The Gathering Place: Musical Expressions of Self and Community within a Non-Profit, Community Mental Health Drop-In Center

A dissertation presented to

the faculty of

the Scripps College of Communication of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Steven P. Phalen

August 2013

© 2013 Steven P. Phalen. All Rights Reserved.
This dissertation titled
The Gathering Place: Musical Expressions of Self and Community within a Non-Profit,
Community Mental Health Drop-In Center

by

STEVEN P. PHALEN

has been approved for
the School of Communication Studies
and the Scripps College of Communication by

William K. Rawlins
Stocker Professor of Communication Studies

Scott Titworth
Dean, Scripps College of Communication
ABSTRACT

PHALEN, STEVEN P., Ph.D., August 2013, Communication Studies

The Gathering Place: Musical Expressions of Self and Community within a Non-Profit, Community Mental Health Drop-In Center

Director of Dissertation: William K. Rawlins

The Gathering Place opened its doors in 1976 to ex-patients of the Athens Mental Health Center largely through the dedicated efforts of community mental health activist Rita Gillick. Operating according to the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation, The GP provides a home/family-like environment for its members while providing them with opportunities to develop vocational and social skills necessary for independent and meaningful in the community living. This dissertation is an ethnographic rendering of my three years of involvement with The Gathering Place as a volunteer, musician, advocate, and eventually friend. I share particularly my experiences making music with the members during the collaborative jam session known as GP Jams and the music therapy programs sponsored by the organization. Further, I share the story of community mental health activist and musician Pete Wuscher and the community event to raise awareness of issues facing people with mental illness referred to as “Walk the Walk.” I interrogate my experiences drawing upon dialogic sensibilities informed by phenomenological and pragmatist philosophies emphasizing the significance of lived experience and the possibilities aesthetic expression creates for imagining socially just ways of living with others. Ultimately, I arrive at three dialogic promises that music makes as an act and a metaphor to those who enter into musical relations with others: 

*music as embodied acknowledgement, music as invitation to dwelling, and music as
expression of corporeal community. In sharing music’s dialogic promises, I offer ways in which they add to communication theory as well as highlight future directions for communication inquiry.
This dissertation is an ethnographic rendering of my experiences making music with the members of The Gathering Place, a non-profit drop-in center for people living with mental illness in southeastern, Ohio. As an ethnographic rendering, this dissertation is composed in a fashion that warrants some clarification so as to prime the reader for his/her upcoming experience. In the pages to follow I adopt a dialogic orientation towards the performance of meaning on the page (the details of which I share later) and pay particular attention to meaning as emerging from the interaction of dynamic selves and others entering into communion within ideologically saturated sociophysical contexts. The idea being that if one desires to perform a rendering of a group of people while probing the significance of their communicative exchanges, one has to dig beyond the superficial appearances of each encounter into the meanings undergirding participants’ perceptions of their lived experiences.

In sharing the musical relationships I established at The Gathering Place, I keep this confluence of self, other, and context in mind in composing this text. The first two chapters are dedicated to describing the historical, social, and physical contexts in which my musical relationships with the members unfolded. Beginning with Chapter 1, I provide a brief history of the experience of living with mental illness and mental health care in the United States through the story of former patient and community mental health advocate Rita Gillick, founder of The Gathering Place. After speaking to the historical and social contexts of mental illness as performed through Rita’s life, I describe the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation that serves as a basis for The Gathering Place’s social and vocational rehabilitative program. In Chapter 2, I invite the
reader into the house by sharing the corporeal experiences of the members who value their time spent with The Gathering Place. In my rendering of the house, I pay particular attention to the homelike feel of the environment as expressed through the domestic quality of the house activities, the sensorial qualities of the artifacts displayed, as well as the invocation of familial metaphors in members’ descriptions of their relationships with each other and the staff of the organization.

It is in Chapter 3 where I get to the heart of this dissertation and the introduction of the purpose of this project as raised through the question: *How is music experienced as a relational modality of self and communal expression?* Keeping in mind the confluence of self, other, and context I have established, Chapter 3 focuses on my positionality as a musician/scholar in relation to the members of The Gathering Place. Specifically, I describe myself as a highly sensitive person who has a lived understanding of mental illness and a rich background with regard to making music. These are two contours of my person that are relevant for the reader to come to know in order to understand the interpretive sensibilities that bear upon my rendering and subsequent discussion of the musical relationships I establish with the members.

Chapters 4 through 6 perform the story of my musical relationships with members of The Gathering Place as they unfolded within the house. Chapter 4 describes my participation with the loosely structured collaborative jam session known as GP Jams that is facilitated by one of the members. In this chapter, I introduce music’s qualities as a modality of relation that makes possible the expression and sharing of personal experience. In Chapter 5, I describe my experiences participating in the music therapy sessions as facilitated by undergraduate music therapy students completing practicum
credits for their degrees. In this chapter we learn about different understandings of and approaches to music, as well as experience music’s capacity to unify diverse persons in their difference. In Chapter 6, I share the song “Walk the Walk” written by Pete Wuscher, member of The Gathering Place and community mental health advocate, that describes the experience of living with mental illness. In addition to sharing the song, I share Pete’s story of living with mental illness as well as insight into the fragility of communal relation as established and maintained by persons. I then provide my experiences as a volunteer promoting the event “Walk the Walk” (also first imagined and carried out by Pete) to raise awareness of mental health issues within the community.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I reflect upon my musical experience with the members of The Gathering Place and offer three dialogic promises music makes as a relational and meaningful modality of self and communal expression. These dialogic promises are *music as embodied acknowledgement, music as invitation to dwelling*, and *music as the performance of corporeal community*. In addition to describing these dialogic qualities of music as a meaningful modality of relation, I also speak to music as a metaphor for dialogic communication by providing a brief reprise of Rita Gillick’s life read musically in order to drive home the point as expressed by Oliver Sacks (2008), “Humans are a musical species no less than a linguistic one” (p. xi). I offer some concluding thoughts on the composition of this dissertation and the experience of conducting ethnographic work within the setting of The Gathering Place.

Before officially beginning this story, the reader should keep in mind a few points of clarification regarding the purpose of this dissertation. This dissertation performs the musical relationships established with people living the experience of mental illness.
While mental illness is a necessary theme to address in order to arrive at an understanding of this state of being-in-the-world, this dissertation is not about mental illness. Rather, this dissertation is about the possibilities music creates for self and communal expression as a meaningful modality of relation between selves and others. In some instances mental health is implicated in my musical relationships with the members, but analytic attention is focused on the musical dynamics and not the mental health issues underlying the experience. Moreover, although a significant part of my experience making music with the members of The Gathering Place unfolded during music therapy sessions, my story does not intend to contribute to theoretical and practical discussions of music through the perspective of music therapy. This is not to say that exploring music therapy sessions from a relational perspective is without benefit; but in the same breath it is not my hope to inadvertently arouse particular expectations without addressing them. Keeping in mind my previous caveat concerning mental illness, music therapy is implicated in this dissertation; but again, my analytic attention falls on the relational aspects of music and not the therapeutic. With that being said, let us begin with the story of Rita Gillick.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the members of The Gathering Place who let me into their lives both musically and personally.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank The Gathering Place, both the members and staff, for inviting me into the home they have fostered at 7 North Congress Avenue. These past three years serving your organization musically and otherwise have been transformative for me both as a person and as a scholar. I hope this dissertation performs the ethos of the organization by speaking compassionately and humanely to the experience of living with mental illness, as well as showing the possibilities inherent within all persons when approached with openness and respect.

My family deserves a shout-out for their support through this journey through graduate school. They have been there to provide laughs and welcome escapes that helped me realize the scholar in me is but one facet of an otherwise dynamic life. And my mother, who has read various drafts of this dissertation with her editorial eye, deserves a special thanks.

I would like to thank each of the members of my committee who have shown me that being a scholar and a humane person are one in the same. Beginning alphabetically, Austin Babrow, I thank you for being an attentive person who has always approached my ideas with a careful and critical eye, as well as someone to whom I could turn to have a fine conversation about life over a beer. Though I do not draw upon your work directly in this dissertation, I know we both share a common agenda in that we believe our ideas should help make this world a better place. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Lynn Harter, I appreciate your unapologetic imagination and the hope it inspires within those with whom you share your life. Moreover, you give an individual such as myself whose attention may be easily drawn to “bright and shiny ideas” encouragement
that this is a sign of meaningful and imaginative engagement with the world and not merely a disruptive intrusion. Life is art, make it magic.

Finally, Jaylynne Hutchinson, you have forever transformed the way I approach the classroom. You have helped me realize that our students are also our peers, and sometimes, the most useful pedagogical tool we may bring to the classroom is our ability to hold a meaningful and hopefully transformative conversation. I hope that I can influence the lives of my students in the same way you have influenced mine.

Bill. You have shown me that dialogue is not merely a philosophy to be layered atop life but an orientation towards others that we adopt with great consequence. In other words dialogue is something that we live in our relations with others. Thank you for meeting me as a person, thank you for acknowledging the music within me, and thank you for providing me opportunity to express that music both on the written page and as a member of Broken Ring. I have told you this once before, but you have a gift for seeing people at the core of the being and refining that light so it is all that shines. Thank you for seeing the music and for encouraging it to sound. Though seemingly nonsensical, I feel the only way to bring this thought to a close is through the words of Ringo Starr, “I’ve got blisters on my fingers!”

And last but certainly not least, I wish to thank my wife Amanda. There were points where this task grew incredibly burdensome, but you continued to support me, encourage me, and on more than one occasion feed me (some pretty darn good vittles too). But more importantly, again and again, you have performed your vow to me during our wedding that you would help me remember my worth. There will come a time when
the love you have showed me throughout this period will be reflected back on to you
tenfold. And when that time comes, you better get yourself some sunglasses.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter or Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Rita Gillick</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillick Committed: The Story of Institutionalized Care</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Released: The Experience of Living with Mental Illness</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens Mental Health Incorporated</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fountain House</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clubhouse Model of Psychosocial Rehabilitation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Forward</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: The Gathering Place</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Front Porch</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Floor</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basement</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second Floor</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting The Stage</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: The Composition</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Relationship with Mental Health</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Musical Self</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Composition of this Text</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: GP Jams</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Opening Jam</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicked Wiccan</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Music Therapy</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Term Activity</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: RITA GILlick

My story of The Gathering Place (The GP) begins with Rita Gillick\(^1\), a celebrated pillar of the mental health community in Athens, Ohio. Between 1970 and 1985 she was responsible for organizing concerned citizens to address mental health issues facing the community and helping hundreds of ex-psychiatric patients live meaningful, independent lives after their release from the Athens Mental Health Center. She devoted her life to raising social awareness of mental illness and fighting the stigma surrounding the disease, a devotion she performed through opening her heart and home to ex-patients so they did not have to shoulder their burden alone. For her support, she demanded of ex-patients that they take an active part in their recovery by taking steps toward becoming a contributing community member. She put them to work doing various jobs including general maintenance, yard work, and helping recently discharged patients find and settle into their first homes away from the hospital. Though her love was tough, as some founding members who knew her recall, it was constant. As long as ex-patients were making steps towards their recovery, they always had Rita as an advocate and access to a large network of empathic others.

Among her accomplishments as a mental health activist, she was a keynote speaker at the first Ohio state mental health consumer’s caucus, worked on the governor’s humanization committee to reinforce the humanity of the person receiving a mental illness diagnosis, and served as board president of the non-profit organization Athens Mental Health Incorporated responsible for the formation of The GP. While these accomplishments alone are enough to make any person an inspirational figure within the

\(^1\) Rita Gillick is not a pseudonym. Throughout this dissertation, the reader should assume all identities are pseudonyms unless noted otherwise.
Gillick’s story as a psychiatric patient and mental health activist provides valuable background material for understanding the experiences of living with mental illness, as well as The GP’s rehabilitative philosophy. Throughout this chapter I foreground Gillick’s experiences as a patient of two state hospitals in Ohio and as an ex-patient living in the Athens community. Her experiences speak in an embodied fashion to (1) historical attitudes towards mental illness as a marginalized state of being in the world, and (2) the evolution of psychiatric treatment from institutionalized care to a community network of mental health care providers known formally as deinstitutionalization. Further, I share the “conditions of possibility” (Foucault, 1972) that coalesced during the 1970’s in the wake of deinstitutionalization policies that created the necessity and possibility for The GP’s emergence as a community drop-in center for people living with mental illness in Athens. Doing so sets the stage for a description of the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation that helps people with mental illness lead meaningful, independent lives as parts of our communities – the model that inspired The Gathering Place’s rehabilitative structure.

Gillick Committed: The Story of Institutionalized Care

Between 1949 and 1970, Gillick spent her life institutionalized as a psychiatric patient at two state hospitals in Ohio. Her family made the decision to commit her when she began presenting depressive symptoms and hostile behaviors that were becoming a
significant disruption in their lives beyond their capacity to control. Like many families at the time with a member who had become difficult to care for and live with, they left her to the care of the state hospital. There she was classified as a depressive and subject to various treatments to alleviate her symptoms and keep her behavior relegated to a confined environment. Moreover, like many patients of the time, she became trapped within a psychiatric institution staffed by doctors who had few conclusive understandings of mental illness and few, if any, effective treatments to alleviate their distress.

Understandings of Mental Illness

In the mid-20th century mental illness was a label seemingly applied to individuals in order to maintain social order as much as to help them receive treatment. Gillick testified to this perception years after her eventual discharge from institutional care:

As I look back and realize how despicably I reacted toward people (loved ones) because I thought I was completely misunderstood. Actually I was, for at that time there was little or no understanding of the mentally and emotionally disturbed. They were classed as “crazy” and wound up in institutions left to the mercy of ill-trained unknowing people who had a job to do, namely keep people controlled in whatever manner they could. (Gillick, 1985, para. 3)

Gillick’s conception of mental illness as a classification imposed upon people with anti-social behavior speaks in an embodied fashion to learned conceptions surfacing during the time of her confinement and some years after.

---

2 Founding Member Gary Meyer mentioned that Gillick discovered later in life that her depressive symptoms were indicative of post-partum depression, which had gone unnoticed by the hospital staff (personal communication, 2012).
Erving Goffman (1961), having spent extensive time conducting ethnographic work in a state hospital, described mental illness as an understanding of self personally arrived at or imposed upon by others based upon “socially engrained stereotypes” as to the meaning of hearing voices or losing temporal and spatial orientation that may invoke a sense of personal or social anxiety (p. 132). And defected psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1974/2011) went so far as to describe mental illness as a “myth” that served the purpose of “transforming sins into crimes” (Appendix 2, Section 3, para. 8). Szasz argued instead that mental illness was diagnosed based upon behavioral norms and not the biological presence of disease as psychiatrists would like to believe. Think for example about the former status of Homosexuality as an entry in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual as a diagnosable mental illness until it was removed from the third edition in 1986. However, Szasz recanted and qualified his conception with the accumulation of evidence that mental illnesses including schizophrenia (see Torrey, 1983/2001) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; see Hallowell & Ratey, 2005) have measurable, biological manifestations beyond behavioral idiosyncrasies.

Despite the recent emergence of these biological indicators, psychiatry today still does not have a clear and comprehensive understanding of mental illness. Unlike their biological counterparts, the majority of mental illnesses lack unequivocal pathological and etiological understandings. Psychologists Lilienfeld and Landfield (2008) noted that the majority of mental illnesses are understood as syndromes due to the high co-morbidity and variance with regard to the presentation of symptoms. Few mental illnesses present common signs and symptoms that would earn them the higher classification of disorder, and no mental illness has reached a level of pathological and
etiological understanding to warrant the classification of disease.\(^3\) Even so, our present understandings of mental illness are significantly more sophisticated than in the mid 20\(^{th}\) century.

