



**THE INTERSECTION OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL MUSIC LEARNING  
PRACTICES**

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This paper discusses research concerning formal and informal music learning, how the two types of practices are unique, and how they intersect. It develops the premise that “outside” music endeavors are important to the development of the complete musician, and that music educators can learn from how music is transmitted in informal music learning environments.

Have you ever heard of the IME and FME railway? The FME has a long history of excellence spending 25% of their sales revenue on popular advertisements. At one time, the IME ran on rails that were in obscure locations, although somehow everyone knew where they were. The IME has recently established a new rail system, in many ways much faster and more productive than the FME rails. Their advertising accounts for approximately 2% of their revenues and promotes the excitement of the run with hip, futuristic themes. It is interesting that several owners of these railways own stock in both, and while there may be some conflict of interest, it is a recognized practice and legally

condoned. Often, the two lines move parallel to each other across hill and dale. Occasionally the trains travel very close to each other and passengers wave to each other as they pass. Of course, the lines criss-cross and the engineers communicate with each other so they don't collide. The FME is never crowded; it is elegant, sophisticated, and expensive. The IME is always packed with people, apologetic for what it may lack by comparison, but reasonably priced. Perhaps someday the two systems will consolidate into one.

### **The FME and the IME Railway**

The analogy of riding two rail systems that represent formal music education and informal music education is more closely related to the music practices of music education than the place where these practices exist. Are there two distinct practices? Campbell (2002) stated that “school is *one* (italics added) of the places in which children acquire music. They learn songs and gain other musical knowledge from their music teachers, their classroom teachers, and from other children” (p. 57). Music enculturation occurs in the school and out of the school setting. We participate in all varieties of musical experiences through interactions with our families and friends in “social and religious communities” and mediated through “radio, TV, recordings, videotapes and films, CD-ROMs, and other late-breaking technological avenues” (p. 57).

There are two aspects of formal and informal education that may describe and define how students acquire knowledge in either setting: where the learning occurs, and how it is delivered. Where does each type of education exist? In general, formal education is in a

school and uses established criteria and curricula that may not be in the context for which it will be used. Informal education can take place at home, in the community, outside of the normal school day, mediated, and/or may not be planned. Formal and informal practices use differing processes. Formal education is usually teacher directed whereas informal education is often peer directed, often without a discernable leader. In many informal settings the learner is not making an effort to learn, there is no meta-cognitive action to understand and remember. Researchers use both quantitative and qualitative lenses to examine informal and formal teaching environments and their practices. Creswell (2003) noted that both methods of research are on a continuum and in reality rarely two distinctly different poles.

### **The Formal and Informal Education Environment**

More and more music researchers are looking at informal music learning practices and asking how music is learned and transmitted. How we define the formal setting and practice has implications for the study of the informal scenario. Certainly all the arenas of learning are important to educators. Understanding the full extent of each learning environment will help us to be more successful teachers. Heath (2001) observed that the learning environment that exists outside of the normal school day, whether in the community, or as after school sports activities, has drawn little attention from researchers. While an accepted and often important predictor of achievement, which Heath observed by its importance in college entrance requirements, no attention has been

given to “what extra learning is, how it works, and who is able to participate in it” (p. 10).

Community programs that are offered out-of-school to provide assistance for the development of youth has a base of research that has opened the public’s eye to the benefits of a “third environment” (Heath, 2001, p. 17). The third environment is the “third arena of learning, that which takes place beyond classroom and home, is generally left unattended, minimally supported, and almost completely unexamined” (p. 10). Further, Heath defined the formal environment as one that is governed by teachers, “curricula” and “decontextualized testing” (p. 11).

Resnick (1987) contrasted the differences between formal, in-school learning, and informal, out-of-school work. Her premise was that formal schooling is “a setting in which to learn rules” (p. 15). Students are discouraged from bringing their informally acquired knowledge into this arena; “there is not supposed to be much continuity between what one knows outside school and what one learns in school” (p. 15). Resnick categorized school learning as different from “other learning.” Joiner, Faulkner, Littleton, Miell, and Thompson (2000) specified these differences; they believe that school learning promotes individual achievement and the use of psychological tools, such as language, but generally does not promote the use of technological tools.

