THESIS ABSTRACT

A Field of Vocal Discovery:

A Descriptive Study of Vocal Perception

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Singing is a function of the human body and spirit which is as natural as laughter. Yet so many people in our culture shy away from singing because they feel that they have to know 'how'. The purpose of this research is to explore how the singer perceives his or her own voice. How does the voice act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues? How does the perception of the voice help or prevent the singer from being in the world? What kinds of fears prevent some people from singing? Does the perception of the voice change once the singer has had the opportunity to sing in a non-judgmental, safe environment?

Answers to these questions were sought through a group of six people who attended a workshop entitled 'A Field of Vocal Discovery.' Five types of singers will be identified but in the context of this thesis, the singer's perception of the voice was studied from the perspective of those who will not sing within earshot of anyone else, and possibly not when alone.

The literature review is based in the areas of academic writings about the voice, the use of voice in therapy, the intangible nature of singing and sounding and theoretical foundations. This last area includes music therapy theory, field theory and theoretical thought in gestalt therapy.

The method of research was conducted through the tradition of phenomenology in conjunction with a Heuristic approach. These were explored from the perspective of the practitioner researcher. Issues of judgement from the self and others emerged as influential in the singer's experience of his or her own voice.

A FIELD OF VOCAL DISCOVERY:

A descriptive study of vocal perception

A thesis
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by

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DEDICATION

For my dear old Mum,

Bette Oddy

For all of your love, support, pride, and
for that push in the right direction
at the beginning.

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To my workshop participants who gave generously of their time.

To all of my voice students and music therapy clients, who have unwittingly been my valued teachers.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

> ...I always had a thought about that. In the Bible it says, "in the beginning was the word". My thought on that is always that is should be translated, "In the beginning was the sound that created the world, not the word". The sound was the creative force. Not a word-not a written parable-a sound...
> (a comment made in interview by workshop participant, Dave[1])

Purpose of the Study

Everyone is born with a natural ability to sing, just as everyone is born with the ability to laugh. Yet there is much stigma for some, that hovers around the use of the voice, that is rooted in the singer's past. Feedback from family, friends and teachers plays an enormous role in how people feel about their singing voices. The purpose of this study is to explore a part of that stigma by exploring the singer's[2] perception of his or her own voice. This was accomplished during a workshop for six people over five sessions, during which a number of issues were explored. How does the voice act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues for the participants of this group? How does the perception of the voice help or prevent the singer from being in the world? What kinds of fears prevent some people from singing? Does the perception of the voice change once the singer has had the opportunity to sing in a non-judgemental, safe environment?

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[1] Names have all been changed in order to protect the privacy of the participants.
2 In this paper, the word *singer* refers to any individual, regardless of vocal training

Origins of the Inquiry

I have been singing for as long as I can remember. I recall my early experience with singing or sounding with conflicting feelings that I still have today. Singing lessons were a mixed blessing. They taught me tangible (technical) elements of singing, such as how to project, breathe, form vowels, phrase, and how use my voice as any musician would use their instrument to learn the fundamentals of making music.

On the other hand, there are many intangible elements that my formal voice training missed. Now, as a music therapist, I can easily see what these things were. I missed gaining the self-confidence that is required for true mastery, as a result of learning under a shroud of judgement and criticism. I missed understanding that there is any connection at all between the voice and the emotions and spirit. Any authentic expression was thwarted because it was considered to be a distraction from the technique. Dramatic or emotional elements of the song were never truly felt, but projected in order to enhance the performance. After years of learning how to sing, I still felt unable to sing, inadequate, and unworthy of praise. It was thirteen years after I finished training before that I finally came to accept and enjoy my voice for what it was, and not what someone else thought it should be. This was a great step that came about by virtue of sheer acceptance of my own instrument. It required closing my ears to judgement of my voice from without and within. It was a conscious decision to

stop trying to please others or to try fitting into a mold. Feelings of inadequacy

due to this key influence in my life had affected my self-esteem and ability to trust

that I was able to pass on my knowledge and experience of the voice to others. I

refused to trust compliments from other people, and brushed them off with

thoughts of 'they're trying to be nice,' or 'they don't know any differently.' I felt

quite alone, and believed that other singers were very self-confident and knew

their craft better than I.   I have learned in my years of teaching singing, using the

voice in therapy and teaching folk choirs, that I was quite wrong about being

alone. This is an inadequacy that is felt by many people who are both trained

and untrained singers. I have known singers with exquisite voices who

experience these same feelings.

Reflection upon these issues and experiences prompted me as a music

therapist to try to understand the role of the voice. What is it about the voice that

frequently makes people self-conscious regardless of their training and

background, and why is the singer's perception of his or her voice so deeply

linked to the opinions of others?   During this reflection, thoughts about tangible

and intangible qualities which contribute to these perceptions emerged, which led

me to the concept of the *Field of Vocal Discovery*.

What is the Field of Vocal Discovery?

The field of vocal discovery is a vast field, which includes elements from many facets of the singer's life. It includes culture, family, social circle, and school background. It includes the singer's perception of their memories of the past and present and also includes how feelings and experiences incubate in the unconscious. To report on the entire field of vocal discovery for the six people who participated in this study would have resulted in an enormous document far beyond the scope of this thesis. For this reason, the field of vocal discovery was operationalized as the workshop itself. This study focused on of the experiences of participants during the time frame of that workshop.

In this workshop, several clinical experiences were presented to participants in an accepting, non-judgemental, safe environment.   I was interested to know how this environment might enable singers to change their perceptions of their voices. After much reflection, I determined that in my experience, there are many types of singers, five of which will be explained in Chapter 2.   I was initially interested in all singers, because so many singers of every description feel the weight of judgement. Although I would have wished to explore all types, this was not practical within the framework of this thesis. It was then that I became focused upon a more realistic goal, which was to understand more about the perception of the singer who wants to sing, but is very uncomfortable being heard, even in a casual group setting. Thus, the Field of

Vocal Discovery Workshop was designed for that group of people. A full description of the workshop is presented in Chapter 4.

Through the workshop experiences, many elements of the broader field of vocal discovery emerged as significant. It is through these elements that themes emerged and were studied.

Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter 2, the concepts of the tangible and intangible voice are defined and examined from the perspective of the field of music therapy as a whole, and then specifically from the perspective of the voice. These concepts form the foundation for the theoretical perspective of this paper. In Chapter 3, the literature review takes into account academic writings about the voice, previous scholarship in the areas of the use of voice in therapy, the spiritual nature of singing and sounding, and theoretical foundations. Three sub-areas under theoretical foundations have been highly influential in this thesis: music therapy theory, field theory, and theoretical thought in Gestalt therapy. They are taken into account individually. In Chapter 4, the methodology is explained. This is a phenomenological study from the perspective of the practitioner-researcher. An heuristic sensibility as outlined by Clarke Moustakas (1990) also describes the process of research very well. In this chapter, the field of vocal discovery, including the participants in the study and the clinical experiences, are detailed. In Chapter 5, responses to these clinical experiences are outlined, as well as

participant response to the research questions and emergent themes. In

Chapter 6, a discussion of the question responses and emergent themes is

presented. Chapter 7 presents reflections on the tangible and intangible in

relation to the document, reflections on the authentic voice, and reflections of the

music therapist, singer, and researcher as a practitioner researcher. In this

chapter, possibilities for the future are also discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOICE

It's just so unfamiliar I feel unbalanced doing it. Unsure of myself.
Feels like I'm very tense when there's an expectation of singing or joining
in. I just don't know how to do it. On some level you feel that you can't
match up to people around. That's true for a lot of things. Some people
are good at sports. It doesn't mean you don't play sports.
(comment in interview by workshop participant, Adam)

The Blade of Grass and the Sunbeam

Tangible and Intangible Elements of Music

The word *tangible* comes from the Italian, tangere, to touch. It is defined

as that which can be touched or felt. It is also defined as definite or objective

(Guralnik, 1968).

The word *intangible* is defined as that which cannot be touched or incorporeal. It

is also defined as representing value, but without material being. It is that which

cannot easily be defined and is vague.

In all of life, the tangible and intangible interact. I watch a chipmunk run

past my window with his cheeks full of his store. The tangible experience of

watching him is a foundation for the intangible feelings of love, sweetness, and

innocence that emerge in my watching. The tangible experience of listening to

my child practise the piano is a foundation for the intangible feelings of every kind

that emerge from hearing him. These range from feelings of relief that he is

practising, to love for him in his accomplishment, to feelings of some kind of

sadness in my solar plexus which probably relates back to my own practising as

a child. In a music therapy session, the tangible and the intangible are completely

present. "The musical improvisation is the meeting place between the abstract

and the concrete" (Kenny, 1996b, p.68).   These two forces make up the whole,

in a subtle interplay, as a music therapist listens to inner impulses, instinct and

intuition (Amir, 1996).

Joe[3] is my primary teacher in this work and mode of thought. He is a man

with whom I have worked with for 8 years. He is quadriplegic from birth, and

nonverbal. His body is bent irreparably. Someone like Joe has very few ways to

express himself, but express he does. He can show pleasure with a smile or

gaze. He can vocalise and show discomfort or intense pleasure by shaking*.* He

laughs and cries and shakes furiously when angry. Not only does someone like

Joe have to deal with the physical pain of being in a misshapen body, but he also

has the pain of being without parents, and of having been institutionalized all of

his life. He has the pain of having had very little embrace and physical affection

in his life. He is a person literally stripped of all the physical and emotional rights

that the rest of us enjoy. When trying to imagine what life is like for someone like

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[3] Joe's real name is being used with permission, so that he can be fully acknowledged for the role he has
played in my learning.

Joe, the compassion is overwhelming. To walk a mile in his shoes is a far greater challenge than I can ever hope to meet.

What can someone like this teach us about working with 'whole' people? Despite years of discomfort and disability, this man's spirit shines to most who venture to know him. Because the tangible benefits of music therapy are so unreachable for someone like Joe, he teaches us to see and accept the *whole* experience, including both tangible (such as vibration, volume, and timbre of the instruments) and intangible (such as emotional or spiritual experiences).

When attempting to help someone like Joe, the music therapist can feel discouraged by a feeling of powerlessness to heal.   There is no way to perceive the depth of the pain of someone like this, except perhaps on a very superficial level. Staying with the tangible is safe, touchable, and visible. When using terminology about these elements, it is simple to explain to them what is taking place**.** What can't be explained, and what an observer can't often see, is that 'other' that music therapists experience by virtue of the intangible nature of music that they work with. When I am working with Joe, the tangible parts of making music are a foundation for all of the spiritual connection that takes place between him and me in the music.

When attempting to describe the intangible experience to others not in the field, I have some difficulty. Observers have commented on the spontaneity and success of the sessions. When asked specifically, 'What are you trying to achieve?,'   I perhaps say something about tangible goals, such as the improvement of quality of life, movement toward speech, or increased sensory

stimulation.   When these things are said, the work is grounded and it thus feels worthy of esteem.

What if all the rules were broken and I spoke my truth and said "I honestly don't know what I'm trying to achieve?".....

The mere act of typing these words feels like a betrayal to my very training, accreditation, and music therapy community. I must be professional, articulate, scholarly, and clear about my motives.   To be this honest in a public forum would make a laughing stock of our young and growing profession.   Yet, it is honesty. After my experience of speaking this honesty to other music therapists in a 'Canadian Association for Music Therapy' conference presentation, I was flooded with people coming to speak to me afterward.   The main response was one of relief: "I'm so glad that I'm not the only one."   I learned that day that we are so concerned with validation of our work by people in other more concrete professions, that any form of potential invalidation by basing our focus on spirit or other intangible elements feels like betrayal to the music therapy community at large. Those who came to speak with me agreed that although many of us do it, *admitting* to uncertainty, based on suspended waiting for that intangible moment or that special moment (Amir, 1996) is a faux pas.

I think about what the continuation of my honest answer would be.   "I am trying to achieve what is achieved. That which happens is what happens and the

goal is to enable it to happen." I would state my motto for myself as music therapist as follows: I see (meaning the use of all senses), I perceive, I respond, I receive (Kenny, 1996b, Oddy, 1999).

The instruction that Lisa Sokolov gives before leading vocal improvisation activities is "notice what you notice" (Sokolov, 1998). This gives a framework for the activity that can then go easily beyond 'activity' into the intangible realm. This works both when we are in the participant role, and when we are in the therapist role. We must notice what we notice, feel what we feel, hear what we hear, see what we see, capture it, join it, move with it, embrace it.

This response is a highly intangible one to a question that demands tangible reasoning. The fact is that tangible reasoning does not answer the question. The language that is required for discourse about a tangible foundation cannot encapsulate the intangible elements of a music therapy session.

By trying to achieve what is achieved and allowing that which happens to happen, intangible elements are discovered. They emerge through seeing, perceiving, responding and receiving. By being open to receive whatever comes without censoring, the therapist opens herself to a feeling of empathy and an outflow of love and spirit. Carolyn Kenny (1989) in her Field of Play model comes the closest to creating theory that can describe this experience. Her fields of Aesthetic, Musical Space, Play, Ritual, State of Consciousness, Power, and Creative Process are extremely descriptive and helpful in identifying the kinds of intangible experience that I have with people like Joe.

Dorit Amir (1996) writes about the concept of the intangible using different words. She writes about not only the effect on the client of the special moment, but also the therapist's growth as a result of these moments. As Jean Vanier writes, "Communion is at the heart of the mystery of our humanity. It means accepting the presence of another inside oneself, as well as accepting the reciprocal call to enter into another" (1998, p. 28). As long as that reciprocal relationship is present, the therapist has room to learn and grow. "The one who is healed and the one who is healing constantly change place. As we begin to understand ourselves, we begin to understand others" (p.25).

The concept of intangibility, or parts of it, has been given different names by different music therapists: Abstract and concrete (Kenny, 1989), special moments (intangible) (Amir, 1996), sound (the vibrating universe) and music (the musical self inside all human beings) (Amir, 1995), sound and symbol (Priestley, 1994), the objective experience (tangible) (Ruud, 1998), and music as universal energy form (a combination of both tangible and intangible qualities) (Bruscia, 1998).

The 'special moments' that I have had with Joe are highly spiritual. Perhaps for him, the effect does not last beyond the music therapy session (although there is no way to know this), but in the here and now they are moving experiences (Oddy, 1999).

In my current work I am involved with people who can articulate their experiences. It is often important for clients to name their experiences, thus bringing their experiences into the tangible. This kind of work is often done in

order to make something that seems unreal, real**.** Perhaps a repressed experience, for example, will not be remembered until it has been embodied through playing an instrument or through the voice (Austin 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001; McClure 1998). This, in conjunction with working at the intangible level as taught to me by Joe, can spark meaningful experiences which can prove to be important for therapeutic growth and self-discovery.

A Blade of Grass: The Tangible Voice

A singing teacher may refer to a blade of grass when teaching her student. This refers to the concrete image of two blades of grass vibrating together to make sound, simply because air has been blown through them. This image may be used when explaining or experiencing the laryngeal mechanism. Learning about technical elements of singing means learning about the tangible body. This is the foundation for singing, just as it is the foundation for learning about all other bodily functions. A parallel for the tangible in the voice is the physical design of a piano. When building a piano, the craftsman carefully chooses wood for the resonator, and carefully shapes the resonating chamber. The mechanism of the action is carefully designed and formed to precision. The difference between a good instrument and a mediocre instrument is the quality of the craftsmanship and the choice of materials. A pianist then buys the instrument that best suits his or her needs.

The larynx, the throat, the pharynx, the diaphragm, the nasal passages, the hard and soft palates, the sinuses, the facial muscles, the tongue, the teeth, the lips, the chest, the ribcage, the intercostal muscles, the abdominal muscles, the vocal cords, the thyroid cartilage, and the ears are the tangible aspects of the voice. This is what the singer learns about in order to be able to control, temper, and stabilize the tone. These are the tools that are akin to the hammers and strings in the piano.

In order for a piano to exist, a craftsman is required to create and built the instrument. For the singer, the instrument is a given. No one needs to build it, and the singer does not need to purchase a finely crafted instrument. The spoken and singing voices were presented to each and every one of us at birth as intricate and expressive gifts. Infants know about their gifts well. They base their entire vocal communication upon expressive use of them. The following years determine whether or not the gifts are used, disowned, misused, or forgotten for a while. The remarkable thing about the gift of the voice is that it can't be thrown away. We have it for life, barring trauma to the vocal cords.

The tangible or technical approach to singing was the foundation for my own training, but in addition to that foundation, there is a whole realm of intangible elements which are rich in resources both for performance and, especially, for insight and growth.

Fifteen years of experience has taught me that when training a voice, the tangible issues are of concern only to the extent that the singer will improve the voice by manipulating those entities of the voice. This is contrary to much of the

information shared in the academic singing literature (Burgin, 1973; Schiotz, 1970; Shakespeare, 1924; Vennard, 1967). When a singer is trained with a focus on technique, the risk is run of crushing his or her feelings of self-worth as he or she attempts to fit the mold. Technical perfection may be overvalued.