Unfortunately, these biological understandings of mental illness would not come until years after Gillick’s discharge, which left her and countless other patients in state hospitals at the mercy of ineffective treatments derived from hypotheses founded upon limited or no empirical support. Despite their limitations, during their period of decline towards deinstitutionalization as a result of overcrowding and reports of abusive care during the time of Gillick’s commitment, state hospitals were built with the hope of providing humane treatment and were once the pinnacle of mental health care in the United States.

*The State Hospital*

State hospitals first appeared on the United States landscape in the late 18\(^{th}\) century. As “total institutions” (Goffman, 1961), they were self-contained entities isolated from the rest of society where patients’ days were highly structured and planned out without their input with the purpose of alleviating their symptoms of mental illness. These hospitals were designed to “provide retreats, often in the solace of nature, where, in the absence of any actual evidence-based treatments, patients could at least be left alone in a tranquil setting” (Barber, 2008, Chapter 3, para. 5). While in the care of the state hospital, patients were rehabilitated through participation in work-oriented activities

\(^3\) It is important note at this point in the dissertation my use of mental illness as a seemingly homogenous category when in fact it is comprised of a spectrum of diverse mood and personality disorders. When relevant, I draw attention to specific mental illnesses, but for the most part, I use the generic term “mental illness” with this caveat on mind.
based in farming and cottage industries to contribute to the self-sustaining communities that had developed in state hospitals during the last half of the 19th-century (Soreff & Bazemore, 2005, p. 11). Further, state hospitals also were committed to providing patients with a general education, opportunities for creativity\(^4\), and vocational training for when they would eventually be discharged into the community (2005, p. 11). These work- and creativity-oriented approaches to mental health rehabilitation were not lost when the state hospital system was eventually phased out in the late 20th century (Ziff, 2012, p. 24), as will be seen with the emergence of the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation discussed later in this chapter.

The numbers of state hospitals increased in Ohio during the middle of the 19th century, particularly through the national efforts of mental health activist Dorothea Dix. She witnessed the sub-par treatment people with mental illness received at the hands of their families, alms houses, and jails, all of which lacked the means and patience for providing adequate and effective treatment. She therefore argued for more asylums based on humane orientations to rehabilitation (Ohio Department of Mental Health, 2012). But with their increase in numbers came an overreliance upon the state hospital as a means for treating mental illness and the first tremors of a drastic shift in mental health care within the United States.

As a result of overpopulation in the facilities, in the early 20th century, the state hospital began to experience the initial phases of its transition towards

\(^4\) Historian and social critic Benjamin Reiss (2008) described asylums in the 19th century as a significant cultural figure upon the United States’s landscape. Patients participated in theatrical performances, debating societies, contributed to literary journals, schools, and religious services. Many of these programs disappeared from the institutions when state hospitals began to grow unsustainable.
deinstitutionalization. W. Robert Curtis (1986) described how the family structure in the United States at the turn of the century began switching from a multi-generation to a nuclear family that lacked the resources and time to care for older generations who were becoming increasingly dependent upon younger generations for support in an industrial society (p. 35). As a result, older family members often were left to the care of state hospitals to decrease the burden on the family. Between the years of 1903 and 1950, the patient population in state hospitals increased from 144,653 to 512,501 (Torrey, 1983/2001, p. 19) leading to overcrowding and a decrease in the staffs’ capacities to care for patients. The increasing patient population placed a mounting financial burden on state governments because of limited provisions in federal legislature for the care of people living with mental illness (Grob & Goldman, 2006, p. 4). Although the quality of treatment provided for people living with mental illness differed state by state, some, such as New York, were allocating no less than 33% of their annual budgets to mental health care by the mid-1950’s (Grob & Goldman, 2006, p. 14). These costs were especially wasteful in New York, because between 25 and 50 percent of patients released from state hospitals actually were readmitted within one year (Robbins, 1954, p. 8). This pattern is a common outcome of institutionalized mental health care that will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. The economic inefficiency of the state hospital as a result of overcrowding was but one facet of the declining quality of mental health care in the United States.

State hospitals began to fall under public scrutiny in the 1940’s for the poor treatment patients received at the hands of the attendants as a result of overcrowding. Albert Q. Maisel’s (1946) exposé published in *Life* magazine depicted state hospitals as
places where patients were abused by members of the staff and forced to live in squalid conditions. Additionally, Albert Deutsch’s *The Shame of the States* in 1949 described state hospitals as comparable to “Nazi concentration camps” (as cited in Barber, 2008, Chapter 3, para. 6). These criticisms would eventually have the effect of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* on the transition from institutionalized to community-based mental health care within the United States. Though not inaccurate, such critiques should be taken within the context of the inadequate resources that these hospitals were provided by the state. W. Robert Curtis (1986) noted that while care in the state hospitals was not perfect, people were expecting hospitals to operate successfully beyond their designed capacities. For example, historian Katherine Ziff (2012), speaking to the history of Athens Mental Health Center, noted the Kirkbride-style hospital, which became an icon of humane treatment in the late 19th century, was designed to house only a couple hundred patients, each with his or her own room. Even so, that maximum capacity was often breached, and the Athens Mental Health Center reached a population of 1,800 in 1967. Despite the fact that the poor living conditions for patients were largely outside of the hospital’s control, the journalistic accounts were damning. Such critique was especially prevalent during the dawn of the Civil Rights movement that would champion the cause of the involuntarily committed psychiatric patient in addition to the racial and gender revolutions taking place at the time. In conjunction with the ineffectual treatment, rising costs, and subhuman living conditions for patients, advances in psychiatric treatment also played a significant role in reducing the reliance upon the state hospital for treating mental illness.
Psychiatric treatment witnessed a significant increase in effectiveness as a result of scientific inquiry during the 20th century. Prior to World War II, specific procedures designed to alleviate mental illness were largely ineffectual. As previously noted, there was a significant moral component in psychiatric diagnoses of mental illness, and treatment for mental illness reflected such pejorative judgments of persons. Charles Barber (2008) described several such approaches that were employed by psychiatrists in the early 1900’s. Dr. Henry Cotton, for one, removed patients’ teeth and other body parts thinking tooth decay and germs were the cause of insanity, despite the fact this form of treatment often resulted in death (Chapter 3, para. 6). Additionally, Harvard doctors John Talbott and Kenneth Tillotson submerged patients in freezing waters thinking mental illness was thermally based (Chapter 3, para 7). It was also common practice for patients to be sterilized to prevent the potential of mental illness appearing in their children (Chapter 3, para. 5). However, during World War II, military doctors demonstrated success treating soldiers who suffered from shell shock (later reclassified as post-traumatic stress disorder in 1980), which instilled a sense of hope in the psychiatric community that mental illness was something that could be both medically understood and remedied (Grob & Goldman, 2006, p. 14-15). Additionally, many soldiers who wished to enlist in the military during World War II were turned away due to the presence of mental illness. This trend prompted psychiatrists to turn towards community practice to take a preventative stance towards environmental factors that seemed to play an etiological role in mental illness in the interest of national security (Johnson, 2011, p. 23-24).
As a result, many psychiatrists began to leave state hospitals to begin community-based practices to treat and prevent the development of severe and persistent mental illness at a local level (Grob & Goldman, 2006, p. 17). In these efforts their attention was drawn, and still is, to the “worried well,” often (upper) middle-class individuals who seek help for the general ups and downs experienced in life (Barber, 2008). Meanwhile, the extensive migration of psychiatrists from state hospitals resulted in their replacement with inexperienced staff incapable of providing effective mental health treatment. Unfortunately, the care offered at state hospitals suffered as a result, and they continued to exist as testing grounds for potential new treatments.

During the course of her commitment to Ohio psychiatric hospitals, Rita Gillick was subject to a variety of ineffectual treatments to alleviate her depressive symptoms. She described this experience in her own words:

Having entered a mental institution at the age of 35 with an acute case of depression--I suffered the gamut of treatment: insulin shock, EST [electroconvulsive shock therapy], and finally a pre-frontal lobotomy, which robbed me of any sensitivity for many years following the lobotomy which had little or no effect upon my depressed state. I became a literal guinea pig beginning with the inception of Thorazine and followed by a multitude of new and varied tranquilizers, which were to no avail--I continued to be a constant depressive.

(Gillick, 1985, para. 1)

Her story was a common one for many patients of state institutions. Most hospitals were staffed with inexperienced graduate students from outside of the United States as a direct result of the migration of psychiatrists towards community-based care. The ill-trained
staff often administered a variety of treatments to individuals without discrimination or specific knowledge of the illnesses they were trying to treat (Goffman, 1961, p. 361). Even so, although Gillick’s experience with psychiatric medications such as Thorazine was ineffective for her condition, it did prove useful in alleviating the symptoms of mental illness for many other patients. Charles Barber (2008) went so far as to describe Thorazine, in conjunction with outpatient community centers for the treatment of people living with mental illness, as a significant factor in the transition from institutional to community mental health treatment (Chapter 3, para. 12). Taken together, the economically and therapeutically ineffective approaches to mental health care, the civil rights violations that purportedly were taking place within the state hospitals, and the growing support for community mental health care all came to a head in the early 1960’s in the form of legislation that would transform significantly how mental health care would be practiced in the United States.

Deinstitutionalization

In 1963 John F. Kennedy signed into law the Community Mental Health Centers Act (CMHCA) that increased the federal government’s power to influence mental health care in the United States with the hope that it would end the unjust and ineffective treatment provided by the psychiatric hospital. This legislation marked the beginning of the deinstitutionalization era by expanding the coverage of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security Disability Insurance to include people living with mental illness, so they could live independently in the community with the help of outpatient clinics and psychiatric medications such as Thorazine. With Kennedy’s signature this legislation began the slow and systematic release of patients back into their respective communities,
so that all but the patients with the most severe and persistent mental illness had an opportunity to live independently in the community. Overall, the federal government’s decision to expand coverage alleviated the financial responsibility that states had assumed for the hundreds of thousands of patients living with mental illness in psychiatric hospitals across the country. The dream of the Community Mental Health Centers Act was actualized to a degree by ex-patients such as Rita Gillick, as will be shared momentarily. But it would fall short of its goal to put in place an effective network of community mental health centers.

The CMHCA’s effectiveness is debated to this day as to whether or not it was an effective response to the problems of mental health care in the United States (see Grob, 1995; Grob, 1997). For one, communities were ill-equipped to receive the influx of former patients. Other than a few outpatient clinics where ex-patients would have brief access to a mental health care provider, there were limited places to turn for support. People living with mental illness face difficulties finding and keeping employment (Brohan & Thornicroft, 2010; Brohan et al., 2012), sometimes due to stigma perpetuated in part by mediated portrayals of persons with mental illness, who are characterized as peculiar, odd, and potentially dangerous (Klin & Lemish, 2008). As such, people with mental illness tend to be an economically disadvantaged population. While government assistance is available for people living with severe and persistent mental illness to receive treatment, the potential stigma resulting from identifying oneself as having a mental illness prevents some from seeking assistance (Pietrzak, Johnson, Goldstein, Malley, & Southwick, 2009). In their isolation the recovery of many persons who do not
know how to take their medication and/or secure government assistance would regress to the point where they would find themselves homeless or in jail.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2010) noted that of the approximately 408,000 people without homes every night, 26.2% have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness. In addition, people who are homeless and living with mental illness are more prone to chronic homelessness and incarceration (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008). Instead of transitioning patients from the hospital to the community, some critics believe that the deinstitutionalization legislation only effectively transitioned them from one institutional setting to another (i.e. from the state hospital to the jail). Notably, E. Fuller Torrey (1983/2001) described the Los Angeles County Jail as the largest mental hospital in the United States.

What was (and still is) missing from communities in the deinstitutionalization era is the presence of a social network for people living with mental illness to find solace from their seclusion. Despite the grim prospects for living a meaningful life afforded people living with mental illness through deinstitutionalization legislation, it set the stage both for Rita Gillick’s eventual release from the Athens Mental Health Center in 1970, and the emergence of The GP.

Rita Released: The Experience of Living with Mental Illness

With Kennedy’s signature on the Community Mental Health Centers Act came a relaxing of the Athens Mental Health Center’s rigid institutional structure. Though Ohio would not become fully deinstitutionalized until 1988, the state hospitals across the state began decreasing restrictions to give patients more access to the community (Ohio Department of Mental Health, 2012). Among these allowances was the opportunity for
patients to receive day passes to travel into the city of Athens, an opportunity that Gillick used to find employment in town—a difficult task for people living with mental illness. For many, their return to the community was their first after years of institutionalized care. Patients’ capacity to make decisions for themselves and to interact socially with others atrophied significantly while within the highly structured environment of the hospital. To add to this obstacle, the idea of mental illness and hospitalization carries with it an aura of ill-repute, a stigma barring access to fulfilling social relationships. Rita’s experiences provide useful insight into the experience of living with mental illness in the community.

Throughout history people living with mental illness have lived on the fringes of society. Michel Foucault (1965) traced the idea of madness from the 16th century to modernity and noted how it was caught up in discourses that understood it against the background of reason. Specifically, individuals prone to emotional outbursts or who displayed idiosyncratic behavior were labeled as “animals” as a result of their irrational behavior. They eventually began to be confined to asylums under the medicalized gaze of psychiatrists who diagnosed moral failings as biological pathologies. Mental illness and a history of institutionalization became stigmatizing marks serving to prevent access to social circles (Goffman, 1961; Goffman, 1963). Today, mental illness often appears as an attribute of homeless people and criminals; two groups of people understood respectively by scholars as “invisible subjectivities” (Harter, Berquist, Titsworth, Novak, & Brokaw, 2005). Further, they are considered to be individuals whose correction requires isolation and subjection to rectifying power/knowledge discourses operating invisibly by the hand of the state (Foucault, 1979). Alan Stein, a founding and celebrated member of The GP
who is diagnosed with both cerebral palsy and schizophrenia, spoke directly to the
capacity of language to marginalize the experience of living with mental illness:

It starts with the theory that somebody might have told somebody else in their
childhood that you're a special person. And when you get to school, you get out
in the world, you're not so special. Special people ultimately wind up being
tagged as developmentally delayed, damaged. I feel like I'm damaged from
something. (personal communication, June 22, 2012).

The experience of living with mental illness became a story narrated by people removed
from the direct, corporeal experience of this particular quality of being-in-the-world.

Rita was one of the fortunate ex-patients to secure employment outside of the
hospital. She worked first at the Ohio University library and then helping nurse back to
health a local teacher who had broken her hip. However, her search for employment was
not easy as she faced rejection on occasion because of her status as an ex-patient. She
described a particular instance of discrimination:

I was allowed to search for a job and was hired by Ohio University for a
temporary job, which was to last for two weeks—this however lasted for six
months before termination. Following this and with a feeling of accomplishment,
I set forth to seek other employment, which was not very rewarding. I applied at
a local business establishment only to see my application thrown in the trash
basket as I made my exit. The reason: my address was the Athens Mental Health
Center. Stigma! . . . why did my address override my ability? (Gillick, 1985,
para. 12-13).
Eventually, she found permanent work as a receptionist at a local dentist’s office where she experienced a degree of professional success and was eventually allowed to assist with the patients. Her newfound full-time employment allowed her to generate enough income to live independently in the Athens community without the need for government assistance. This turn of events helped her build a case for discharge from the Athens Mental Health Center, a request honored in 1970. However, despite Rita’s ability to support herself financially, life in Athens was difficult without a network of supportive others to turn to when not working, an experience common for people living with mental illness.