Educators’ focus on the informal environment has elicited a rather critical examination of the formal environment. For example, Strauss (1984) defined the formal paradigm of schooling as emanating from the “industrialized West” (p. 195). Western schooling is

“deliberate, carried on out of context; in a special setting outside of the routines of daily life” (p. 195). Bowman (2004) described the formal teaching environment as “frozen” and problematic because there “frequently comes with institutionalized study a degree of technical polish and refinement uncharacteristic of praxis in the field outside” (p. 41).

### **Formal and Informal Education Practices**

As an analytical tool, Mosston and Ashworth (1985) developed a “theoretical structure of the spectrum” (p. 32). Their study revealed six general observational tools used to examine teaching styles. The spectrum is based on a universal or unified examination of teaching styles. The “versus basis” characteristic is one of six observational tools. For example, rote learning as opposed to discovery learning or, in this case, informal music education practice versus formal music education practice. As mentioned, the third environment is another way to categorize the difference between the home and “other” areas of practice.

Green (2002) stated that the delineation of these two practices does not necessarily “imply that these are mutually exclusive social practices” (p. 6-7). However, she concluded that there are “significant differences between the formal and informal approaches to music learning and teaching” (p. 6).

Gardner (1999) defined formal instruction as a “procedure” so that cultures can be “studied, committed to memory, drawn upon when appropriate, and transmitted to the

next generation” (p. 28). He noted that disciplines exist as a means to convey and come to grips with the world and differentiate between formal and informal education by the transmission. Formal education is “remote from where it will ultimately be used” (p. 29). Most significant is his belief that the goal of education in the formal setting is for language acquisition and the “mastery of disciplines” (p. 29).

Strauss (1984) identified informal education as having “ill defined procedures” and “incidental learning,” the learner does not try to remember but is able to because of meaningful, in-context connections. Fornas, Lindberg and Sernhede (1995) described incidental learning as voluntary and not obligatory. The “learning processes can be institutionalised (formalised) or spontaneous (informal),” and “closed or open” (p. 230). Closed processes have goals and curricula plans (p. 230), pupils may not know of these aims and goals but they believe that someone in charge does.

### **The Dichotomy of Formal and Informal Music Education: Environment and Practice**

Formal music practices usually exist in a “special setting.” Informal music learning exists in any community in which there is music. At its most basic level, informal music practices are natural and spontaneous responses to music. There is no evaluation, formal or otherwise, and no teacher direction or guidance. The musical enculturation, influences of parents, and first instruments are all part of the beginning “experiences and opportunities that tend to be in place at the start of the learning process” (Green, 2002, p.

20).

Prouty (2002) described his personal experience as a jazz musician both in and out of formal and informal music education. His experience was that of “an academically-trained jazz musician” (p. 10). Prouty found himself in the awkward position of trying to balance the demands of standardized classroom methods with the creative and non-binding traditional jazz methods. He described the traditional informal transmission methods of jazz music and its placement into formal academic jazz education as contradictory. Despite “tension” and “often-high attrition rates” (p. 10) no one challenged the authorities.

Prouty (2002) discovered that the intersection between informal and formal music education is not clear. Informal music education can be an “out of school” and/or student-led environment. There is usually not a teacher in charge and the music can be one of many styles but probably not classical. The style of music that students learn in an informal setting is often popular music. It would be uncommon to discover a garage band re-creating school band music. Rodriguez (2004) stated that an imitation process exists in both formal and (informal) popular music learning. What sets formal and informal practices apart is the lack of sequence and planning in the informal setting, “in informal learning environments, beginning musicians usually acquire what they can when they can, learning bits and pieces that eventually form entire songs” (p. 17). Further, it is not just the music that is imitated in the informal environment but the images of the pop star

life. Today's musicians do not seem to want to emulate the life and times of Beethoven.

