

Chapter 3

Theoretical Context

...it is through symbolic interaction with one another that we give the world meaning and develop the reality toward which we act.

(Charon, 2001:61)

Music, meaning and emotion

Langer (1942:243) describes music as 'an analogue of the emotional life' which is composed of the gestures, forms and shapes of everyday living. It is for this reason that music can be understood as a transformer and metaphor in our lives. As discussed in Chapter 2, music can be an expressive representation of people's moods, emotions and resolutions. For example, music can put us in touch with emotions we have felt previously, and evoke emotions we have not felt. Changes in our lives and ways of thinking can thus be articulated through musical forms even if we do not understand all the details of these ideas, feelings and emotions (Bunt, 1996; Langer, 1942). Damasio, (2000:43) when writing about the life of emotions, offers a similar view when he states:

We can feel our emotions consistently and we know that we feel them. The fabric of our minds and of our behaviour is woven around continuous cycles of emotions followed by feelings that become known and beget new emotions, a running polyphony that underscores and punctuates specific thoughts in our minds and actions in our behaviour.

Nagler and Lee (1999) state that many people lack quality of time in their lives that they regard as engaging in meaningful activities. He observes that it is not quantity of time that is the problem, after all people are generally living longer and working longer hours. It is the ability to find the time to do the things that offer meaning in life. Some philosophers claim that people have less time to engage in peaceful and meaningful activities that can provide them with a restorative state. Needleman (1998:3) refers to this lack of time as 'the poverty of our affluence'. He believes that this poverty is the result of a 'famine of a culture that chooses things over time' or the 'external world over the inner world'.

So how can people find restorative meaning in their lives? Nagler and Lee (1999) suggest that it can be found within the individual and that one possible way is through music. Music can create a personal environment that includes a sense of peaceful space, which assists people to achieve balance and order in their lives. For example, as Chapters 5 and 6 will show, through music people can discover meaning in their lives and develop new understandings of emotions.

Jourdain (1997:330) states that music can be considered 'a seamless expression of emotions'. Music and emotions are key elements that directly connect people's mind, body and spirit. He claims music has the potential to:

- help people find beauty in their lives,
- affirm and celebrate people's achievements,
- inspire people, and
- restore people's sense of faith, hope and optimism.

Music itself defies scientific exploration because music is given meaning and importance from a person's subject experience of it (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001b; Miles

& Huberman, 1997; Shepherd, 1991). The personal experience and meaning of music in people's lives can be articulated and described through words, metaphors, and images.

One of the primary functions of music is to enhance the quality of individual experience and human relationships (Blacking, 1995). This is because the structures of music 'are reflections of patterns of human relations and a piece of music is inseparable from its value as an expression of human experience' (Blacking, 1995:31). Music expresses aspects of people's everyday living and the development or inhibition of these capacities is largely conditioned by their experience of human relations. Blacking notes that the 'public' and the 'private' selves in people's lives are products of social interaction, and the structure of every aspect of *self* is reflected in the processes of the interaction. As he notes:

Music which is a product of the processes which constitute the realisation of self, will reflect all aspects of the self. (Blacking, 1995:33)

Langer (1942:242) believes music is an 'unconsummated symbol' because it conveys the emotions, although it does not assert anything about the emotions. The real power of music is that it can be true to the experience of a feeling in a way that language cannot. This could be explained by the fact that significant forms of music have the ambivalence of content that words cannot possess. An example of this is programme music that is composed around an open programmatic idea such as Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, Liszt's *Faust Symphony* or *Symphonie Fantastique* by Berlioz. The music provides the potential for the listener to have non-conventionalised and non-verbalised freedom of thought. Davies (1994) further proposes that music acquires emotional significance because of the context

within which it is heard. If people are moved by music they have passed through a cognitive stage where they have formed an internal representation of the music.

The emotional factor of music is trans-cultural and reflects humankind's universal attraction to organised sound (Bright, 1993a; Sloboda, 1989). However, if music is understood from a purely physics perspective, it is seen only as a collection of sounds with differing pitches, durations, dynamics, timbre, tempi and other such measurable qualities. It is the human mind that assigns meaning and significance to musical sounds. It is these sounds that 'become the symbols for something other than pure sound' in our lives' (Sloboda 1989:2). For example, it is the interpretations given to these sounds that move people to laugh or cry, like or dislike, or be indifferent to them.

Music is personal and relational to many aspects of people's lives and yet it is difficult to quantify the value and importance of music. This is because people perceive the world around them differently from one another. This also applies to art objects that Kemp (1997: 22) states are ambiguous yet 'stretch our imagination and allows us to delve deeper into our sense of identity and well-being'. Aesthetic experience is one of the main reasons for justifying existence and this is largely dependent on linking the subjective and objective and the mind and body (Storr, 1992).

People's subjective response to music is dependent on their particular personal experiences in life, individual perceptions, and intent when listening. Stevens (1993:93) states that 'subjective qualities surround all of music's parameters and an individual's perception also surrounds the music itself'. Meyer (1956; 1967)

supports this view when he states that there are different ways that people find meaning in music. These focus on either the assigned meaning that a person gives music and the meaning that is embodied in the music itself.

Music can give rise to both types of meaning. It can evoke associations and connotations for the listener, and these may come from the listener's own life experiences. However, at the same time, music can evoke its own meaning for the listener, by creating expectations of subsequent events in the music itself. (Pavlicevic, 1997:23)

Cook (1994) claims there are differences in the ways that musicians and non-musicians listen to music. He believes that musicians tend to perceive the formal structures, harmonic nuances, performer technique and timbre colours that affect the overall appreciation and meaning of the experience. On the other hand, non-musicians tend to respond to music in a non-intellectual way and derive pleasure without understanding the formal structures of it. However, Cook also suggests that there is another form of appreciating and finding meaning in music. This meaning is by way of created images in the mind that are triggered by the music. For example, these images may be of special relationships, memories of summer, or may be unique times in a person's life.

Human experience is infinitely diversified and no two people have exactly the same experiences in life. Kitwood (1997) describes this concept as an individual's *personhood*. He states people's experiences are rich in feeling and emotion, and are part of their total subjectivity. Coulson and Ronaldson (1997) also argue that the components of *personhood* are all directly related to an individual's personal experiences and important to successful ageing. These components include: wholeness, being, peacefulness, joyfulness, contentment, self-worth, self-esteem, social aspects, spiritual dimensions, and cultural orientation.

No one person can know the subjectivity of another. At the same time, people need to develop ways of having empathic understanding of others. Music is one way of people finding an empathic understanding with other people. This is especially important for those people who are unable to articulate a feeling or gesture. For example, people who have suffered a stroke and the loss of the ability to communicate, or those people who suffer with various forms of dementia.

The conceptual context of the study

Springer-Lowewy (2000:38) states that inquiry 'is the systematic and progressive determination of an indeterminate situation. It is the continuum of inquiry as the process by which beliefs and knowledge are required'. The goal of any inquiry is pragmatic in that the researcher tries to gain knowledge about a topic. It is also a reflective process in which researchers actively participate in the construction of that knowledge.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) describe qualitative research as being inductive and holistic, naturalistic and non-intrusive in nature. Such research considers phenomena as though it is happening for the first time, and requires the researcher to suspend presuppositions. 'Their validity criteria are based on first hand experience of life, unmediated through concepts, definitions and rating scales' (Kenny, 1996b: 60). Van Manen (1990) provides further insight by stating that qualitative research is about questioning and wanting to know how people experience the world.

...to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching, questioning, theorizing, is the intentional act of

attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world. (Van Manen, 1990:5)

The function of theory is to give order and insight to the research activities, while the function of methodology represents the principal ways that researchers investigate their environment through, for example, in-depth interviews (Denzin, 1989). In qualitative research this process is inescapably tied with human experience because it is a person's interaction with their environment and society that is the nature of the research. Kvale (1996) reminds researchers that if they want to effectively understand the worlds of other people then they must talk to them. Therefore, the choice of a qualitative research method is appropriate to use when exploring the depth, meaning and interpretation of music in the lives of older people. A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to gather a rich tapestry of descriptions and life experiences that can highlight and describe the meaning of music in the lives of older people. This understanding is achieved by analysing the individual reality in terms of his or her personal views, reflective meanings, life experiences, and the person's need for music in his or her life.