Loneliness was a significant issue for many ex-patients to overcome as they made the transition from the rigid structure of the hospital to the freedoms of independent community life. While the expansion of federal health benefits for people living with mental illness created the possibility for them to live independently in the community, years spent in institutionalized care had the tendency to *disculturate* ex-patients (Goffman, 1961, p. 13). Ex-patients had a thorough knowledge of the way of life within the walls of the hospital. But that knowledge was useless in the community, rendering them ill-prepared to reenter the social graces of community living in conjunction with their already stigmatized identities. Gillick (1985) described how she was punished in the Athens Mental Health Center for accepting and sharing a cigarette with a male patient,

---

5 Several current GP members who remember Rita comment on her encouragement of them to maintain good oral hygiene to help someone in their recovery from mental illness. Oral health is a particular issue facing people with mental illness in that oral health sometimes takes a back seat to mental health treatment. Additionally, some medications used to treat mental illness decrease salivation making the gums sensitive to brushing. Poor oral health care has implications for physiological health including the prevention of heart disease (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2013).
because “that was a strict taboo . . . No association with the opposite sex” (para. 7). But such associations are common place occurrences for persons living in the community.

To make matters worse, there were not many social places within the community infrastructure that welcomed people living with mental illness. Gary Meyer, a founding member of The GP, noted that there did exist an informal network of ex-patients who recognized each other from their days in the hospital where they could keep up with current events in the lives of other former patients (personal communication, Aug 12, 2012). This network was useful for sharing significant happenings within the Athens mental health community, but it was not enough to counteract the loneliness of life in the community. Additionally, unable to be welcomed into social spaces, Anne Stempel, a founding member of The GP, shared that many ex-patients could be found sitting on the steps of the Athens Court House (personal communication, October 26, 2011). These steps became an unofficial meeting place because they had nowhere else to go. In other parts of the country, communities had ex-patient groups in place for recently released patients to turn to in order to alleviate the isolation they felt in the community, which if left unchecked was cause for a reappearance of the symptoms that initially prompted commitment (Wechsler, 1960). However, there was a dearth of ex-patient organizations across the country that was noted as a failing of deinstitutionalization legislation (Propst, 1997). However, in Athens upon the time of Gillick’s release, there was one group concerned with the plights of ex-patients in the community that helped provide support for those trying to live meaningfully in the community.

Stempel (not a pseudonym) noted that some of the former patients were recruited to serve as jurors for trials taking place inside the courthouse should they need extra bodies (personal communication, October 26, 2011).
Athens Mental Health Incorporated

Since 1971, Athens Mental Health Incorporated (AMHI) has served the Athens community through programs to help people with mental illness live independently in the community. At their inception, AMHI was concerned primarily with helping discharged patients, who had no place to go upon release, to find a home and get settled in Athens. Rita heard about the organization and their meeting times at the Athens First Presbyterian Church through the word-of-mouth network of former patients. At the time AMHI was comprised of community members and former patients who had the desire to address issues facing people living with mental illness. But the organization lacked clearly defined goals or strong leadership. Rita’s presence was a turning point.

With Gillick’s help AMHI became a beacon of hope for ex-patients living in the Athens community. Anne Stempel described Gillick as the leader Athens Mental Health Incorporated needed, because “she demanded that the organization set goals and follow through on them” (personal communication, October 26, 2011). In 1976 her efforts earned her the position of president of the organization. Under Gillick’s direction the organization sponsored a program entitled “Help Mate” that provided material assistance for recently released patients. Through “Help Mate” ex-patients were given $15.00, and with the assistance of volunteers with Athens Mental Health Incorporated, they would go to the grocery store and purchase food for their first homes outside of the hospital. In addition, “Help Mate” provided ex-patients with the comfort that there were people in the community able to see past the stigma surrounding mental illness and institutionalization and who were concerned about the unique problems facing people living with mental illness. Even so, Gillick’s understanding of the significant loneliness that accompanied a
patient’s experience of living alone in the community helped her realize that monetary support was not enough. There needed to be something for ex-patients to do or some place for them to go, so that they may escape the loneliness preventing many people living with mental illness from leading a meaningful life. She took it upon herself to acknowledge and address this need for supportive relationships.

Gillick was known for opening her home to ex-patients so they did not have to live in isolation. Though many ex-patients were able to support themselves off government assistance, the stigma associated both with the diagnosis of mental illness and having spent time in the state hospital were barriers to developing meaningful relationships necessary for positive mental health. Her small Athens apartment became a social club for ex-patients when Gillick was not working at the dental office. When she would get off work, ex-patients would come by her house to take advantage of the food that she would prepare for them or to dwell in the presence of similar others who understood the experience of living with mental illness. In doing so, Gillick opened herself to the emotional and physical exhaustion characteristic of non-profit work (Eschenfelder, 2012). Rita Gillick’s devoted service to the ex-patient community was not without trying moments. Anne Stempel described days when Rita would come home exhausted from her job assisting in the dentist office and say she did not have the heart to turn on the lights in her apartment—because if she did, the ex-patients would come and want food (personal communication, October 21, 2011). However, the work of both Rita and AMHI was not in vain.

In early 1976, Athens Mental Health Incorporated, under Gillick’s direction, began to catch the attention of local and state mental health agencies. Members of the
Athens-Hocking-Vinton 648 Board contacted Athens Mental Health Incorporated to let them know of demonstration grants available to organizations with effective approaches to community mental health treatment. There were several 648 boards throughout the state, named after the Amended Substitute House Bill 648\(^7\) that established them in the wake of deinstitutionalization to serve the purpose of allocating federal monies for community mental health centers (Ohio Department of Mental Health, 2012). The late-1970’s were a time when government monies were available to rehabilitation programs that were demonstrating success in the era of deinstitutionalization (Propst, 1997). This money came in the form of demonstration grants made available to groups or individuals exploring innovative ideas to help community mental health networks provide effective and efficient treatment for people living with mental illness. Athens Mental Health Incorporated took the suggestion seriously and began to put together a case to demonstrate their need for the money to secure a place out of which to operate instead of occupying the church library and Gillick’s apartment.

The process of writing this grant involved an active effort on the parts of the AMHI members to motivate community support and to research similar, effective community-based programs. Anne Stempel shared that part of this effort involved securing letters from community members (personal communication, October 26, 2011). Between the volunteers and ex-patients, AMHI had access to local ministers, mental health practitioners, university faculty, and the police chief. Most of these people were sympathetic to the argument provided by Jim Burgess, an ex-patient member of AMHI.

\(^7\) Today, 648 boards are referred to as 317 boards, again named after Amended Substitute House Bill 317, which was passed in 1987 to include alcohol and substance abuse under the mental health services.
that Athens needed a “Gathering Place” where former patients and people living with mental illness may go within the community (personal communication, Anne Stempel, October 21, 2011). In total they acquired 45 letters of support. But Stempel also described how the stigma surrounding mental illness prompted some members of the community to voice concern regarding a group of former patients gathering under one roof, thinking that they may get into trouble (personal communication, October 21, 2011). Even so, these antagonists did not prevent AMHI from sending out the demonstration grant.

In addition to collecting letters, members of AMHI searched for other community-based mental health centers as models for developing an effective rehabilitative environment. In their research at Ohio University’s Alden Library, they came across literature detailing a rehabilitation program in Manhattan, New York, by the name of Fountain House that had demonstrated success providing effective psychosocial rehabilitation through providing a supportive, work-oriented environment for people living with mental illness. Acknowledging “Help Mate” and Rita Gillick’s informal social club held in her apartment, they felt the Fountain House program would serve as an effective model to justify their efforts helping ex-patients in Athens as an enterprise deserving of funding.

In their optimism the members of AMHI began scouring Athens to find a suitable house out of which to operate. Several places caught the eyes of the members, but the

---

8 Jim Burgess’s (not a pseudonym) suggestion that the ex-patients needed a gathering place was the impetus for the name “The Gathering Place.” Burgess is often invoked by longterm members when the discussion of the name of the organization arises during conversations at the house.
owners of the houses were either only looking to sell or unwilling to rent the house for AMHI’s intended purposes. However, a three-story, Victorian style house at 7 North Congress Avenue caught the attention of AMHI, and the owner was willing to rent it to provide a space for the ex-patients. AMHI secured the house when they received the demonstration grant, and The Gathering Place opened its doors to the Athens community for the first time on October 1, 1976. Since that time, The GP has continued to provide a space for ex-patients and people living with mental illness within the community in a fashion similar to the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation as inspired by Fountain House in New York City.

Fountain House

Though taking place 30 years earlier, the story of Fountain House follows a trajectory similar to The GP. Fountain House was envisioned in 1946 by a group of ex-patients in New York City, who provided material and emotional support under the banner “We Are Not Alone” (WANA). The organization helped recently discharged patients to transition from institutional to community life by holding meetings in churches, as well as the Rockland State Hosptial, which discharged many of the ex-patients. WANA was also known to gather on the steps of the New York Public Library, much like the discharged patients in Athens who would congregate on the courthouse steps. In 1948 WANA caught the interest of concerned citizens and New York City’s mental health community, who provided financial assistance for their organization to secure a permanent location to meet and help former patients get on the path to leading a meaningful, independent life. This house became Fountain House, named after the fountain on the property to inspire a sense of new hope in those who would find refuge
within its walls (“Wellspring”, 1999). At this site Fountain House’s rehabilitative program would evolve to become the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation, the rehabilitative approach to helping people living with mental illness adopted by The GP.

Fountain House's psychosocial rehabilitation program was initially enacted through purging all artifacts and practices associated with institutional care. As previously noted, patients were the passive recipients of treatments within the highly structured environment of such institutions with little attention paid to the acquisition and development of skills useful for independent life in the community. In a move to counter the involuntary, highly structured, and passive treatment received at state hospitals, the idea of membership was advanced in order to emphasize the voluntary relationship members have with Fountain House and their personal rehabilitative journeys towards community life (Robbins, 1954; Glickman, 1992). Fountain House members were encouraged to view themselves as persons with the capacity to live within and contribute meaningfully both to the community and their rehabilitation.

To further distance the organization from institutional care, members were placed in charge of planning and executing daily programming to promote the development of vocational skills and supportive relationships. This decision was made with the belief that members were in the best position to anticipate and address the individual needs of ex-patients reentering the community (Robbins, 1954). This belief stood in direct contrast to institutional care where psychiatrists administered universal treatment to their patients with little regard to their individual needs and capabilities as persons (Goffman, 1961, p. 6).
One social worker was kept on staff, without the assistance of psychologists or psychiatrists, to serve as an informal advisor and to empower members to assume responsibility for their transition back into the community (Robins, 1954). Fountain House operated in this fashion for several years, and though it was successful in alleviating the loneliness that patients experienced, it was doing little to help them acquire vocational skills to secure employment.

The organization never grew beyond a social club when directed solely by members because of ineffective programs for personal development and a lack of community involvement (Fisher, Beard, & Goertzel, 1960). As a result, more social workers were added to the organization, who collaborated with members to develop a work-oriented program that would facilitate the transition to community life based on the needs of the members.

In the reenvisioned program staff and members worked together planning and executing the day-to-day activities central to the functioning of the house, while continuing to foster social connections between members to develop a supportive community atmosphere. Although Fountain House’s restructured program was more goal-directed than the first iteration (Fisher, Beard, & Goertzel, 1960), members still were encouraged to take part in the program at their own pace. Staff provided opportunities for members to help out with the daily chores necessary for the smooth operation of the house such as cooking, cleaning, and basic maintenance, as well as more complicated tasks including keeping financial records and other managerial tasks. When ready, members were encouraged to participate in the transitional employment program geared to facilitate their transition to independent community living, as will be discussed.
later. The social programs continued playing an equally important role as the work-oriented activities by helping foster connections among members to create an empathic community to which members could continually turn for support even after graduating from the transitional employment program (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982).

Even though the amount of staff assisting the members increased in the day-to-day functioning of the organization, Fountain House remained devoid of the presence of licensed mental health professionals in an active effort to maintain the non-institutional demeanor of the house. The absence of licensed mental health care professionals within clubhouses is of significant importance within the context of this dissertation, because it emphasizes the central role of meaningful relationships with regard to living well with mental illness.

While its beginnings are associated with Fountain House in 1948, the authorized clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation did not officially emerge until 1982. Propst (1997) credits the emergence and proliferation of the clubhouse model to demonstration grant opportunities sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health. These grants sought out successful community mental health programs with demonstrated success in contributing effectively to community mental health networks during the era of deinstitutionalization. Fountain House received a grant to turn their rehabilitative program into a model that could be disseminated to other communities with the hope of achieving the same success. At this point it is important to note that The GP,

---

9 Beard, Propst, and Malamud (1982) noted that in later years, Fountain House took a psychiatrist on staff because of the amount of people who took advantage of their services. This decision was made out of a practical necessity rather than from a desire to change their rehabilitative philosophy.
which first opened in 1976, though inspired by Fountain House's rehabilitative program, is not an official clubhouse. Such certification requires training and accreditation by Clubhouse International, the organization that oversees clubhouse operations around the world (see Clubhouse International, 2011). The GP took advantage of government funds to establish an effective community mental health program during the same time that Fountain House was developing the clubhouse model. Despite this technicality, the GP was inspired by the Fountain House program, and the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation is a useful heuristic for understanding the GP’s organizational structure.

The Clubhouse Model of Psychosocial Rehabilitation.

Today, clubhouses world-wide have demonstrated success providing a community-based mental health service by creating a space for people living with mental illness to dwell within an empathic environment. Clubhouse membership allows for year-round unfettered access to the organization’s rehabilitative programs and social environments at a cheaper cost than partial hospital services (Plotnick & Salzer, 2008). Approximate annual clubhouse operating costs range from $2000-$5000 per member depending upon whether the clubhouse is located in a rural or urban area (Mowbray, Lewandowski, Holter, & Bybee, 2006). And though not perfect, transitional employment programs sponsored by clubhouses have shown significant success in helping clubhouse members find employment compared to other social programs (Henry, Parreira, Banks, Brown, & McKay, 2001). The proliferation and success of the clubhouse model has prompted the establishment of the International Center for Clubhouse Development (currently referred to as Clubhouse International), which oversees the implementation of clubhouses worldwide (Clubhouse International, 2011). At this point we turn our
attention to the foundational beliefs that comprise the clubhouse model’s rehabilitative structure and four inspirational messages clubhouses attempt to convey to each member.

*The Four Fundamental Beliefs of the Clubhouse Model*

Goertzel, Propst, and Malamud (1982), who are former executive directors of Fountain House, described the four basic beliefs of the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation: (1) even the most severely disabled of psychiatric clients has the potential for productivity; (2) work is a deeply generative and reintegrative force in the life of every human being; (3) men and women require opportunities to be social together; and (4) special attention to the circumstances in which members live is imperative. The first belief that everyone, regardless of psychiatric impairment, has the capacity to be a productive individual is not developed beyond that initial statement. Nevertheless, it serves as an important frame through which to experience the subsequent beliefs. Holding the first belief in mind, let us turn to the second belief.