Green (2002) examined popular musicians in informal music settings. She identified the informal music practice in which “young musicians largely teach themselves or ‘pick up’ skills and knowledge, usually with the help or encouragement of their family and peers, by watching and imitating musicians around them and by making reference to recordings or performances and other live events involving their chosen music” (p. 5). She defined formal music education as a system that consists of “educational institutions from primary schools to conservatories, partly involving or entirely dedicated to the teaching and learning of music” (p. 4).

Formal music education practice has historically been associated with teaching classical music. In the last 40 years, a swing toward incorporating a wider variety of music styles has brought about the use of many styles and idioms in the classroom. The music in the informal culture of the Western society has its own network and value system (Green, 2002). It is, for the most part, popular music, transmitted in an aural/oral procedure.

### **An Inspection of the FME and the IME Research**

Szego's (2002) conspectus of ethnographic research has provided an overview of ethnographic practices in music education. She noted that historically music educators have focused on the formal context of teaching and learning predominantly with youth and children. The studies are question driven and influenced, perhaps subtly, by the

“experimental paradigm” (Szego, p. 718).

Bartok (1881-1945), Kodaly (1882-1967), and Blacking (1928-1990) observed informal practices and through scholarly writing and personal transmission of the music, spread the knowledge to the formal teaching community. Just as these scholars blended the music and the practices found in the formal environments with the music they found in the informal cultures of their people, so do researchers of today.

The ultimate aim of any music education research is to improve teaching. If the informal environment is primarily concerned with the transmission of popular music then examination of music learning, in or out of the school, begs the question of whether or not popular music should be taught in our schools. Bowman (2004) acknowledged the use of popular music but asked that teachers understand and “think critically about how and why we do what we do” (p.38). He listed three “educational ends of schooling” (p. 38) as the ultimate rationale for education. They are presented in the table below:

1. Education is concerned with the development of skills, understandings, and dispositions that do not follow easily or naturally from the socialization process alone.
2. Education is concerned with developing and transmitting skills, understandings, and dispositions that are deemed important by society.
3. Educational aim involves preparing students for life by giving them skills that will serve them well. Significant among these in capitalistic democracies are such

attributes as empowerment, independence, self-reliance, critical skills, and the inclination to use them.

Rationale for Education (Bowman, 2004)

Bowman has provided a framework by which to examine the intersection of formal and informal music learning. Each of Bowman's tenets could be categorized under a broader heading. The first rationale is education's relation to the development of musicality. Rationale two is the relation between the culture and transmission within an education setting. Finally, rationale three is the relation between education and democratic attributes. Given that these are legitimate reasons for schooling, using them as a reference to examine informal/formal environments is warranted. Have researchers that have studied the crossroads of informal and formal music education addressed these aims?

**(Rationale 1.) Musicianship and (Rationale 2.) Culture and Transmission**

There has been a sizable amount of research into the practices of the informal environment and the impact on formal music education. Originally, this research was to understand and describe the musicianship and aural/oral traditions of the non-formally trained musician. Bartok and Kodaly, early ethnographers, set out to expose the musical traditions of their cultures and to elevate the musicianship of their countrymen in general.

Beginning in 1905, Bartok's music included the folk traditions he discovered in the folk music of Romanians, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians, Turks, North Africans, and Hungarians. He acknowledged the importance of culture. "The concept of assimilation was integral to Bartok's way of thinking....all agreed that peasant music had to be studied in the field, as it had actually existed, and that life had to be shared with the peasants" (Schonberg, 1981, p. 588).

While the impetus for this research was to improve the skills of the musicians from their homeland, Bartok and Kodaly believed that the transmission of their culture's music was important. They recognized that the function of music in their society was tied to the musicality of their society. They collected songs and were forerunners of the importance of the preservation of a culture's music.

Blacking (1973) was a concert pianist whose career was going nowhere. Discouraged by what critics said, he became interested in anthropology and at the invitation of a friend, went to Africa to work with the Venda Transvaal tribe. Blacking learned to collect songs, analyze them, and study the cultural background and the technical and functional aspects of music within cultures.