Qualitative research is firstly, about the researcher uncovering the feelings, thoughts and perceptions that people experience in the context of their daily lives. Secondly, it is about how these thoughts, feelings and perceptions influence their actions. The focus is not to reveal causal relationships, but 'to discover the nature of the phenomena as it is humanly experienced' (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995:7). For example, this study is concerned with the particular aspects of older people's lives that are affected by music. Thus, the study is specifically focused upon older people's thoughts, feelings and perceptions of music.

The main intellectual undercurrents of qualitative research are phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and *verstehen* (understanding) (Bryman, 1995). The uniting strand of these intellectual traditions is their attempt to describe and provide insights into the inner world and behaviour of people. The sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism provides an appropriate conceptual foundation to contemplate the breadth of the music experience in terms of human behaviour and interaction as experienced by the informants. This conceptual perspective observes society as being a loose arrangement of heterogeneous groups. It is based on the assumption that the organisation of social life develops from within society and out of the processes of interaction between individual members of society (Charon, 2001)

Symbolic interactionist theory

Blumer (1969) described the concept of 'social psychology' as being largely interested in the social development of the individual. The primary task of this type of research is to study how individuals develop socially as a result of their interaction with themselves and others (Wallace & Wolf, 1991). It was Blumer (1969) who formulated the phrase 'symbolic interaction'. He was an ardent follower of the philosopher, George Mead, who had earlier developed the concept of 'self'.

Mead (1934) believed that the *self* is an acting organism and not a passive receptacle in life. He developed a perspective that regards the individual as an active and thinking being. The person is also creative, self-directing and defining, and has the ability to use symbols and define his or her environment to create a

unique place within which he or she live (Charon, 2001). In summary, people respond to their environment, define it, act toward it and use it. These are the basic tenants of symbolic interaction. Meaning and significance of events in the everyday world are selected by the reflective mind and thus help to shape our lives by influencing our own actions and the actions of other people with whom we interact (Charon, 2001). Wild (1985)) paraphrases this perspective by stating that it is via the internal conversations and putting yourself in the shoes of others that individuals make sense and organise their lives. This provides an important framework to begin to understand how people may use their very common, divergent experiences and interpretation of events to derive a particular significance of how music can contribute to quality of life.

Blumer (1969) expanded Mead's work and concluded that the meaning of experience develops from social interaction between people. It is through social interaction that individuals come to interpret each other's behaviour through shared meanings. This shared interaction ultimately influences an individual's personal internal thoughts, emotions and social behaviour (Wallace & Wolf, 1991). The meaning for the individual comes from the processes of social interaction and interpretation. Blumer's interpretations of Mead's work on *self* and his fundamental premises of symbolic interaction are summarised as follows:

- (i) people act towards things on the basis of meanings associated with them,
- (ii) meanings are a product of social interaction, and
- (iii) meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process.

Blumer (1966; 1969) stressed that people do not live in a world of pre-constituted objects with intrinsic natures, but in a world of objects created through the process

of human perception and cognition. The meanings people have for objects are neither universal nor fixed (Hammersley, 1989). This conceptualisation of reality and meaning is particularly important, as this study attempts to focus on how people give meaning to music in their lives, identifying the key functions of music as defined by the informants via their own experiences and human interaction.

The nature of *self* in symbolic interactionist theory

Mead (1934:173) states the 'essence of the self' is essentially cognitive because it is closely associated with a person's internal dialogue. It lies in the internalised conversations of gestures that constitute thinking, and the thoughts and reflection processes that follow. Taylor (1991:111) follows up this concept by stating that 'our notion of the self is related to, one might say constituted by, a certain sense (or perhaps a family of senses) of inwardness...The unconscious is for us within, and we think of the depths of the unsaid, the unsayable, the powerful inchoate feelings and affinities and fears which with us the control of our lives, as inner'. Thus, to think is 'to speak to one's *self*, to continuously point things out, to sometimes reflect, to carry on conversation toward that social object called *self* in identically the same manner as one speaks to others', according to Charon (2001:80).

Blumer (1966:535) states that 'the possession of *self* provides the human being with a mechanism of self-interaction with which to meet the world – a mechanism that is used in forming and guiding' his or her own conduct. As a social object, the *self* is constantly changing for the individual because it continues to be defined and redefined in social interaction. This is because in one particular situation it may be used in one way and in another situation quite differently. It is the social

interaction that defines and influences how a person acts toward him or her *self* (Charon, 2001). A person develops a *self-concept* of him or herself that becomes enduring and is evolved over time. Rosenberg (1979: ix) defines the *self-concept* as the 'totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself or herself as an object'.

Gergen (1991) states that the concept of self becomes evident when people are disclosing their life stories. Giddens (1991:52) states that 'identity of the self ...presumes reflexive awareness'. It is what the individual is conscious of in terms of self-consciousness. To be a person is to have a concept of a person as it applies to *self* and to others. Therefore, self-identity is something that has to be 'routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual'. It is not so much found in behaviour or in the reaction of others. Instead, it is observed in a person's ability to maintain a particular narrative that 'continually integrates events that occur in the external world and at the same time sorts them into the ongoing story about *self*' (Giddens, 1991:53).

Alasuutari (1997) suggests that individuals use life-story narration and autobiographical accounting, much like Giddens' (1991) concept of reflexive awareness, to construct their individuality. It is in this way that continuity develops over time and how *self* is discursively accomplished. When individuals tell a story of themselves, he or she is giving a presentation of *self*. It is consistent with life events and is intended to make specific points about the individual.

While a person is in the physical world, his or her *self* is not. It is essentially part of social reality and is a construction by which he or she lives his or her life. This

also allows individuals to reconstruct and redefine *self* over time as reflections change (Alasuutari, 1997). For example, DeNora (1999) suggests that music is used by people as a resource for constructing self-identity and to also create and maintain a diversity of emotions. Her studies reveal that individuals are not just passive listeners that are influenced by the music they are engaged with, but actively construct their own ability to be emotionally moved. DeNora also reveals that people use music 'to regulate, enhance, and change qualities and levels of emotion. They show considerable awareness about the music they need to hear in different situations and at different times to influence aspects of themselves and their self concepts' (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001a:10-11).

Phenomenology: ways of knowing

An important contemporary writer on phenomenology has been the Dutch educationalist Van Manen. He has written two major texts that describe and document a phenomenological methodological approach (Van Manen, 1990; Van Manen, 1984). Van Manen's approach has often been described as combining the features of descriptive phenomenology (that is, the description of the phenomena) and interpretative phenomenology (which is the interpretation of the meaning) (Moyle, 1997).

Phenomenology is the study of the life world according to Van Manen (1990). It is concerned with the world as people immediately experience it and before it is reflected upon, categorised and conceptualised (Husserl, 1970). Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990, Van Manen, 1984). Phenomenology does not so much offer research scientists a theory based philosophy, but rather a possible

insight into the direct world and lives of people, and is about the 'science of essences' or phenomenal objects and how they appear (Shand, 1994:239). Essences are essentially the phenomena of consciousness, and meaning is captured by an understanding and exploration of the essence.

Husserl's writing on phenomenological research focuses on two central issues. These issues firstly include the notion of *intentionality* which he believed was the basis to all cognitive experience, and secondly, the notion of the *noematic* and *noetic* foci of *intentionality* (Sokolowski, 2000; Spinelli, 1995). Intentionality is considered to be the first and most basic interpretative mental act. That is, the act of 'translating the unknown raw stimuli of the real world which our senses have responded to, into an object based reality' (Spinelli, 1995:11). According to Shand (1994:235), 'the intentional object is that object of one's attention in a mental act', and that every mental act is directed towards an object.

Husserl suggests that truth is to be found in the *self*, and that it is the *self* that must find the truth, which Solomon (1988:137) states is a double role in terms of subjectivity. This is because *self* is both the 'locus of truth and as its discoverer'. In short, this particular study does not assume that there is a single definition of the meaning or use of music in the lives of older people and that music, regardless of style or form, can hold different relevance, purpose and meaning for different people.

A qualitative study

Spinelli (1995:1) states that as human beings, 'we attempt to make sense of all our experiences'. Through our mental acts, we strive to impose meaning upon the world as we live life, and as a result, 'we are led ineluctably to an underlying issue which poses the most basic of all philosophical questions: What is real?'