> Music education that is misunderstood and emphasizes too much efficiency and ability can deeply hurt the student or it can even embarrass her completely. At the same time she produces embittered and permanent repulsion towards a human psychic symbol of life, music itself. (Lehtonen, 2000, p. 35)

In my experience, it is of far greater importance to work with the intangible aspects of singing. The release of blocks and freedom of expression play a much larger role in producing a free unencumbered sound. It is also these elements that contribute to problems experienced by singers who fear singing or sounding (Moon, 1998; Smithrim,1998).

A Sunbeam: The Intangible Voice

The Sunbeam is one of many metaphors that a teacher may use to help a student relate to the intangible in singing. Metaphors like this one could be used to express a brightness in tone quality, a mood, or a feeling. The sunbeam is also an expression that I have adopted to illustrate that singing is not just for those who are 'born' with it, or decide to learn over years. It is for everyone. Each and every person born is just as capable of singing as they are of talking, walking, breathing, and laughing (Barbareaux, 1941; Gass, 1991; Newham, 1998a). It is as natural and all around us as is a sunbeam.   In our culture, it has

unfortunately become taboo to open one's mouth unless one is sure that a lovely tone will emerge. This attitude is unfortunate, because it has produced a society in which many people are conscious of exposing what they perceive to be a vulnerable part of themselves by opening their voices to sing. This vulnerable place can be the most beautiful part of a singer. It can also be a very frightening place. It depends upon how the singer perceives being vulnerable.   If vulnerability is perceived as negative, then singing could be frightening. Even a singer who has a beautiful voice by our cultural standards could be uncomfortable showing a big sound. It could expose that which has been rejected or never accepted in the first place. It could also be held in for fear of envy or a fear of that feeling of power. The vocal sound represents a part of themselves, whether that is anger or strength and that could create that feeling of vulnerability(Austin, 2001, personal conversation). It is a place in which many fears emerge, and where a great deal of learning and growth can take place.

When we sing, emotional and spiritual parts of us can experience a feeling of contentment, happiness, or elation. There could also be sadness or despair. In some cultures where free vocalization is considered acceptable, one can express grief through wailing. In our culture that kind of response to grief must be done secretly, in private. The feelings are there and the singer chooses to meet with them, or not. For a music therapist this is a rich notion. Singing a song can often be very moving and emotional when the lyricist or composer touches upon the mood or the situation of the singer. Vocal improvisation on the other hand is a singing of the singer's own song. It can reveal the truth of the singer's own

being. Even a singer who is used to performing and expressing the song she is

singing may not know the depth of personal feeling that she has until she

improvises. To allow a sound to come from the body that is a true expression of

one's feeling is alien and terrifying to many of us. A music therapist can guide

the individual through that feeling of fear to an awareness and accessing of the

unconscious. This can then provide a channel for acceptance of the messages

that the voice is providing (Austin 1993, 1996, 1998, 2001; McClure 1998).

How the Singer Perceives the Voice

One extremely intangible element of singing is the singer's perception of

the voice. It is a large element of the whole picture. The singer's perception

of the voice is influenced by feedback that he or she has received from family,

teachers, culture, and social norms. This judgement issue figures very

prominently when speaking to singers about how they perceive their own

voices.

Often the singer perceives his or her voice through the ears of others. It's

a fact that our voices sound differently to our own ears through the bone and

muscle structure of our body than they do through the airwaves to another pair of

ears. This difference is a cause for the fact that most singers do not take the

opinion of another lightly. Whether it is a teacher working to help the student with

technique, or the ear listening on the other side of the shower, there is much

stake placed in the opinion of the other.   Being willing to own the opinion of another taints the singer's perception of his or her own voice.   Ideally the singer must learn to hear herself and trust her own sensations and feelings.

If the singer agrees with the listener that the voice deserves criticism, then can the singer let it go and sing despite self and social judgement? As stated by David White in his lecture entitled Poems of Self Compassion, "somehow those flaws are carefully placed inside of us. Almost like the flaws in marble that give it its beauty" (White, 1993). The voice is a thing of beauty regardless of opinion and judgement received from without and within.

In my work over the past twenty years, I have come in contact with many types of singers. These 'types' relate to the degree of acceptance that the singer has of his or her own beauty in the voice, and the amount of willingness that the singer has to experience his or her true voice. For the purpose of this document, I will identify five types here.

The first two types are those that most people in our culture call singers (as opposed to the universal definition adopted in this paper). The first type of singer is one who receives an instrument at birth, which by a turn of nature creates an especially beautiful tone. In this case, it is pleasing to him or her and to others within the context of the relevant culture. This is akin to how much physical 'beauty' within the context of the relevant culture a given person receives at birth. This person may or may not choose to train the voice. It really doesn't matter. When trained, this voice can fit the operatic mold which exists in

our culture. An untrained voice of this type is the 'natural' voice that many others stand in awe of.

The second type is the singer who is born with a moderately pleasant voice (within the context of the relevant culture), which he or she has chosen to train. The singer then can learn how to create the tone that is considered beautiful by learning how to manipulate the tangible aspects of the voice. This could take years. For some the power of suggestion is strong and the learning can take place quickly with an effective teacher.   For others it is a struggle, which takes a lifetime of exploration. This type of singer will often sacrifice the authentic voice in order to try to meet a cultural ideal.

It is seldom that I hear the third, fourth and fifth types of singer refer to themselves as singers. The third and fourth often consider themselves people who will sing, but this is differentiated from the singer in our culture.

The third type of singer uses the voice as a natural part of her *outer* life. It's part of her community, religious practise, and celebrations. She will comfortably be heard singing around the campfire, or in church. Seldom would this type of singer have the confidence in her authentic voice to be heard singing alone or performing. Singers of this type who do perform can be very popular (for example, Neil Young or Bob Dylan), because the authenticity of their voice is often relevant for many listeners.

The fourth type is the singer who uses the voice as a window to the *inner* world. The people who know this use their voices as a way to release tension, stress, anxiety, grief, and joy. In many cultures, this is an everyday relationship

with the voice. In our culture, this type of relationship to the voice is not a given. Usually the fourth type of singer also fits into the third type. It does not necessarily work the other way around.

The fifth singer is very intimidated by the voice and what it represents. It doesn't matter what kind of voice he or she was born with.   He or she would never sing within earshot of anyone else, and possibly would not sing when alone.

In the context of this thesis, I have focused the research on this latter group of people. I worked with a group of six people who fit into this fifth type. My clinical goal was to inspire awareness in them about the authentic voice. Through this work my hope was that they would come to accept their authentic voices with enjoyment and without judgement.

The Authentic Voice

I couldn't help making the connection to artists of the visual genre. There are so many different forms of expression in the visual world - none of them wrong or right - just different and unique statements of personalities. And singing should be the same way - many different sounds and qualities - and all of them beautiful when they are recognized as 'sound pictures' of the beautiful individuals from where they source. (comment by workshop participant Ellen from her journal)

My working definition of the authentic voice is as follows:

The authentic voice is the voice of beauty. It is a term that I use to define the voice which gives a truthful expression of who the singer is, and to allow truthful expression to emerge through the voice is beautiful.

Authentic voice ➤ Truthful expression of the singer ➤Beautiful voice
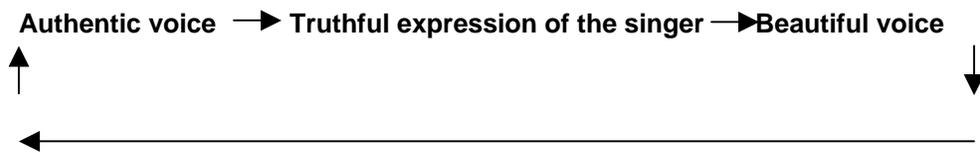
To fully discuss the question 'what is beautiful' is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important in terms of the intangible voice and requires mentioning. As is so famously quoted, 'Beauty is in the eye [and ear] of the beholder'. We each perceive beauty in our own way. For many it is a question of what is in style. Beauty can be cultural or personal. It's our individual choice. There is so much beauty in the singing voice that everyone is born with. It is beautiful because it reflects who the singer really is. It is beautiful for the sheer perfection of the vocal mechanism.

Carolyn Kenny's definition of aesthetic is very helpful in the understanding of beauty as the human person:

> The aesthetic is a field of beauty which is the human person. This field contains all non-verbal cues, which are communicated by the individual in being and acting and are perceived through the intuitive function. The aesthetic is an environment in which the conditions include the individual's human tendencies, values, attitudes, life experience and all factors which unite to create the whole   and complete form of beauty, which is the person. (Kenny, 1989, p. 75)

And that whole and complete form of beauty which is the person includes the authentic voice.

Joe Salas has also done some work on beauty in the context of music therapy and defines it as "the quality of integrity of form that echoes, to a greater

or lesser degree, the grace and elegance of the patterns of existence" (Salas, 1994, p.4). These elegant patterns of existence are authentic expressions of the world that are not necessarily beautiful in our cultural sense of the word.

Voices are as different from individual to individual as are noses, eyes, and personalities. How the voice is used is tied up very intimately with what kind of voice singers are born with, and how they choose or have been conditioned to use it. It is about how the voice is bound in elements such as personality type, the environment that the singer has grown up in, or the judgement of voice quality which exists in our culture. A large part of the work that I am exploring is that search for the authentic voice and how people can come in contact with or accept the voices they are born with (O'Loughlin, 1995). The voice can be a tool in demonstrating compliance (Austin, personal conversation, 2001), which can mold the voice into something which is not authentic. Getting back to the true voice can be a channel for getting back to the true self, as Diane Austin (2001) demonstrates when helping people give their trauma a voice.

There are so many voices that I have heard which are the embodiment of spirit. Whether beautiful by the standards of our culture or not, they are truly beautiful. When the singer is involved in the music and the experience of singing, it is beautiful in the most pure sense of the word. Examples can be found in the myriad of wonderful elderly and disabled singers whom I have experienced in my work.

> **Jane:** So there's no such thing as a monotone voice?
> **Nicola:** Yes there is such a thing as a monotone voice, but that voice is still a beautiful voice. It's just that in our culture we judge people. Ever

since I've started this project, I've wanted to take my video tape into some of the facilities where I work. Some of the elderly people sing in there. And they sing with all their voice and they don't care what anyone thinks. And their voices are all over the map but they are having a blast. But the faces - you can't audio tape that , you have to video tape it because it's the faces that go along with their voices. Those beautiful faces that shine because they are singing in spite of the discomfort they are living... (Workshop transcript, Field of Vocal Discovery, session 5, 2001)

Summary

In this chapter, the elements of music therapy that influence this work were presented to form a foundation for the concepts of the tangible and intangible voice. This discussion, in turn, forms a foundation for the theoretical perspective of this paper. Next, five types of singers were identified and one type was selected for research in this thesis. Finally, the authentic voice was presented. Here, there was a discussion of the possibility of the singer's perception being based in a sense of beauty which also requires acceptance and enjoyment of the authentic voice. In the next chapter, relevant literature is reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Four areas are surveyed in this chapter: academic writings about the voice, the use of voice in therapy, the intangible nature of singing and sounding, and theoretical foundations. This last area includes music therapy theory, field theory, and theoretical thought in Gestalt therapy.

Academic Writings About the Voice

Training the voice is an act of commitment that has been paralleled to that of the body builder training his body (Joyce, 1999). While all people work and lift and move objects, the body builder trains his muscles to be larger than life and to be better than the rest. While all people are singers, the person who trains vigorously and learns to project into large spaces and to maintain amazing stamina is a genre of singer apart from the rest. This genre could include both professional and non-professional singers just as a person who trains the body to be larger than life can do so for personal or professional reasons. The important factor here is an ability which is out of the ordinary. To attain this quality of performance, the tangible voice as defined in Chapter 2 must be developed. Technique has to be impeccable, and understanding of the acoustic of the voice has to be intact. Singers who are in training to develop and become that special

voice need technical expertise, and the academic literature about the voice reflects this focus.   Seldom do the writings address the singer's perception of intangible spiritual and emotional qualities of singing with any depth, and often the listener's perception is addressed as opposed to the singer's perception (Andreas, 1975; Reid, 1965; Vennard, 1967).

There are some instances where the writer enters the realm of vocal self-perception, albeit briefly. Esther Salaman is a singer and teacher of singing. Her book (Salaman, 1989), while covering many technical elements of singing, does not negate the intangible. "I believe the wish to sing is intimately bound up with the desire we all have to know and express ourselves" (p. 64). In some cases, she combines tangibility and intangibility so that it is clear that one affects the other. "The wish to sing and open up one's personality means physically opening up the back of the throat; literally the gateway to freedom and expression" (p.63). Cornelius Reid writes books about the technical elements of singing. He tends toward the traditional view of singing, meaning that most of what he prescribes is based on the need to remove vocal imperfections (Reid, 1979, p. 85). He then offers an alternate view which he touches on very briefly.

> Restricted to purely physical dimensions there are but two factors to be considered, registration and resonance. But neither of these operates in a vacuum and must be considered part of the total person, with allowance made for judgments and attitudes toward creative goals aesthetic concepts and ideals, physical potential, and emotional blockages. It is the latter which may now be seen to hamper progress so severely.(p.14)

Many others who have written books about technique add a small tribute to the spiritual or emotional. "Singing is actually the transmutation of energy into

tone" (Jones, 1947, p.3). "The human voice is the only musical instrument with a heart, mind and a soul" (Cooke, 1952, p. 15). "The voice is the expression of the whole physical body, and intellect and the spirit. If the body, the mind or the soul is ill, the voice is affected instantly" (Lehmann, 1945, p.54). These very fine and important points are often touched upon in the introduction or conclusion as an embellishment (Burgin, 1973; Schiotz, 1953; Shakespeare,1924), and are rarely elaborated upon.

The Use of Voice in Therapy

Music therapy is a medium that includes the use of any kind of musical instrument, including the voice. Why separate the voice from the rest, and examine it or differentiate it from the other instruments that are used? The voice is different because our body is the instrument. It is personal, and thus sounding often can be a reflection of the personality, or something that is happening emotionally (Austin, 2001; Joyce Moon, 1998; McClure, 1998; Moses, 1954; Nichols-Rothe, 1995; Patteson, 1998). When playing the piano, for example, the way a pianist plays can be judged. The instrument on which the pianist plays can be assessed also, but then it is not the essence of the musician that is being judged, it is someone else's craftsmanship, or someone else's tuning ability. For the singer, all of the judgement rests with him or her. "Fear of judgement about the way one sounds can inhibit any attempt to sing even when

there is a strong desire to do so" (Austin, 1993, p. 316). In many cases, it is judgement that has been received from times long ago that has become ingrained and introjected.[4] The singer may not sing because of a fear that is not understood or even recognized. The fear may be a reflection of something impressed upon the individual by another who won't sing, or an internal fear based on being silenced as a child (Joyce Moon, 1998; O'Loughlin, 1995). "When he has learned to survive by living in silence and denying his emotional truth, finding his voice requires courage" (Austin, 1993, p. 316). The inability to open up the voice physically and mentally because of the fear of singing is referred to as "imprisonment" by Barbareaux-Parry (1941).

The person who considers himself or herself to be a non-singer may be used to thinking of the voice as an instrument to be played only with skill. In this case, they will not be heard singing any more than they would be heard playing a song on the violin without being taught. This is the notion that needs to be overcome. Singing is as natural and as innate as laughter. The voice is an instrument apart from the rest. We are not born with a violin in our hands or a piano to play. We *are* born with a voice with which to sing.

Use of the voice in therapy is touched on from several different angles by therapists who focus on the voice. Diane Austin (1993, 1996, 1998, 2001) approaches voice therapy from the Jungian perspective that the voice contains

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[4] Introjection is a Gestalt therapy term that refers to the 'swallowing whole' of impressions, judgements, or anything else that has been impressed upon the individual by another, in the family, school, or society. The thing that is significant about an introject, is that the person may not be aware that they are not in confluence with the issue. (Perls, Hefferline, Goodman, 1951)

information from the deep past that is shared by all human beings. These archetypal images come forth as subconscious messengers to anyone who is willing to receive them (Austin 1993). This Jungian approach is of great interest to a music therapist who taps into the symbolism of the improvisations. Jung's notions of the personal and collective unconscious, and the use of symbolism, are very relevant to voice work (McClure, 1998; Sokolov 1987).

As well as the Jungian approach, Austin (1993) also looks to object relations (Winnicott, 1971) and writes about the use of voice to repair early mother-child ruptures.

There is also a strong movement toward the use of voice in body awareness work (Linklater,1976; McClure,1998; Newham,1998; Sokolov,1987). Wilhelm Reich's views on the nature of body energy, character armours and the storage of feelings in the body are also relevant (Sharaf, 1983; Sokolov,1987). Paul Newham (1998) has created an entire genre, which he titles 'Therapeutic Voicework.' This genre is wholly based on the concept of the link between voice and body.

Silvia Nakkach is a music therapist who has created a school of voice which she titles 'Vox Mundi.' She uses a multi-modal approach, including media such as chant, toning, sound poetry, song writing, voice meditation, vocal techniques from contemporary music, and use of vocal music from around the world. Her premise for her school is that "expressing the inherent musicality of the voice activates healing. Singing is a tool to transform consciousness and

emotional and physical dysfunction" (Nakkach, 1999, p.1). She believes that it is important to sing and sing some more. "The key is to cultivate familiarity with the practice of singing - as often as possible" (pg.1).