Blacking (1973) stated that he could not find one non-musical person in the entire community of the Venda people. Here an entire community was shown to be musical through direct aural transmission. Blacking's personal experience as a classically trained musician gave him a unique perspective on formal versus informal music education. He

believed that all people were able to maintain a level of musicality (Campbell, 1995). The importance of informal practices was the enculturation of all the members of the community. In *How Musical is Man* (1973) he related how the Venda taught him that music is closely tied to the interactions between man and the social setting. He also believed that the function of music in a society promoted musical ability and affected how music was created and practiced by all of the members.

This concept of enculturation is important to informal music practices. It would be hard not to be enculturated with the music of a society. Barring a hearing deficiency, we cannot help but hear the sounds around us. Lucy Green (2002) drew from Blacking's writings, as do many educators in formal practice. The value a society places on music and the ability to make music may be an indication of the level of musicality individuals attain. Green contrasted a baby from a London family banging a spoon on a table, with a Venda baby in South Africa doing the same. Typically, in the London family, the spoon would be taken away. Citing Blacking's studies and observations about the Venda people of South Africa, she says that a child banging an object in a Venda home in South Africa would be warmly approved; others would join in and spontaneously convert the rhythm into other polyrhythms (Jaffurs, 2004).

Nettel's *Music in the Five Towns* (1944) was an early ethnographic study on the subject of music transmission and learning. Nettel investigated the musical culture of six, not five, industrial towns. He chronicled the development of folksong societies, emerging orchestras, and other formally organized groups within the communities of workers who

sang and played for their own pleasure, without any formal instruction or organization. These groups were known by their “popular music.” Nettel criticized the trained musicians’ views of these people and their music. He quoted an “eminent musician” (Nettel, p. 2) who equated social inner city problems with the music they produced. He was uncomfortable with the judgment of their music as being nothing but a “commercial object, of snippets of slang” (p. 2). He concluded that the music of these colorful townfolk was not a sham, but just as important as the better-known music of the cities.

Finnegan’s (1989) ethnographic study compared and contrasted the differences between participation in formal and informal music practices. Finnegan viewed the formal approach as a sequential, “publicly validated career” (p. 136), while the informal approach was an “apprentice-type process” (p. 133) where one learns “on the job” (p. 134). Further splits between these two groups were accounted in interviews such as one with a 20-year old rock musician. At the age of 14, the participant became interested in playing the guitar, and eventually became lead singer and composer for a local rock group. She said that she did have “some school training in classical music, but this seemed quite separate from my own music” (p. 137).

Green (2002) studied fourteen rock musicians who ranged in age from 15 to 50. She wanted to examine the values and attitudes of the informal world, to discover the popular musicians’ experiences in formal music education, and the possibilities which informal popular musical learning practices might offer formal music education. The cultures of both of these practices, in school and out of school, are discussed throughout the book.

She defined “enculturation” as the “acquisition of musical skills and knowledge by immersion in the everyday music and musical practices of one’s social context” (p. 22).

Campbell (1995) exposed musicianship development in her study of garage bands. Members of the group attempted to emulate songs they heard by repeated performances in rehearsals. She defined the role of the musical leader as “expert,” “on-site transmitter,” (p. 19) and model. She called for further study to expose musical development. She also stipulated that, if rock music is to be included in the classroom, it should be in the creating of rock music and not in a curriculum that could destroy it by heavy analysis that may cause it to be “dulled by discussion of its features” (p. 19).

Green’s (2002) and Campbell’s (1995) studies are most closely aligned with the first tenet of Bowman’s rationale for education. Their studies revealed the musical achievements of the informally trained musicians. Bartok, Blacking and Finnegan also described music skills and achievements but their main concern was with the second tenet, that of transmission of culture and the understanding of the function of music in a society.