A qualitative approach allows us to explore and describe the meaning and social reality of the informant's experience. The experience of music, like music itself, does not readily lend itself to statistical reduction. The study is about the exploration of people's 'inner worlds' (Nagler & Lee 1999:35) and using a qualitative framework will provide:

- in-depth exploration and description of the experience of music in older people's lives,
- gives voice to older people's personal perception and meaning of music, and
- discusses and reflects upon the effect and meaning of music in their lives.

Our understanding of life comes from our sensory experience of phenomena and it is this experience that needs to be described, explicated and interpreted so that people can make sense of the world. There is no separate or objective reality, only a person's experience that after reflection provides them with meaning (Patton 1990). This particular approach to qualitative research differs from other 'descriptive' methods because the focus is on the informant's experienced meaning, instead of describing their actions or behaviour. It has its grounding in the teaching and writing of Edmund Husserl, who was one of the first theorists to use the term 'phenomenology'.

The term 'phenomenology' is a compound word derived from the Greek words *phainomenon*, which means appearance (the plural being *phainomena*) and *logos* (Shand, 1994: 237). Thus, phenomenology means the giving of an account (*logos*) of different phenomena in terms of the different ways that things may appear to us (Sokolowski, 2000: 13). According to Spinelli (1995:2), philosophers generally define the word *phenomena* to mean 'the appearance of things as contrasted with the things themselves as they really are'. Thus, the world as people experience it, is a phenomenal world. For example, (Sokolowski (2000) suggests that pictures and photos (as opposed to simple objects), events that are part of people's memories has associated meaning and importance. This would also include the experience of music. Phenomenology is thus the science of consciousness and intentional objects. 'It consists of laws based on meanings which describe the necessary structural or formal features of appearance of various sorts' (Shand, 1994:237).

Husserl's most basic philosophy was that people can only know about life as they experience it through their senses and consciousness (Wallace & Wolf 1991; Patton 1990). Polkinghorne (1989:43) summarises Husserl's philosophic concept when he writes:

Experience, as it is directly given, occurs at the meeting of person and the world ... it is a reality that results from the openness of human awareness to the world, and it cannot be reduced to either the sphere of the mental or the sphere of the physical.

Reality is what people perceive it to be, and that the subject matter of phenomenology includes consciousness, experience, the human life world and human action (Aldridge, 1996; Kvale, 1996). It is the experience that must be

described, explicated and interpreted, and often the description and interpretations of the experience are so intertwined that they become one (Patton 1990). Phenomenology is a methodological approach that encompasses a variety of doctrines, but its most basic premise and focus is concerned with describing people's conceptions of reality and experience, and comparing and systemising these descriptions and perceptions (Sokolowski, 2000; Spinelli, 1995; Svensson, 1994).

Van Manen (1990) states that we cannot reflect on lived experience while we are living through the experience and, therefore, reflection from a phenomenological perspective is retrospective and recollective. It is Van Manen's (1990:23-34) approach to phenomenological research that has been incorporated into this study because the research is about the meaning and description of the experience of music in the lives of older people that is the subject of this study. This includes:

- (i) *Seeking out the very nature of the phenomenon; that is the essence without which it could not be what it is.* These are the core meanings that are mutually understood by the informants in their reflective understanding of the meaning and importance of music in their lives, as well as looking for deeper meanings and descriptions for the individuals.

- (ii) *Systematically uncovering and describing the internal meaning and structures of lived experience.* An essence may only be understood by a study of the particulars of people's lived experience. It is the assumption of essence that culture exists and is important (Patton 1990). This is achieved by reading the transcripts and listening to the recorded interviews to produce clear, precise and systematic descriptions of the meaning that Polkinghorne (1989:44) refers to as 'the activity of consciousness'.

- (iii) *Attempting to describe and interpret people's meaning with a certain degree of depth and richness.* This is achieved by focusing the informant during the interview on describing and reflecting upon his/her personal experiences of music in their life. The focus of the analysis is then to describe the many different ways people use music, and how it assists them to achieve positive ageing and well-being.

- (iv) *By reduction, approaching the study without presuppositions or prejudices.* This is referred to by phenomenologists as 'bracketing', or suspension of presuppositions (Polkinghorne, 1989; Spinelli, 1995). It is also known as the rule of *epoche* (Spinelli, 1995:17). Husserl referred to this concept as the researcher 'exploring a phenomenon but at the same time placing aside one's knowledge or presumptions of the phenomenon' (Husserl, 1970:33-42). When the rule of *epoche* is engaged, what remains is 'only what is certain and necessary about objects' of our consciousness (Shand, 1994:238).

- (v) *Using reflection to focus the informants on their particular experiences of music throughout their lives.* For example, asking the informants to talk about their life experiences and the associations that they see as associated with the importance of music in their lives.

- (vi) *Being explicit about meanings and interpretations.* The study attempts to articulate the structures and meanings behind the social construction of the use and place of music to enrich people's lives that are provided in the interviews. For example, people spoke of music in terms of connection. So what exactly is this concept of *connection*? What are the different perceptions

and understandings of connection, and how does music relate how people connect in their lives?

(vii) *Validating the described phenomenon by getting feedback from the participants.* The participants in the study will have the opportunity to read the research report and give feedback as to the validity and accuracy of the data.

(viii) *Being attentive in the practice of 'thoughtfulness' that includes deep reflection on the meaning of the whole experience.* Van Manen (1990:12) states that the word 'thoughtfulness' most aptly characterises phenomenology as it is the 'heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living of what it means to live life'. As a music educator, gerontologist and social researcher I am particularly interested in knowing how older people use music in their lives and how music can contribute to their quality of life, health and well-being.

(ix) *Exploring and describing the phenomenon through the examples provided by the informants.* Phenomenology is often described as the science of 'examples', and by providing examples of lived experience the reader should have a broader and more comprehensive understanding of music in the lives of older people. For example, asking people to speak about the concepts of beauty, spirituality, self expression and emotion. It is the 'what', 'how', 'where' and 'when' of the informant's experience of music.

Conclusion

These premises form the key conceptual arguments that shape the collection and analysis of the data in this study. The focus of the study is to describe how older people use music in their lives and to describe and document the different ways music impacts on the informant's life. The research is concerned with the how and why music is so important to these older people and aims to provide detailed and diverse description of how music is used to enrich their lives. This study is also concerned with understanding the ways people use music and what particular functions that music serve in people's lives. Thus, a qualitative theoretical framework and methodology is adopted to explore the depth and meaning of such experience. Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative methodology used to collect the data, provides profiles of the informants, and discusses the analysis techniques used to collect, interrogate and interpret the data for meaning and emerging themes.

Chapter 4

Research Design

It is music's lofty mission to shed light on the depths of the human heart.

Robert Schumann (1810-56) (Shapiro, 1978:198)

Introduction

The study collects data about how meanings of music are constructed in older people's lives. A qualitative research design allows the researcher to understand how a person defines reality from his or her own socially based interpretation (Charon, 2001). Denzin (1971:166-67) states that it is important to understand the definitions of people's actions even if it means asking them for 'retrospective accounts of past actions'. This chapter will now describe the research design and data collection procedures used in this study.

Hermeneutic principles are applied to interpret the life world of the informant, and search for descriptions and meanings of how music is and has become important in the lives of older people. Van Manen (1990:10) states that a person can only reflect on *lived experience*, that is, that people can only draw personal meaning from lived experience after they have lived it. The research is specifically concerned with descriptions, process, and meanings. Through the process of data collection the study attempts to capture the informant's descriptions, thoughts, feelings and experiences about music.