*Work is a deeply generative and reintegrative force in the life of every human being.* Clubhouse approaches to psychosocial rehabilitation thrive on the potential of work to bring meaning to members’ lives. Active involvement in the work-oriented activities sponsored by clubhouses is a key to member success within a clubhouse. Beard, Propst, and Malamud (1982) wrote, “Each [member] has skills and talents that, when discovered and utilized, can make the experience of each day worthwhile. Fountain House believes that this process provides a new and nourishing foundation for the future” (p. 48). Robby Vorspan (1992), former assistant director of training at Fountain House, wrote about the generative capacity of work: “Work has a profound meaning in your life. It gives you a sense of who you are among other people” (p. 51). Through work members
see themselves as “not as fragile as we might feel ourselves to be” (p. 53) as they find the balance between the experience of mental illness and the responsibilities of work necessary for living independently within the community. Even outside of the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation, people living with severe and persistent mental illness find that employment becomes a significant source of meaning in their life and aids in their recovery (Dunn, Wewiorski, & Rogers, 2008). Clubhouses implement their work-oriented days to reflect the working patterns of the surrounding community. They devote the majority of the daytime hours to work-related activities, while reserving the evenings and weekends for social programs (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982; Jackson, 2001). Eventually and at their own pace, members are encouraged to take part in the transitional employment program, the first step to living independently in the community.

Clubhouses provide opportunities for members to take part in work-oriented activity through prevocational and transitional employment programs. Prevocational programs involve members in a variety of work-oriented activities within the clubhouse in order to help members realize their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the program (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982). The prevocational activities are largely centered around the immediate needs of the organization and members including cleaning, planning and cooking meals, answering phones, as well as creative workshops for art, photography, poetry, and music (Peck, 2000). Beard, Propst, and Malamud (1982) wrote about the importance of these activities in the lives of the members, “Such involvement in the work of the clubhouse is a splendid preparation for and source of increased confidence in each member’s ability to take gainful employment in the outside world” (p.
The idea is that prevocational activities help members develop the skills and confidence for employment outside the organization.

Reintegrating people living with mental illness back into their communities as contributing members is performed through Fountain House’s transitional employment program. Over the course of its time in operation, Fountain House has developed ties to organizations such as the American Stock Exchange, Dow Jones & Company, McGraw-Hill, and Time Warner by placing members in employment positions with these companies (Peck, 2000). Additionally, Fountain House’s transitional employment program has been shown to increase the time members spend employed compared to individuals who do not take part in a similar program (Henry and others, 2001; McKay, Johnsen, Banks & Stein, 2006). The power of work in the rehabilitation of people living with mental illness was even felt by Rita Gillick.

After a myriad of psychiatric treatments were administered to her to alleviate her depressive symptoms with negligible effects, Gillick experienced the most significant improvements in her outlook when she began working:

Slowly I began to feel like an individual person—not a number in the files to be administered medication every four hours. Finally the depression began to lift. I worked with the housekeepers cleaning. Then on to the library to work where once again I became immersed in new books, the daily newspapers, etc. (1985, para. 10)

And as mentioned previously, ex-patients gained Gillick’s favor in the community by devoting themselves to recovery from their mental illness through offering their services to the community. Founding member Gary Meyer recalled when he first met Rita at her
apartment prior to the opening of The GP that she expected him to help out with the other patients living in the community in whatever ways he could, which on that day meant mowing the lawn of one of her acquaintances. And before he left to carry out the task, she reached into her packet and gave him a five-dollar bill (personal communication, Aug 2012).

Gillick’s appreciation of work-oriented experience is present today within The GP through programs that encourage members to contribute their unique talents to the organization. The GP provides opportunities for members to cook meals for one another, as well as encourages them to keep the house in a presentable state. But The GP is also mindful to include creative programming for their members. The organization has a relationship with several academic departments at the local university, and during the academic year, students from the English and music departments host one-hour poetry workshops and music therapy sessions. As such, it is important to note that the idea of meaningful work is broadly construed (see Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, & Lair, 2008). It is reflected in the GP’s rehabilitative structure through the incorporation of creative and vocational modalities of expression and validation.

Even though The GP is devoted to the personal development of members, they do not have a transitional employment program in place like the one provided by Fountain House. One reason this is the case is that The GP is located in the Appalachian region of Ohio, an area with limited employment opportunities and above average unemployment when compared with the national rate (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2011). Job opportunities are limited, especially for people living with mental illness, which serves as a barrier to employment (Biggs, Hovey, Tyson, & MacDonald, 2010). Despite these
obstacles, The GP is sensitive to the members’ needs to create meaningful work and contribute to the community. In addition to promoting the value of work, clubhouses, as noted, understand the value of meaningful social relationships in the lives of people who live with mental illness.

*Men and women require opportunities to be social together.* One of the obstacles preventing former patients from making a successful transition to living independently in the community was the lack of social relationships in former patients’ lives (Fisher, Beard, & Goertzel, 1960; Goertzel, Beard & Pilnick, 1960; Robbins, 1954). As noted earlier, not only did former patients lack the necessary skills for independent living, they also were burdened with the stigma associated both with mental illness and psychiatric institutionalization that pushed them to the margins of society (Foucault, 1965; Goffman, 1963). There is no time when the presence of supportive others is more vital than when the patient is released from the hospital and often at the height of his/her social isolation and vulnerability. Without a supportive network, it is no surprise that many former patients found their way back to the hospital as their mental health declined with their isolation increasing (Wechsler, 1960). One of Fountain House’s primary purposes was to fill a former patient’s need for belonging. Fountain House’s capacity to foster supportive relationships was apparent when WANA began gathering on the steps of the New York Public Library. Even during Fountain House’s early years when many of the members were stagnant in their rehabilitation due to ineffective member leadership, members reported their social needs were fulfilled meaningfully by the organization (Fisher, Beard, & Goertzel, 1960). The organization's capacity to foster social relationships grew when member leadership was supplemented with the guidance of a
small staff of social workers, and the rehabilitative program took a more work-oriented approach. Robin Jackson (1992), a Fountain House staff member, described the relationship-fostering capacity of work within clubhouses:

Through this process of working together and being valued in so doing, members begin to gain, or regain, some self-respect, some sense of self worth, and respect and value for others. They begin to form friendships and to be able to be friends themselves. (p. 64)

Though clubhouses advocate the development of work-oriented relationships, they also stress the importance of purely social relationships in the experience of mental illness.

Clubhouses demonstrate a commitment to fulfilling social relationships beyond the context of work. Fountain House specifically reserves social programming for the evening and weekend hours of operation in order to reinforce the eight to five work schedule (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982). These social programs include activities as simple as playing board/card games and holding movie nights or may include outings to recreational activities such as sporting events.

Likewise, The GP offers its members numerous social programs for its members to develop relationships with one another. During the evenings the staff will hold weekly card and board game tournaments, movie nights, as well as outings to the bowling alley. Every holiday the organization celebrates with a potluck meal and karaoke, when available. The GP also remains open for Christmas and provides its members with dinner. Finally, each summer the staff and members plan a weekend trip to a professional sporting event or theme park.
Attention to the lived circumstances of the members’ environment is imperative.

One of the failings of institutional treatment was the tendency to overlook the day-to-day needs of the patients by focusing exclusively on alleviating the mental illness at the expense of the holistic needs of the person (Wechsler, 1960). When patients re-entered their communities, they were often unable to cope with the freedoms of non-institutional life resulting in many patients returning to the hospital (Fisher, Beard, & Goertzel, 1960; Goertzel, Beard, & Pilnick, 1960; Robbins, 1954). This recidivism is also associated with deinstitutionalization policies enacted without adequate community mental health networks in place to help people living with mental illness to sustain themselves independently within the community (Curtis, 1986; Grob, 1995; Grob, 1997). As such, clubhouses strive to help members reintegrate into communities by focusing on the lived experiences of those members. The GP performs this goal by helping its members to find adequate and affordable housing, as well as to get signed-up for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

The Four Messages Clubhouses Convey to Members

The four underlying beliefs of the clubhouse model give rise to four primary messages that Beard, Propst, and Malamud (1982) noted clubhouses attempt to convey to each of their members: (1) Clubhouses belong to those who participate in them and make them come alive; (2) Members are made to feel that their presence is expected and makes a difference; (3) Members are made to feel wanted as a contributor to the program; and (4) Members are made to feel needed within the program.

Clubhouses belong to those who contribute to them. Clubhouses convey messages of belonging by promoting the idea of membership as opposed to being a patient.

Conceiving of clubhouse involvement as “membership” was a conscious choice, because
it casts members as voluntary agents in their own rehabilitation, as opposed to the role of a patient passively receiving psychiatric treatment within the hospital setting (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982; Robbins, 1954). Mark Glickman (1992), former coordinator of internal training at Fountain House, described the voluntary quality of clubhouse membership as a vital component of the program’s success: “By simply saying when to be at the clubhouse, how long to stay, and what to do while there, we end up saying to our members, ‘You cannot decide what is in your best interests’” (p. 40). This particular emphasis speaks to the clubhouse belief that the circumstances in which members live must be reflected in the clubhouse environment. In this case voluntary membership encourages members to take responsibility for their rehabilitation within an environment that mimics the freedoms associated with community life. At The GP, the staff actively seeks member input with regard to social and vocational programming at the house. Every Friday afternoon, the organization holds a “Rap” session where staff members inform members of upcoming events, and open a space for members to voice any concerns they have with regarding the day-to-day operations of the organization. Further, the “Rap” session is where aspiring members are allowed to make a case for their membership with The GP to current members who then vote as to whether or not to grant membership. Although anybody with a diagnosed mental illness or history of substance abuse qualifies for membership with The GP, the members have the ultimate say as to who is and is not granted membership.¹⁰

¹⁰ Tom Sepeck noted that membership at The GP was difficult to acquire during the early years of the organization. If one member did not approve of a particular person, s/he could be blackballed and there would be no future for that person at The GP. However, today all an aspiring member has to garner is a majority show of hands from the current
Members are made to feel expected. At face value this message appears to cast the relationship between member and clubhouse as one of obligation, which would contradict the voluntary quality of membership advocated by the rehabilitative program. However, Beard, Propst, and Malamud (1982) clarified what is meant by expectation: “All members are made to feel . . . that their presence is expected, that someone actually anticipates their coming to the program each morning and that their coming makes a difference to someone, indeed to everyone, in the program” (p. 47, emphasis mine). Expectation in the sense of anticipation is distinct from expectation as obligation.

Clubhouses do not demand that members be in attendance, rather clubhouses should always be prepared for the likely arrival of their members. Members are made to feel wanted as contributors to the program. One of the goals of the work-oriented day is to empower members and help them realize they are capable of making meaningful contributions to the clubhouse and their community. Recognizing the individual strengths of the members is one way in which clubhouses attempt to convey to members that their contributions are important. Roesnfield and Neese-Todd (1993) offered the following comment regarding how clubhouse models perform their rehabilitative structure: “In addition, these programs are defined by common principles, including approaches to treatment and service delivery that stress patients’ strengths rather than the weaknesses associated with their illness” (p. 76). As already mentioned, clubhouses enact this belief by allowing members an opportunity to participate actively in the functioning of the organization. Beard, Propst, and Malamud (1982) wrote, “Every function of the members during a rap session, a change which Tom noted is the result of the influence of the 317 Board that funds The GP, as well as state regulations (personal communication, July 9, 2012).
program is shared by the members working side by side with staff; staff never ask members to carry out functions which they do not also perform themselves” (p. 47).

Through active member participation, clubhouses help them realize their capacity to contribute meaningfully to their respective communities (Jackson, 1992; Vorspan, 1992).

In addition, the staff encourages members to establish and lead activities during the week, and the product of such encouragement has resulted in walking groups. Jillian Pillar, the executive director of The GP as of the writing of this dissertation, puts the members first when she pursues grants to supplement the funds provided the Ohio Department of Mental Health through the 317 boards. Each year she has to raise approximately $50,000 through grant opportunities and goodwill donations in order to support summer trips and other recreational activities for the members. When she applies for grants, she finds opportunities that do not interfere with the rehabilitative goals of the organization and play to the advantage of the house. For example, Ms. Pillar has applied for and received health and wellness grants from the Little Sisters of St. Joseph Church and Charitable fund which has allowed for the purchase of supplies and seeds for the members to plant and maintain gardens both at the house and on one of the community plots offered by the city.  

Members are made to feel needed within the program. This message emphasizes that member contributions are not only wanted but needed within the clubhouse. Beard,  

---

11 I would like to note a parallel between the fundraising efforts undertaken by the executive directors of The Gathering Place speaks to the research of Harter, Leeman, Norander, Young, and Rawlins (2008) on organizational practices of “merging of seemingly divergent logics” (p. 449). While Harter and others were referencing a collaborative art studio, The Gathering Place enacts a similar tactics by using the physical structure of the organization to apply for and receive funding for sources outside of mental health.
Propst, & Malamud (1982) wrote, “Fountain House thus meets the profoundly human desire to be needed, to be felt as an important member of a meaningful group, and at the same time conveys to each member the sense that each is concerned with all” (p. 47). Clubhouses perform this message through seeking member input on a wide variety of decisions from buying food to more significant decisions facing the organization. However, Mowbray, Lewandowski, Holter, and Bybee (2006) noted how clubhouses, although designed with the intent of empowering members through making them feel needed, do not entirely fulfill on that promise. Members remarked that though they feel empowered through the social relationships made possible through their clubhouse participation, they felt as if they only had a limited capacity to influence the governance of the clubhouse. A similar feeling has been expressed at The Gathering Place, especially with regard to electing members to serve on the board that governs the organization in such a way as to mediate individual member voices. In summary, the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation is built upon the belief that every individual regardless of mental illness has the desire to belong and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to his or her respective communities. The clubhouse rehabilitative model understands the need to provide an environment for members to develop supportive social relationships and to develop the skills necessary for independent community living. Clubhouses perform this model through conveying messages that acknowledge the presence of their members and empower them to see themselves as individuals with the

12 All non-profit organizations are required to have a board of directors, usually elected from members of the community, who hold the organizational accountable with regard to fiduciary matters.
capacity to contribute meaningfully to the community, accomplished in part through
programs that emphasize aesthetic expression, specifically music (Peck, 2000).

Moving Forward

In this chapter I have examined understandings, evolving practices and
experiences of living with mental illness in the United States during the past 100 years.
My rendering of these issues of mental illness was contextualized within the life of Rita
Gillick, a former patient of two state hospitals, notably the Athens Mental Health Center,
and a community mental health advocate. We came to see mental illness as a stigmatized
identity serving mainly to marginalize a group of people whose recovery and integration
into the community depends in part on having access to meaningful social relationships
and vocational purpose. In contrast, Rita’s loving orientation towards the ex-patient
community with whom she identified strongly caught the attention of state
representatives. They in turn provided financial support for AMHI’s mission that allowed
for the formation of The GP. Since opening their doors in 1976, the staff and members of
The GP have provided a supportive space and rehabilitative environment inspired by the
person-centered clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation.