A surprising source of great interest in use of the voice as therapy was found in the experiential education literature. There appears to be a new rise in the work of music educators toward helping students experience the voice in a positive and growing light (Joyce Moon, 1999; Patteson, 1999; Smithrim, 1998, 1999). After hearing so many stories of oppression and lack of compassion by teachers in the past, it was with great delight that this was noted. Teachers of singing are now aware that their students who have emotional and spiritual issues are encountering solutions in the music studio. One educator takes singing outside of the studio, and uses singing in wilderness experiences with abused women. She writes:

> At the individual level, singing is making music with the body as instrument. As such, it is a form of "body work" that has the potential to do what all therapeutic body work does. It can release tension, loosen blockages of cellular energy, and access emotion, and memories that may be locked in various location in the body.(Joyce Moon, 1999, p. 247)

As a teacher, she has arrived at a similar place in her work as have music therapists Diane Austin, Lisa Sokolov, and psychologists Wendy McClure and Paul Newham. People in these three professions approach the voice from completely different perspectives. People from different fields recognize the

voice as an important element of the psyche. This recognition is a statement of

the significance of the relationship between voice and psyche.[5]

The Intangible Spiritual Nature of Singing and Sounding

There is a wide range of belief systems in music therapy, from cognitive

and behavioural approaches to very spiritual approaches. My personal belief

system is based in a more spiritual and psychological framework. This is the

realm that I find most intriguing in music therapy sessions. In my own work, the

degree of spirituality in a session is what determines the degree of success

(Oddy 1999). With all of the musical expertise in the world, and with the most

beautiful space to work in, if the interaction does not include an emotional or

spiritual component, it is a session without substance. This is the essence that

provides the link to people who are non-verbal, with little apparent cognizance. It

is also the link to deep emotional places in psychoanalytical work (Austin 1993,

1996, 1998, 2001; Lehtonen 1993, 1994). This is the freedom and invitation to

express oneself fully in the company of the other. It is the quality of connection

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[5]   The realization that people from varying fields share the same view led me to think that music therapists are ready to enter dialogue and comparisons with other professionals who are experiencing similar conclusions from different perspectives. In this way we can discover our 'similarities and differences' (Kenny, personal conversation, 2001). Music therapists have drawn on other psychological and behavioural models over the years in order to explain themselves. Now that music therapy has begun to establish its autonomy, it can include itself in the broader community. This way, the other professions can recognize *our* literature and accomplishments. In the experiential education literature there was not one music therapy reference. This needs to change.

between two people. It is not linked to religious practise, or any belief system at all. It is a resonance between two human beings (McMaster 1996).

In the dictionary, the word 'spirit' is defined as coming from the Latin word spiritus, which means breath (Guralnik, 1968). This definition is particularly 'inspiring,' because the voice is all breath, all spirit. Lisa Sokolov encapsulates this notion well.

> Breath is the life force that feeds the spiritual fire of the musical self. Taking in breath is drawing closer from the collective whole and outside, and channelling it into the inner self. To breathe in is to inspire, bring in, open and receive. It is a respiriting from without. (Sokolov, 1987, p.357)

When the music therapy experience is made tangible, it reveals some of the truth, but not all. Some music therapists are self conscious or even defensive about their own feelings concerning the intangible elements of music and music therapy, and try to validate them by basing them in the tangible. Ruud (1998) mentions that there has been a change in the field of music therapy which reflects a change in the scientific climate, and it points toward metaphysical (intangible) qualities. He calls this a "weakness of rational thought" and an "adoption of a religious attitude beyond art and science" (Ruud, 1998, p. 4).   He attempts to put this kind of thought into the realm of the tangible by suggesting that "we ought to be asking what kind of mythology produces this kind of ideology. And further, is this mythology useful in promoting health?" (p.4).   Ruud also addresses awareness of feelings and how music contributes to this awareness of feelings through acceptance. "The emotional experience of music seems to help the person to establish memories, to integrate and formulate them within a metaphoric form that gives direction to their personal narratives" (p. 19).

Some other music therapists don't touch on the intangible at all in their writings

(Hoelzley, 1993 and Wiebe, 1994 for example), and explore very tangible

elements of music making.

There are, on the other hand, many music therapists who do not back

away from concepts of an intangible nature (Amir 1995, 1996; Austin 1993, 1996,

2001; Goldberg 1995; Hesser 1995; Kenny, 1982, 1999; McMaster, 1995, 1996;

Mohan 1998;   Nichols-Rothe, 1995; O'Loughlin, 1995; Priestley, 1994).

Kimmo Lehtonen writes that "musical forms meet the corresponding forms and

structures of human consciousness. At the same time we start to create new

awareness and consciousness." (Lehtonen, 2000, p. 34). Lehtonen looks at the

meaning of music in one's life.   He writes of "examining the meaningfulness of

music and how the development and problem solving in the musical field can

lead to innovations in a real life" (p. 35). I resonate with this concept completely,

as it relates so solidly to singing and use of the voice. One's relationship to the

voice can be a virtual mirror of one's relationship to the self and to the world.

> The movement in time, a certain "experience of flow" presupposes
> that the controlling function of the self give way to a pure experience,
> where man's bodily and unconscious intentions are automatically
> transformed into a sounding reality. In the process, the creative individual
> is able to handle the phenomenal world of archaic origin and to experience
> the imaginary miracles in it. (Lehtonen, 1993)

Lehtonen completely embraces the intangible in his article 'Is Music an

Archaic Form of Thinking?' "Music is communication, it has been compared to

the 'sacred text,' which contains untold stories, quiet whispers, and shouts about

mental pictures, memories, meanings, and things which are linked to the psychic processes" (Lehtonen, 1994, p.4).

The writings of Carolyn Kenny indicate that she is very 'in tune' with intangible elements of music therapy and is not ashamed to admit it. "It is a move to encourage creativity and resourcefulness in the truest sense, that is, finding strength where there appears to be none and re-sourcing oneself or touching one's source again" (Kenny, 1982, p. 56). Kenny validates music therapists when she speaks of the beauty in the human encounter during a keynote speech (Kenny 1999) and in her writings (1982, 1989, 1996b). She does not fear ridicule in her writing, and does not compromise to accommodate a world of tangible ideas. "The idea of 'operationalizing my vision' did not seem integral to the spirit of the work. Also I was not interested in proving anything" (Kenny 1999, p.9).

The Helen Bonny method of Guided Imagery in Music is a perfect example of intangibility in which altered states of consciousness play an important role (Goldberg, 1995), although it is very much grounded in the tangible through the set selections of music and the preset format of the session.

Mary Priestley's work with Analytical Music Therapy is based in "linking sound [tangible] and symbol [intangible]" (Priestley, 1995, p. 131). Priestley points out that we need the connection between both. "The patient explores new pathways symbolically in the world of imagination but with the bodily-expressed emotion in sound which gives her safe toe-hold in the world of everyday reality" (p. 131). It becomes a matter of hearing and interpreting.

The approach that Austin uses, as mentioned above, is very much based in the combined forces of tangible and intangible elements. "Singing offers a way for the disembodied spirit to incarnate because the way home can be pleasurable and the painful feelings can be put into an aesthetically pleasing form" (Austin, 2001, p. 5). Her work with disassociation and archetypes is a very spiritual process (personal experience, 2000).

Wendy McClure articulates the concept of taking intangibility to a step beyond the self. "I propose that a profound resource for the phenomenon of healing through singing and sounding is the universal unconscious. Vocal expression linked to the universal unconscious provides support for self to sound through" (McClure, 1998, p. 118). She works with 'voicing the world soul' in wilderness experiences. This sounds like a powerful way to experience the intangible elements of the voice.

Literature about the voice as spiritual is often focused on three other areas which exist outside of and in confluence with music therapy. Chant is a repetitive singing of a phrase which produces an altered state. In this state, spiritual and emotional learning takes place (Gass, 1999). Toning is a continued held sound which the singer experiences as a resonance in different parts of the body (Beaulieu, 1987; Gardner-Gordon, 1993; Keyes, 1973; Rudhyar, 1982; Sokolov,1998). The third is the singing that takes place as a means for spiritual connection engaged in by most religious practices in the world (Gass, 1999;Nakkach, 1999).

The spiritual nature of singing showed up quite strongly in the experiential education literature. An example of openness to spiritual experience through the voice is as follows:

> The process of 'giving voice' is sacred work and singing allows us
> to express ourselves as spiritual beings It connects us to our humanity
> and to our sacredness; it grounds us and centres us in our power. Singing
> can be a sublime experience, eliciting joy, awe, wonder, and reverenced,
> even in the midst of despair and sadness. It moves and transforms
> energy.
> (Joyce Moon, 1999, p. 249)

Theoretical Foundations

Music Therapy Theory

Theoretical thought comes in many different colours and shades. Likewise, theory development in the field of music therapy appears to have many different foundational definitions. Some say that it refers to description of practise, (Bruscia, 1987) or a description of research. (Amir, 1996) Yet another writes that theory development refers to categorizing and placing new knowledge into the context of existing theory (Ruud, 1982). Theoretical thought in music therapy has also been referred to as an abstract concept which describes a field of thought (Kenny, 1989).

Ken Bruscia writes that there are many ways to build theories.   He proposes that a true theory has application for a "whole phenomenological field.

It is not a single finding or construct, it is a set of principles which are logically related to one another" (Bruscia, 1998, p.243). A theory shows how the phenomena within a domain are interrelated. A theoretical principle provides a better understanding of the facts.

Bruscia outlines several ways of thinking theoretically. Explication is when a theory is developed by classifying, organizing concepts, practices and terms. He considers his work on improvisational models of music therapy (1987) to be this type of theory (Bruscia, 1998). In this book he speaks of theoretical orientations for each person discussed in the book.   He points out that each model of improvisational therapy is rooted in one or more 'treatment' theories and that these theoretical orientations affect goals, procedures, dynamic intervention, and the process of treatment. He approaches the system that Ruud described in 1980 from a different point of view. Ruud looked at how different theoretical models are a *basis* for music therapy practice, and Bruscia looked at music therapy practice that is *affected* by various theoretical models.

Bruscia defines integration as when a theory is developed by relating music therapy to another field. He considers works by Kenny (1985) (systems theory), Ruud (1980) (overall orientation to other fields) and Lehtonen (1993) (psychoanalytic theory) to be examples of this type of music therapy theory. Philosophical criticism is theory that uncovers inconsistencies and faulty reasoning of existing theory or practise. Empirical analysis is description of a phenomenon based on some form of systematic observation or inquiry. He also

notes that an empirical theory is based upon data from one specific study (Bruscia, 1996).

Speculation is a theory that is based on "reasoned opinion, direct experience with the phenomenon, and intuitive observations" (Bruscia, 1998, p. 245). "A theory is speculative, it is not always or entirely based on findings from research or clinical practice, and in fact it can rarely be substantiated" (Bruscia, 1996, p.86).

Revisioning is when a theory consists of new schemes, propositions, and terminology to break from past traditions. Finally, symbolization occurs when the theory relies upon symbols, metaphors or stories to help with the description (Bruscia, 1998; Kenny, 1982).

Most of the above types go hand in hand, and it would be as difficult to separate them in any given theory as it is to separate one's reasoning from one's thoughts. I would expect that classification, integration, philosophical criticism, empirical analysis, speculation, revisioning, and symbolization can all be included in one theoretical work as different theoretical thoughts are introduced into the whole.

Music therapy originates in a medical model which is a concrete approach to theory. In his book Music Therapy and its Relationship to Current Treatment Theories (1978), Even Ruud addresses a very cognitive approach to conceptualizing music therapy. He addresses basic medical models, as well as psychoanalytical, behavioural and humanistic/existential theories to see where music therapy fits into pre-existing models. He says, "The basic idea

throughout this work has been to show that the field of music therapy can never establish theories and procedures separated from those within the field of psychology and philosophy" (p. 70). He also suggests that "it is therefore necessary for music therapists to be closely oriented towards these disciplines in order to maintain this relationship as well as to maintain their integrity" (p. 70). This book was written at a time when music therapists were concerned with fitting into the pre-existing mold. Development of theoretical thought is an ongoing discourse in the field of music therapy (Langenberg, 1996). This kind of development can be seen in attitude changes in Ruud's later work. In his document of 1997 titled 'Music and the Quality of Life,' he advocates that music therapy can be identified independently, and has a unique identity which can get lost in the realm of science. This is also an idea that is discussed in Kenny's work, (1996a) and in the work of Ken Aigen (1995, 1996).

Although music therapists are indeed engaged in discourse to identify theory that is unique to our field, other theoretical foundations are by no means excluded from the thought process. For example, Kimmo Lehtonen bases his theoretical thinking on Lewin's field theory to 'examine the meaningfulness of music and how problem solving in music can help to problem solve in real life' (Lehtonen, 2000, p.20). In another article, he bases his work on developmental theories of Piaget and Freud. His main theory here is that music and psychic occurrences are isomorphous. Music is a psychic process. It is an external, perceptible manifestation of that inner process of externalizing the internal.

Kenny (1989) is another theorist who delves into field theory in order to define her thought.

Dorit Amir refers to theory as something that is based on comprehensive description and that becomes grounded by systematically and intensively analyzing the data. She writes that once this is done, the theory is written 'where identification of themes, topics and patterns that characterize the phenomenon under study is provided in a clear and comprehensive format' (Amir, 1996, p. 114). Here theory is related to research as opposed to a work of fiction or as something that cannot be substantiated.

The definitions of music therapy theory are as different as the theorists themselves.

Of the theoretical thinkers in music therapy that I have reviewed, Carolyn Kenny inspires me the most, probably because of the passion with which she approaches this topic. "Theories hold the underlying assumptions of our work and are surely one of the most dominant conditions in the field of our experience" (Kenny, 1996a, p.12).

Kenny writes that theory serves as a foundation, is abstract and describes the constant elements of our experience (Kenny, 1989). Theory presents the big picture. Viewing a situation theoretically is akin to the view that an eagle has when she flies over the countryside, getting a whole picture of the environment (personal conversation, Kenny, 2001). Theory implies a kind of architecture of

thought. "It is a representation of the uniqueness in you" (Kenny, 1989, p. 43).

Kenny points out that through the use of critical analysis and comparison, the

researcher questions her worldview, her assumptions, and how she sees the

world and thus her work through it. It is a dialogue between herself and all of the

'others'. It is also an internal dialogue. "Any theory is a self study of the theorist,

as well as the theorist's spheres of influence, culture being one, clients

themselves being another...It is a story, seen through the eyes of the beholder. It

is fiction" (Kenny, 1996b, p.63).

Field Theory

The field approach is a category of systems thinking (McWhinney,1984 in

Kenny, 1989) "Since the field theorists consider the field infinite in many aspects,

only aspects of it can be described and the influence articulated at any point in

time and space" (Kenny, 1989, p. 65). Field theory takes a look at the project

from a different perspective--that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts

(Kenny, 1985). It does not deal with the individual, but instead, looks for patterns

and forces in systems (Hutchison, 1991).   "field theory emphasizes the

importance of the fact that any event is a resultant of a multitude of factors"

(Lewin, 1951, p. 44). In field theory, behaviour is related to the combined forces

acting on the person a given time. It is therefore important to know what these

forces are. (p.44) Influential forces in the life of each individual selected for study

in this thesis, are important factors. Since vocal discovery has no specific

boundaries, field theory is an appropriate basis for thought in this

phenomenological work. In the work of other music therapists, Lewin's concept

of life space emerges (Kenny, 1989; Lehtonen, 2000; Woodward, 1998). In

relation to analysis of the work, field theory provides a firm foundation. "Field

theory is ... a method of analysing causal relations and of building scientific

construct" (Lewin, 1951, p. 45).

Theoretical Thought in Gestalt

This study is also addressed within the context of a Gestalt framework.

Although Perls himself never intended his work to be encapsulated by theoretical

representation, there is much theoretical thought in the area of Gestalt therapy

(Fagen and Shepherd, 1972; Perls, Goodman, Hefferline, 1951; Polster, 1973;

Zinker, 1978). Music therapists encounter elements of gestalt in their work

(Moffit, personal communication 2001; Prefontaine, 1999), and much of it applies

to the voice. Music is by nature a passing, momentary phenomenon here in this

moment and gone the next. The memory of it might remain, but the actuality of

the music passes. The voice leaving the body is a here and now experience that

is gone as fast as it appears. It is a fleeting experience, which demands

attention. When we deny ourselves contact with our voice, we are being nothing

short of resistant, whether the resistance comes from within, or from society. Emotional issues, issues of spirit, and issues of the body can be uncovered and addressed by using the voice.

Contact with the self, others and the environment (Gestalt Institute of Toronto, 2000; Perls, Goodman, Hefferline, 1951) is a fundamental element of Gestalt therapy, as is the concept of holism. Holism refers to interaction of individuals, things, events, or places within the field of the past and future, society, and the relationship of the inner and outer parts of the person and parts of the personality (Gestalt Therapy Institute of Toronto, 2000). When a singer is singing, this definition of holism is very relevant, as all of these elements come into play while singing.   Actuality is another Gestalt therapy concept, and one that is reflected in Maslow's writings as well (Maslow, 1968). This is about experiencing that which is happening in the present moment. This includes the present experience of memories, or imaginations about the future (Perls, Goodman, Hefferline 1951; Polster, 1973). The voice expresses the here-and-now absolutely naturally. We sing in the moment and in the same moment the sound is gone. Field theory and Gestalt thought complement each other very well.