Where does current practice with the newer styles of electronic, synthesized, and sampled music belong in a study of informal environments? Green (2004) stated that she chose to study one substyle of popular music so the findings “could be compared to learning practices, attitudes, and values in other substyles” (p. 226). She validated her findings by the “existing literature” (p. 227) on popular music, which does not include electronic,

synthesized music styles.

Ethnographic studies of music learning and experiences have begun to examine how people use and derive meaning from the “virtual community” (Lysloff, 2003, p. 54). Lysloff described the “virtual community” as a form of social interaction. This community is part of the third arena of learning that Heath (2001) identified. As members of cyberspace sample sounds, enjoy multimedia experiences from Nintendo to Disney, we realize R. Murray Schafer’s (1986) “schizophonia,” the splitting of sound from the maker of sound. Ironically, Lysloff argued for the acceptance of this environment based on the “collective sense of identity” (p. 55) and not on the sharing of physical space. The research on this environment has been largely in the area of collaboration, identity, and transmission (Joiner, Faulkner, Littleton, Miell, & Thompson, 2000).

### **(Rationale 3) Democratic Attributes**

Szego (2002) observed that “wherever control of musical resources is at issue, power relations are invoked” (p. 716). In most informal environments control of musical resources is not an issue, the power relation of the group’s expert is not seen as domineering or controlling. There have been many studies that examine leadership roles, and the other democratic tendencies that Bowman denoted as necessary. The identification of an expert in the group, or “on-site transmitter,” is important

with respect to the issue of musical independence.

Freire (2000) recognized these tendencies and drew attention to the “democratic learning environment” (p. 27). His *Pedagogy of the Heart* is a political and thought provoking description about the education system of Brazil. The educational reforms Freire espoused are emotionally laden because of the desperate state he described. In his view, social constructivism in such an environment is not just a method, but also an ethical responsibility for every teacher. He believed that in such an environment the teacher challenges “the learner’s naïve curiosity in order that they can both share criticalness” (p. 97).

*In Garageland* (Fornas, Lindberg, & Sernhede, 1995) is an investigation of the cultures created by three rock bands in three different cities. The musical activities of youth “contain strong elements of play and enjoyment;” “they are voluntary and chosen” and “linked psychologically to the development of identity in adolescence” (p. 255). The study demonstrated that the need for “collective autonomy” was a major theme for all three bands. Peer groups are important to musicians in rock groups but compared to formal environments, “no outsider tells you what to do in a rock band” (p. 251). Fornas, Lindberg, and Sernhede concluded that the processes found in the three worlds created by these groups allowed for the development of musical knowledge and skills and life-long involvement.

Allsup (2003) based his study on the democratic teaching reforms of Dewey.

Pedagogically, he wanted to examine the overall growth of the participants, individually and collaboratively. Philosophically, he wanted to see if the project was in line with democratic education principles. This approach is rooted in “cooperative learning, thematic teaching, child-centered curricula” (p. 27) concepts. Allsup succinctly defined democratic teaching ideals. He referred to these as intuitive and deeper than mere choices. In democratic teaching environments, both teacher and student are on equal ground where ideas are shared and new ideas evolve and are constructed.

Field notes from Allsup’s study give evidence of a change in perception about the role of the teacher. One student described the teacher as a “coat,” or a lab researcher doing experiments on subjects. This student eventually changed his beliefs about teachers being “up here when we’re down here...you changed throughout the entire study, you went up and you went down, it was really weird” (p. 34-35).

Gay (1991) discussed his role as participant observer. Gay’s study was an examination of the rock music culture in New York. As participant observer, his ethnographic study extended over four years. Gay found that individuality and autonomy were important to the members of rock groups. The bands described themselves as democratic because each person shared equally in the responsibility and musical success of their group (p. 284).

The examination of informal music teaching environments offers implications for the formal music environment. Studies in the formal environment of schools have crossed the

boundaries with the application of democratic teaching principles. Green's (2005) project implemented informal music approaches found in garage bands. She noted that bringing informal and formal practices together is more than allowing students to play and perform popular music. Students chose their own music, instrument, and group. Most importantly, they worked without anyone in charge. She asked educators to consider the advantages and disadvantages of creating this scenario and the extent to which "informal approaches can be harnessed by education" (p. 32).