With this background in mind I will now take you inside The Gathering Place –
the venue where my musical relationships with the members unfolded. After providing
you with a tour of the house, I offer some preliminary comments on the composition of
this dissertation in order to introduce the dialogic sensibilities that influenced my writing.
I will then share with the reader my experiences making music with the members of The
GP during the GP Jams (a collaborative jam session) and music therapy sessions.
Following these experiences, I will tell the story of member Pete Wuscher and his song
and community event “Walk the Walk” to raise awareness of the experience of living with mental illness. Finally, I will provide some concluding remarks that highlight the takeaways of my musical experience, or what I believe to be music’s dialogic promise. So, with this being said, let us make our way to the house.
CHAPTER 2: THE GATHERING PLACE

Well, I call it; it's a home away from home. –Rachel Mabry

The Gathering Place sits atop the crest of North Congress Avenue, one street removed from the bustle of downtown Athens. The house bears a Victorian-era appearance with its three stories, covered front porch, and bay windows on the first and second floors. Large pine trees growing along the south and west property lines overshadow the house, darkening the peppered buttermilk color of the brick exterior. The gables in the roof’s apexes are forest green, similar to the needles of the pine trees surrounding half the house. The combination of the shade and the gables make the house appear withdrawn into the property despite its imposing proximity to the sidewalk. The lawn is well maintained and free of the plastic cups and beer cans occasionally littering the yards of the neighboring undergraduate students. Groomed bushes in front of the porch and the garden growing along the length of the house further distinguish it from the neighbors’ unadorned landscapes. A passerby glancing into the window might find a family sitting down to dinner or watching television together, and truth to tell, peeking through a window might reveal such a domestic display. However, there is something unique to this family imperceptible to the eye. This is a family that did not enter the world together, but rather they found each other later in life. And the home in which they live is not a place of origin, but a found social oasis in a social world not entirely comfortable with the idea of mental illness amid tragedies such as the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut. The house provides sanctuary from stigmatized understandings of mental health and serves as a beacon of reason for
educating the community about mental illness. And to some, the place has a resonance that feels like home.

The Front Porch

In the inn of the world
there is room for everyone.
To refuse entry to anyone,
for whatever reason,
is to risk an irreparable loss.

--Unknown Author

The well-shaded front porch stretches the width of the house and is accessible by a concrete stairway bridging the several foot gap to meet the sidewalk. For almost a decade this was the sole entrance to the house, until the late 1980’s when The GP was required to include a ramp alongside the house to the back door to improve accessibility. The porch’s wooden floor is painted a forest green matching the gables in the roof. A rocking chair and small table sit in front of the bay windows to the left of the front door. On nice days, it is enjoyable to sit in the rocking chair and listen to the wind blow through the large maple and dogwood trees growing in front of the porch. Two eyelets, spaced about a foot and a half apart, are screwed into the front roof support and hold a wooden sign with a picture of the front of the house and “The Gathering Place” routed into the surface. The rich, dark color of the wood makes it difficult to notice from the

---

13 This poem was found on an aged piece of paper in a folder of newspaper stories on The Gathering Place in the Robert R. and Jean R. Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections. I found the inclusion of the poem significant as an artifact of organizational culture (see Eisenberg & Riley, 2006).
street. With a casual glance the sign passes as a placard with the surname of the family residing inside.

The front door is the only aspect of the front porch with outright markers of the house’s status as something other than a standard residence. A postcard-sized piece of paper inscribed with the hours of The GP (10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. seven days a week including Christmas and Thanksgiving) is taped inside the corner of the window near the doorknob. Another sticker announces that The GP receives funding from United Appeal, an organization that provides financial support for causes addressing people in need (United Appeal of Athens Ohio, 2012). In the left center of the window is a large sign indicating that concealed weapons are banned on the premises. A full sheet of paper hangs in the center of the window indicating the three parking spaces in the private lot next door that are reserved for The GP with a friendly reminder to move one’s car should it not be in a designated space.

The door is unlocked during hours of operation, and people are encouraged to walk in. One of the important messages clubhouses are supposed to send to their members is that their presence is always anticipated but never required (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982). It would be difficult to convey this message with locked doors. Though individuals must have a diagnosed mental illness to be eligible for formal membership, members of the community are encouraged to stop by to learn about the experience of mental illness. Despite the placard indicating clearly the organization’s hours, there is some uncertainty as to how to enter the house. On occasion, people from the church dropping off food donations can be heard knocking at the front door or ringing the doorbell. At such a time, a member of the organization will help the person in and direct
him or her wherever they need to go. But for the most part, those visiting the house tend to walk in without announcing their presence via a knock or ring of the doorbell.

Before we cross the threshold, my description of the house is informed by Gagliardi’s (2006) attention to the aesthetic quality of organizational life in that organizations have a particular feel to them expressed, in part, through artifactual means. Examples of such artifacts include furniture, artwork, photographs, computers, or any other material object that may come to find itself within an organizational setting. Bearing in mind that Gagliardi believe that we experience organizations bodily, as well as symbolically, I invite the reader to bring your own embodied experiences of home to bear on this rendering to fill in the gaps that words alone struggle to fill.  

The First Floor

The Foyer

The foyer is a modest room with unadorned walls and dark, hardwood floors and trim. A doormat rests inside the door for members and guests to wipe their feet. To the right is a coat closet housing a small stack of cardboard boxes, and to the left is a waist-high chest of drawers with a brochure holder containing literature describing the organization and a binder of sign-in sheets for the members. Anywhere between one and twenty names can be found in that book depending on whether one arrives in the morning or afternoon. A piece of blue construction paper hangs on the wall above the binder with a message encouraging members to sign in in order to justify for funding sources, particularly the 317 Board, that The GP is being used by its members. On occasion, the

\footnote{I have included a floor map (see Appendix A) to accompany my description of the house.}
smell of chicken soup, casserole, or another home-cooked meal permeates the air in the foyer greeting both members and visitors alike.

The most notable feature in the foyer is a large, switchback staircase rising from the center of the room to the second floor. At the switchback, there is a small bay window opening out towards the neighboring house and illuminating the foyer. Atop each windowpane is set an ornamental stained glass pane that augments the sunlight with pastel yellows, greens, and reds. On the wall of the upper section of stairs is a long picture frame hung parallel with the incline of the steps displaying the head shots of approximately forty men and women (mostly men), who are former and current members of The Gathering Place. Finally, two light fixtures hang from the edge of the second floor landing parallel with the front door. The foyer opens onto both the sitting room to the left and the living room across from the front door. However, the passage to the living room is narrow, chocked off by the staircase rising overhead, and often closed off by a sliding, window-paned door. In contrast, the wide opening between the foyer and sitting room is more inviting and allows easier access.

*The Sitting Room*

The bay windows encountered in the porch extend from this room, providing a view of the sidewalk along North Congress Avenue. Because of the large trees growing in front of the house, the amount of light entering the room is limited. Two computers sit in the bay windows, each with its own desk. During the Christmas season, an artificial tree sits between the desks with some small gifts underneath. The aged, white walls and dark, hardwood floor and trim present in the foyer extend into the sitting room. A white, brick fireplace occupies the middle of the wall across from the foyer with a row of
pictures resting on its mantel. Two high-back chairs sit on either side of the fireplace. One chair has an end-table sitting next to it holding a lamp and a cordless phone. An upright piano sits in the corner of the room directly under a red control box for the fire alarm system detracting from the otherwise domestic appearance of the room. The members often use the sitting room to take advantage of the computers and the phone.

The two computers in the bay windows have internet access that the members are able to use for personal and entertainment purposes. These computers are available for the members to use in order to find housing, discover job openings, get information about government assistance, check their email, or other important needs. Members also use the computer to access Facebook and watch music videos posted on YouTube. Sometimes the computers are a source of contention when someone needs to use one for work purposes but other members are occupying both for personal entertainment reasons. Member Franklin Anderson shared that, “There should be a rule. Whoever needs the computers for work purposes should have first priority” (personal conversation, July 19, 2012). The other draw of the sitting room is the phone.

Members often use the phone to call their case worker and follow up on potential employment opportunities. Above the phone is a bulletin board with the phone numbers for local mental health and social work agencies. Members also are allowed to use The Gathering Place phone as a contact number for members looking for jobs. One member, Paul Wilson, calls The GP on occasion from his home in a nearby town for no reason other than to talk when he is unable to make it to The GP.

A third draw to the room is the upright piano in the corner across from the phone. Several members are able to play it and will on occasion fill the house with renditions of
Vangelis’s “Chariots of Fire,” Beethoven’s “Für Elise,” and Santana’s “Oye Come Va.” Sometimes members without any musical experience will sit down for a brief spell and strike the keys creating sometimes harmonious and sometimes discordant sounds. A local piano tuner keeps the instrument in tune for free. And of special significance in this room are the pictures resting on the mantel of the fireplace.

Seven aged photographs remind those who know the history of The GP organization of a few meaningful moments and people significant to the organization. One is a photograph of Anne Stempel, the founding member introduced in Chapter One. Four are group photographs of members and staff posing in various locations around the house. The significance of these latter photographs to the organization’s history is minimal, but they create a warm resonance in their celebration of significant events and people.

Anne’s face stands out among the groups posing in the dining room and sitting room photographs. Founding member Alan Stein’s face from when he was a couple decades younger is also visible in the photographs. He still comes by the house from time to time to sing karaoke or to sign up for summer trips to baseball games and amusement parks. In the course of his time with the organization, he has graduated from the local university and has run several marathons. Another picture is of three men posing in the late 1980’s (suggested by their clothes) during the construction of the ramp running alongside the house and making it accessible to individuals with difficulty climbing stairs. At the center of the mantel is a photograph of Shirley Wahn, another instrumental community volunteer member of AMHI who served as treasurer for the organization.

---

15 Shirley Wahn is not a pseudonym.
She, like Anne, played a significant role in securing the demonstration grant. But her most memorable contribution to The GP is Soup Day.

Soup day has been a tradition of the organization every Tuesday since Wahn initiated the practice during The GP’s nascence. She would arrive in the morning and throw together a large pot of soup. Though the soups varied weekly, Franklin Anderson recalls bean soups, vegetable soups, and chicken noodle soup, all of which were very tasty. Pete Wuscher\textsuperscript{16}, a long-time member of The GP, recalled Wahn fondly and described her soup-making as a form of bonding:

Somewhere I ran into someone in mental health. Her philosophy was, “It takes a lot of chicken.” And the simple . . . idea of that is, uhh, is rather than being confronted about the person’s obvious . . . maladies then, you know, you side with that person and you try to, you try not to put up barriers. You know? To engage, I guess is the treatment word for it, but um, her thing was you know, if you want to make some friends, you know, make a big chicken dinner. You know, it takes a lot of chicken dinner, <chuckles>. And uh, actually, Shirley’s retired now from The Gathering Place, that was her thing too, even though she wasn’t that one who said it, she was there every Tuesday faithfully making chicken soup. (personal communication, December, 14, 2011)

Soup day is still practiced at The GP, and every Tuesday the smell of soup permeates the house. However, when the heat begins to pick up in the summer time, the hot soups are replaced with cold salads. But regardless of the temperature, Wahn’s memory persists in the Tuesday meal and the photograph on top of the mantel.

\textsuperscript{16} By request, Pete Wuscher is not a pseudonym.
When considering the portraits displayed on the mantel, they not only present the visages of these women who served the organization with open hearts, but to certain members, these women were the first and sometimes only family they had ever known. Alan Stein noted that Rita Gillick, Anne Stempel, and Shirley Wahn are considered grandmothers of by the long-term members of The GP. Gary Meyer, another founding member, shared with me that he considered Anne to be the “mother I never had” (personal communication, Aug. 12, 2012). And the external reflections of the fondness the founding members have for these women exist in these images adorning the mantel. Again, to some, these pictures show portraits of individuals that have come and gone. But to others they represent the years of devoted care and affection they have come to find at The GP over the years.

Further, this expression of family within the context of The GP is of significance with regard to the organization’s rehabilitative goals. Salvador Minuchin (1974) held a deep reverence for the role of the family in social life noting how they imprint individual members with selfhood, impart young citizens with practical and moral advice for negotiating society, as well as provide a structure that fosters psychosocial development. The rehabilitative philosophy of The GP speaks to these social functions of the family as stressed by Minuchin. During my time with the organization, there were two members, Paul Wilson and Tony Malone, who referred to each other as brothers. Doing this was Tony’s idea because he felt that the significance of this familial label would encourage Paul to take a stronger initiative in taking physical care of himself by quitting smoking and to assume more responsibility helping out around the house.
The Dining Room

Another wide passage links the sitting room with the dining room. The dining room has a large table positioned in the middle of the room with six chairs surrounding it: one at each end and two in the middle on either side. Apples and oranges rest in a bowl in the middle of the table with local and national newspapers resting in a pile next to it. A box of markers sit at the edge of the table next to a stack of colored paper and some drawings of nature scenes and tribal art. Some pictures hang from the dark wood moldings of the large passages between the sitting room and the living room, reminding me of the art my sister and I produced as children that would find a home on the refrigerator or empty walls. One drawing on display is of a rainbow with the phrase, “The Gathering Place: Where the Heart of Friendship Shines.” The presence of such a sign within an organization that stresses the significance of meaningful relationships in living a life of recovery with mental illness is appropriate, because as Rawlins (2009) stated, “Freedom surely lives at the heart of friendships” (p. 1). And in this house people living with mental illness have the freedom to experience and express themselves without fear of repercussion or stigmatization.

On occasion, one may find a sympathy card on the dining room table for someone with health problems or who is recently bereaved, or there may be an “I miss you” card for various members who have suffered a misfortune and have not been around for a long period of time. Like Fountain House and the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation, it is common for members and staff to reach out to members to let them know that they and are missed and their presence is always anticipated (Goertzel, Beard, & Malamud, 1982).
Sunlight pours into the Dining Room from two windows that bow out in a bay fashion from the side of the house. However, there is no center window as in the other bay windows. Instead, there is a bulletin board in its place announcing the times of a variety of activities. There is a sign for a poetry workshop at 4:00 p.m. on Mondays, music therapy at 2:00 p.m. on Thursdays, and sign-up sheets for potential summer trips to a Cincinnati Reds Game and or trip to Kings Island. One sheet announces an upcoming meeting of the board that oversees the operations and finances of The GP. Directly above the bulletin board is an ornamental stained glass window, like those opening onto the switchback staircase, which adds a colorful element to the light pouring through the glass onto the dining room table.

There are several more bulletin boards in the dining room. One in the corner between the sitting room and living room is a message board with various pieces of paper with the first names of members pinned to it. And next to this bulletin board is another with pieces of paper describing the rules of the organization’s expectations of conduct (see Appendix B). A bulletin board near the entrance of the kitchen has a variety of announcements for organizations serving people with substance abuse issues. There is a flyer for Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Nicotine Anonymous. Hanging from the door leading into the kitchen is a list of guest speakers coming to Athens, Ohio, to talk about borderline personality disorder, postpartum depression, schizophrenia, and autism.

The dining room is a spot for congregation in the house. Many of the members will bring their meal into the dining room to eat, so they can sit and read a paper, engage in conversation with other members, or eat their meal as they keep to themselves. Once
every week members come together at the table to play a game of euchre or rummy. The
dining room is also the location of the monthly board meetings, and when the weather is
less than desirable, the weekly rap session.

On the wall near the passage between the dining room and the sitting room is a
framed cross-stitch poem entitled “Well People” authored by Dr. Irvin D. Yalom:

Well People/ Recognize that life is at times/ unfair and unjust / Recognize that
ultimately/ there is no escape / from pain and from death / Realize that no matter
how close they/ get to people, they still face death alone. / Face the basic issues of
life and death / and thus live more honestly, / less caught up in trivialities / Learn
that they must take responsibility / for the way they live, no matter how / much
guidance and support they get from others. / Learn what they cannot obtain from
others. / It is a harsh lesson and leads both to / despair and strength.