All the informants were asked to reflect on the importance and meaning of music in their lives. The data collected did not discriminate or even assume a particular interest in terms of music style or taste on the part of the informant. Thus, the study does not seek to ascertain the informant's particular interest in musical style such as classical, jazz, folk or other classified styles

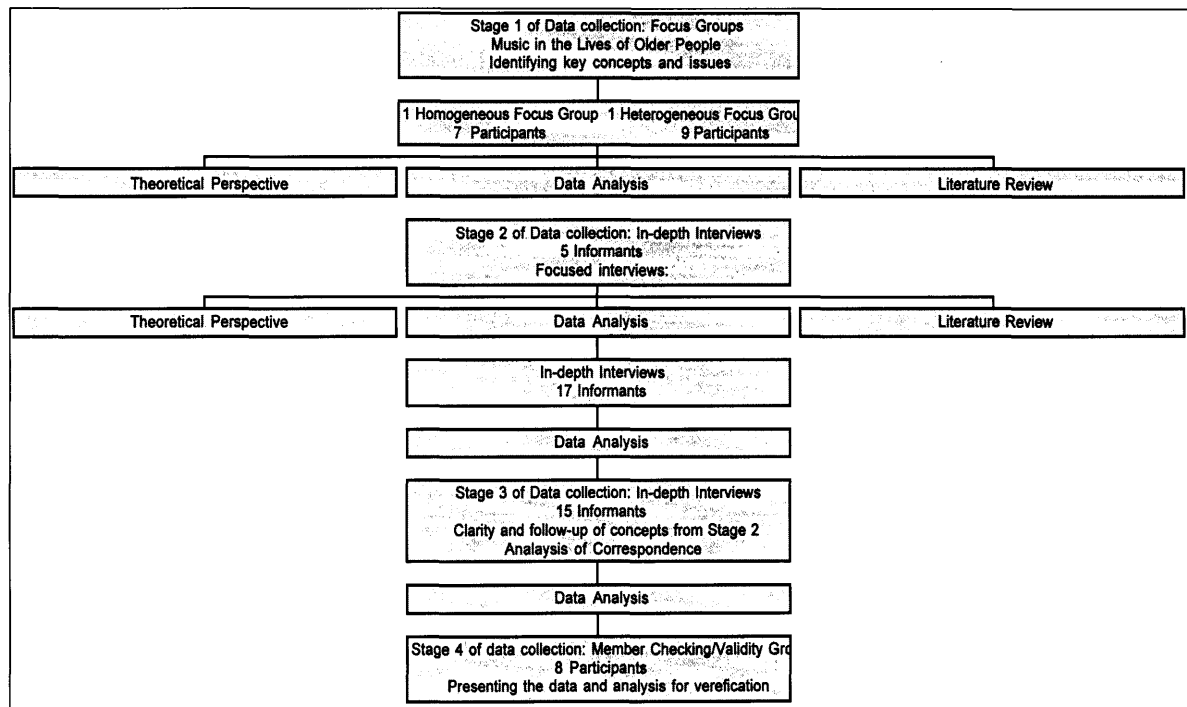
Ethics application

Before beginning any field research, the researcher applied for ethical clearance through the University of New England to carry out the study. The University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee gave approval (HE 990154) in October 1999 to undertake the research. Appendix I documents the content and context of the ethics application.

Data collection

Figure 4.1 outlines the chronological flow of the data collection and analysis that applied some of the methodological techniques and processes of *grounded theory* to ensure rigour in the development of themes emerging from the data. The study begins with two focus groups. Reading the relevant research and theory literature co-occurred while collecting and analysing data. The figure also outlines the pattern of the data collection that included focus groups interviews, in-depth interviews in three sequential field excursions, and a final validity checking focus group interview. The figure shows the number of informants interviewed and the data analysis process that took place in each round of data collection.

Figure 4.1: Data collection flow chart



Conducting in-depth interviews and analysing the data following each stage of the data collection process (refer to Figure 4.1) provided the opportunity for closer examination of the data and collecting more descriptive accounts of the meaning of music in the subsequent interviews. This process of integrating data collection with analysis also resulted in three modes of enquiry happening at the same time. These included *induction*, which allowed the researcher to follow an idea or concept that presents itself in the data, and *deduction* and *verification*, where the researcher after identifying key concepts sought further clarification, description and detail of issues and topics (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The *inductive method* of data collection requires the researcher to analyse the data as it is collected, and for the results of the analysis to be fed back into future data collection (Browne & Sullivan, 1999:603). As the study progressed and the categories and themes emerged, the sampling allowed for further elaboration and

insights for each of the categories or themes raised by the informants. For example, following up on the ideas of well-being, connection or spirituality and how these related to music in people's lives. It is also interesting to note from the researcher's perspective that, as the study progressed, the content of the interviews began to have more depth. This was partly attributed to using a better interviewing technique on the part of the researcher, and the interviews being more focused with richer descriptive data provided by the informants.

An important aspect of the data collection was the concept of *triangulation* that involves the use of different sources to collect data (Smeijsters, 1997:155). Minichiello, Fulton and Sullivan (1999:45) state that *triangulation* 'is the process by which the same issue is investigated in a variety of ways so that different types of evidence are produced to support a particular finding'. It can involve mixing different types of qualitative research methods such as interviews or considering data from different groups in different locations (Berg, 1995). In this study, the researcher interviewed people as well as collecting post-interview written material. At the close of the interview the informants were invited by the researcher to either phone, post, email or fax the researcher any additional information that they thought of after the interview that could be of interest to the study. Five of the informants responded by calling the researcher, and four informants decided to write their thoughts and post them to the researcher.

When determining the total number of participants required for the study, the researcher followed the guidelines of Glaser and Strauss (1967:61-62) relating to 'sampling until saturation of the topic was reached'. Strauss and Corbin (1990:188) suggest that saturation occurs when no new or relevant data seems to

emerge with regards to a topic (in this case, no new data emerged regarding the concept of music in people's lives).

Participants in the study

The informants used in this study were drawn from various backgrounds and included older people who had studied music formally at school, people who had no training in music during the course of their lives, and people who had careers as professional musicians. These professional musicians included performers, teachers, a composer and a music therapist. The informants were drawn from major Australian cities including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Newcastle, and rural and coastal towns, such as Armidale and Coffs Harbour. The total number of informants in this study was 52, comprising 24 women and 28 men.

The study used a convenience sample based on using a number of purposive sampling categories. The sampling categories used included:

- age: 60 years and upwards. The study was specifically interested in people of varying age categories and included the *young* old (60-70 years), *middle* old (70-80 years), and the *old* old categories (80 years and above) (Powell, 1998).
- gender: that there was a balance in the study between male and female informants. Specifically, did men and women experience music differently in their lives, and if so, how was this?
- level of musical expertise: the informant profile ranged from non musically-skilled or musically educated to professional musicians. Is there a difference in these people's experience of music? Is it important to have musical skills for music to have meaning in one's life?

- location: interviewing people living in rural and metropolitan settings. Does geographic residential location have an impact on the meaning and importance of music for older people?

This study recruited informants using the technique of '*snowball sampling*' (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995; Spinelli, 1995) or '*chain*' sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and drew upon people who were either referred to the researcher by other colleagues or, in turn, were referred by informants as the researched progressed. With the informants recommending other possible informants, the researcher was able to gain access to further informants and their networks. **Table 4.1** shows the *snowballing* referral effect where an initial informant referred other informants to the researcher for follow-up. For example, the person in the first column referring other people who are shown in the middle column, and in some cases, these secondary referrals referring a third person.

Minichiello, et al; (1995:161) refers to *snowballing*, as involving 'a group of informants with whom the researcher has made initial contact and asking them to put the researcher in touch with people in their networks'. Examples of *snowballing* include Robert recommending Owen, Bob, Morton, Lloyd, Joe, Fred, Don and Gordon. In some cases, such as Elizabeth, one of her referred informants, Margaret, referred the researcher to other informants including Bunty, Pam, Dolly and Neill.

Table 4.1: The referral of informants by informants showing the snowballing effect

Initial contact person	Referred 2nd person	Referred 3rd person from 2nd person
<i>Robert</i>	<i>Owen</i>	
	<i>Bob</i>	
	<i>Morton</i>	
	<i>Lloyd</i>	
	<i>Joe</i>	
	<i>Fred</i>	
	<i>Don</i>	
	<i>Gordon</i>	
<i>Eileen</i>	<i>John</i>	
	<i>Neville</i>	
	<i>Phil</i>	
<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>Jane</i>	
	<i>Keith</i>	
	<i>Noel</i>	
	<i>Margaret</i>	<i>Bunty</i>
		<i>Pam</i>
		<i>Dolly</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>Frank</i>	
	<i>John</i>	<i>Noreen</i>
	<i>Bev</i>	
	<i>Peter</i>	<i>Patricia</i>
	<i>JuneB</i>	
<i>Carole</i>	<i>Ian</i>	<i>Glenda</i>
<i>JuneP</i>	<i>Keith</i>	

The response rate for this study was 51 participants out of a total 53 who were asked to participate. The reasons given by the two non-respondents were (i) on vacation overseas, and (ii) an interstate commitment.

Stages of data collection

Figure 4.1 outlines the various stages of data collection. This includes the initial stage of data collection with two focus group interviews. With these interviews the researcher sought to clarify and highlight some of the key issues with regard to music in the lives of older people. The first stage of data collection, therefore, centred around exploring the topic with:

- diverse age groups of people,
- different career backgrounds, including professional musicians,
- people who had little and/or no musical training, and
- people who lived in metropolitan centres and rural areas.