> According to field theory, behaviour depends neither on the past nor on the future, but on the present   field. (This present field has a certain time-depth. It includes the "psychological past, " "psychological present" and "psychological future" which constitute one of the dimensions of the life space existing at a given time). (Lewin, 1945, p. 27)

As Maslow writes, "self actualizing creativeness is emitted like radioactivity, and hits all of life...it is emitted like sunshine" (Maslow, 1968, p.137).

Homeostasis refers to a sense of balance that occurs when our needs are met. An imbalance occurs when there are needs which have yet to be met (Perls, Goodman, Hefferline, 1951; Zinker, 1978). Organismic self-regulation means that if balance can't be attained by dealing with the problem head on, the problem will leave a gap in functioning. If the gap is unfilled by action, then the body will create something else to fill it. It could be illness, which develops from the stress of negative experiences, or it could be depression (Perls, Goodman, Hefferline, 1951; Sharaf,1983; Zinker, 1978). The voice is a great harbour of tension and symptoms of stress.

Frustration is the arousal that occurs when another person or situation challenges a situation or state of mind (Gestalt Therapy Institute of Toronto, 2000; Fadiman and Frager, 1976). An example of this could be a simple statement that is made on the part of the therapist such as, 'I notice that you are singing very quietly today.' A statement such as this one could bring forth different reactions. For example, quiet singing could be a reflection of shyness or a reflection of a part of the person that has been silenced. In 'frustrating' the client by pointing out the quietness of the singing, the therapist is encouraging possibilities for self-awareness.

The paradoxical theory of change means that to change, we should not change, but instead become more tuned in to who we really are, and become more accepting of that (Fagen and Shepherd, 1972). The singer is encouraged to be where and what he or she is with the voice and to discover the authentic voice.

Overall, the Gestalt therapist is striving to help the client arrive at a "good gestalt." This is a "unified figure against an empty ground" (Perls, Goodman, Hefferline 1951 p.56). When one is engaged in spontaneous attention, the figure becomes clear, bright and sharp against an empty background, as if nothing else exists at that moment. For example, when at a gathering with many people making noise, a member of

the group can pay attention to another person speak in spite of the cacophony. This capability is called a good gestalt and occurs at any moment with any object or situation. Therapeutically this is valuable when the therapist enables the client to understand the figural or important elements of a situation.

Summary

This chapter has explored the literature that focuses on singing, the use of the voice in therapy, the intangible nature of singing and sounding, and the theoretical foundations which have been instrumental in providing a framework for this work. In the following chapter, methodology is discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY

The Research Approach

This phenomenological study uses an interpretive descriptive process to enable me to understand more about how singers' perceptions of their voices can act as a channel for their emotional and spiritual issues. It also contributed answers to my initial questions of how the perception of the voice helps or prevents the singer from being in the world, and to explore what kinds of fears are protected when a singer won't sing. This study has focused on the perspective of those who fit into the category of the fifth 'type' of singer (see Chapter 3): those who will not sing within earshot of anyone else and possibly not when alone.

Because I was entering into a new realm of discovery and had not facilitated this particular group of people before, the research took an action-based approach. My role was that of the practitioner-researcher. The methods unfolded as the research took place. I went into the project with a set of ideas and plans. It did not surprise me that they changed and developed as the project developed and as I grew to know this particular group of people. As stated by Jarvis (1999), there are three ways by which humans seek the truth: experience, reasoning, and research. "The practitioner-researcher has two main purposes:

to highlight and examine the role of the practitioner-researcher and to try to understand more clearly the relationship between practice, practical knowledge, and theory" (Jarvis, 1999, p.xiii). Through learning from practical experience, practitioners take the content of what they are taught, and what they acquire in practice, and they build their own theory. This theory is pragmatic, necessarily dynamic, and relative to the practice situation.

Practical knowledge is the practitioner's own knowledge that has been legitimized or validated in practice. It is personal and qualitative. It is a combination of process knowledge and content knowledge in its practicality. It is not merely the application of a pure academic discipline to practical situations. It is integrated knowledge. Two terms that reflect this sensibility are 'reflective practice' and 'reflective research' (Jarvis, 1999).

Practice is always changing, and a practitioner-researcher responds to changing situations. The reason for this is that practice is transitory rather than empirical and unchanging. Knowledge about practice cannot be measured, as it is a personal and subjective phenomenon. Also, precise events can never be repeated, so each practice situation is unique. To understand practice fully, it is necessary to undertake qualitative research, as any research undertaken about practice can only be a snapshot of the events that occur when the research takes place. (Jarvis, 1999) In reflective practice, this fluid position leads to both action and reflection. These two in turn are in constant interplay with each other.

Reflective practice is a necessary part of reflective research. There are three stages to reflective research. Jarvis identifies these three stages as

methods (Jarvis, 1999). In the case of this project, his methods have been

reinterpreted as stages of one research project. The first is the reflective

planning stage. In this stage, plans for the project or session are set in advance.

They can only be planned insofar as the qualities of the group can be predicted.

It could be an entirely different experience in actual practice, but the planning

process prepares and formulates a fundamental plan. The second stage is

reflection in action (Jarvis, 1999; Schon, 1983). This is about the researcher

thinking on her feet and learning by doing. This type of research requires

spontaneity and quick thinking when the situation requires a change on the spot.

The researcher cannot be tied into his or her ideas and plans. The third stage of

reflective research is retrospective reflection. This is the evaluation of practice

after the fact.

In a similar vein, Anderson writes that practitioner researchers: a)

consider the situation based on the information available to them as participants

in this particular situation and select some action (a practice): b) try out the

practice and observe its results: and, c) revise the practice if necessary, correct

for flaws and try it again (Anderson et al., 1994, p. 46).

> When a practitioner sees a new situation as some element of his
> repertoire, he gets a new way of seeing it and a new possibility for action
> in it, but the adequacy and utility of his new view must still be
> discovered in action. Reflection in action necessarily involves experiment.
> (Schon, 1983, p.141)

These ideas were also considered by Kurt Lewin (1946) when he looked

particularly at action research, in a similar fashion. He writes that once the

overall plan and first step of action has begun, reconnaissance, or determination

of the success of the first step of action, takes place. He writes that there are four functions of reconnaissance.   First, it evaluates the action to show the degree of success of the action. Second, it allows the planner to learn and gather new insight regarding the strength or weakness or validity of the research. Third, it serves as a basis for planning the next step, and finally it helps the researcher to modify the overall plan. He writes that this circle of planning, action and reconnaissance is a spiral of steps which accompanies the researcher in each step of research. Lewin did not call this reflective research, but it appears to be similar in philosophy.

With this approach, there is a recognized interrelationship between research and learning. Reflective learning and reflective research become interchangeable concepts. This type of research supports the idea that the learning that occurs in practice does require exploration so that theories can be developed and shared. "The emergence of practitioner-researchers is a symbol of the development of the learning society" (Jarvis, 1999, p. 159).

The other concept that I found relevant to this study is the fact that it entailed a great deal of spontaneity. So much planning and pre-thought was often abandoned for a more suitable plan of action because of how the group unfolded. Often the changes came from an intuitive place, and even though I had not experienced this group before, the ideas would be very appropriate and effective.   "It is also true that in much of the spontaneous behaviour of skillful practice, we reveal a kind of knowing which does not stem from a prior intellectual operation" (Schon, 1983, p. 51). This statement   completely

resonates with my general experience of how a one-to-one, or group session unfolds. There is a plan which invariably becomes null and void due to conditions in the session, as soon as the session is under way. Schon uses the improvisation of a jazz musician as an example of reflection in action. "As the musicians feel the direction of the music that is developing out of their interwoven contributions, they make new sense of it and adjust their performance to the new sense they have made" (p. 55).

The practitioner-researcher approach is very consistent with heuristic research as outlined by Clarke Moustakas. It involves the self of the researcher throughout the process. The heuristic nature of this work requires that it will involve "self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). There are six phases to heuristic research, and this project has touched on each of these.

The first phase is *initial engagement.* The idea for this project has been emerging for many years as clients have been observed in practice, and conversations with individuals about the voice have taken place. "Ultimately these forces come together and form a question" (Moustakas, 1990, p.27). This is exactly what has happened in this case. The purpose of research has emerged out of the convergence of experiences and observations.

The second phase, which is *immersion*, also applies to this work. I have been living, breathing and sleeping the research questions and considerations for months. "People, places, meetings, readings, nature--all offer possibilities for

understanding the phenomenon"(p.28) This is absolutely the case. It is a life enriching experience to see the world through a focused set of glasses for a contained amount of time.

The third phase that Moustakas defines is *incubation*. This has been more of an integrated process in the case of this project, as opposed to a phase. Incubation has taken place during immersion. While not working on this project, and not thinking about it consciously, it has been a cog in the wheel that has been constantly turning. *Clarification* is the fourth phase as outlined by Moustakas. This has taken place between each session of writing and learning.

The fifth phase of *illumination*, "the door to a new awareness" (p.30) has emerged during the experience of leading the workshop and examination of the interviews and journals.

The final phase is *explication*. Here, the "examination of what has awakened" (p.31) takes place. This is a creative synthesis of the information gathered which have contributed to the formation of theoretical ideas.

The Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the singer's perception of his or her own voice. How does the voice act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues for the participants of this group? How does the perception of the voice help or prevent the singer from being in the world? What kinds of fears prevent

some people from singing? Does the perception of the voice change once the

singer has had the opportunity to sing in a non-judgemental, safe environment?

The above questions were addressed during the presentation of a workshop

titled 'The Field of Vocal Discovery'.

The Field of Vocal Discovery

The Field of Vocal Discovery is a workshop experience which was

designed to offer each research participant an opportunity to meet his or her

authentic voice and to find acceptance and enjoyment in it for what it is. This

project looked at seven elements of the field of vocal discovery, although the

scope of field is limitless. Narrowing it down to a finite number of elements in the

field provided the structure that was needed to create possibilities for participant

and researcher spontaneity (Kenny, personal conversation, 2001). The

participants who agreed to take part took a risk by agreeing to be involved, as it

is a scary thing for these people to be heard singing. It was not about learning to

sing pitches at a certain frequency, or to create a tone that someone else has

deemed worthy. It was about the discovery of the self through discovery of the

voice. During the course of the workshop, the participants' perceptions of their

singing voices were explored, and judgements brought to light. The clinical goal

of the workshop was to open up a new realm of the voice to participants to the

extent that they will have discovered a confidence in their singing. With this

confidence, I was hoping that the participants would find or acknowledge their courage to sing in a social setting such as around the campfire. The goal of the research element of the group was to discover how people who are afraid to be heard singing perceive their voices.

The term 'field' (Lewin, 1945) comes from systems theory, and it is an appropriate approach for the open system that is singing. It involves "the characterizations of events and objects by their interdependence rather than by their similarity or dissimilarity of appearance" (Lewin, 1945, p. 145). In the case of this project, the field is the surrounding experience and all that is involved in the experience, including the events that led up to the singers' perception of their voices, the events that maintained their perceptions, and the experience during the actual workshop. It also includes any changes in perception that occur after the clinical experiences are presented in this field. The field of vocal discovery includes all of these events, but in this study it is only possible to report on the elements in the field from the perspective of a particular envelope of time, which was the duration of the workshop. There is no way of knowing what the implications of the experiences will be over the long term, or how the field will alter participants' perception of their voices over time. The perception that people have of their own voices may change, and the perception that people have of the voices of others may change.

Each participant was interviewed prior to the project to ensure that he or she fit the description of being a singer who wishes to sing more freely, but does not want to be heard by others. The field included various experiences to help

people discover new perspectives of their voices. Seven elements of the field of vocal discovery were chosen for this project: sensation of the breath, sensation of the voice within the body, sensation of the voice in a resonant space, discovery of possibilities of the voice in improvisation, and sensation of the voice in an outdoor environment. The sixth and seventh were spiritual elements of the field, and emotional elements of the field of vocal discovery. It was decided that these would be observed from the perspective of all of the other experiences, as it is not reasonable to separate them. The experiences followed a sequence that aimed for a safe environment. Over the sessions we started with breathing, then toning, then droning louder together, and moved into chanting, singing familiar songs, and trying improvisation in a one-to-one session. On four occasions, I met with the participants within the group setting. The fifth experience was presented one-to-one. At each of these meetings, a clinical experience was presented and taught. All participants were given a journal in which they were asked to write freely about their experiences during the workshop process. Also, I met with participants individually so that they could discuss their experiences privately.

The Participants

Participants were chosen because they were the first six with whom I came in contact during the formation of this group, who expressed a desire to sing in public but faced a fear of being heard by others. When I learned that they fit this category of singer, I invited them and they accepted the invitation. As

researcher-practitioner, this was the most realistic way to form a group.[6] It was by pure chance that the group was equally representative of men and women from a wide range of backgrounds. The group was comprised of an artist and stay at home mother (Ellen), a man who is a stone mason (Dave), a woman who is a speech therapist (Jane), a man who is a high school teacher (Trett), a man who is a retailer (Adam), and a woman who is a counselling psychologist (Lynn). These are pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of participants. The age range of the group was fairly small with the youngest being 43, and the oldest being 60. This proved to be fortuitous, because their experience was an expression of a certain cultural viewpoint which would differ for people of varying generations.

The Clinical Experiences

When first devising these clinical experiences, separate sessions were created for discovery of the voice in emotion and discovery of the voice in spirit. However, while elaborating upon these themes, I realized that these two primary elements are integral to all of the other discoveries and could be present in any of them. Discovery in those two areas which are fundamental to this project were blended into the whole.

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[6] In a clinical setting, groups which have a certain focus are offered to clientele, and people who feel that they can benefit from the focus, can take advantage of the group. The group for this research project was formed in much the same way.

1) Discovery of the sensations of breathing in the body

The first session started with breathing and discovery of sensations of the breath in the body. It was important in this first session that there be a strong focus in order to allay fear. The room was cast in a low light to provide a safe environment. The participants were offered the option of lying down or sitting comfortably in their chairs. Pillows were provided which could provide back support, or privacy for the face. A guided imagery was presented which encouraged the participants to focus on the sound, feelings, and sensations of the breath. Included in this was a silent exploration of the tangible elements of the voice. Participants were asked to breathe into parts of the body. Feet, legs, pelvis, abdominal muscles, diaphragm, lungs, ribs, solar plexus, vocal cords, pharynx, jaw, tongue, teeth, hard palate, soft palette, and lips were explored from the perspective of a sounding being. The shapes of the vowels, ay, ee, ah, oh, and oo were explored. The silent tapping together of the vocal cords was attempted, and the wide opening of the mouth to emit a haaaa sound was tried. There was no actual singing in the first session, although the participants were led in a sigh sound, which was a simulation of singing. They were asked to do this several times, and to notice how they were making the same sound as each other. This was an initial indication that they in fact can hear pitches, (contrary to what I was told by them) because although this isn't traditional singing, it is a pitched sound. Diaphragmatic breathing, upper chest breathing, and movement

of the ribs in breathing were explored. The participants were asked to reflect

upon how different ways of breathing feels. Feelings of inhaling and exhaling

were explored. Their assignment was to be aware of their breath, to try the

above exercise on their own, and to journal about it. At the end of this first

meditation, participants were asked to reflect upon to the role that singing played

in their lives when they first heard it. They were asked: Where were you? How

old were you? Who was singing? How did it affect you? What was the role it

played when you first heard it? What is the role that singing plays in your life

now, and how does this relate to your early experience?

2) Discovery of sensations of the voice within the body

The second vocal discovery began as that of the voice within the body.

During this session, another guided meditation was presented which encouraged

participants to think of the body in terms of its function as an instrument. To aim

for a low stress experience, vibrations of the body were focused on, rather than

sound. Sound making was introduced by using toning in a very quiet personal

way. Group members were asked to place their hands on their jaws and begin

with an ee vowel in a comfortable range. They were asked to focus on vibrations

and sensations and to hold the pitch for a while until some sort of awareness

entered--a few minutes perhaps. Different vowels were introduced at

spontaneous intervals. They were encouraged to explore the different feeling that

different vowels create. After the exercise was introduced in the jaw area, the

nasal area, the top of the head, the neck, chest, ribcage, abdomen, and pelvis were explored.   I also asked them to find an internal organ to nurture through sound vibration by placing their hand on the area of choice and focusing on it while sounding. Once all of the areas had been explored and 'toned' into, the participants were asked to find an area which gave them the most pleasure, to place their hand on that spot, and to sound once again on the vowel of their choice. They were also asked to notice where they didn't like to sing. Overall, the participants were asked to: "Notice what you notice. Is it pleasant? Is it uncomfortable?" They were asked where else in the body the sound was felt and to notice feelings, memories, associations and sensations.