This poem, though not the most emotionally uplifting piece, speaks to the sometimes
harsh realities of human existence. Anne Stempel described how members of The GP
reacted to this poem about wellness as they read it, perhaps while sitting at the dining
room table:

It’s a very interesting thing, because see if you accept that life is not fair, your life
is a lot better for you, if you do not go around feeling life’s not fair he has this,
and I don’t have that, and you know and so, it’s just Shirley found [the poem] and
this man gave her this very old timey frame and she lettered it so perfectly and did
the artwork on it and she’s very artistic and it’s a beautiful thing. And people
would sit there and they would read it, and they would say the first time I read
that I was scared that I read that, but I like it now, it’s one of the things they would talk about. (personal communication, October 26, 2012)

*The Living Room*

The living room is located just off the dining room and is connected to the foyer through a frequently closed, glass-paneled door. Another fireplace sits in the wall across from the dining room with pictures displayed atop its mantel like the fireplace in the sitting room. However, the pictures atop the mantel are not of people, but pictures of nature scenes and drawings of abstract shapes, perhaps the products of a photography or art class. One photograph is a picture of leaves scattered across the Hocking Valley Bike Path taken by Wicked Wiccan, a member of The GP for the past ten years. Windows, one on each side of the fireplace, illuminate the room. In the corner next to the fireplace is a little bookshelf with a variety of reading materials, some of which are about mental illness. Two couches are positioned against the walls and a rocking chair sits near the fireplace, all of which face the flat-screen television hanging from the wall separating the living room and foyer.

Members often use the living room to sit quietly and watch television. Seeing a member enjoy an afternoon nap with Judge Judy sounding from the wall is not an uncommon sight. And on weekends in the fall, a group of members may be seen together watching a college or professional football game. On occasion, when The GP holds an open house for the community and members, there often are pieces of art and crafts created by members on display. Visitors are encouraged to purchase the available artwork, and the funds going to the members who sometimes set aside a portion of the profit to donate to The GP.
The kitchen is located at the back of the house and is accessible through a door in the back of the dining room. A large table sits in the center of the room with a bowl on top that during the summer is filled with vegetables from their plot in the community garden. Against one wall is a sink with a variety of coffee mugs and plates and bowls on the shelves directly above the sink. A bin full of soapy water rests in the sink with a few dishes, mostly coffee mugs, visible below the bubbles. A microwave and coffee pot sit atop a rolling table near the refrigerator, and above the coffee pot hangs a sign reminding members to pay/contribute to the coffee fund. Coffee used to be provided by the organization, but the quantity of coffee drank by the members placed significant stress on their limited food budget. The refrigerator has a sign on it to inform members they may help themselves to bread and peanut butter, as well as fresh fruit. There are cabinets underneath the table stocked with pots and pans used for cooking.

A large metal pot sits on the stove with the burner set on low. Noodles, celery, and carrots float on the yellowish broth of what appears to be chicken noodle soup. Soup is not the only meal that the members are provided at The Gathering Place. It is typical to see a pot of chili cooking on the stove or smell a casserole in the oven. Bowls sit on the table next to a pile of spoons to allow members easy access to the soup. Members are encouraged to help themselves to any meals prepared in the kitchen as long as they clean up after themselves.

Like the dining room, the kitchen is also a place of congregation where members gather to converse. It is a common sight to see members in the kitchen sharing a conversation across the table in the center of the room. And on occasion, those members
who stop in the kitchen to get a cup of coffee or a peanut butter sandwich will take a moment to listen and perhaps participate in the unfolding conversation.

The kitchen is a room where many paths converge in the house. The door to the back porch and the back staircase to the second floor are both accessible through the kitchen. Also, the only entrance to the basement is in the kitchen next to the sink. The high volume of traffic moving through the kitchen makes navigation through the room difficult on occasion.

*The Back Porch*

The back porch is partially covered by an overhang from the sunroom directly above that provides shelter from the elements and shade when the sun is particularly hot in the summer time. A large picnic table sits underneath the overhang. A long bench sits on one side of the table and chairs sit around the remaining three sides. The portion of the back porch directly below the sunroom is comprised of a concrete slab, alongside which is constructed the wooden deck and ramp extending down the side of the house for accessibility by members who find stairs difficult to manage. On the deck component of the back porch is a circular table. Pine trees surround the back porch area giving it a secluded feeling.

Behind the back porch is a grassy backyard that is part of a hill rising gently towards the property behind the house. In the corner of the back yard is a motionless wooden water wheel sitting beneath a tree and serves an ornamental purpose. Carved into the hill behind the back porch is a concrete retaining wall holding the earth back from spilling over into the gravel pit where a gas grill, recycling bins, and trash cans are
placed. On the concrete retaining wall is a mural painted by a work-study student during the summer of 2010 that tells the story of the Gathering Place.

The mural is of a green field below a blue sky. On the left-hand side of the mural is a rendering of the Athens Mental Health Center as it appears sitting on the hill overlooking the city of Athens. On the opposite side is a house appearing to be The GP. In between the asylum and the house is painted a brown doorframe and open door, with several trees painted into the landscape giving it the appearance of a grassy field. Near the house there is a silhouette of an individual playing a guitar with a rainbow rising out of the strings.

The back porch is a highly populated place at The GP. Most of The GP members smoke and are only allowed to do so outside. This being so, it is common to find members out back smoking cigarettes during The GP’s hours of operation. Though the back porch is often utilized for smoking purposes, many non-smokers spend time out here, because that is where most of the members may be found. However, smoking is not the only purpose the porch serves. On quiet days at the house, some members will sit out on the back porch when the weather is nice to enjoy the day sans cigarette. On other days one may even find a dog tied to a tree in the back yard awaiting its owner somewhere in the house. And there are other times when members will be sitting on the back porch with guitars and drums performing for those who happen to be present. During the summer months the back porch often smells of grilled chicken when the members fire up the grill to make dinner.

The back porch also serves as the back entrance to the house and is the entrance that most people affiliated with the organization use upon their arrival. This is often the
case because there is a greater chance of running into other members on the back porch than entering through the front door. One member, Robin Freeman, described the entrance from the back porch as such:

I guess that would have to be probably my favorite thing, and I think that's part of the reason I go up the ramp. Because there's always a crowd out there. If you go in the front door, it's just different. If you go in the back, it's like you can go through and get all the hugs all the way in. So that's why I go up the ramp. . . . And it's kind of like being allowed to go in the back door of someone's house. Yeah. And so I like going up the ramp because I like collecting hugs on the way in, and it doesn't really happen if you go into the front. (personal communication, July 8, 2012)

Many members and volunteers take their first steps into the organization through the front door, though after a couple visits, their path into the house gets diverted through the back door.

Between the ramp and the length of wall where the ramp runs is a plot set aside for planting a vegetable garden. Tomato and pumpkin plants can be found growing in this garden during the summer months. Members are in charge of tending the plants by making sure they are watered daily and the ground is free of weeds. As the vegetables ripen they are used for member consumption, either raw or as ingredients in meals provided the members.

The Basement

A wooden door with a padlock in the kitchen provides the only entrance to the basement. The lock is on the door to prevent people from going downstairs and
potentially stealing food items in the refrigerator and freezer alongside the stairs, as well as the personal belongings that members sometimes store when in-between houses. Wooden stairs descend into the main room of the basement with doors leading to a workshop and a hallway running the length of the house. The walls of this room are comprised of cinder blocks chipped away by age and lighted primarily by the light filtering in along the ground level windows. A damp, earthy smell permeates the air. Along the side wall is a washer, a dryer, and a utility sink. A dehumidifier sits unplugged near the washer. Along the back wall are a series of empty cardboard boxes. In front of the refrigerator and freezer resting alongside the staircase to the kitchen is a drum set comprised of a kick drum, snare, a hi-hat, a ride and crash cymbal\(^\text{17}\), and three tom drums of various sizes. Provided by one member, the drum set gives members an opportunity to express their musical talent, and on occasion, one can hear someone down here beating the skins or potentially a whole rock band indulging in a fantasy of success. Also, hanging from the basement ceiling is a speed bag for punching, as well as a Bow-Flex\(^\text{®}\) and set of dumbbells left by a member for the members to work out and improve their physical health. For a short period one member, Dennis Madison, used to refer to the basement as his gym when he would spend about an hour each morning using the equipment. At one point in time, this room used to house a Ping-Pong table for member use.

Opening off the main room to the right is a workshop. Windows around ground level allow light in like the windows in the main room. A large metal table sits in the

\(^{17}\) Ride and crash cymbals have two distinct sounds. Ride cymbals provide a more sustained and resonant tone when struck. Crash cymbals sound onomatopoetically with a bright though short-lived tone.
room with a band saw resting on its top. There is a row of shelves alongside one wall that hold various tools. Three bikes, most likely donated by a member of the community, rest along the far wall that need new chains and/or tires but are available for members when in working condition. A brick room opens off from the workshop into a space below the back porch that looks as if it stored wood at one time. Stemming from the workshop in the center of the basement is a hallway that runs the length of the house. Following the hallway towards the front leads to a storage area where more boxes are kept, as well as seasonal decorations including the Christmas tree that sits in the bay windows overlooking North Congress Avenue from the sitting room from Thanksgiving until several days after Christmas.

The Second Floor

There are two staircase that connect the first and second floors – the staircase in the foyer and the staircase in the kitchen. The staircase in the kitchen is neither wide nor open like the switchback staircase in the foyer. Rather, these stairs are steep and the walls close on either side giving them a narrow feel. Both staircases open onto and are connected by a hallway stretching down the center of the house parallel with its corollary in the basement.

The Sun Room

The sun room is positioned at the back of the house directly above the back porch. The exposed floor makes this room particularly cold. The room’s two exterior walls are lined with windows that let in copious amounts of light throughout the day that is accentuated by the yellow interior walls. There is a large table in the center of the room that holding a stack of several photo albums and stacks of papers. A few small books
shelves no taller than the sill line the windowed walls. Upon one bookshelf rests a whiteboard that leans against the window and lists chores that volunteers may do to help around the house. Today, the tasks include doing the dishes and sweeping the front porch.

There is a computer in this room as well, which is reserved specifically for people who need to get work done. Some members take classes at the university and use this computer for its word processing and spreadsheet capabilities. Other members with the assistance of the staff use this computer to find houses, job opportunities, or sign up for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). On the non-windowed walls are large bookshelves filled with books addressing such topics as music and mental health. There are also pamphlets that provide information on workshops and mental health talks sponsored by National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Topics include The GP, and various mental illnesses including bi-polar disorder, depression, schizophrenia, and substance abuse among others.

There is a closet in this room locked with a padlock that holds the music equipment that the house has been able to accumulate for the sake of the members. Inside one would find two guitars, a keyboard, a djembe (an African style drum), several microphones, a mixing board, and a public address speaker. The guitars and djembe are used for the weekly GP Jams and music therapy sessions. The microphones, mixing board, and public address speaker are brought downstairs during holidays to celebrate with karaoke – notably Valentine’s Day, Memorial Day, Halloween, and the Fourth of July among others.

The sun room is often used by staff members as a meeting room. The volunteer coordinator will use this space to sit down and explain responsibilities to new volunteers.
who help out each term, usually to fulfill a volunteer requirement for class. Staff members have used this room to meet with various mental illness specific therapy groups, such as post-traumatic stress and schizophrenia discussion groups.

At one point there is also a weekly women’s meeting group for female members to speak directly to women’s issues involving mental health. Women, for example, are more prone to depression and anxiety than men, as well as post-traumatic stress as a result of sexual violence (World Health Organization, 2012). Charlotte Lundic, a staff member who started with The GP as a social work intern until she began her graduate studies in social work, spoke to the abuse experienced by some of The GP’s members:

I have a lot of -- I think a lot of times I'm -- I think women tend to come out with a lot of past abuse with me, and I don't know if that's because I'm a woman and they feel comfortable about it or if I just open myself up to just, I don't know. I hope people see that I'm very -- I'm a very non-judgmental person so. I've had. I've had a lot of women talk to me about past abuse, but also males, too, oh, males having past abuse or growing up in the system of foster care or just homelessness, chronic homelessness, or past hospitalization experiences, things like that.

(personal communication, June 27th, 2012)

In the case of the women’s meeting group, the sun room becomes a place in which the gendered experience of mental illness may be expressed openly.

The Live-In Staff Member Apartment

The live-in staff member’s apartment sits off the hallway in the middle of the house. This room is not a part of the organization and is the private space of the live-in staff member who stays in the house with total access to the building during non-
operating hours. When the organization first opened, AMHI originally hired a live-in staff member to stay in the house during non-operating hours so someone could keep watch. Throughout the history of the organization, the live-in staff members have been affiliated with the local university in one capacity or another. A few of the live-ins were psychology students whose experiences at The GP helped them earn their degrees (personal communication, Anne Stempel, October 26, 2011).

The Office

The office is located directly across from the live-in staff member’s apartment. Three desks are positioned along three walls and each is covered with numerous stacks of paper. The desk on the wall opposite the office door is positioned in front of a fireplace that is connected to the fireplace directly below in the living room. A bookshelf is built into the wall to the left and, like the desks, is also filled with a variety of papers. There is also a row of mailboxes for staff members, as well as a few of the regular members. Atop the fireplace is a stack of envelopes for members who use The Gathering Place as an address to receive their physical mail.

On the walls hang personal and organizational certifications. One certificate reveals the executive director’s status as a licensed social worker. Another is a certificate from the Ohio Department of Mental Health that provides license for The GP to operate as an alternative provider of mental health care. Sitting on the desk leaning against the wall is a plaque labeled “The Rita Gillick Award” that is given out to a member of the organization who works actively towards his/her recovery with the dedicated spirit inspired by Rita Gillick. The first recipient of this award was Jim Burgess, former patient
of the Athens Mental Health Center and the person who inspired the name of The Gathering Place.

Meetings that take place between staff and members are usually one-on-one while in the office and sometimes behind closed doors depending upon the sensitivity of the conversation. Additionally, the office is a place where staff meet with individual members of The GP’s board of directors, as well as with volunteers and program coordinators. Though staff spend time walking around the house socializing with members, sometimes the emotional stamina that may be required on the job on a day-to-day basis becomes overwhelming. Staff member, Jason Brust describes his position as involving emotional labor through the sometimes straining moments between staff and members:

But I've also learned that, you know, you don't overreact to the bad and you don't overreact to the good, you kind of just let everything, you know, kind of just play its course and, you know, I try to never let any of the members feel like they're they've got to me and they're bothering me, you know. So I, you know, with different jobs that I've had, I've kind of -- that's always been in play so I'm able not to let them know that they've got me, and sometimes they have got to me. But I'm always able to keep that more inside to myself and not let them know that, you know, they got me and if they keep pushing it you know, like I say, I have a good relationship. (personal communication, July 18th, 2012)

Jason’s comments are not unique. Charlotte Lundic speaks further to the emotional influence members have upon the staff:
That's when I realized how much of an emotional attachment I think I had to these people and that I shouldn't take my work home with me, but also when people tell you that they're like really struggling health-wise, like not mental health, but, you know other aspects like with cancer or things like that that's always hard. So just like any time I think a client or a member rather has bad news, it's always -- that always put the damper on the day. (personal communication, June 27th, 2012)

Accordingly, the office provides a place for staff to create some distance from the sometimes emotionally turbulent moments in the house.