Focus groups

Morgan and Krueger (1993) suggest that researchers can gain a clearer understanding of the thinking, language, and reality of the participant's world when they use focus groups. This is because focus group interviews allow the researcher to explore the variation, diversity and/or consensus on a particular topic. St John (1999:420) states that focus groups 'enable analysis of complex behaviour and motivation, access to a large number of opinions, ideas, and beliefs about a research topic, rather than providing information about a number of people who hold a particular view'.

Two focus groups were purposely selected to represent a *homogeneous* and a *heterogeneous* group of informants (as defined below) with the idea that informants would be provided with an open interview, whereby they could interact with each other to explore the depth of meaning and importance of music in their lives. This group interaction also helped to coax informants who were less verbose and less

likely to share their opinions (Mathers & Husang, 1998). The two focus groups consisted of eight participants in each group. Only three of the participants of the focus groups were further interviewed in the study. These three all came from the *homogeneous* focus group. The participants in each focus group were all assured of confidentiality and their names would not be used or made known from the research.

The choice of the *homogeneous* focus group was used to draw upon a group of people who the researcher assumed had a mutual interest in the topic and a commitment to music in their lives because they were actively involved with music and met regularly each week to rehearse. This particular focus group comprised eight members from a Sydney choir who all volunteered to be interviewed. The interview was held in a rehearsal room where the ensemble met each week.

The second focus group was the *heterogeneous* group held in Armidale, New South Wales at a community centre for older people. The group comprised of five women and two men. The people were invited from the larger group of attendees at the centre to participate in a focus group to discuss the role, meaning and importance of music in their lives and that of older people. With this group, the researcher did not assume any particular musical background, affiliation or commitment to music on the part of the informants, although several informants had extensive musical experience in their lives, while the majority had little or no training in music. Thus, the researcher was able to draw a conclusion from this particular data that the phenomenon of music in the lives of older people did not rest solely with the musically trained or practicing musicians.

The reason for choosing the number of participants per focus group was largely because of manageability. St John (1999:423) states, 'a group that is too small may result in less stimulation of ideas and less discussion. A group that is too large may be difficult to manage and it may be hard to ensure that all participants are heard'. Thus, she proposes that focus groups should be approximately seven to ten people per group.

Some of the issues and topics of discussion for both focus groups are outlined in the interview schedule (see Appendix II) that was formulated by the researcher as an initial guide to explore issues that arose from the literature. Both focus group interviews were open-ended to allow free flow of discussion by the participants. In focus group interviews St John (1999:425) states that, 'while it is important to maintain flexibility and to avoid pre-empting discussion, the basic questions and possible prompts need to be identified'. She also states that it is important that questions should be:

- open-ended to help facilitate discussion,
- only a few questions should be used, and
- sufficient time allowed for in-depth exploration of the topics up for discussion.

Tables 4.2 and **4.3** outline the composition of the two focus groups. It shows the names of the people who comprised each group, their age and musical training. In both focus groups, the majority of the participants had no musical training, but shared a common history of singing as a child and being introduced to music by their parents.

Table 4.2: Participant information for the *homogeneous* focus group interviews

Name	Gender	Age	1st Involvement	Family Influence	Training/ Involvement
<i>Owen</i>	m	69	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Bob</i>	m	70	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Morton</i>	m	70	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Lloyd</i>	m	71	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Joe</i>	m	69	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Fred</i>	m	87	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Don</i>	m	68	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur
<i>Gordon</i>	m	75	Childhood sing	Parents	Amateur

Table 4.3: Participant information for the *heterogeneous* focus group interviews

Name	Gender	Age	1st Involvement	Family Influence	Training Involvement
<i>June</i>	f	69	Childhood sing	Parents	Piano lessons
<i>Stan</i>	m	76	Childhood sing	Parents	Piano lessons
<i>Marie</i>	f	71	Childhood sing	Parents	Piano lessons
<i>Zillah</i>	f	72	Childhood sing	Parents	Listening only
<i>Florence</i>	f	79	Childhood sing	Parents	Listening only
<i>Frances</i>	f	76	Childhood sing	Parents	Listening only
<i>Lorna</i>	f	73	Childhood sing	Parents	Listening only
<i>Bill</i>	m	74	Childhood sing	Parents	Listening only

In-depth interviews

Taylor and Bogdan (1984:77) define in-depth interviewing as:

...repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding the informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words.

In-depth interviewing was a way of collecting data that allowed informants to discuss their experience, meaning and the importance of music in their lives. As Minichiello, et al; (1995:61) state, 'it is a means by which the researcher can gain access to, and subsequently understand, the private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold'. The informant is the only person who can articulate and explain the social reality in which he/she lives (Burns, 1995, Spinelli, 1995).

According to Minichiello, Madison, Hays, Courtney and St John (1999), the advantage of in-depth-interviewing is its reliance on a recursive style of interview. This style of interviewing largely focuses on the informant being engaged by the researcher through conversation to provide relevant data by way of recursive questioning from the interviewer. The depth of understanding is achieved by concentrating on the individual's perception of the experience. For example, asking the informants to tell the researcher their story of how music is important in their life.

The majority of the interviews were held in the homes of the informants with five being held in a teaching studio at the Australian Opera Centre, one in a teaching studio at the Faculty of Music, University of Newcastle, two at the recording studios of 2MBS FM in Sydney, and three at the 3MBS FM in Melbourne. When given the option, the researcher suggested that the interview be held in the informant's home so as to provide a more relaxed and familiar environment for the informant. This helped to maximize reflective thought for the informant by decreasing the possible anxiety and stress associated with logistic problems of transport and getting to an alternative place for an interview. All the interviews were from 45 minutes to an hour in duration.

The interviews were informal, with the informants being told that the interview would be an open discussion that centred on the meaning and importance of music in their lives. The interview schedule included open-ended questions that allowed a free-flow of information from the informant on the topic with little interruption from the interviewer. This enabled the interview to follow a more conversational style that facilitated the informant feeling that his or her story was unique. The interview thus placed the life experience of the participant as the focus of the interaction.

The interviews were conducted over a 23 month period, beginning in December 1999 and finishing in early November 2001. The informants were contacted by phone initially and asked to participate in the study, followed by a letter (see Appendix III) outlining the nature of the research. The letter also raised matters of confidentiality and requested the informant to suggest a convenient time for them to meet with the researcher. The informants were told that their identity would remain confidential and only a brief description of their position, age and sex would be used in the informant profiles.

All the interviews were recorded with the permission of the informants (audio tape only) and then transcribed into texts. The reason for recording the interviews was to obtain an accurate verbatim account of the dialogue between informant and researcher. Recording the interviews also allowed the researcher to be more attentive to the informant's verbal and non-verbal dialogues. Thus, the transcripts constituted the material that was interpreted for meaning. Several of the informants were also asked to check their own transcripts for verification of the interview. These included informants Robert, Donald, Elizabeth, Bob, David and

Jane. All six agreed that the transcripts were an accurate record of their interview with the researcher.

Table 4.4 outlines the profiles of the informants who participated in the in-depth interviews. It includes a pseudonym name, age, information about their earliest memories of involvement with music, who they considered their closest family influence, information about the informant's musical training and level of present musical involvement.

The interviews

Perception, according to Rosenfeld and Berko (1990), is the process of becoming aware of objects and events, including one's self. How people perceive themselves forms the basis for their perception of the world. How they perceive the world also affects and reflects how they communicate. Rosenfeld and Berko note that perception is not a passive process. The world offers an infinite variety of details for people to comprehend and interpret. It is the person who determines what they perceive, how they organise the information, and how they interpret it. It is, therefore, the person who is the *cause* for what they perceive. By using in-depth interviewing the researcher has the opportunity to enter the world of the informant and to explore and record the understanding, perspective and meaning of events that effect his/her life.