Wiggins (2001) described social constructivist implications for music educators. She asks educators to include learning environments that model the out-of school, real-life situations that are "holistic problem-solving experiences" (p. 17). In her 1999/2000 study, she examined characteristics of shared experiences of third grade students who composed music. She supported group instruction to solve musical problems as opposed to composing individually. She concluded that members benefit from the "shared understanding of the group" (Wiggins, 1999/2000, p. 68). She also reported that working in groups benefits the individual student and "seems to promote and nurture independent musical thinking" (p. 86).

Campbell (1998) was a participant observer in *Songs in Their Heads*, an investigation of the music in children's lives and the meaning they attach to it. Campbell's study took place in school but exposed how children are "musically engaged" in the informal environment. She created an awareness of the cultures and subcultures in which children's musical experiences occur. She compared the differences between American

culture and other cultures.

As mentioned, Prouty (2002) described his experience as participant observer in and out of the school environment. The problems he encountered were from being caught in the intersection of both environments. As Bowman (2004) stated, institutions tend to refine and structure many praxis such as the creation of “school jazz” (p. 30). The authenticity of the informal learning setting is lost. This example highlights the potential problems of meshing both worlds. Veblen and Olsson (2002) believe that the socially shared world of the authentic environment is what makes the teaching and learning more effective. The two systems are in conflict over a basic difference; the “cultural core values and artificial or theoretical models” (p. 734).

There is a model of collaboration that may enable educators to combine both types of environments and yet allow for contextual authenticity. Bresler (2002) acknowledged that education does not need to happen in “encapsulated classrooms” (p. 26). She suggested that schools collaborate with museums, artists in residence, and other community outreach connections to establish meaningful authentic experiences for students.

Robinson (1998) created several models for learning environments and examined a formal school district and a community education department that joined forces and collaborated. While the community music school may not be considered a completely informal setting, it is a connection between the out-of-school and in-school environments. Robinson developed a partnership primer to assist professionals who are considering a

program such as this.

### **Newsflash: New Owner Buys FME and IME**

Educators are starting to bring what they have learned and observed in the informal environment to the formal setting. Perhaps the developing interest in informal music learning practices and community music programs worldwide will foster greater musical learning and development. Already we are witnessing action research, greater teacher awareness, new journals, such as “*International Journal of Community Music*”<sup>1</sup> (K. Veblen, personal communication, October 29, 2003), and magazines, such as *Making Music*. These may encourage music educators to view the “outside” music endeavors of our pupils more seriously.

Using Bowman’s three tenets of education to gauge the research that has been conducted in informal/formal environments acknowledges that researchers have, at least in part, related the informal environments to the greater concern for the overall aim of education. Researchers are as concerned today about the transmission of culture and heritage and the skills and achievements necessary for musicianship as they were in 1905. Researchers are examining the way informal music ensembles model democratic principles and are beginning to investigate these approaches in the classroom. Democratic teaching practices that promote “empowerment, independence, self-reliance, critical skills, and the inclination to use them” (Bowman, 2004, p. 39) are worthy life-long skills. Fornas, Lindberg, and Sernhede (1995) recommended that researchers “reflect and seek ways to

counter mechanisms of dominance inherent in their academic institutions" (p. 263).

### **What have we observed from our travels?**

The intersection of formal and informal music practices brings up the question of what constitutes musicality. Is musicality in both formal and informal music settings the same? Researchers have recorded and observed the skills and achievements informally trained musicians develop on their own. The ultimate questions surround the nature and development of musicality and the processes found in the informal and formal settings. Who decides *what* is important and necessary for the development of musicality? Many researchers have asked these questions (Appendix A). Blacking struggled with the differences he found between the Western world and a culture in Africa. Many years later, Green (2004) remarked on the unfortunate discovery that societies with the most formal music education are those that do not make music a part of their daily life. Formal music education does not seem to promote life-long habits, clarinets are put away and classical concert attendance is down.