While on the topic of emotional turbulence, it should be noted that there are occasional disputes that take place between the members that escalate to the point of physical conflict. Member Walter Mitchell described one particular instance and potential outcome of conflict that occurs at The GP:

I was booted from here once or twice because of my, oh, like I said, opinions. Okay. The least favorite would probably be when Tim and I got it, into it. We really didn't know each other, that sort of thing, and Tim's got a lot of the same personality-type length that at I do. . . . I think it was Mary that finally came down and broke it up. . . . I mean, it's the like, oh, yeah, both of us was sweating our asses off, you know, but I mean we -- the TV room was shambles. I think we both probably ended up on the dining room at one time, knocking chairs over, knocking things off, et cetera, et cetera. We got into a knock down drag out. . . . obviously, we both got banned for I think it was a week on that one. (personal communication, July 13, 2012)
Walter was only banned for a week, but there is in existence a list of individuals who have been given a lifetime ban from the organization for particularly egregious offenses such as death threats. However, the decision to bestow a lifetime ban is a hesitant one as described by the executive director Jillian Pillar:

I’m even hesitant on the lifetime ban because that’s suggesting that that person can’t get out of that place, like those are obvious symptoms of mental illness. If you’re just going to saw, well, you’re a lifetime ban, that’s suggesting that they can’t recover from that. (personal communication, July 20th, 2012)

However, this is not to say that The GP is a dangerous place. Conflict is an inevitable reality of entering into relationships with others. A point to which Jillian elaborate:

Sometimes their own moods or negative . . . attitudes can sort of get a little bit out of hand. . . . As I said, that happens in all interaction that you're going to have. So in some ways it prepares people to be able to, you know, be strong in their own thoughts and self that they can handle those challenges as well. (personal communication, July 20th, 2012)

The Attic

In the back corner of the office is a small doorway that opens onto the stairs to the attic. The attic is a wide open space stretching the length of the house. Light enters the attic from the windows installed in the gables of the roof. The squeaking of bats sleeping on the outside of the house can occasionally be heard through the walls. Judging from the mostly hardwood floor and small section of linoleum, it seems at one point the attic was fitted to be an apartment of its own complete with a kitchen. However, today the attic is filled with boxes of donated goods.
There are boxes of clothes, boxes of dishware, and at one point there was a television. These goods were donated by members of the community. When students move out at the end of the academic year, The Gathering Place solicits donations by hanging a giant sign in the front porch encouraging people to donate their used items instead of throwing them away. Today, the attic is used for the same purpose. Member Tom Sepeck commented on how The Gathering Place’s attic aided him in a tight moment:

[Former Director Lisa Roebuck] helped me get my first apartment, helped me get things like silverware, plates, bowls, stand for my TV set, things like that. That normally that wouldn't – normally I wouldn't have those things. I'd have to go out and by them brand new. But the attic, I got things out of the attic when I moved into my – so that's what that attic's all about. People donate things up there, and when you – if you need silverware or if you need plates and bowls or a stand for your TV or a TV, there's a TV's up there, just basic furnishings like that, you know. (personal communication, July 9, 2012)

Tom’s testimony conjures memories of the Help Mate program Rita Gillick started with AMHI that supplied many ex-patients with furnishings and food for their first apartment. Help Mate still exists in spirit through the donated goods stored in the attic to be distributed to members in need.

The Quiet Room

The quiet room sits at the top of the switchback staircase. It is a medium-sized room. The large bay windows visible from the front of the house on the second floor extend out from this room. These windows sit above the trees growing in front of the
porch allowing plenty of sunlight to illuminate this room. A large bookshelf sits in the corner with extension cords and cardboard boxes occupying the shelves. A smaller bookshelf directly across from the large bookshelves holds a few books on mental illness and some stacks of papers. Near to the door is a framed picture of a member alongside a poem speaking to the virtues on friendship from 2007. Along the wall is a vinyl orange couch long enough for a person to lie down upon, a purpose for which the room came to be known as “The Quiet Room.” However, the name “Quiet Room” is an inadequate representation of the many purposes the room serves for the members.

Like the back porch, the quiet room adapts to the needs of members who need to use the space in a particular way. During my time with the organization, the room has served a variety of purposes. It has been utilized as a storage space for domestic items and the furniture of members in transition between apartments and houses. I have used the room to provide guitar lessons to a member when the weather was too cold to sit on the front-porch. And federal work-study student, Stephen Dargaj\(^\text{18}\), used the room as a recording studio to carry out the short-lived Athens Recording Project. And, consistent with its name, there are members who still use the room to find peace and quiet amid the bustle one floor below.

Setting The Stage

This concludes our tour of the house at 7 North Congress Avenue where The GP has continuously provided a place where people living with mental illness may come to spend time within a welcome and empathic environment since 1976. As we move forward I encourage the reader to keep in mind the home-like environment and familial

\(^{18}\) Not a pseudonym at his request.
climate that has grown from the meaningful, though occasionally turbulent, member and staff relationships that have developed within the house. So with our understanding of the discursive climate of mental illness within the United States as manifest through policy and social understandings, as well as this description of the house out of which the The GP operates, I now will explain how I composed this dissertation to frame the telling of my story.

It is important to note that chapters one and two are only partial renderings of the stigmatized experience of living with mental illness, the state of mental health treatment in the United States, as well as the significance of this house in the lives of the members. Much has been left unsaid with regard to the minute and varied details of the experience of living with mental illness, mental health treatment and policy in the United States, as well as the importance of the house regarding the rehabilitative significance of space and the ongoing making of it as a home. However, the purpose of this dissertation is not to explore these issues in detail but rather to explore music as a communicative and relational modality for self and communal expression. Even so, before I share with you those musical experiences, it is important to understand both me as the primary narrator and the dialogic sensibilities that guided the rendering of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3: THE COMPOSITION

This dissertation presents an ethnographic rendering of my musical meetings with the members of The Gathering Place. In composing the experiences that comprise the bulk of this project, I adopted a dialogic standpoint that emphasizes meaning as emergent in the meeting of diverse and ideologically situated selves and others. Approaching meaning in this way renders it a highly contextualized phenomenon that continues to grow and change almost before our very eyes and ears. Moreover, selves and others enter the scene of life at different points in an ever-unfolding history of human experience. With each individual entrance emerges a unique, ideologically situated viewpoint – what Bakhtin refers to as the law of placement (see Holquist, 1990). As such, when adopting a dialogic perspective to explore human experience, it is the researcher’s duty to provide readers with the consequential experiences and interpretive sensibilities that influenced his or her insights.

Understanding meaning as a highly contextualized emergence impels researchers to be mindful of the situated locations from which we speak. With this in mind, Bud Goodall’s (1991) dialogically inspired understanding of communication as mystery will serve as a useful metaphor for coming to understand the composition of this ethnography. As a mystery communication “is not a problem to be solved, but a life force to be experienced. . . . communication is about shared activities that make possible negotiations about the meanings of contexts, self, and other” (p. 265-266; see also Eisenberg, 2001). Thus far, I have described the historical context in which mental illness exists discursively in the United States. But meaning does not stem solely from the embracing context, rather it arises in the meeting of diverse selves and others who enter
into meaning from differing positions – and this dissertation is no exception. As for who the others are that influenced the meanings and insights derived from my experiences at The GP, that story will be told momentarily.

Taking a dialogic orientation toward interpretive inquiry sometimes demands the sharing of consequential moments from one’s life. Such an account may require the researcher to step into the role that Ruth Behar (1996) refers to as the **vulnerable observer** who “has come to know others by knowing herself [sic] and who has come to know herself [sic] by knowing others” (p. 33). The revelations of this intimate, human relation with self and others in the field involve sharing those significant and sometimes emotionally trying/traumatic moments that allow us to presence contours of experience that otherwise go unnoticed. In answering dialogic inquiry’s tacit demand to be vulnerable in the acts of social inquiry, this chapter is devoted to sharing consequential moments of my life that led to my involvement with The Gathering Place, and then putting those moments into conversation with the dialogic sensibilities and learning practices that informed the composition of this dissertation.

**My Relationship with Mental Health**

Although I do not live with what may be described as severe and persistent mental illness that prevents me from shouldering significant responsibilities, it is not an experience to which I am a stranger. At the age of five, I discovered my father’s body after he suffered a cerebral aneurysm while bathing. His passing is an event I remember vividly and viscerally and a story that I recount elsewhere in depth (see Phalen, In press). I still can hear the screams and sobs of my sisters and see the ambulance pulling away from our house with our father inside as if it were yesterday.
The complex emotions associated with finality of the sudden death of a loved one are not easily overcome, particularly for a child. Despite my intense anger and deep longing, I feigned a strong face. For approximately 20 years of my life, I lived in a state of what is referred to as delayed grief (see Moorey, 2005) marked by anxiety, periods of depression, and occasional emotional outbursts. In other words, those emotions I ignored were clamoring for their release, and that day came during a life-changing event in the spring of 2005.

At the time, I was a senior undergraduate student at a small university in Wisconsin. Over the course of my undergraduate education, I noticed that my experiences of depression and anxiety began to increase, as well as feelings of inadequacy. I will spare the reader the details of these feelings. Even so, it is relevant to note that I had also discovered that both alcohol and marijuana provided a lift out of depression and that alcohol alleviated my anxiety to the point where I felt as if I were normal (at least, what I perceived to be normal). This detail is important because during my junior year, I saw a commercial for Paxil® that posed the question “Do you feel uncomfortable in social situations with unfamiliar people?” while promising to reveal the real me hidden underneath my perceived social anxiety. I felt a strong resonance between this commercial and my life and was elated that a pill existed that could fix my increasing feelings of worthlessness. After providing the psychiatrist with a general description of my feelings about how I felt in social situations (as inspired by the Paxil® commercial), I was able to secure a free, 30-day trial of the medication that eventually evolved into a prescription. Cultural critic Charles Barber (2008) noted that prescriptions for psychotropic medications, such as Paxil®, tend to spike in the United States in the few
days after a marketing campaign -- to suggest that my response was by no means isolated to myself.

While on this prescription, I met with a psychiatrist who would ask me about my progress and lifestyle. I shared that despite the occasional waves of nausea, there were moments when I believed the medication to be working. I recall one time letting a spider crawl on my hand during a philosophy class despite my intense arachnophobia. The psychiatrist would ask me about my recreational lifestyle, and in earnest, I told him about my weekend alcohol and daily marijuana use. The psychiatrist advised me that it was not wise to mix my medication with other substances and encouraged me to stop. When I first started taking the medication, I did not experience or notice any significant adverse interactions with the alcohol or marijuana. Slowly, and visible to everyone but myself, what Bakhtin (1990) might refer to as their “excess of seeing,” there were marked differences in my behavior in that I would grow slightly violent when intoxicated, less responsible with regard to both my academic and employment expectations; and overall I had become increasingly withdrawn. Years later, an acquaintance would tell me that throughout our shared time together at the university that I smiled less and less – an apt summary of how I felt. Despite these warnings, I continued my reckless behavior, which would have its repercussions during the early morning hours of May 6, 2005.

I was celebrating Cinco de Mayo by drinking to intoxication at the downtown bars with the mobs of my undergraduate peers. My usual cocktail of alcohol, marijuana, and my medication were present within my system. After midnight, I felt an overwhelming urge to escape the masses downtown and go home. While walking the alleyways downtown to avoid masses of my drunk peers, I noticed a security light
illuminating a hand-sized hole above the knob of a back door into one of the buildings. As if compelled by some force beyond me, I walked over to the door, reached my hand through the hole to turn the lock, and let myself inside. The building was empty of people but littered with scraps of wood and power tools suggesting it was undergoing renovations. A warm light was visible through a door leading to the basement; and like a moth to the flame I went down to investigate.

The basement was illuminated by a utility light that was left on. Down there I found more power tools and scraps of wood. In the center of the room was a large worktable with some scraps of paper on top. As I walked around the table examining the basement, I remember feeling a pronounced sense of detachment as if this basement and me existed on some plane of existence different from the reality I left behind in the alley. Again, as if compelled, I reached into my pocket, pulled out a lighter, and lit one of the scraps of paper atop the table on fire. I did not stop to watch them burn but continued walking around the table. Out of sight, out of mind. As I walked up the stairs, I stopped and ignited a hooded sweatshirt hanging from a nail before continuing up the steps. Again, out of sight, out of mind. I did not leave the building after starting the fires in the basement but continued to walk around upstairs. At this point, the smoke from the fire became visible to persons outside the building and soon sirens were sounding in the distance. As I tried to leave, a dark figure appeared suddenly in the doorway who called urgently for the police. I was apprehended at the scene.

When I recall the event, the details emerge clearly. But I must say it is difficult to convey in writing the detached feeling I had while I engaged in this destructive act. It was almost as if someone else was controlling my body, and I was a mere passenger in my
own experience. A counselor would later describe this experience as a “drug-induced psychosis” (see also American Psychiatric Association, 2000) brought on by the combination of substances in my body.

While at the police station, I confessed to my involvement with the fire and apologized profusely to both the police officers and fire fighters who showed up later to gather more information about the cause. In this confession, I disclosed my mental health status and prescription to Paxil®. The officers who apprehended me made the decision to keep me in solitary confinement on suicide watch as a precaution that my act was a sign I was a threat to myself. After spending three days in solitary confinement over the weekend, I was eventually brought before a judge for my arraignment where I was formally charged with Arson in the first degree and Reckless Public Endangerment in the second. My bail was set at $25,000, which my parents posted by taking out a mortgage on their home.

When released, I sought counseling as opposed to continuing my medication. My experiences with the counselor were markedly different from my experiences with the psychiatrist. Instead of talking about how I was responding to medication, our conversations focused on how I was feeling as a person, how I felt as a person in relation to others, as well as how I was coping with my new identity of a convicted felon. In these conversations with my counselor, I began to express and articulate my feelings of depression and anxiety and whittle away the negative thoughts I had woven into the experience as me being somehow an inferior person. Eventually, we got down to the significant experiences in my life that have always marked it as something other than the experience of others – namely my father’s early death and now these felony convictions.
As I reflect upon this counseling experience, it was in these early meetings that I developed an appreciation for the significance of relation in human experience that is the hallmark of dialogic philosophies. Martin Buber (1958) described the relational nature of human experience through the primary words *I-Thou* and *I-It* – the former representing the *possibility* inherent in relation and the later representing modalities through which we objectify our experiential worlds. Real living, according to Buber, does not take place solely in either of the primary words but somewhere in between. For when the *Thou* is presenced in relation, its ephemeral quality soon gives way to the world of the *It*. And to relate with someone solely as an *It* is to objectify his or her experience as a means to an end that emphasizes the isolated self while losing sight of the relational nature of being. At a time when I felt my criminal conviction was going to close doors on numerous life opportunities, such as meaningful employment and marriage, my counselor continued to address me as a person. Buber’s advice for fostering edifying meetings between diverse selves and others is to enter into relation with the understanding that “All real living is meeting” (p. 13). To a certain degree we must reduce the diverse others with whom we meet to some degree through language in order to share meaningful experiences. Even so, we should bear in mind that behind those words is both the presence of the possibility of relation, as well as what may unfold when we encounter others and let them *happen* to us. In those meetings, I was being addressed as a person.

When I was eventually sentenced, I did not have to serve time behind bars as the adage goes. Instead, I was placed on probation and afforded an opportunity to take an active role in the justice process by working to pay back a large amount of restitution. I also was required to see a counselor as part of my conditions for probation, which I did.
willingly. I found myself looking forward to the hour every week to talk about my recent conviction and the uncertainty surrounding my future. I continued to explore in-depth my unresolved feelings from the passing of my father, as well as to whittle away my negative self-perceptions.