Table 4.4: Profiles of the informants who participated in the in-depth interviews

Name	Gender	Age	1stInvolvement	Influence	Involvement
<i>Robert</i>	m	73	Childhood Singing	Mother	Professional
<i>Morton</i>	m	71	Childhood Singing	Mother/Father	Amateur
<i>Joe</i>	m	70	Childhood Singing	Mother	Amateur
<i>Don</i>	m	70	Childhood Singing	None	Professional
<i>Donald</i>	m	90	Childhood Singing	Mother	Professional
<i>Bunty</i>	f	74	Childhood Singing	Parents	Listening only
<i>Neville</i>	m	72	Childhood singing	Father	Amateur
<i>Eileen</i>	f	71	Music Less/singing	Mother	Professional
<i>Bob</i>	m	67	Teenager/Concerts	None	Listening only
<i>Elizabeth</i>	f	68	Singing/school	Church	Listening only
<i>Noel</i>	m	68	Child Mus Less	Parents	Listening
<i>Jane</i>	f	72	Teenager	None	Listening only
<i>Dennis</i>	M	73	Child	Mother	Professional
<i>John</i>	m		High School	Teacher	Amateur
<i>Margaret</i>	f	68	Child/mus/lessons	School	Amateur
<i>Keith</i>	f	65	Child sing/teens	Grand parents	Amateur
<i>June</i>	f	73	Child sing/mus less	Parents	Amateur
<i>Mildred</i>	f	98	Child music lessons	Father	Professional
<i>Hal</i>	m	73	Child music lessons	Mother	Professional
<i>Kevin</i>	m	69	School Singing	None	Listening only
<i>Phil</i>	m	67	School mus lessons	None	Amateur
<i>Maureen</i>	f	68	Childhood singing	Parents	Listening only
<i>Pam</i>	f	67	Child sing/mus less	Parents	Amateur
<i>Joan</i>	f	69	Child/music less	Parents	Amateur
<i>Julie</i>	f	62	Child/music less	Parents	Professional
<i>Margot</i>	f	69	Child/sing	Parents	Listen/sing
<i>Frank</i>	m	64	Child/music less	Grandparents	Semi-professional

Table 4.4: Profiles of the informants who participated in the in-depth interviews continued

<i>Glenda</i>	f	78	Child sing /mus less	Grandparents	Professional
<i>Ian</i>	m	67	Child sing /mus less	Parents	Semi-professional
<i>Carole</i>	f	65	Child singing	None	Listening only
<i>James</i>	m	68	Child Concerts	School friends	Amateur
<i>Peter</i>	m	74	Child Music Less	Parents	Professional
<i>Patricia</i>	f	75	Child Piano Less	Parents	Listening only
<i>David</i>	m	72	Child Piano Less	Father	Listening only
<i>Bev</i>	f	68	Child Piano Less	Father	Listening only
<i>May</i>	f	72	Child/music less	Parents	Amateur
<i>Noreen</i>	f	90	Child Piano Less	Parents	Listening only
<i>Graham</i>	m	68	Childhood	Parents	Listening only

This approach is much like the counselling approach advocated by Rogers (1970), where the client's lead can structure the counselling session or, in this case, the interview. It requires analytical listening skills on the part of the interviewer who may be led by the informant to new and unexpected topics or insights associated with the research question that the researcher had not considered to be relevant prior to the interview.

The interviews included an interview schedule specifically comprised of open-ended questions designed to elicit the informant's life experience and personal meaning of music in their lives. For example; *'Tell me about the importance of music in your life'* or *'Tell me about your earliest recollections of music in your life.'*

The focus of the interview was on the personal meaning of the informant's experience of music. The interview schedule was designed to focus the

informants on their own experiences, and also the meaning that they assigned to music in their lives. These questions often led to further focused exploration of the topic as raised by the informant. For example, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, participants raised the concept of beauty and the associated links that beauty held for them with regards to spirituality.

The interview schedule was developed and refined as the number of interviews proceeded and incorporated techniques described by Minichiello et al. (1999:399) as *funnelling*, where the questions were general and broad such as 'tell me about music in your life', to *story telling*, where the questions were specifically to elicit the informant's personal story. For example, 'tell me how you knew at an early age that you wanted to be a professional musician'. Other questions such as *probing* questions were designed to elicit further details or clarification than provided with the original question. An example of a probing question is: 'you spoke about music as being a sensual experience. Can you tell me what you meant with some examples of how music is sensuous for you?'

These questions formed the basis of the interview guide, although the guide was not fixed in its structure of questions or answers, and was part of an evolving process dependent upon the questions identified as relevant as a result of the on-going data collection. The interview schedule was designed by the researcher so the questions would be sequential and developmental, thus focusing the informants to disclose relevant information regarding life experiences with regard to the meaning and importance music in their lives. This required the informants to reflect on the meaning and the importance of music in their daily lives, the ways music functioned in their life, and the perceived benefits or being engaged in music making or listening.

The interview schedule was revised, edited and developed as the interviews and data collection progressed. Thus in the later interviews, the researcher adopted what Seale (1998:206) describes as a *topic guide* rather than an interview schedule. An example of this included topics such as identity, well-being, spirituality, beauty, connection and so on. These guides functioned as an aid or checklist for the researcher and links directly back to the analysis of previous data.

The interview schedule questions reflect Patton's (1990) summary of question types that are geared to collect information on different aspects of informants' knowledge and experience of music in the lives of older people. These included questions that were directly associated with:

- (i) experience and behaviour (eg, *'In what ways has music been important in your life?'*);
- (ii) opinion and values (eg, *'Why has music become so important to you?'*);
- (iii) knowledge (eg, *How did you know that music was something that you wanted to pursue in life?'*);
- (iv) senses (eg, *You talked about music being sensual. Can You tell me more about that and give me some examples of how it is in your life? Or How does music contribute to your sense of well-being?'*);
- (v) demographics and background (eg, *tell me about your musical training, or at what age did you first realize that music was special in your life?'*); and
- (vi) time frame (eg, *When did you first realize that music was something that you couldn't live without?'*).

Kvale (1996:133-135) suggests that researcher interviewers follow the technique used by therapists whereby they do not constantly fire questions at the participant but allow time for reflection and consideration. He also suggests using questions that include *interpreting questions* that paraphrase the informant's words so that there is greater clarification and less room for doubt. Such a question might be, 'so you consider spirituality to be linked with beauty. What do you mean by that exactly?' These types of questions are often synonymous with *probing questions* where the interviewer is looking for greater depth of explanation.

During the process of the interview the informants were able to articulate and reflect upon their feelings, meaning and experience. It was Van Manen (1990:10) who proposed the theory that people give meaning to their life experiences only after they have lived through them and when they reflect on them. The reflection is not *introspective*, but rather *retrospective*. In this case, the focusing process enables the researcher to identify core themes and categories that constitute the meaning and experience of music in these people's lives (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). This process often focuses informants to reflect and articulate the meaning and experience of music in their lives that until now may have only been part of their subconscious, or because to date they had not given extended thought to the topic.

It is interesting to note that many of the informants experience a sense of *avoir l'esprit de l'escalier* (Steiner, 1980:153). This was evident when upon finishing the interview the participant often remembered particular events, experiences or aspects that might be of interest to the research once the tape recorder is turned off. As a result, the researcher was always mindful that the interview was not

always completely finished and was ready to restart recording after-thoughts of the informant if needed.

Phenomenology: method and practice

Phenomenology is 'the description of lived-through quality of lived experience' and also the 'description of meaning of the expressions of lived experience' (Van Manen, 1990:25). Therefore, the essential applied methodology for the researcher is description and interpretation (Heidegger, 1962). In the case of this particular study, it is the *description* of the experience of the meaning and function of music in the lives of older people through the interpretation of the transcribed interviews.

Van Manen (1990:29) states that the methodology of phenomenology is that it 'posits an approach to research that aims at being presuppositionless' and that what is most paramount in doing hermeneutic phenomenological human science research is scholarship. Phenomenological research is a dynamic interplay between six particular research activities (Van Manen, 1990:30-31). These are:

- turning to a phenomenon that is of interest and commits us to the world,
- investigating experience that is lived rather than that which is conceptualised,
- reflecting on essential themes that characterize the particular phenomenon,
- describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting,
- maintaining a focused pedagogical approach to the particular phenomenon, and
- balancing the research context by considering the *parts* and the *whole*.

Spinelli (1995:28) states that phenomenological method is the 'science of experience', and so the researcher was mindful of following the codes of practice as suggested by Husserl (1970), Van Manen (1984; 1990), and Sokolowski (2000) that require the researcher to *bracket* or suspending his or her own prejudices and beliefs when conducting the research.