During this meditation, participants were asked to recall the first time that they sang and to think about the following questions. What was the reaction to their singing? Who was the person that reacted? How does it feel to sing now? What are the emotional issues that arise when you think of singing? What is your own perception of your voice quality (not what other people think)? They were also asked to note how they felt emotionally and spiritually, before, during and after the experience. The assignment was for the participants to try this when alone, and to journal about the experience.

After the meditation, there was plenty of lively conversation about first experiences with singing.   In response to this discussion, we sang some songs that were sung early in the lives of participants (although singing songs in this session wasn't initially intended). This unplanned turn of events is true to the role of the practitioner- researcher. It was definitely called for and appropriate. The

participants sang as a group, and were introduced to the idea that they in fact

can sing. It also helped to instill group cohesiveness. This proved to be a good

segue to the next session.

3) Discovery of the sensation of the voice in a resonant space

Participants were introduced to the feeling of singing indoors, in a

resonant space. The stairwell of the local library was chosen. Usually a

functional space, it became transformed to a place of discovery in a couple of

short hours. First a simple chant was taught which was based on sounds as

opposed to words. The group sang it many times once they were taught the

chant. It took about three tries before the group knew it well enough to sing

without fear. The space had beautiful resonance, and there was a long ring off

the sound at the end of each phrase. Once they had learned the chant, the

participants were invited to sing with eyes closed, to take the experience inward.

Then they lengthened the time between phrases so that they could hear the

resonance in the room. They were then asked to be aware of the vowels and the

shapes that the mouth takes when the different vowels are formed. The next

element that was added was drone. At first I sang the drone alone underneath

the chant.   The melody of the chant became somewhat muddled during this

segment as the group members attempted to become accustomed to the added

part. A participant joined me in creating the drone, which also produced a

tentative result. During the next segment, the participants were asked to be

aware of the sounds of the overtones in the room. The drone was injected once again, and the group held the melody much more solidly by this point.

The next experience was a call and response. I sang a phrase, and the group followed. Once they caught on, the sound was quite resonant. I learned that when introducing a new activity, spontaneous instructions integrated within the experience are much more effective than instructions that are given before the experience begins. It became apparent suddenly that using solfege[7] would be an effective tool for helping the participants to differentiate the pitches. A series of two and three note phrases on solfege were sung which worked much better in the call and response. Once do - sol[8] was reached it was sung many times to solidify it, and then the open fifth was sung together in harmony. Finally, the group was taught a small song using words, called, 'Circle Chant.' The group sang it many times, during which the melody became very solid. Through this they were able to experience the meditative feeling of chanting a repetitive phrase. Much silence was allowed after the chanting experience. Participants wanted to be quiet at this point. The assignment was to notice the voice in indoor spaces, and to journal about this.

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[7] Solfege is a system of sight singing that was created in the 11th century by Guido of Arezzo (Grout, 1973).   To this day it is an effective tool for learning songs.

8 Do - Sol creates an open fifth which is characteristic of early polyphony. It produces a very pure sound which is often felt to create a very spiritual feeling when sung.

4) Discovery of the possibilities of improvisation in the voice

This was a one-on-one experience for people in which they were introduced to the kind of improvisation that is done in the studio. This session varied for each person. In order to guide the experience, a combination of guided imagery, call and response, drumming, and piano improvisation were used. Free associative singing was explored using the vocal holding techniques as defined by Diane Austin (1993, 1996). In this technique, the participant improvises with guidance and support over a two chord pattern which is played on the piano. Emotional and spiritual exploration was encouraged in this session. It was kept as safe as possible. The participants were asked to write about this experience in their journals.

5) Discovery of sensations of the voice in an outside environment

In this experience, people were introduced to singing outdoors, in nature. A spot was chosen on a small private lake, with forest all around the lake. There were loons on the lake, and the beauty was inspirational. 'Fill in' songs, and songs that work well with call and response were planned, but once again in the true nature of research in the style of the practitioner-researcher, the actual session changed due to the group energy, and what seemed appropriate based on leader intuition, issues that the group raised, and what the group was willing to explore. We began by reviewing the chants that had been used in Session 3.

It was appropriate to use the same songs and to experience them in a new environment. The first simple 'sound' chant was used first, as a warm up of focus and to reinstate comfort in the group. Participants were able to compare their experience to the indoor experience. We then tried the other familiar chant from Session 3, 'The Circle Chant' (Hirschorn, 1982).[9]

Circle Round for Freedom, Circle Round for Peace,
For all of us in prison, Circle for release,
Circle for the planet, circle for each soul
For the children of our children, keep the circle whole.

This chant was expanded upon. First, it was just sung in the usual quiet way of the group. Then, the group was invited to sing louder. There was lively discussion following this experience which had taken a great deal of bravery from the group members. We then explored saying the chant, but on pitch, and without the quality of singing. This raised the question of what singing is compared to speech. Then, as a result of something that a group member had experienced, the group was asked to try singing loudly, and to focus on the beauty around instead of the voice itself. At this point, a new chant (which is a part of local oral tradition) was taught. This one is titled 'Earth Chant'.

Mother I can feel you under my feet,
Mother I can hear your heart beat
Mother I can see you when the eagle flies
Mother won't you take me higher

The group was learning songs progressively more easily. The silence after stopping was paid attention to.

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[9] This song can also be found on p. 194 in Rise Up Singing, which is a collection of songs edited by Pete Seeger

Another song was taught. This one was a chorus which could be repeated many times throughout the song. The group learned even more quickly than previously. The whole song was sung with the group injecting the chorus. By the end participants were beginning to join in on the verses as well. There was a great deal of discussion after this experience, before a final song was sung together. This was a familiar song, 'Old Man River' from Showboat, which had emerged during the second session. This proved to be a very apt final song for the group to sing together. The assignment was to journal about the experience.

Analysis

In order to find answers to the research questions, data from journals, group sessions, and interviews were analysed for emergent themes. Conclusions were drawn from work with the individuals in this group, from readings, and from previous study in music therapy theory, systems theory, Gestalt therapy, music psychotherapy. and vocal improvisation as outlined in the literature review. The analysis is presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE:

VOCAL DISCOVERIES

> So for the purpose of this time together I would ask of you that you
> take that ball of judgement and put it in your hand, and toss it far out of
> sight so that you know in your self, that nothing you do is wrong when it
> comes to singing--especially improvising, because improvising by nature
> doesn't have to go anywhere. It's what it is. By nature there is no wrong.
> There is no right for that matter. It just is. (a remark by the researcher to
> mark the beginning of a session)

Response to the Clinical Experiences

The participants responded very positively to the clinical experiences.

They progressed along a continuum throughout the process, which began with

heightened vocal shyness, and ended with a willingness to explore singing

options in their lives.   As this continuum progressed, and participants were

describing their experiences, certain themes emerged.

Responses to the first two sessions were quite tangible. By the third

session, as participants began to feel safer and more comfortable with each

other, the experience deepened. The various vocal discoveries in the workshop

opened up the door to a large spectrum of discoveries about the experience of

singing, both tangible and intangible. Through listening to group discussion and

interviews, I came to realize that the workshop   'A Field of Vocal Discovery' was

just a launching pad for a much larger field of vocal discovery. That which happened in the sessions themselves had taken a back seat to other discoveries that were made by participants and myself as a result. It was a learning ground for new elements in the field.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, responses to the workshop experiences will be documented. Then, responses to the interview questions will be recorded. Finally, the emergent themes will be outlined.[10] In this chapter, words of the workshop participants will be primary text. This first hand approach is the best way to describe their experiences in the sessions. Dotted lines are used to separate comments. Unseparated comments indicate a dialogue.

Discovery of Sensations of Breathing in the Body

While most of the responses to this first experience were based in tangible language, there are messages in each which could lead to some deeper learning for the participants if there had been time to explore these further in the group.[11]

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[10] Although emergent themes will be outlined later, on p. 77, it was felt that an indication of where the themes had originated would be useful. The numbers in italics throughout this section refer to those emergent themes.

11 Participants quotes originate from the workshop unless indicated with an asterisk (*) in which case, they originate from the journal.

Jane: I found the imagery of the breath passing through hollow tubes (legs) helpful; it was easier to 'imagine' breathing in the lower body than to 'feel' it.

Adam: I found it easy to breathe but was surprised how my throat felt tight.

Lynn: I couldn't get past my pelvis at all.

Dave: At first nothing - and then I realized all breath goes to the lungs - from the lungs to the blood cells. By mentally following these cells - there was a perceived tingling.

Ellen: I think I felt like Lynn, having difficulty getting beyond the waist except when you were describing it as a column it made it much easier. Then it felt very natural to extend to my toes. But I had a real hard time finding my diaphragm. I felt that odd. Like I was missing a chamber.

Blocks from the waist down for Lynn and Ellen and in the throat for Adam are

messages that could have been investigated if these people were interested in

doing deeper psychological work.

Discovery of Sensations of the Voice Within the Body

Comments in this session confirm those possible areas of blockage for

two of the people. For Adam, the experiences point to a possibility for bodily

clues to deeper emotional work from the neck up. For Lynn, the clues point to a

possibility of further work being useful below the mid section.

Jane, Dave, and Trett stayed in the tangible body for this, while Ellen began venturing into exploring a more spiritual realm.

> **Ellen:** I especially enjoyed the 'oh's' from the top of our heads. The whole room   suddenly became a Tibetan Monastery and there was a beautiful stillness in the   sound.* *(3b)*
> ------------------------

> **Adam:** I didn't really feel the vibration in parts of my body - In my sinuses and head a bit.
> -------------------------

> **Jane:** Felt the vibrations from sounds particularly at the top of my head, in my jaw and over my rib cage - all bony areas, which help to conduct sound/sensations?
> -------------------------

> **Lynn:** I couldn't feel vibrations below solar plexus except in my hands.
> -------------------------

> **Dave:** I did notice that different vowels give different vibrations. When I play harmonica I can feel different vibrations in my head.
> -------------------------

Discovery of Sensations of the Voice in a Resonant Space

During this session, camaraderie began to unfold among the participants. Continuous singing through chant was the main experience. There was very lively discussion each time the singing stopped.   Participants expressed enjoyment in the singing and made many associations to places they had been in or heard about, such as cathedrals and ancient structures. This was due to the focus of being in a particularly resonant space.   Some beautiful singing took place there in the stairwell. It was surprising to find that people can actually sing. After all that they had implied about their voices, a cacophony was expected!

Results of this session indicate to me that in the case of these six participants, it is indeed their perception of their voices as opposed to the actual quality of their voices which prevents them from singing.

> **Lynn:** I'm not sure that I can say that I'm at the point where I can appreciate my voice. I have felt easier and easier and easier in this group to be doing the sounding and toning that we've been doing. Being in the library was great - I really really enjoyed that. Some of the tones ... It was spectacular, absolutely spectacular.
> **Nicola:** But nobody there can sing! (with a laugh)
> **Lynn:** (laughs.) You call it singing. I guess it is singing eh? I really enjoyed that. I had a great warm feeling - peaceful. I guess I gained confidence in that if I'm in a group of people I *can* sing. It's the confidence that someone else can lead and I   can hear myself following or not following and adjust. *(2a)*
> ----------------------------------
>
> **Adam:**   Well, it was fun to sing in the stairwell. I found it easier than I expected once we got going ...and it made me feel like trying the chanting group.[12] *(2a)*
> ----------------------------------
>
> **Ellen:** Perth Public Library becomes a place of spiritual awareness - another experience of the monastic.... The resonance that happened in the stairwell was   quite lovely and very moving. It seemed easier to sing in - as if a choir was   backing you up. *(3a)*
> ----------------------------------
>
> **Jane:** It felt good to be focused on our chanting so completely that you were   aware of nothing else but the sound and tone of the notes we made together. *(3a)*
> ----------------------------------
>
> **Trett:** Oh, I like chanting. I enjoyed that. There was nice reverb in that space. It sounded to me like we were doing all right.

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[12] In Perth on Saturday mornings, I lead a chant and casual singing group. I found myself using the growing willingness of people to try singing in this non-judgemental group as an indication of growth of self-confidence.

Discovery of Possibilities of Improvisation in the Voice

This drew differing responses from the participants. For some it was quite moving. For others it remained very tangible. There were also feelings of surprise and excitement expressed.

> **Ellen:** My solo session was a little more intimidating than I thought it might be. I guess I am more 'held within' than I thought. *(3c)*
> ------------------------
>
> **Jane:** My feelings when doing this exercise were that because my range seems so limited there was nowhere for my notes to go! *(1b)*
> ------------------------
>
> **Lynn:** That felt really nice.
> **Nicola**: Did it bring up any feelings in the body?
> **Lynn:** I kind of got lost in it. I just didn't think of anything. I was just going with the rhythm. One time I think I was little off.
> ------------------------
>
> **Dave:** It really does feel strange. It's not something that I'm accustomed to. There's that feeling of unfamiliarity that you're - there's an unsureness, but then by the nature of the words, you just let it go! There's something - I don't know if I'd call it excitement - I don't know if I can put it into words. There's a loosening up. I know I'm not expected to have a certain level of anything, so that gives it a sort of - if I can get over that, then you don't mind it. So there's a feeling of comfort in that level, and a little bit of excitement because now I'm doing it... There's still that uncertainty. *(3c)*
> --------------------------------

Adam had an experience which surprised him. During our improvisation, we used a call and response structure in which I began simply on ah and sang up a minor third. He followed very well and began overlapping right away, holding his final note while I created the next call. I followed him in this idea, and it created a beautiful result of drone under melody. Each time the melody varied,

he successfully followed. The minor third was the foundation, and the other

melodic moments changed around it. After about one minute of doing this, he

became choked up.

> **Adam:** I find it very hard to do that.
> **Nicola:**   What do you feel? Where do you feel it?
> **Adam:** In the chest. (Began to tear up)
> **Nicola:** Close your eyes for a moment and go to that place. (Long silence)
> **Adam:** I never thought I'd get caught up on 'ahhh'..... I feel restricted
> **Nicola:** It carries a message. The music can help to guide you.
> (he seems quite dumbfounded and surprised at his feelings)
> **Adam:** It feels very intimidating. I feel like I'm out of my element. *(3c)*

I couldn't help but notice that the chest was the source of his emotion, and this

relates back to sessions 1 and 2 during which he found blockages in the neck

area, and couldn't feel resonance in his chest. Perhaps there was resistance to

feeling his chest feelings, which he overcame in spontaneous improvisation.

When we went there without thinking, it produced an emotional feeling.

Discovery of Sensations of the Voice in the Outside Environment

Singing outside proved to be quite a different experience. Participants

had varying responses to it.

> **Jane:**   I found it easier to sing outside because my attention was drawn more to my surrounding than my voice. I also found it easier to sing louder outside. *
> ----------------------------------

And in contrast to Jane's perception...

Ellen: Singing in the open outdoors, especially on a lake, is definitely
more exposing. It seemed as if the sound left you forever, and that you only had
one   chance to hit the right note or sing the right word - no resonance or recall
to back   you up. *

There was an interesting and humorous sense of audience or of being

heard by others when singing outside, even though all that was there were the

loons.

Ellen: The loon still there? Yeh the loon's still there.
Trett: He's got his wings in his ears.
Lynn: The sound dies.
Dave: No, there's not that resonant feeling - it just goes away from here
Ellen: Which means you're more conscientious of your voice, because
you don't have that echo coming back at you.
Adam: I thought it sounded good.
Trett: But you don't get that feedback like you do inside.
Adam: No, it's missing that.
Lynn: I wonder where it is now.
Nicola: It doesn't stop.
Dave: It never stops. As long as there's someone with the right capability
picking up the frequency that it dissipates to.
Adam: Aliens will be listening to us thousands and thousands of years
from now.
Lynn: Maybe!
Ellen: Maybe they heard it yesterday - how does that time warp work?

When singing outside, and asked to try singing louder, a discussion about

making mistakes took place. There is a large sense of self-criticism and

perfectionism in the expectations of their singing. This was not a surprising

discovery, when I considered how self-conscious about mistakes I had been

when singing in the past, even in a casual setting. That was before I had shed

those fears and gave into enjoying my voice. The participants were very

unforgiving and analytical of themselves.

> **Dave:** It allows less room for forgiveness though, because if you sing louder you know if you make that mistake they can all hear it more. If you sing quiet - you know- mumble mumble- you can lose yourself.
> **Nicola:** If someone sings loud and make's a mistake, will anyone point and laugh? Tell me more about what it feels like to sing louder like that.
> **Lynn:** I really like it when someone else makes a mistake because then I know I'm not the only one.
> **Jane:** I don't hear your mistakes.
> **Lynn:** I do.
> **Dave:** I almost sang a wrong line.
> **Lynn:** Did you?
> **Jane:** I think we're all so self-conscious - we're all that way - so we're all trying so hard to sing on key - I'm not noticing...
> **Lynn:** You were paying attention to your own singing   I sang off sometimes.
> **Nicola:** A note or a word?[13]
> **Lynn:** A note.
> **Jane:** What I find hard is 'or' when it goes up a little and when you have to break the word 'circle'. *(1b)*
> ----------------------------------

Overall, the responses to the sessions reflected a mixed experience for

each of the participants. The differences are as interesting as the similarities and

can be quite useful in the learning process. Movement between tangible and

intangible perceptions of the experiences were especially noted. Comfort level

with each other, and the growing knowledge that no judgement would take place,

set the stage for the intangible to come in.