What are some of the processes in informal environments that make it successful?

The way informally trained musicians create their own music is of interest to music educators. To a great extent, informal environments use an aural/oral approach without a significant dependence on notation. Musicians in informal settings listen to music and try to copy it but at the same time don't want to duplicate it exactly every time they perform. Formal musicians do not normally listen to recorded performances when rehearsing.

When they do, they do not want to imitate it. Yet, formally trained musicians read notation and try to copy the notation exactly without any improvisation or change (as cited in Bowman, 2004, p. 24).

### **FME and IME Passengers Don't Want to Change Railways**

Green (2004) observed that while formal music education has begun to use popular music, informal music practices are not used. Music teachers who have been informally trained “downgrade the importance of their own informal learning practices” (p. 237). Apparently, students also downgrade the importance of their formal learning. Lamont’s (2002) study revealed that music students categorized themselves as non-musicians, “saying they did not take lessons and did not play a musical instrument” (p. 47), even though classroom teachers noted that they did participate in music classes. She encouraged teachers to understand that the values they themselves convey play a part in the positive and negative attitudes of our students. School can be a place where positive musical identities are established but not if students believe that the musician they are in school is different from the musicians they are in their garage.

### **There's a Damsel in Distress Tied up on the Tracks**

There are concerns with uniting our railway systems! First of all, we run the risk of creating “school jazz” and “school rock.” The damsel on the track is the conformity and standardization that can sometimes stop a practice in its tracks. The evolution of jazz as a school subject demonstrates this point. Bowman quoted Les Paine, jazz musician, who

said, “If you put ketchup on everything, everything is going to taste like ketchup” (as cited in Bowman, 2004, p. 41).

Gracyk (1993) defended the informality of rock music and cautioned against bringing it into formal music education. His concern is that uniting the two environments could bring “self-consciousness to an area in which vast numbers of people currently engage un-self-consciously” (Bowman, 2004, p. 42). The function of music in Western culture is varied. Music occupies a great deal of time for those who listen to music many hours every day. As Bowman noted, the popular music scene and its practices do not need advocacy, as does the formal scene. We don’t want to create the need for advocacy in the informal environment.

### **The Tracks Need Continual Maintenance**

Can we be responsible for the function of music in our society? Are we the caretakers? Perhaps, as educators, we should promote music as a part of every ritual in our society. Certainly, we have some rituals; we sing at birthday parties; we dance at weddings, and use music to comfort us at times of grief. There is criticism of this approach in some of academia because it is using music for a purpose outside of music’s inherent aesthetic value.

Why are we so concerned and insistent with the development of reading notation that we do not allow musicians to copy aurally the music of others? Recently, I was on an

interview search team for a music position in a public school district. All seven candidates said that their number one job was to teach students to read music. As an undergraduate, I was studying Faure's "Après Un Reve" and mentioned to my instructor that I would like to hear a recording. He said that he had a recording but I should not listen to anyone sing it until I learned it on my own. I was told that if I found a recording I might copy it, learn it quickly and easily, and somehow "cheat."

### **Training the Railroad Workers**

Green (2004) offered suggestions for implementation and further research into formal/informal music education and practice. First, teachers should pay attention to what music their students know and like. Kelly and Van Weelden (2004) also suggested that teachers "connect with your students' music" (p. 37). Second, teachers should encourage students to listen to recordings at school and out of school as "aural enculturation and a normal part of everyday life" (Green, 2004, p. 238). Recordings in the school setting should be used for transmission, for "purposive listening, and copying exercises" (p. 238). Teachers should consider not being as focused on daily practice and "good" technique; they should "trust children's and young people's instincts and natural inclinations for music learning" (p. 239). Finally, teachers should encourage student-centered, peer teaching.