Validation and verification

As shown in **Figure 4.1** the fourth stage of the data collection involved validation and verification of the analysis. The analysis focussed on a thematic analysis of the transcripts recorded through interviews with the participants. This was achieved firstly, by constant re-examination and cross checking of meaning and categories with the transcripts through referencing to individual transcripts or the transcripts as a collective set by the researcher. Secondly, the meanings were also cross-checked with the informants as the data collection proceeded. There were four rounds of interviews and within each round, validation and further clarification was sought by the researcher from the informants by asking them to clarify or further expand on particular issues or ideas. For example, participants spoke of *spirituality* and the connection of music. As the interviews progressed, the researcher sought clarification and crossed checked people's meaning of the term *spirituality*.

Gerber (1996:24) reminds researchers that analysis of data will maintain a sense of truthfulness if the researcher understands the philosophy that underpins each of the specific interpretive methods that they use, and if they employ the following set of hermeneutic principles when analysing the transcripts. These include:

- orienting the analysis toward the phenomenon,
- describing the phenomenon as it is experienced and appears to the informants,
- treating all aspects of the informants' responses as being of equal importance,
- checking the data for structural features that demonstrate the linkages amongst the different variation or the general similarities. In phenomenological studies this perspective results in the development of essences of experience, or in the case of phenomenography, categories of description, and
- using intentional variation as a basis for testing the clarity of the conceptions or meanings of the experience of a phenomenon.

The analysis of the data was also validated by discussing the researcher's findings of the study with a validation group comprising of people who had participated in the in-depth interviews. This formed the fourth and final stage of the data collection process (see **Figure 4.1**).

Minichiello, Fulton and Sullivan (1999:45) refer to this concept as participant endorsement, while others refer to the process as member checking (Roberts & Taylor, 1998:181; Smeijsters, 1997:19). This is where the informants are consulted with regards to the findings of the research for verification. This has a two-fold purpose, as it firstly allows the participants to feel included in the outcome of the research report, and secondly, it checks the validity of the researcher's findings with the informants with regard to recording the true essence of the participants' lives and experiences.

The research categories and findings were also given to four research colleagues for objective verification feedback. These included two professors with specialized skills in qualitative research, one professor with expertise in gerontology and a researcher with a background in music therapy. This is known as peer checking where professional peers of the researcher are asked to give feedback on the coding, data descriptions and meanings to the researcher (Smeijsters, 1997:20). All four colleagues agreed that the categories, functions and meanings of music in the lives of older people reflected the essence and breadth of the experience, meaning and importance of music for the older people who participated in the study.

Analysis of the data

The main focus in analysing and interpreting the data from the interviews was to search for the ways in which the informants understood and gave meaning to the importance of music in their life. By using an inductive process of analysis, the patterns, themes and categories emerged from the data and were not imposed prior to data collection or analysis.

Qualitative data analysis involves a detailed examination, interpretation and breaking down of textual data into their descriptive and conceptual elements, and reconstructing those components into a meaningful whole. This was achieved in several ways. Firstly, all the interviews with the informants were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. These transcripts were then examined by the researcher for discreet descriptions and meanings that directly relate to the concept of music in the lives of older people. Each transcript was carefully subdivided up into meaning units as suggested by Mostyn (1985) that consisted of discrete phrases,

sentences or series of sentences that conveyed related sets of perceptions regarding music in the lives of older people. Secondly, the transcripts were then cross-case analysed by comparing and grouping the different meaning units together. This helped to also provide a validity check for the coding of the data.

When beginning to analyse the transcripts the researcher has two primary sources to draw from in organising the analysis according to Patton (1990)). These include, firstly, the questions that were included in the interview schedule and developed during the interviewing process and, secondly, the analytical insights and interpretations that emerged during the data collection.

The interpretation of the texts followed the principles of hermeneutics with the purpose of the interpretation to obtain a valid and common understanding of the meaning of the text (Kvale, 1996). Tonkiss (1998:253) states that texts help provide the researcher with a framework in which to consider *inconsistencies, internal workings* and *small strategies of meaning*. The overall aim, however, must be to be faithful to the text meaning.

Hermeneutic methods aim to decode the expressed meaning of the texts to provide a co-understanding of the phenomenon experienced by the informant. According to Radnitzky (1970:23-30), the interpretation of meaning is characterised by a hermeneutical circle that centres around seven canons. These canons are summarized as follows:

- the continuous back and forth process between the parts and the whole of the text,

- interpretation of meaning is reached when there are is a lack of inner contradictions,
- the testing of part interpretations against the global meaning of the text,
- the autonomy of the text where the text is understood on the basis of its own frame of reference,
- the researcher's knowledge about the theme of the text,
- the interpretation of the text is not pre-suppositionless as the interviewer and informant both contribute to the text, and that
- every interpretation should involve innovation and creativity to bring forth new differentiation and interrelations within the text.

Informants spoke about their personal experiences of music and how they used music in their lives. The understanding of the text takes place through a process where the meaning of the separate parts is determined by the global meaning of the text, as it is anticipated by the researcher. The closer determination of the meaning of the separate parts may also come to change the originally anticipated meaning of the totality, and this again may influence the meaning of the separate parts. An example of this is the concept of *connection*, where many of the informants spoke about music at one level as being a medium to help them connect with other people, and at another level music as functioning to connection to such things as memories, spirituality, beauty, relationships, events, emotions and lifestyle.

These meaning units were then collated and categorised according to similarities and differences. The data were organised in terms of the following categories: general descriptions and definitions, the different functions of music, the personal need and importance of music, the psychological and physiological impact of

music on the informants, spirituality, stimulus and aesthetics. At this point there is a process of convergence whereby the researcher decides which concepts fit together and which are related (Guba, 1978).

Coding

Open coding

The coding process followed the technical guidelines of Strauss and Corbin (1998). The initial process of coding is known as open coding, whereby each line of the transcript file was analysed. This involved examining each line, each phrase and sentence for meaning. Often the coding centred around a single word that was descriptive, for example 'beauty', 'spirituality' or 'memory' and at times was related to the focus of the discussion found within the entire paragraph of the transcript, for example 'connection'. The coding of the concepts and the abbreviations used in organising the data of each transcript can be seen in **Table 4.5**. The table includes concepts relating to meanings, experience, processes and functions.

Using this system the transcript files were then sorted in order according to the various categories. The analysis transcript consisted of discrete categories with a range of meaning units sorted within each category. These categories were then double-checked by the researcher so that the meaning units did adequately fit the categories. At this point it became clear that some units were applicable to one or more category depending on the particular issue or function of music for the informant, for example, connection, spirituality, well-being and identity.

Table 4.5: The open coding of concepts and their associated abbreviations used in analysing the data

Accomp Accompanies	Exp Expression	Par Parents
Abst Abstract/abstraction	Ext Extension	Pass Passion
Adv Adventure	Fam Family	Per/Dev Personal/development
Add Addition	Fasc Fascination	Perc Perception
Ageing Ageing/growing older	Feel Feeling	Perf Performance/Performer
Alert Alert	Focus Focussing	Pers Personal
Anticip Anticipation	Friends Friends	Persp Perspective
App Appreciation	Func Function	Phils Philosophy
Appet Appetite	Gro Growth	Phy Physiological
Arr Arousal	Health Health	Play Playing
Assoc Association/s	Hist History	Plea Pleasure
Aware Awareness	Human Humanity	Pow Power
Avoid Avoidance	Hun Hunger	Pray Prayer
Bea Beauty	Id Identity	Pref Preference
Bea/Sp Beauty and spirituality	Imag Imagination	Pro Professional
Calm Calming	Imp Importance	Prom Promoting
Car Career	Incent Incentive	Psy Psychological
Carry Carrying	Indiv Individual	Recreat Recreation
Carth Catharsis	Indu Indulgence	Ref Refuge
Ch Childhood	Inner Inner (self)	Rel Relationships
Ch Choice	Integrat Integration	Relax Relaxation
Ch/Exp Childhood experiences	Ins Insight	Reli Religious/religion
Cha Challenge	Insp Inspiration	Ren Renewal
Change Change	Inst Instrumental/Training	Rep Representation
Child Childhood	Int Internal	Resol Resolution
Choice Choice	Int/Lis Internal listening	Respo Responding
Com Comparison	Int/Sti Intellectual stimulus	Restor Restoration
Comf Comfort	Inte Interests	Reti Retirement
Comp Compliments	Intel Intellectual	Roman Romantic
Compe Competency	Inten Intensity	Revel Revelation
Conc Concerts	Interp Interpretation	Sat Satisfaction
Conn Connection	Inv Involvement	Search Search
Cont Contentment	Isol Isolation	Sec Security
Cope Coping	Issues Issues	Self Self
Creat Creative	Joy Joy	Sense Sense
Cris Crisis	Know Knowledge	Sep Separation
Def Definition	Lang Language	Sex Sexuality
Den Denial	L/L/L Life-long-learning	Shar Sharing
Depress Depression	Lib Liberation	Si Singing
Depr Deprivation	Lif/Rev Life review	Soc Sociology
Des Description	Lif/sav Life saver	Soc/Perp Sociolperspective
Dev Development	Life Life	Soc-Stat Social status
Dim Dimension	Life Life	Soul Soul
Dist Distraction	Lift Lifting	Spi Spirituality
Distres Distress/distressing	Lis Listening	Stab Stability
Educa Education	Log Logic	Sti Stimulus
Escap Escape/escapism	Long Longing	Strive Striving
Effe Effect	Loss Loss	Stru Structure
Ego Ego	Lov Love	Subsc Subconscious
Em/W-b Emotional well-being	Mean Meaning	Ther Therapy
Emot Emotion	Meaning Meaning	Thou Thought
Enco Encouragment	Med Meditation	Ti/Man Time management
Ener Energy	Mem Memory	Time Time
Enhance Enhancing	Meta Metaphors	Train Training
Enj Enjoyment	Metaphy Metaphysical	Trans Transcendental
Ent Entrainment	Mood Mood	Und Understanding
Escap Escapism	Myst Mystery	Unhappy Unhappy
Exc Excitement	Need Need	Vis Vision
Exhil Exhilaration	Net Networks	W-b Well-being
Exist Existence	Opp Opportunity	Youth Youthful/ness
Exp Exploration		