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[13] I was curious to know how specifically self-judgemental Lynn was being, or if she would laugh off my question. She didn't laugh it off at all.

Response to Interview Questions

During the interview process, five questions were asked which refer

directly back to the initial research questions. They were:

1) How do you perceive your own voice?

2) What kinds of fears prevent you from singing within earshot of other people?

3) How does your perception of your voice help you or prevent you from being in

the world?

4) How does the voice act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues?

5) How did your perception of your voice change from the beginning to the end of

the workshop?

Discovery of Vocal Self Perception: How do You Perceive Your Own Voice?

This was initially a one-step question, but once interviewing began, it

became apparent that a second part to the question was required.   Everyone's

first answer was based upon what others think. In order to investigate the

singer's perception of their *own* voice, the singer was asked again more

specifically. In every case the participant was 'taken aback' by the second part of

the question and had not thought about that before.

> **Dave:** Through other people's views. That's a hard question. Mostly a lot
> of times from what a lot of other people have said. They say 'you can't
> carry a tune' and they're right, for the most part I can't. Most people just
> jump in, but if I do it I can't get the key - I get five or six keys. I can't stick

on one. ...   Bullfrog. How do I see my own voice? It all bounces off what other people... I guess I never   thought it particularly anything. *(1a)*

And when asked how *he* feels about his own voice his answer was:

Dave: But I've never thought about my voice as being one that's particularly good. It's just that when you're there by yourself, you don't have to worry about whether it's good or bad - there's no one to judge it or care. What it does for me personally is a whole different - I love it - it makes me feel good. A short while ago back at the river. It was just before Penny died - I was thinking about stuff like that, and I just had this urge to do the only song I really know - Swing Low. I literally brought myself to tears. I was on the back 40 and belted it out and deep as I could and deeper, and the deeper I went the more feeling it evoked. Now when I do that, I like my voice - I like the resonance - I like the brrrrrr that it does in my throat. I can just do it as loud as I want. If I'm on the right note I don't   know, and I don't care. *(1c)(2e)(3c)*

Ellen: When I sing I'm quite aware of my incapabilities. I'd die if I heard my voice on the tape recorder. It would embarrass me. *(1a)*
Nicola: What is your perception of your voice when you let it out at home?
Ellen: I guess I think - Oh! That's not too bad after all, but mostly because we're in a comical mode anyhow, so anything goes. *(1c)*

Ellen: And I know - Jerry McGuire - my favorite scene in that movie is when he rolls down the window and belts out 'Free Falling'. Last week I heard it on the radio 3 times. So I was cutting loose with the words 'free falling'. It was the only words I knew in the whole song. That's all you need to do is... cut loose. Mind you, I didn't have an audience! *(2e)*

Trett: I perceive that I can't sing. That I'm off key, I don't have a wide range. Another one that is tricky is not being able to sing something the same way. If I sing something and someone hears it and says do it again, I'll think I'm doing it exactly the same way but it's not.*(1a)*
Nicola: How do you yourself perceive your *own* voice? Say you're in a field all by yourself, and there isn't a soul around - do you ever sing to yourself in the car   or - in a situation when you're all alone?
Trett: Oh yeh.
Nicola: And how do you perceive your voice at those times?
Trett: Oh, I think I sound really good! *(2e),(1c)*

Lynn: Probably acceptable and it's a 'proceed with caution' thing.

And when asked how s*he* feels about her own voice her answer was:

Lynn: See it's easier for me to go and put on something that speaks to what I feel and just feel it as it's playing.   Then I can let my voice make the sounds that I feel. As long as I'm alone. *(2e)*

Jane: I don't feel that I have - pretty neutral. My early experiences were pretty encouraging. I was sung to as a child and was always given positive feedback about my voice. But I wasn't encouraged beyond that, so I've always felt that I'd   like to sing, and I absolutely love certain kinds of music but I'm not a singer - I've never been able to find my range, and I think I've mentioned it's as if I feel caught between two points and I can't - I'll start off singing and then I'm either too high or too low and some songs I feel that I can sing quite easily and readily and get through and stay roughly on key, but so often I get frustrated because I can't hit those notes. So I don't perceive myself having any kind of singing voice   - no. *(1b)*

And when asked about her very own perception of her voice:

Jane: I like the feeling of singing. I do remember singing lullabies to the kids and my daughter was very sweet. She said, "But Mommy, you have a nice voice." [Jane dismissed this compliment as invalid with her facial expression.] But it was nice that she remembered that and the songs that I used to sing to her... I'm glad I at least found my voice and I enjoyed singing enough - not to care about the quality of my voice but just to sing those songs that I really liked. *(1e)*

Later in the interview:

Nicola: It's a lovely voice. It's a very gentle voice - very sweet. It doesn't have to be any more than that, and it can be more than that if you want it to be. You sure don't sound like somebody that can't carry a tune. Everything we sang today was stuff you didn't know, and we were making it up and you were following perfectly.
Jane: (tears) That's very encouraging.
Nicola: Well it's absolutely true.
Jane: Well maybe it's not too late to take singing lessons.
Nicola: You don't even have to take singing lessons - just sing. *(2c)*

Adam: For me it's a discomfort. It's not just reacting to the music. That part may be just being uncomfortable with actually doing it. I might be reacting to the experience of actually doing it. I don't like that I don't feel comfortable doing it. I'd like to be able to stand up in a crowd and sing. After 47 years it's hard to get myself to sing.*(1a)*

A comment on singing alone...

Adam: It feels good - sometimes I lose my voice a little bit. I don't mind listening to my own voice. The voice that I hear when I'm alone is ok. I don't mind my voice when I'm singing to myself.
Nicola: Do you ever do that when you're by yourself and you want to express some feeling?
Adam: Yeh, sometimes. Sometimes I'm having fun, enjoying my spirit, or if I'm angry or something I'll do that. But generally I'll just do it when I'm singing along to a cd, or if I have a song in my head. *(2e)*

Every one had been able to get past what other people thought, enough to

be able to sing freely when alone and like what they experienced. Their

perceptions of their voices were quite different when the focus of the question

was asked with emphasis on their *own* perception.

Discovery of the Fears People Harbour in Relation to Singing: What Kinds of Fears Prevent you From Singing?

With this question, I was hoping to uncover any insecurities that are felt

when singing in a group of people where judgement is present.

Dave: Well fears of rejection, and fears of ... well rejection is probably the best word. It's not necessarily that people are rejecting you but if you're not singing in key and all that it's kind of a rejection. It just feels bad. You're not able to do this thing that everyone else can do. Or maybe an inadequacy.

Nicola: So you're kind of exposing yourself a little bit.

Dave: You're exposing your faults. Your inadequacies. "I can't do this, and if I don't sing, you won't know I can't do this." But it's also a dream I guess. Everybody wants to be able to do something. Singing - I don't think it's just me either. A lot of people really want to do it. *(1a)*

Ellen: I guess there's the fear that I'll only make it partway through a song and I'll get to the point where I can't continue on. I don't know if it's connected to the perfect human being to have all of these faculties. Blue eyes, blond hair, can sing - that kind of thing. I don't know if it's part of that 'cause...to me being able to sing is kind of a beautiful gift because it's so portable - it's always with you. *(1a)*

Trett: I guess self-image as a capable person. Or a fear that my voice is offensive to someone that can carry a tune. Mr. Monotone. I guess the fear of ridicule - that goes way back to when I was little 'cause generally I do other goofy things and I'm not afraid of what people think of me. *(1a)*

Lynn: Certainly self-worth and rejection. And I guess trust. Learning not to trust my own sounds. *(1a)*

Adam: I guess I'm not putting myself on the line more. I'm not expressing myself as much as I could so I'm protecting my insecurity I guess. I'm protecting myself from exposure.
Nicola: Physical exposure like people will look at you? Or what?
Adam: Well, people look at me when I'm singing. I have trouble looking at other people when they sing. Putting yourself on the line and feel silly- you're exposed for not being able to sing. Not fitting in properly. *(1a)*

Discovery of the Relationship of Singing to a Person's Relationship to Others: How does your perception of your voice help you or prevent you from being in the world?

With this question, I hoped to discover how the perception of the voice can

make a difference to a person's life.

Dave: Sometimes it gives me peace. In a group it makes me draw away. It's two different things.
Nicola: So do you think that the only reason you withdraw is because people judge the quality of your voice?
Dave: For sure. *(1a)*

Trett: Occasionally if there's a party or sing-along - unless there's a whole lot of   voices, I probably wouldn't do it or if there's a whole lot of voices and I name a song, and they say 'tell me how that goes', well if there's a whole lot of voices, I'm not going to try and tell them. I'll say the lines of the words. I guess from that sense it stops me from being in the world. In religious kind of stuff, I don't sing the hymns. *(1a)*

Adam: Joining into sing-alongs, campfires. It clams me up when people start singing. I feel distant.
Nicola: It makes you withdraw altogether. From that sense of social circle...
Adam: I think I used to sing more. I think I've become less comfortable in the last few years progressively. I don't remember feeling uptight about singing. I just never sang much. I feel more uptight about it now.
Nicola: So when you withdraw in a song circle situation, do you think it affects your relationship to those people at other times?
Adam: It changes the connection that I have with them. I don't think it totally affects me socially, but I imagine it would broaden my social connections if I was comfortable singing. *(1a)*

Adam: I don't really know. I assume that if I could sing comfortably that it would open up my energy a little bit. It's a bit of a clamp not being able to so I assume if I could overcome that, that it would relax my spirit a bit. Especially since I'm involved in music around me, I feel left out. I'm conscious of not being able to participate. So I'm assuming that it would make a difference. I feel left out from singing. I always felt that if I could sing or play music that I could be more involved with people socially. I just see it from the negative side. *(1a)*

Discovery of Expression of an Emotional or Spiritual Life Through the Voice: How Does the Voice Act as a Channel for Emotional and Spiritual Issues?

I was interested to know how aware the participants are of the spiritual

and emotional role that the voice can play in their lives.

Speaking about an experience of release through the voice:

> **Dave:** I couldn't figure out if I was sad, or released. I was both. Released, because I let the sadness in. That's what it was. I was accepting that I was feeling a little bit sad, and this song was helping me feel sad, but also at the same time it was helping me release.
> **Nicola:** So you were allowing the sadness to come.
> **Dave:** It was general sadness about life and the cycle of it and how - it kind of created sadness. And I just let it all go through me. Now if someone was there to hear me sing they might have had a different point of view and I don't care. I'm glad there wasn't because then I would have done that. At least not with the same emotion or the same force.
> **Nicola:** So you can find that emotional and spiritual place in your voice.
> **Dave:** I guess so. I didn't really realize that. I guess that's what's happened, or happens, or can happen. Or sometimes you do it just to make yourself feel good. Often just driving in the truck. I seldom listen to the radio. I love music and I play cd's at home if I'm by myself - or I choose the silence. Harmonica can do the same thing. I've dabbled in that for years. It can evoke happiness or sadness within me. Or if I'm feeling sad, I can pick it up - it somehow intensifies the feeling. But it would also be a release of it at the same time. Because you did it, you let yourself experience it, and you can let it go.
> **Nicola:** It gives a passage for it to come out of your body or something.
> **Dave:** Something like that. *(3c)*
> --
>
> **Ellen:** Well I'll often listen to songs in the car and there might be a lyric although I'm thinking of the singing that we do up at Madonna House (a Catholic family retreat) when I'm not even aware of the lyrics. In that case I think it's the music. We do a lot of plainsong and chanting and stuff that I always find moving. It's the spirit I think. At most churches I don't feel a lot of spirit there, but at the little chapel up at Madonna house, even though I think seventy percent of the people are like me and say they can't sing, the spirit when they sing because they're all there for the same reason because their heart is in it, is just incredible. There are a tenth or

twentieth in terms of numbers of the people in the chapel that there are at St.John's (Ellen's home church) but the volume is one hundred fold because their hearts are in it. *(3b)*

Lynn: It's probably a lesson for - "just be yourself and go past what other people thought or might think". Like be yourself and if your voice is a certain way that's too bad - that's just the way it is.
Nicola: It's not about what anybody thinks. It's just about fully experiencing your own body...
Lynn: And the voice is a part of it. *(2b)*

Lynn: You asked when my father sang if it was a happy time. It was an embarrassing time. I remember feeling totally embarrassed when he would sing.   I wonder how much that's affected me. It was as if - he loved it so and put so much joy into it. In our house there wasn't any joy and it was like it was embarrassing to see him doing it. He would let go and nobody did that in our house. It was a big contrast. How much of that affects me wanting to sing now? I remember feeling totally embarrassed. *(3c)*

Lynn: [when speaking about hearing an a capella group] But I guess you [they] were the voices that I know that are in me. But I don't know how to move them   from in me to out. That's probably true of other things too. There are a lot of things in me that I don't know how to move out. Even when working with people sometimes I have this 'knowing' that I don't know how to move from in me to a place where they can pick up what I know. *(3c)*

Jane: Singing is so emotive. Words in the song for sure strike a deep chord. *(3c)*

Adam: I have difficulty expressing myself. I'm a bit inhibited. That's part of it. It's not just singing- I'm not usually extroverted. I'm a bit repressed that way. It   sort of surprised me that I would have that much trouble. [Sounding in our one-to-one session brought tears from a confused place] *(3c)*

Adam: [after feeling emotional during our one-to-one session] I'm not sure exactly what it was that I was reacting to. It was a sense of exposure

or something. That's what it felt like. Almost like it was scary to have fun doing that. It sort of clamped down. It's very foreign. It's ridiculous when I think about it from the outside, for something like that to be foreign. At my age being around music. More and more every year I feel more clamped down rather than more comfortable. *(1a)*

Only one participant hadn't made this connection.

Trett: I don't think so. Or if it is, it's deep and don't know about it. It isn't something that I'm aware or conscious of.

Discovery of Changes in Perception that can Occur with Encouragement and a Safe Community: How Did your Perception of your Voice Change from the Beginning to the End of the Workshop?

I was interested in knowing if the workshop experience had served to alter

perceptions of the voices of participants.

Dave: A lot of that has got to do with you. Because of you and your attitude and   the attitude that you're trying to instil in other people -it kind of opens that door a bit. So it's not necessarily a building of confidence to walk into any old group anywhere and say "I'm going to sing with you people."
Nicola: It's walking into a group where you're not going to be judged.
Dave: There's boundaries that are still there. *(2a)*

Ellen: My perception of it - I think it's made me more aware of the fact that I have a small appreciation of my voice, and that I shouldn't have such a small appreciation of my voice. Just talking about it makes you more aware of the situation and how silly it is - foolish it is to hide. Like you say, I'm not up on stage and the expectation from other people is next to nothing. *(2b)*

When asked if he would join a casual singing group:

Trett: I'd consider it. I don't think I feel confident enough yet that it would be a fun way to spend my time. In terms of learning a new skill it would be a good thing. I've been thinking about it. It's certainly possible. The other night in the library, I thought - I can do it! *(2a)*

Lynn: I realize I haven't improved my perception of my voice from this experience, but I have improved my confidence in being able to sing along. * *(2a)*

Adam: It was really fun and interesting to sit around and sing with people.... I guess I learned that I enjoy it... And we all sounded good!!* *(2a)*

Adam: I definitely feel more confident to do the group thing than I did before. I would try that now. I never would have before. That's a big change *(2a)*

Jane was the only person who actually felt that her perception as opposed to

feelings of acceptance had changed.

Jane: I actually think they have a little. I feel less self-conscious about singing so am more relaxed and I think that in turn has enabled me to sing with more ease.

Outline of the Emergent Themes

Throughout the course of the workshop, the themes began to emerge. "A

theme can be defined as a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most

of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or

factual impact" (Ely, 1991, p. 150). There were three main themes which ran

through most of the material, and each theme had two or more sub-themes,

some of which were not prevalent for everyone, but had significant impact. They

were as follows:

1) Being judged by self and others

        a) The discovery of the influence of judgement by others (inadequacy, fear

        of exposure, fear of appearing incapable, withdrawal)

        b) The discovery of self-judgement

        c) The discovery of self-judgement from the perspective of others

2) Not being judged

        a) The discovery of the ease of singing in a non-judgemental community

        b) The discovery that there are no non-singers. We are all singers

        c) The discovery that the voice does not have to be 'learned' before using

        d) The discovery of tender memories of early singing

        e) The discovery of enjoyment of own voice when alone.

3) The discovery of singing as a channel for emotion and spirit

        a) Feelings of well-being when singing

        b) Feelings of spirituality when singing with others in chant, or in church

        c) Expression of emotional issues when alone and unheard by others

In this section, each of the themes and sub-themes will be looked at. Workshop

responses and interview questions have been marked with italicized numbers to

indicate which theme they relate to. Additional participant comments will be

added in order to clarify the significance of the findings.

The First Emergent Theme: Being Judged by Self and Others

1a) Discovery of the Influence of Judgement by Others.

All but one participant (Jane) remembered being judged by others.