In the movie *School of Rock*, (Rudin, 2003) there is a scene where the rock group's teacher tells the keyboardist to take home a recording of a rock song and listen to the solo

so that he can rid himself of his classical music connections. Green (2004) suggested that the popular musicians, who have turned from formal music education, should realize that we share and value many similarities. Listed below are the similarities Green cited:

Integration of composing

Improvising

Playing, singing, and listening

Cooperation, commitment, and self-esteem

Appreciating a wide range of music

Nurturing a deep enjoyment, love and passion for music

As Campbell (2002) stated, we learn from all settings, in school and out. As postmodern philosophies come to the forefront of education, universities, schools, community music programs, and all environments that promote the musical development of our children may unite. We have a common goal, the musical development of the whole child, not just when he or she is in the classroom. While it is tempting to suggest that we hop on board the informal approach, we should not ignore formal music education. Yes, there is much to learn from informal music settings, caution should be taken in how we channel and focus our interest. Enjoy your ride.

### **Notes**

1. See *International Journal of Community Music* at <http://www.intljcm.com/index.html>

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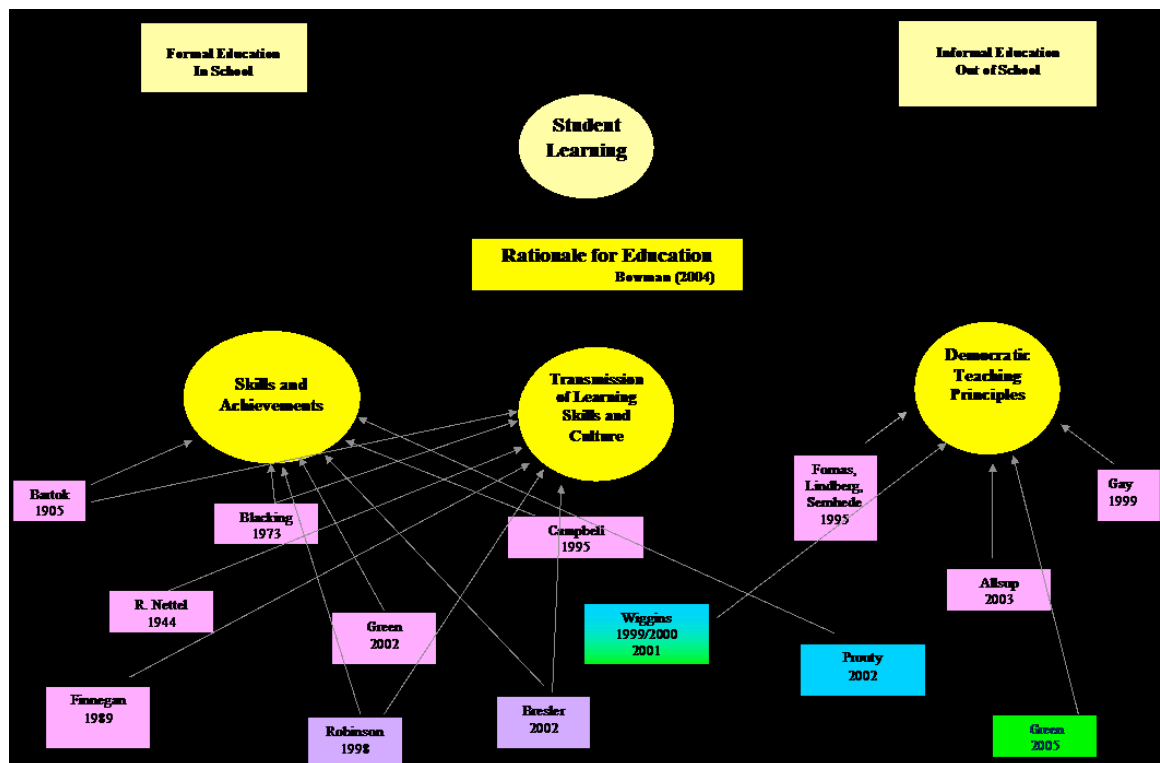
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## Appendix A



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