Axial coding

This second process of analysis centred around what Strauss and Corbin (1990:96) describe as *axial coding*. This is the procedure where data are put back together after *open coding* and the researcher begins to make connections between the various categories. *Axial coding* involves focusing on a specific category or phenomenon and the particular conditions that cause the category to exist. It includes looking at the context of the phenomena, the action or interactional strategies by which they are used or managed, and the consequences of these strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is essentially a way of putting the data back together and making connections between a major category and its sub-category.

At this point of data analysis the links between categories and sub-categories began to emerge. This included examining at the micro level the relationships and dimensional properties of the phenomenon of music in the lives of older people. At this point the researcher began questioning what is the relationship between the categories and sub-categories, such as 'what is the link between spirituality and need for beauty in one's life'? or, 'why is it for some people that music is important in terms of their identity'?. It was a stage where the researcher began drawing initial diagrams of categories and trying to see the links as patterns began to emerge in the data.

An example of this initial diagrammatic analysis can be seen in the **Diagram 4.1**. Strauss and Corbin (1998:141) refer to as 'mini-frameworks' where the researcher begins to comprehend and make links with regards to the theoretical structures that arise from analysing the data and by graphing the possible relationships helps he-she to keep the relationships between concepts in mind as the analysing

continues. In **Diagram 4.1** the initial core categories are identified as being *function* (the specific ways people use music) and *self* (ways music provides meaning for people). The sub-categories are the major concepts and phenomena raised by the informants. It must be noted that this diagram was only meant to be an initial conceptual draft of the data. The sub-categories are incomplete at this point and not meant to be ranked in a hierarchical order.

Diagram 4.1. The initial mini-framework of the data analysis for music in the lives of older people

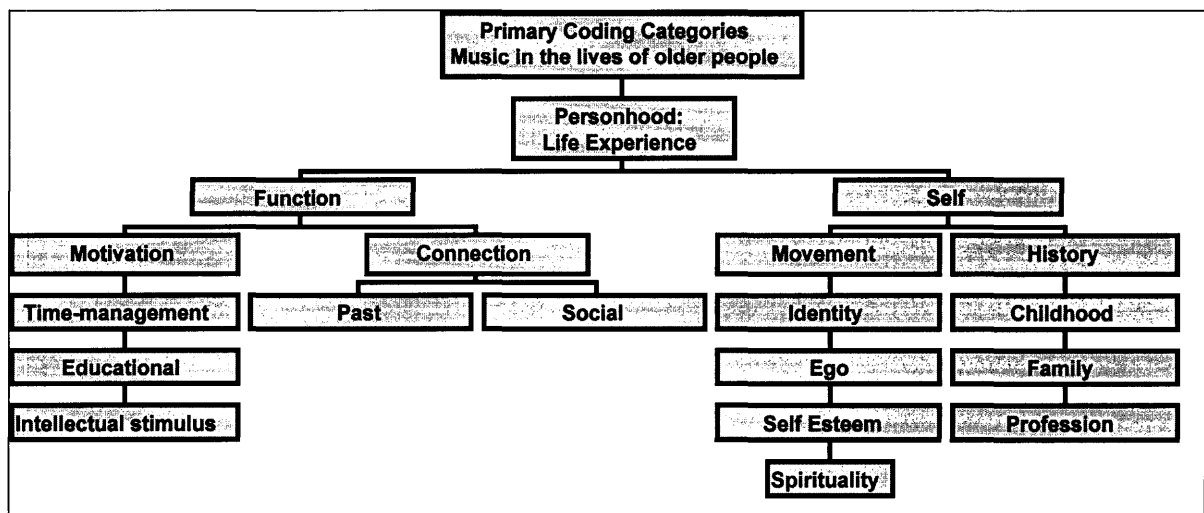


Table 4.6 outlines the secondary and axial coding developed from the open coding when analysing the data. In the *axial* coding column there are a grouping of the sub-categories that directly link with each other and to the *secondary* categories. For example, the psychological and physiological *axial* codes (sub-categories), directly relates to the *secondary* code of well-being which is one of the core codes (categories) of functions.

From this coding emerged the *core categories* of the meaning and importance of music in the lives of the informants. The *core category* is defined as ‘the central

phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:116) and is part of the process of *selective coding*.

Table 4.6: The secondary and axial coding of the data

<i>Core Coding</i>	<i>Secondary Coding</i>	<i>Axial Coding (sub-categories)</i>
FUNCTIONS	<i>Well-being</i>	Psychological Physiological
	<i>Connections</i>	Linking Life Styles People Sharing Beauty & aesthetics Soul, spirit, inner-self Memory - Associations
	<i>Stimulus</i>	Intellectual – demanding Life long learning Challenging - quest Time management Escapism - entertainment - distraction Pain, loneliness, stress
	<i>Spirituality</i>	Private/collective Aesthetics Expressing Experiencing Facilitating
SELF	<i>Identity</i>	Personal Professional Cultural Expression Self and others Linking life stages
	<i>Importance</i>	Ways of knowing Expressing: feelings and emotions
	<i>Spirituality</i>	Expressing Experimenting Facilitating
	<i>Well-being</i>	Psychological Stimulus

Selective coding

One of the main aims when developing this category system was to create a system that remained true to the transcripts by reflecting the concepts discussed during the interviews. *Selective coding* is the last stage of data analysis and linked

to the integration of concepts around a core category and the expansion of categories in terms of refinement and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:236-237). In this case, selective coding centred around the key concepts of *self* and *functions* upon which all the other phenomena and concepts rests.

In the presentation of results, verbatim quotes are used to illustrate and validate particular issues, functions and concepts raised by the informants during the interviews. Sandelowski (1994) supports the use of verbatim quotes because qualitative researchers should have less license to 'embroider' and a greater obligation to report what an informant has said or meant during the course of an interview. By using quotes, researchers gain a greater balance between scientific reporting and artistic license. Patton (1990) further argues that the presentation of actual data upon which the analysis is based helps the reader to make his/her own determination of whether the concept makes sense. It permits the reader to make his/her own analysis and interpretation by being a facilitator, without dominating the analysis. Richardson (1990: 516) makes the important point that the skilful use of quotes adds both to the documentary and aesthetic value of a qualitative research report while drawing more attention to the voices of the informants, who otherwise would remain silent or unheard. 'Quotes privilege individuality and model the diversity within generality' (p.516).

Conclusion

The research methodology used is a qualitative study via in-depth and focussed group interviews. Following the phenomenological interview process, the researcher brackets assumptions and focuses on the informants descriptions of the meaning of music in their lives. The recorded interviews with the informants are then transcribed and coded with the aim of uncovering the meaning, importance

and function that music has for many older people. In the following chapters the data are presented.