> **Ellen:** It was my piano teacher that crushed my singing because I was at a lesson and she stopped me and said, "I think you have a very nice voice, let me hear you sing". I sang two notes, and she said, ok, back to the piano. I always remember that. She had such an immediate opinion and it was the wrong one.
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> **Lynn:** Someone said to me the other day as I was singing along to the radio, "Don't give up your day job to take up singing".
> ------------------------

> **Lynn:** I guess it goes back to feeling this big (puts thumb and index finger about an inch apart) when I was little and my mother screamed at me - "Don't you know? Can't you even tell?" It probably goes back to that feeling. Like I would love to take piano right now, but while my mother is in the house, I'll never practise with her there. Just because of her nature and judgement. So I just go back to being a little kid again without any escape.
> -----------------------

> **Lynn:** You know I taught French for quite a few years, and I taught French songs.

> **Nicola:** So you sang them when you were teaching.

> **Lynn:** I don't see kids as judgemental and it's easy. Being in the day care with the guitar... The kids were happy - they love music.
> --------------------------------

Adam: When I was in the early grades, I was the only kid in the school who didn't make the choir. Thing that clicked on me is that the guy who never taught choir tested you. He played piano and you had to match the note on the piano and I guess that I didn't do it. I'd never been near a piano before that. He never had us sing and said your voice is off key or anything. I didn't match the three notes, and that was it. There was no "let's work at it". That was to me, "I couldn't sing". But really what I couldn't do was match notes on a piano. That was grade 2 or 3. That was it. The judgement was made.

Trett: Well, it's feedback that I've got from other people and now I've come to believe it.
Nicola: When would you have started getting that feedback?
Trett: Oh probably when I started school.
Nicola: What happened then
Trett: I was in music class - I was told in choir in grade three not to sing. Just move your lips.
Nicola: A great way to teach a kid how to sing.
Trett: As a little kid I would sing. Little kids don't know and don't care.
Nicola: Did you sing with your parents at all?
Trett: Yeh, a little bit. We're not great singers.
Nicola: Would your parents be supportive?
Trett: Oh yeh. It was more the school system.

Dave: I remember my mother trying to teach me. She'd try to get me to sing in key which is something that I don't seem to be able to do very well. She could sing quite well. I would try to sing along to the album, and she would tell me "no, that's not right - listen, listen."

1b) Discovery of Self-Judgement.

Jane: And finding out where your voice is. If I just knew if I was supposed to be a little higher or lower...

Lynn: I discovered that it doesn't bother me to make a mistake when I get the wrong word but it bothers me if I'm off tune.

Ellen: I think 'cause I was always on the listening side of it and I think it has to do with being shy by nature. I find when I'm singing a song I think - "Oh,   I'm not doing too bad here," and then there's a note and I can't reach it - I can find all of the ranges in one particular song. And there's a few songs when I think that "Oh I sang that whole song". So I think it's that knowledge too of just knowing I can hit all those notes.

Ellen: When I sing I'm quite aware of my incapability's. I'd die if I heard my voice on the tape recorder. It would embarrass me.

Dave: Bullfrog.

Adam: My singing voice is a decent sounding voice, but I don't think I can stay on pitch or notes or anything like that.
Nicola: So you think that the tone quality is nice.
Adam: It's probably ok. I don't like the sound of it, but in my head it's ok.

Trett: I perceive my singing voice as a bit flat and sort of close to being monotone. That's my perception. Not having all the tones you should have for singing a song.

In addition to the above responses, this second sub-theme emerged from responses to the interview question on page 71, what kinds of fears prevent you from singing? Responses to that question ranged between withdrawal, inadequacy, fear of exposure, fear of appearing incapable, and fear of rejection.

1c) Discovery of Self-Judgement from the Perspective of Others

This sub-theme emerged from the answers to the question on page 68, how do you perceive your voice? In the initial responses to this question it can be seen that everyone discovered they had formed their judgement of their voices around what others thought.

The Second Emergent Theme: Not Being Judged by the Self and Others

This theme turned out to be an important one, because without it the singer

cannot accept his or her own voice for what it is.

2 a) Discovery of the Ease of Singing in a Non-judgemental Community

Dave: A lot of that [feeling that he can sing comfortably near the end] has got to do with you. Because of you and your attitude and the attitude that you're trying to instil into other people it kind of opens that door a bit. So it's not necessarily a building of confidence to walk into any old group anywhere and say "I'm going to sing with you people."

Dave: And again, because you've lessened that degree of judgement. 'Cause you know you're all... I had this experience at Blue Skies (local folk festival). I hadn't played harmonica in a long time, and I certainly haven't sung. I ended up with some new neighbours at my campsite - they both played. And we were actually doing some singing, but the three of us were all on the same level. We all had these fears of ... and yet the three of us sat down together. So that was neat - we all happened to be... With a group like this you know - the other person's as nervous or unsure of themselves as you are. You're all starting off at the same level. You can't judge each other.

Ellen: I thoroughly enjoyed all of our sessions - the music and fellowship was wonderful and definitely gave me a greater appreciation of the song within me.*

Ellen: I definitely feel more comfortable now. It would be different in a different scenario with different people. But if you guys were all there .... I'd sing. Take you along with me. Everytime I go--well I can come, but I'll have to check with my friends first! (laughter) See if they can join me!

Lynn: I have felt easier and easier and easier in this group to be doing the sounding and toning that we've been doing. Being in the library was great - I really really enjoyed that. Some of the tones ... It was spectacular, absolutely spectacular.

Lynn: You know I taught French for quite a few years, and I taught French songs.
Nicola: So you sang them when you were teaching.
Lynn: I don't see kids as judgemental and it's easy. Being in the day care with the guitar... The kids were happy - they love music.

Adam: Well, it was fun to sing in the stairwell. I found it easier that I expected once we got going...*

Jane: It was a comfortable group to sing with and that made the whole difference. *

Trett: We used to sing on Thursday nights at the university pub and this guy would love to play and love to sing and he would lead everything. About 20 people--we were regulars, would go every Thursday and sing until we were hoarse.

2b) Discovery that there are no Non-singers. We are all Singers...

Another sub-theme that emerged was that of the difference between the singer and non-singer. There was quite a lot of discussion about the difference between one and the other. The following exchange best describes the general consensus:

Jane: We're passive - it's easier to listen. We don't perceive ourselves as singers.

Dave: It's easier to let someone else do it and with a flip of a switch you can hear any number of professional voices do for you what you've come to believe you can't do for yourself.

Nicola: That's the other thing is to we take the singer and place the singer on a pedestal. We say "that's the singer - I'm not a singer, but that's the singer because they're up there and they're performing." It was never like that before.

Adam: It's like all this culture with image and fashion - you can gel your hair up and try to look like a fashion model, but you can't change your voices to sing like a fashion model. You can go with the image stuff - you can try to become a follower of style. But singing is a place where it's hard to cross that because in the pop culture there's always stars. You'll never become a singing star no matter how much gel and fashion you put on.

Dave: So much for the can of mousse I bought! (laughter)

Nicola: Listen to Neil Young sing, and tell me what a singer is. He has a voice! It's a very unusual voice. And he's a singer. But he's put himself on stage and he's made a million.

Adam: Or Dylan or any of those people who sing with heart and soul.

Dave: Dylan! Now he can't with all due respect - he's one of these people who - I won't say can't sing.

Nicola: His voice is very ordinary. His voice is an expression of who he is and that's why we love it.

(interchange during the final group session)

2c)   Discovery of the Voice as a Natural Instrument that Does not Have to be 'Learned' before Using

One of the emergent issues that surprised me was that of the feeling that a singer needs to have technical knowledge. The participants all felt that singing was something to learn to do; much in the same way one learns to play an instrument. The idea that their authentic voice is beautiful enough was a new concept for them. Here is an example of this type of response.

Nicola: It's a lovely voice. It's a very gentle voice - very sweet. It doesn't have   to be any more than that, and it can be more than that if you want it to be. You sure don't sound like somebody that can't carry a tune. Every

thing we sang today was stuff you didn't know, and we were making it up
and you were following perfectly.
Jane: (tears) That's very encouraging.
Nicola: Well it's absolutely true.
Jane: Well maybe it's not too late to take singing lessons.
Nicola: You don't even have to take singing lessons - just sing. (from the
transcript of one-to-one session with participant Jane, 2001)

2d)   Discovery of Tender memories of Early Singing

When the participants began to think about their early experiences

singing, many of the stories that they relayed were surprisingly tender,

considering the theme of judgement that had previously emerged.

Dave: One of the first times I remember singing was with my grandad.
Can She Bake a Cherry Pie. I remember being encouraged to sing it, and
he was totally thrilled. I was maybe 6 or 7.

Jane: The first time I sang was also probably the first time I heard singing
which I had forgotten about. My aunt used to sing lullabies to us when we
were little. She would teach me songs and that was probably the first time
I did sing. She loved singing. She was my mum's twin and Mum didn't
sing. That was her role. She had an amazing memory for lyrics and
rhymes and poetry.

Lynn: In grade 5, we had a wonderful teacher who took the pains to
teach us Christmas carols, and to this day I can sing Christmas carols.
And I love it. Because I learned it back then.

Ellen: We lived over in Germany when I was 7 or 8, and it was all the
Canadian kids who lived in this place. There must have been around 60
of us. We went to this incredibly beautiful, exotic, posh hotel in Frankfurt. I
can remember them treating us to these beautiful treats after. I can
remember thinking - "no problem, just singing in a choir." It went downhill
from then, but I just remembered thinking that because we were kids.
They didn't even audition us - whoever   wanted to go. It was a great thrill
to be up on the stage and all these ladies in long dresses and men in

tuxedos were the audience. Because it was a group and it   was a voluntary thing...

Trett: My grandmother sang all of the time. I don't remember what songs, but she always sang. She would always tell stories rather than read them. My Dad taught me to sing Red River Valley when I was just a kid. I would sing that with him.

There was only one participant out of the six who did not have a tender story to relay about early singing. When asked if he had an early memory of singing, his reply was:

Adam: No. I used to sing rock and roll and my friends told me to stop. I don't have early memories at all. There were some family gatherings at Passover when we sang, but it's not a singing table. Growing up we didn't do that.

The tenderness of the stories in five out of six cases was a surprise to find in this field of people who felt so disconnected to their voices. In the cases of these people, it seemed that a single negative experience had the power to overshadow the general positive perspective that they had encountered.

2e) Discovery of Enjoyment of Own Voice When Alone

Responses which point to this sub-theme are embedded in answers to the question 'How do you perceive your own voice?' as seen on page 68.   When a singer is alone, there is no doubt that there are possibilities for enjoyment of singing. All of the participants enjoy singing when they are alone, and there is no fear of being judged.

The Third Emergent Theme: The Discovery of Singing as a Channel for Emotion and Spirit

3a) Discovery of Perceptions of Well Being From Singing

It is common knowledge among many people who love community

singing, or singing in a choir, that singing offers lovely feelings of well-being.

This was a new discovery for this group of people.

> **Dave:** I felt giddy and then light. Not quite the same way as the chanting last night. I actually made a note of this. Last night when I got home, we had friends over and they were at the cabin talking around the table with candles lit. It was quite pretty when I got there, and they were talking politics. I had just been chanting. I did not want to jump in, so I said "I'm going to bed. I don't want to go here. This is going to bring me down and it's going to change what I've just had, and I want to hang onto it."
> ---------------------------------

> **Ellen:** I especially enjoyed the 'oh's' from the top of our heads. The whole room suddenly became a Tibetan Monastery and there was beautiful stillness in the sound. I think I possibly could be quite content just to sing 'ohs' from the top of my head all day. *
> ----------------------------------

> **Lynn:** I have felt easier and easier and easier in this group to be doing the sounding and toning that we've been doing. Being in the library was great - I really really enjoyed that. Some of the tones ... It was spectacular, asolutely spectacular.... I really enjoyed that. I had a great warm feeling - peaceful.
> --

> **Jane:** Repeating them [the chants] over and over induced a feeling of peace and harmony - most relaxing. It also felt good to be focussed on our chanting so completely that you were aware of nothing else but the sound and tone of the notes we made together.
> --

Adam: [after the 'Discovery of the feeling of singing in a resonant space] It was fun to sing in the stairwell. I found it easier than I expected once we got going and now I feel like trying the chanting group. [a casual Saturday morning event]. I have to admit that I am looking forward to the next sing session. There is a certain sense of freeing of my spirit by being able to deal with voicing in public a little.

3b) Discovery of Feelings of Spirituality When Singing with Others in Chant, or in Church

This sub-theme arose out of responses to the question on page 73, How does the voice act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues? There are many references there to having experienced spirituality with others in church settings. Others had experienced that feeling in our chanting, perhaps for the first time.

3c) Discovery of Emotional Issues Through Singing When Alone and Unheard by Others

This sub-theme also arose out of answers to the question on page 73, as mentioned above. Many of the participants could express emotion when alone and use the voice as an outlet or channel for their emotions. (This discovery was also possible in the one-to-one environment.)

The entire experience appears to point in the direction of one overall finding.

When a voice is judged, fears are brought out in the singer which prevent him or her from using the voice and from enjoying the benefits that people can gain from singing. These are benefits such as feelings of well-being, feeling of community, and awareness or expression of emotion and spirituality. When the voice is not judged, all of these benefits are accessible to the singer.

When the singer allows himself or herself free reign to use the voice, he or she can become accepting of the authentic voice, the voice that contains the beauty of who that person is.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE FIELD OF VOCAL DISCOVERY DISCUSSED

Through the research process, I began to understand how vast the field of vocal discovery really is. In its purest form, it includes elements from many facets of the singer's life. It includes culture, family, social circle, and school background. It includes the singer's perception of past and present memories and also includes how feelings and experiences incubate in the unconscious. To report on the entire field of vocal discovery for the six people who participated in this study would have resulted in an enormous document far beyond the scope of this thesis. For this reason, the field of vocal discovery took on a second identity, which was the workshop itself. This study became a here-and-now report of the experience of participants during the time frame of the workshop.

Six people came together for an experience which appealed to them, because they heard that there was an opportunity for them to sing with others who also had a desire to sing, and who also shared their fear of being heard by others. This similarity was the sole common ground for people who were very different from each other. Through singing during five sessions, a camaraderie developed. They agreed as a group that they would meet and sing together once a month, to keep up the momentum of their new found confidence. There was an apparent movement from being judgemental of themselves and others, to

being people who would sing in a group singing experience and begin to evaluate their own self-judgement.

In this chapter, the field of vocal discovery is described in three sections. In the first, answers to research questions are described. In the second, the emergent themes are examined. In the third section there is an illustration of how being judged, not being judged and neutral experiences affect possibilities for a change in perception of the voice.

The Vocal Discoveries Described

<u>**Answers to Research Questions**</u>

The main purpose of the research was to learn more about how the singer perceives his or her voice. The question, "how do you perceive your voice?" led directly to the main themes of being judged and not being judged. The third main theme, which is about the voice as a channel for emotion, was embedded in those other two main themes.

In every instance, the initial response to "how do you perceive your voice?" was reported as a perception that was not the participants' own. When they expressed this point of view, the concern was always in the tangible, which is the concrete aspects of singing that can be heard or perceived through the senses. They were aware that the listener thought they didn't have range, or they

were off tune, or that they would forget words or couldn't sing very loudly. This appeared to be the key to understanding how the singer perceives his or her voice. As soon as the participants were asked how they themselves perceived their own voices, the answer was much different. They reflected the intangible, which are aspects of singing that cannot be so easily observed in behaviour or perceived by the senses. This included elements of singing such as enjoyment, expression, spirituality, and an emotional connection. These are all elements that are available to each and every one of us, when we sing in a non-judgemental environment. It was discussed in the group how people so often will openly criticize another for the quality of their singing voice, where it would be considered rude to openly criticize another for their appearance. It seems that in our culture it is acceptable to call someone "Mr.Monotone," or to tell someone not to give up his day job when heard singing. A deep hurt is often inflicted when comments like these are made, but recipients are expected to laugh it off. One example of a participant who commented on this issue was Trett.

> **Nicola:** What happens when you're enjoying singing and someone is around and they give you what for?
> **Trett:** Well usually I just stop singing. I've got lines for them, but the negative feedback isn't all that fun, so as a rule I just stop.
> **Nicola:** It really bothers me - somebody would never walk up to someone else and say 'you're ugly'.
> **Trett:** But they do that with singing a lot.
> **Nicola:** We need to change that.
> **Trett:** We do, but it's not going to be easy. Even at school we have celebrations five or six times a year, and I would bet that about thirty percent of the kids sing. They all have song sheets - they just don't....
> **Nicola:** They're frightened of what someone else will say if they sing?
> **Trett:** Yeh.
> **Nicola**: The voice is so much a part of what you are.
> (from the transcript of participant Trett's one-to-one session, 2001)

When participants were asked what kinds of fears prevent some people from singing, their answers centred around rejection, inadequacy, lack of perfection, appearing incapable, fear of ridicule, self-worth, and protection from exposure. They are all rather large issues which are possibly mirrors for deeper emotional work that could be done. It also reflects the attitude of judgemental listeners.

When they were asked how their perception of their voices helps or prevents them from being in the world, their answers also reflected wounds from judgement. When in a group setting where they might be heard, the general consensus was that it was safer to withdraw and not participate. Their relationship to their voices did not appear to affect other parts of their lives.

When asked how their voices act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues, all of the participants had a story to tell about how great it feels to sing alone or to let out feelings of emotion or spirit with others who are experiencing a similar thing (in church or while chanting, for example). Even Trett, who had not had the experience of expressing emotion through the voice, had positive experiences of singing alone. Once again the answer reflects fear of judgement. This kind of experience only happened for these people when alone or in a non-judgemental situation.

When asked if their perception of their voices changed from the beginning to the end of the workshop, answers were quite candid. Only one person said that the workshop changed the perception of her voice. It made one person feel that she should have more of an appreciation of her voice, and it made everyone

feel more confident to join a casual singing group. Virtually every one of them felt that now they would be comfortable joining a casual singing group *in which they could be guaranteed not to be judged* despite the fact that their perception of the quality of their voices hadn't changed*.*

The Emergent Themes

The difference between being judged and not being judged could be the key to understanding the discoveries that were made in the field of vocal discovery. Sub-themes under both of these principal themes were all indicators of this possibility.

1) Being judged by self and others

• The discovery of the influence of judgement by others (inadequacy, fear of exposure, fear of appearing incapable, withdrawal)

• The discovery of self-judgement

• The discovery of self-judgement from the perspective of others

2) Not being judged

• The discovery of the ease of singing in a non-judgemental community

• The discovery that there are no non-singers - we are all singers

• The discovery that the voice does not have to be 'learned' before using

• The discovery of tender memories of early singing

- The discovery of enjoyment of own voice when alone.

Discovery that the voice does not have to be learned before using and the discovery that we are all singers appear to be signals that participants need encouragement and validation before allowing themselves to feel comfortable exposing themselves as singers.   When singing alone, judgement is not an issue and so all participants were comfortable with that as long as they knew that they could not be heard by anyone. The power of judgement is exposed in the final emergent sub-theme. All but one participant had experienced tender moments in early years when singing. It wasn't the tender moments that determined the singer's perception of the voice, it was the judgemental ones.

The third theme emerged when singers had the opportunity to sing alone or in a non-judgemental group.

3) The discovery of singing as a channel for emotion and spirit

- Feelings of well-being when singing

- Feelings of spirituality when singing with others in chant, or in church

- Expression of emotional issues when alone and unheard by others

Sub-themes under 'the discovery of singing as a channel for emotion and spirit' are also contingent upon the judgement issue. Feelings of well-being will come only when not judged, as will feelings of spirituality, and expression of emotion through the voice.

The two emergent themes 'not feeling judged by self and others' and 'feeling judged by self and others' are at opposite extremes. 'Feeling judged by
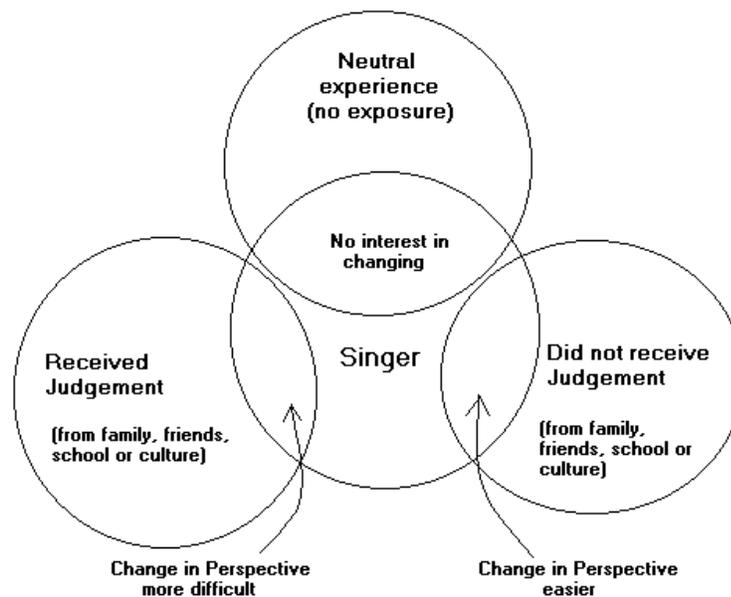
others' moves the singer away from acceptance of his or her own authentic

voice, while 'Not feeling judged by others' draws the singer closer to acceptance

of the authentic voice. 'Not feeling judged by others' and 'the voice as a channel

for emotion and spirit' are linked.

> When you're on your own, you don't have to worry about someone else judging
> you. When I'm with other people, I've got all this stuff in my head - am I on key- and it's almost like you've got all this other stuff in your head and there's almost no room for the emotions that really get flowing. You're too busy in your head worrying about that other stuff.
> (Comment made by participant Dave during his interview)

It is difficult for the voice to be a channel for emotion and spirit if there is a

judgemental environment.

How Being Judged, Not Being Judged and Neutral Experiences Affect Possibilities for a Change in Perception of the Voice

The following diagram is a representation of the judgement issue and what

it implies in relation to the willingness in the participant to allow for a change in

perception. It was interesting to note how closely connected the judgement issue

was to a willingness for a change in perception to take place.

Neutral
experience
(no exposure)

No interest in
changing

Received
Judgement

(from family, friends,
school or culture)

Singer

Did not receive
Judgement

(from family,
friends, school or
culture)

Change in Perspective
more difficult

Change in Perspective
easier

It was noted that when people had had no exposure to singing at all in a certain area of their life, they continued to have no interest in singing there. For example, Adam had no exposure to singing at home, and to this day does not have any desire to sing there. His negative feedback in other areas does not omit his desire to sing in those situations. I have often wondered about the position of the person who has no desire to sing whatsoever. The 'no exposure' circle appears to be an explanation for their lack of interest.

Any of these sections could represent any of the family, school, friends and cultural influences. Using Adam as an example once again, he had received judgement from friends and school. In these two areas, he desired change, but change in perception was difficult. With confidence and an assured non-judgemental environment, he would sing.

Jane was the only person in the workshop who has never heard negative feedback about her voice. Her judgement comes from within. Her willingness to look at her voice differently came much easier to her. In fact, she was the only one in the group who felt that her perception had changed throughout the workshop.

If a singer was judged, a change in perception was wished for, but difficult. If un-judged, a change in perception was more possible. So, if the person received no judgement from family, friends, school or culture, they desired change; and change in perception was more available to them. These people could also increase their level of confidence and sing in a non-judgemental environment. This last qualifier is important. For all of the people in the group, no matter what their background, the environment must be non-judgemental.

Summary

In this chapter the field of vocal discovery was explored in two sections. First, the specific vocal discoveries were described. Secondly, the emergent themes were examined. Within the second section there was a sub-section which illustrated how being judged, not being judged and neutral experiences affect possibilities for a change in perception of the voice. It was illustrated that being judged or not judged is that which makes the difference between feeling that spirit and emotion can be expressed through the voice, or not. Judgement

issues also appear to determine whether or not there is a possibility for change in

perception in the voice.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, five areas are addressed. First, the theoretical concepts of

tangible (blade of grass) and intangible (sunbeam) which were presented in

Chapter 2, are looked at in the context of the field of vocal discovery. Next, there

is a glance at the role of the authentic voice in the whole picture.   In the third

section I reflect upon how this research has informed my perception of myself as

a singer, my work in my music therapy practise, and my role as a researcher. As

a practitioner researcher it is important to note both how the workshop

participants were affected by the experience and how the researcher was

affected by the experience. The final two sections of this chapter offer a

discussion of possibilities for future study, and a concluding statement.

**Concepts of the Tangible (Blade of Grass) and Intangible (sunbeam) Within
the Field of Vocal Discovery**

The concepts of tangible and intangible experiences are very tied into

music therapy and the voice, as described in Chapter 2.   These concepts once

again show their significance in Chapter 6. The primary research question was

"How do you perceive your voice?"   Response to this question indicated that

when being judged, tangible issues of pitch, length of phrase, volume, memory,

vocal range, and size of repertoire are all issues that concern a singer in academic training. When judged by classmates and teachers, these issues far surpass the intangible elements of singing. Participants of the workshop experienced these same tangible issues as important to them in spite of the fact that their vocal performance did not receive academic critique.

The metaphors of the blade of grass and the sunbeam have always helped to ground me in my practise. I therefore felt it was significant that these two elements emerged when the primary question was asked.   When feeling judged, the blade of grass emerged. Technical aspects of the voice were what the singer felt to be important and these came into the foreground. Participants were worried about how the voice sounded and whether or not words were forgotten. When feeling un-judged or when singing alone, the singer experienced the sunbeam which referred to how the voice was perceived when singing alone and feeling un-judged. Emotional and spiritual aspects of the voice became figural. The connection between these metaphors and this primary vocal discovery feels important and powerful. The intangible beauty of an experience can be lost in a sea of judgement. This feels like a universal truth, but that broader discussion is a possibility for another study.

A Glance at the Role of the Authentic Voice in the Whole Picture

The beautiful, personal, real voice is the voice of a human being no matter what it sounds like. To illustrate this point, this thesis should be accompanied by a video tape of people that I work with in a wide range of facilities. These people are perfect examples of those with beautiful voices. The enjoyment of the singing comes through in the faces and the body language. By our cultural standards they may be considered off key, or limited in range, but by authenticity standards they portray sheer beauty. Those who can sing without feeling judged can allow their authentic voice to reign freely and all of the benefits from singing can be theirs.   The hardest task is to find a way to stop the judgement.   The second hardest task is to find a way to help people to stop hearing the judgement if it can't be stopped.

The role of the authentic voice emerged when judgement issues came to light during analysis in the final stages of study. It is a large area which could not be expanded upon within the context of this thesis. The field of vocal discovery points to acceptance of the authentic voice as an important goal of the singer. If the singer accepts the authentic voice, then the issues of being judged and not being judged no longer become important.

Reflections of a Music Therapy Practitioner Researcher

In this section, I will look at how this research has informed my practise from three perspectives.

1) What did I learn as a practitioner researcher about my self as a singer?

2) How did what I learned as a practitioner researcher inform my music therapy practise?

3) What did I learn as a practitioner researcher about myself as researcher?

What Did I learn as a Practitioner Researcher About Myself as a Singer?

This research originated with highly relevant vocal issues in my own life. Since the voice is my primary tool for employment, it was important for me to understand my relationship to it. In the self-hermeneutic of Chapter 1, I described feelings of inadequacy in spite of formal training. These feelings of inadequacy were due both to the blade of grass and the sunbeam. I felt that I could not sing with enough technical expertise, and also felt that I could not express the emotion and spirit of the song well due to lack of sincerity. I wrote of how I felt unworthy of praise and how I felt a lack of trust when compliments were offered. I also pondered the fact that it took a very long time to come to accept

the voice for what it is, and not what someone else would like.   After many years, I came to accept my instrument and to trust compliments. I also came to realize that many others felt the same way.

The incentive to write this thesis originated with those feelings. I felt a strong need to understand why singers have this experience about the voice. It appeared to be a cultural issue in which judgement plays a role. Through this research, I have been validated in my notion that judgemental response to singing is often at the root of an unhappiness with the authentic voice. This validation has been an encouragement in my own singing life. I am finding myself releasing the last remnants of my concerns about my voice. When performing recently, I found that I did not once consider what the others thought. Instead, I simply enjoyed the feeling of singing. Interestingly, when compliments were given, I could then agree that I had enjoyed myself and accept the compliment despite my modesty. I found that I was able to reason with myself and eliminate negative feelings. My self-confidence has increased. I have noticed a much more solid feeling of not caring about what others think. I allow myself to experience the free feeling of singing loudly and with expression. It has confirmed in me that judgement is generally nothing more than the unsubstantiated opinion of another.   It has reminded me that it is important to accept my own vocal sound or authentic voice as representative of a part of who I am.

I also learned that a refusal to sing was not necessarily a result of judgement, but could also be a result of not having been exposed to singing as a part of life. It is a matter of the old adage; you don't miss what you don't have.

How Did What I Learned as a Practitioner Researcher Inform my Music Therapy Practise ?

At the beginning of the previous section, I mentioned that it was important for me to understand my relationship to the voice, since it is my primary tool for employment. Since music therapy is my primary employment, it is also important for me to understand my relationship to the voice within that profession. Taking the time to articulate the concepts of the tangible and intangible has clarified my relationship with my voice as well as my practise. It has particularly provided me with rich reflection about the work that I do with nonverbal clients with very little cognizance. When there is little indication that a connection is taking place with someone who is not cognizant, the intangible connection that is possible through music takes on an important role. I have learned through my studies and research, how important it is to transfer this wisdom to verbal and cognizant people when doing emotional work. It was reinforced in the field of vocal discovery when perceptions of the voice were being explored. Being open to intangible elements of spirit and emotion bring meaning to the work.

Writing this thesis has been a process of learning how and why people perceive their voices the way they do. This is important to the work that I am now embarking upon where the voice is the primary foundational mode of

working.   Vocal blocks, discomfort or shyness about singing for example, will be important clues when attempting to understand what the client is experiencing. Judgment issues that can be revealed through singing could be helpful for people in making discoveries about themselves.

The field of vocal discovery reminded me that the breath is a messenger and is something vital to be paid attention to both while teaching singing and working with the voice in therapy. It also reminded me that a space can be transformed by singing. For example, a stark stairwell can become a sacred place because of the singing that occurs in it.   The concept that the voice through singing can be a channel for emotional and spiritual issues was something that I already had a good sense of through my own experiences. Through the readings covered in the literature review, and my experience in the field of vocal discovery, this was reinforced.

What Did I Learn About Myself as Researcher?

Studying the field of vocal discovery from the dual role of the practitioner-researcher enabled an intuitive and descriptive approach, which included my own perspective. Since intuition is an important part of practice, this proved to be an effective approach. The process of conducting research as a practitioner held an intrigue which I have not encountered elsewhere. When acting as researcher there is license to ask directed questions of participants and to probe them for

clarification. The fact that participants in the field of vocal discovery knew this was a research group added an element to the discussion which would not necessarily have been present in a group of this nature that was not attached to research. Participants were interested in talking about their experiences and in sharing thoughts that would help me to clarify my understanding of their experiences. Humour was added to the situation when I was able to share my own experiences of acting like a probe with the participants. After many years of being a practitioner it was natural to take that next step by entering into the researcher role and experiencing a different perspective on the work that I have been doing. To give myself permission and to receive permission from my clients to seek answers to my questions was validating and worthwhile. Surprises of new-found information as well as validation of initial notions that came before the research are all elements that will inform my future work. As a practitioner researcher, not only is the research affected, but practise itself is influenced. In future workshops of this kind, I will take my experiences with this group into consideration and that will in turn affect my approach.

Possibilities for the Future

Since this study has touched on one small part of the whole field of vocal discovery, it would be possible in future studies to broaden the exploration. One example would be to provide the workshop to other 'types' of singers and see

what new discoveries can be made. It would also be interesting to interview the group used in this study in six months and see how, if at all, it affected their perceptions of their voices over time.   Many other areas emerged which beg for more study. The most important area is the authentic voice. The concept of the importance of the authentic voice emerged in the latter stages, when analysing data. It is a topic that will provide inspiration for an in-depth study at a later date. The whole area of judgement is another topic which could be explored further. And in each workshop session there were many possibilities for future study. Each one of the sessions could have been a full workshop and study in itself.

In terms of the broader perspective of the future, it is inspiring to think that in spite of a world of compact discs and television and radio and computer games, there is a possibility that people can be reminded of their authentic voices and the beauty in them.

Concluding Summary

This study has touched on one small part of the whole field of vocal discovery. First, the concepts of the tangible and intangible voice were defined and examined from the perspective of the field of music therapy as a whole. They were then examined from the perspective of the voice. This served as a foundation for the theoretical perspective of this paper. The literature review took into account academic writings about the voice, previous scholarship in the areas

of the use of voice in therapy, the spiritual nature of singing and sounding, and theoretical foundations.   Three sub-areas under theoretical foundations which were influential in this thesis were music therapy theory, field theory, and theoretical thought in Gestalt therapy. These areas in the literature review were chosen because they reflect the foundation from which thought about the field of vocal discovery began. The 'here and now' element of Gestalt thought is relevant to singing because of the fleeting nature of the passage of sound. Music therapy theory was considered important because there is a growing volume of theoretical thought in the field of music therapy. With more development of theoretical thought, it is important to consider the similarities and differences in thought, and to join in the dialogue.   Field theory is descriptive of all of the elements in a situation, and thus was relevant to this study where so many elements of the lives of the participants were important to the outcome of the study.   Literature about the spiritual nature of singing and sounding, voice in therapy, and academic writings about the voice were examined, because these areas were believed to be important factors that would aid in understanding the field of vocal discovery.

The purpose of this study was to explore the singer's perception of his or her own voice during a workshop for six people over five sessions. My initial questions were the following. How does the voice act as a channel for emotional and spiritual issues for the participants of this group? How does the perception of the voice help or prevent the singer from being in the world? What kinds of fears prevent some people from singing? Does the perception of the voice

change once the singer has had the opportunity to sing in a non-judgemental,

safe environment?   Answers to these questions were answered through

experiences with the remarkable people who formed the study group.   Much

more than this has emerged and their input has been important in helping me to

begin to understand and to share this understanding of the vastness of the field

of vocal discovery.

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