During one session, my counselor described me as a highly sensitive person. She then directed me to a book by psychologist Elaine Aron (1996) entitled *The Highly Sensitive Person* (HSP). HSPs have sensitive nervous systems and tend to be more aware of subtleties within environments and overwhelmed in stimulating situations. Examples of such stimulation would include loud and excessive background noise, the intense emotions involved with conflict, as well as a tendency to read into linguistic expressions any number of positive or negative contours of meaning that may or may not be intended by the sender (among other stimuli). Yet in addition, highly sensitive persons tend to be caring and creative individuals who hold such professions as teachers and artists because of their capacities to hear others deeply and express themselves through a variety of modalities. Being a highly sensitive person does pose hindrances with regard to relating with others and more alone time is required, as well as the need for more time to process conflicts. But there are also significant positives that come along with being markedly sensitive to others and our environments, notably that we may be especially insightful and highly attuned to the needs of others.

Learning about the experience of HSPs heightened my attention to the significance and multiplicity of means through which persons express themselves and receive others. Emmanuel Levinas (1981), for instance, argued vehemently against inquiry into human ontology beginning with the individual as the source from which
being emerges. He launched his critique, in part, through invoking the sensorial capacities of the body (see also Craig, 2010). Levinas uses the notion of sensibility to describe the passive relationship of our bodily sensorial equipment to the stimuli to which it is always vulnerable. This passivity is not to be confused with the absence of human agency as has been mistakenly attributed elsewhere as antithetical to dialogic sensibilities that thrive on the dynamic meetings of difference (Stewart, Zediker & Black, 2004). Rather, this passivity is one that is sensorial in that we cannot choose to turn off our skin, our eyes, our ears, our noses, and our tongues (assuming of course, one has function of the listed senses). Taken together, such sensorial susceptibility serves as a reminder that “from the start, the other affects us despite ourselves” (p. 129). Understanding human relations as marked by a passive vulnerability renders inquiry into human interaction as inherently an ethical quest. The question is no longer who am I as distinct from others, but who may we become as persons when we enter into relations with others with an intimate awareness of the influence we have on our experiences of ourselves and others? Further, what is the significance of this ethical, embodied human experience in relation to being a HSP?

I invoke the HSP within me as a linking point between the significance of relation in human experience and music as a meaningful expression of self. Keeping in mind the capacity of relation to create possibilities for being (Buber, 1958), as well as the multiple means through which human beings receive otherness within their sociophysical environments (Levinas, 1981), highly sensitive persons have a heightened tendency to open our bodies to the possibility of meaning. It is of little surprise that HSPs often display musical talent, and it is here that I turn to my musical background.
My Musical Self

Music has played a significant role in my life beginning at the age of eleven when I both began playing clarinet for my fifth grade band and became aware of alternative rock on the former Twin Cities radio station 93.7 The Edge. Since that time I have learned to play different instruments, notably bassoon, bass guitar, and six-string guitar. My musical journey is one that runs parallel to my experiences of living with mental illness and holds similar consequential moments that inform my approach to composing this dissertation.

When I first began making music with the clarinet, I learned to play by reading sheet music in order to associate particular fingers with their corresponding note on the page, as well as how to count and play different rhythms and tempos. My band instructor was the one who would facilitate my individual and group lessons and would provide us with the sheet music from which to read. This music comprised some songs with which I was familiar, such as nursery rhymes, but often included folk songs, sometimes from different cultures of which I had little knowledge. While I found value in these lessons with regard to developing my technique with the instrument, these songs did not speak to the alternative rock music I listened to on 93.7 The Edge. After a year of playing clarinet, I switched to bassoon, which I would continue to play through elementary, middle, and high school. While learning the bassoon, I took a similar approach under the guidance of my music instructor -- learning fingerings and developing my capacity to read complex rhythms by playing increasingly difficult sheets of music. I rose to this challenge time and again, which opened opportunities to compete and win awards at state competitions, as well as receiving an invitation to play with the state honors band. Finally, I played
bassoon for a semester with the university’s symphonic band, as well as their more prestigious wind symphony. However, my time with the university ensembles were the short-lived aspirations of an undergraduate student with an undecided major and a professor who was unwilling to work with me to develop my skills on the instrument I wanted to devote my attention – the bass guitar.

My relationship with the bass guitar began in high school when I began playing along with two of my friends who played guitar. Pursuing the bass guitar with my friends opened a new world of musical expression in that we could play together the rock songs we had grown to love. Similar to my experiences with clarinet and bassoon, I took lessons to learn playing techniques as well as how to identify the notes on the fret board. However, after a year and half of lessons I ceased seeing my instructor (which is not a commentary on him) and began learning the instrument on my own by playing along with recordings of songs that moved me. With my instructor out of the picture, Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers (RHCP) and Les Claypool from Primus stepped into that void. But it was not just Flea and Les that I listened to, but rather a broad range of funk, jam metal, rock, and ska bands, as well as their various guitarists, across a range of decades extending back to the 1960’s. Other notable musical influences included The Beatles, Dave Matthews Band, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and John Frusciante (an independent musician and former lead guitarist for RHCP). But instead of playing sheet music, I was playing by ear, and this was, as Bateson (1972) would say, *a difference that makes a difference*.

My approaches to playing an instrument such as bassoon and an instrument such as the bass guitar are different as night and day. When playing the bassoon I typically
would read from a sheet of paper, which led to a habit of only playing sheet music as opposed to playing my instrument for the enjoyment of playing my instrument. As such, my relationship with the bassoon was one that was removed from the music I listened to on a day-to-day basis (after all it is hard to find RHCP and Primus sheet music for bassoon). But when I played bass, rarely did I use sheet music (the exception being as a short-term member of my high school jazz band). Instead, I listened to the songs, and with the help of tabulature (a simplified form of musical notation often nearly devoid of formal notation) I would figure out how to play the songs by ear. In learning songs I often would hit wrong notes that did not flow -- and on occasion would thereby discover interesting sounding relationships between notes that I would eventually pursue independently at a later time. This enhanced learning through making mistakes was not that case during formal lessons where we would stop or overlook wrong notes in the service of the song at hand. So, in these less strict instances with my bass, I would let my ear and gut drive my playing as opposed to the expectations of the song as written. The result was a more intimate relationship with my bass in that I did not depend upon notes on the page, but rather on my ear and body to evoke the meaningful contours of song.

However, this approach to making music with my bass proved an obstacle when I tried to pursue bass instead of bassoon as a primary instrument for pursuing a music degree. When I asked the bass professor, this person gave me a sheet of music to practice and return in one week to perform. Reading music, an ability that was second nature when I played bassoon, became an arduous task when playing bass. I found myself looking at my fingers and struggling to find the rhythm of the song almost as if I were a beginner again, which is not too far from the reality of the situation. When I returned a
week later, the professor evaluated my performance and then asked about my musical styles. After I divulged my interests, I was told that if I was going to continue trying to mimic Flea as opposed to focusing on the music that I should reconsider the instrument I should pursue. Defeated and not wanting to pursue bassoon as my primary instrument, I began sampling other majors before finding a home in communication studies.\footnote{19} But I still continued to play my bass.

After my fall from grace my bass played a significant role in helping me make sense of my self. As a part of my conditions for bail, I was required to be on electronically monitored surveillance (i.e. house arrest). When not working, I was required to stay home, and music became a meaningful way to pass the time. Those friends who still talked to me after my unfortunate act and sentencing had lives out in the social world that I could enter only for work obligations. Often I found myself playing my bass, alone. While doing so I discovered its capacities to evoke the complex emotions arising from the fact that I caused approximately $100,000 worth of damage to an undeserving small business owner, and in the process compromising his and his family’s sense of safety and security. I recall a conversation I had with a friend one summer night several months before my sentencing hearing. He and I were conversing about the event

\footnote{19} Music educator David E. Myers (2008) noted that musical education should make a point to find music that reflects the interests of the students in their lived environments, because music education should be more than preparing students for performances in large ensembles. Rather, music education should provide students with opportunities to develop an appreciation and understanding of the music they listen to within their communities, and hopefully, impart some skills so they may continue to have a meaningful relationship with music throughout their lives. I share this not to make an argument for a specific approach to musical education but to announce the presence of a professional stratification (Bakhtin, 1981) inherent within music that will be of relevance later in this dissertation. Also, I do not wish to make any claims that my experience is representative of all perspectives on music pedagogy.
on May 6th, and he reminded me that he was always there to listen should the need arise. I shared with him that all he had to do was listen to the music that I created – that although I may be verbally silent, there was a wealth of emotional information to be found in the music I, and perhaps many others, play. He told me that he would listen anytime, though I never took him up on his offer.

It is an assumption of this dissertation that music is a meaningful modality of expression. John Dewey (1934) described aesthetic expression, and music in particular, as stemming from the lived experiences of an organism’s relationship with his or her environment and audience as opposed to inspiration from some ethereal being. With such an understanding in mind, we may look to aesthetic expression as a meaningful and insightful rendering of lived experience. Or as put by Dewey, “The expressions that constitute art are communication in its pure and undefiled form” (p. 254). With this understanding of the expressive capacities of aesthetic experience in mind, consider the following from Martin Buber (1965):

To all unprejudiced reflection it is clear that all art is from its origin essentially of the nature of dialogue. All music calls to an ear not the musician's own, all sculpture to an eye not the sculptor's, architecture in addition calls to the step as it walks in the building. They all say, to him who receives them, something (not a feeling, but a perceived mystery) that can be said only in this one language. (p. 25)

What I appreciate about this quotation is both Buber’s description of art as a perceived mystery, and also how he draws attention to the unique expressive capacities and relational possibilities fostered through aesthetic media.
These other modalities of expression are intriguing because, as Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) argued, "Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language” (p. 295, emphasis original). As has been shown in chapter one, the experience of living with mental illness is one that lends itself to the possibility of stigmatization. Moreover, the idea of mental illness does not merely denote the presence or absence of a disorder, but conjures a whole connotative experience of madness as animalistic, irrational, and dangerous. Choosing a language has corporeal consequences for self and other when considering how linguistic descriptions and categorizations systematically marginalize the experience of mental illness. As such, when considering the expressive possibilities of both art and the ideological saturation of language with regard to the experience of living with mental illness, one may wonder how we may imagine other relations between self and other, notably those relations that are musical.

This dissertation moves forward with an understanding of relation as a fundamental quality of human ontology in that without relations with others there is no humanity of which to speak. Moreover, relations created between selves and others may be established through a variety of means, and I highlight specifically linguistic and aesthetic modalities for relating. As learned from my background as a particularly sensitive person and a musician, I have had close contact with the experience of mental illness, as well as an intimate familiarity with the expressive capacities of music. At this point this framework is admittedly general, however, it will be invoked in a more meaningful, nuanced and edifying manner through describing my experiences at The GP. And it is with this understanding that I share with the reader the overall question that guided my inquiry into the musical relationships established between selves and others at
The Gathering Place: How is music experienced as a relational modality of self and communal expression?

The Composition of this Text

I drew from multiple resources to perform how I came to experience music’s possibilities as a meaningful modality of self and communal expression. Over my three years of volunteer service with The GP, I took detailed field notes of my experiences of the house and my musical relationships with the members while keeping in mind the idea of *thick description* (Geertz, 1973). In doing so, I was careful to note the sensorial experiences of the house, as well as the musical and the conversational interactions I had with the members and staff. Interwoven with my experiences at The GP are my personal reflections regarding how I experienced myself as a researcher, musician, and eventually friend of the organization. Additionally, I spent two days at Alden Library’s Robert E. and Jean R. Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections going through old records and newspaper clippings pertaining to The Gathering Place. It was here that I put together the story of Rita Gillick and found the points of convergence between The Gathering Place and the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation as told in chapter one. In total, I generated approximately 300 single-spaced pages of field notes.

In addition to taking field notes, I conducted what Ellis and Berger (2002) refer to as *reflexive dyadic interviews* with five staff and nineteen members, lasting between one to two hours each. All but five of these interviews were recorded. The others were not recorded at the request of the members, but they were otherwise willing to share their thoughts openly with me about the organization. The reflexive dyadic interviewing style is one that is semi-structured, and the interviewer takes opportunities to share meaningful
life experiences that respond and contribute to those offered by the participant. But this style is not a tactic to disclose personal information in exchange for personal information from the interviewee. Rather this approach is motivated by a “reciprocal desire to disclose, given the intimacy of the details being shared by the interviewee” (p. 854). This interview style felt natural for me to employ because I had already developed a relationship with each of the members prior to interviewing them for this project. I was particularly interested in the individual roles members and staff played within the organization, their perceptions of their relationship with the organization, and in the case of members with whom I made music, their particular relationships with musical modalities of expression. In total, these interviews generated approximately 500 single-spaced pages.

Even though I had established relationships with the members prior to formal interviews, they were not established with the intent of “going native” and assuming the role of complete participant (Van Maanen, 1988). Goodall (2000) suggested that while immediately informing a group of one’s role as a researcher may be appropriate in some settings, in others, such abrupt revelation may jeopardize the possibility of achieving a genuine insight into edifying social practices. Thus, delaying one’s coming out as a researcher may prove meaningful in both the degree of access one has into lived experience, as well as the opportunities created for the researcher to be moved by the field setting in which s/he works. Even so, at some point the revelation has to be made. I made my revelation by posting signage on the community board in the house that described my role as a researcher observing life at the organization, as well as by going over the informed consent forms with my participants prior to interviewing them.
Finally, I made audio recordings of our interviews and our joint musical performances with the permission of the members of some of the GP Jams sessions, as well as the composers of the members’ original songs. Throughout this dissertation I will discuss original songs as composed by the members in order to perform music’s capacities as a meaningful modality for self and communal expression. These songs have been included to keep in mind Dwight Conquergood’s (1991) critique of culture as a semiotic phenomenon (see Geertz, 1973) and argument for a more performative approach to culture as something enacted between selves and others. Each of these songs provides an invitation into the embodied experience of the musical relationships shared between the members and me. “Unfolding” was recorded in the quiet room by Stephen Dargaj, who was completing an independent study for his degree in health services administration. This song was performed by Jordan, a member of The GP, and I. “Presencing the Jam” was recorded in the sitting room during a music therapy session. The details of this performance will be elaborated upon extensively later in the dissertation. And finally, “Walk the Walk,” another of Pete’s original songs, was recorded in the quiet room and performed by Pete and myself on guitar and bass respectively. I encourage the reader to listen to these songs as you encounter them in order to enhance the limited experiential capacities of the text.

The conversations and musical performances shared throughout this dissertation are both imagined and real. When I say that some conversations are imagined, I am not implying they are fabricated. Rather, all interpretive inquiries, notably ethnographies, are as Geertz (1973) described, “fictions, in the sense that they are ‘something made,’ ‘something fashioned’ – the original meaning of fictīō – not that they are false, unfactual,
or merely ‘as if’ thought experiments” (p. 15). Laura Ellingson (2005), for one, shared an ethnographic rendering of a realistic day comprising her experiences observing an oncology unit. The events she shared actually happened, but not in the order that they unfolded in the book. However, the order of events was not important for her inquiry into the often-improvised backstage communication practices employed by the oncology team. Rather her rendering provides the reader with an intimate engagement with the daily workings of the oncology unit.

With this in mind, my purpose is not to describe my experiences of The GP with a positivist orientation in mind such as the “studied neutrality” of Van Maanen’s (1988) description of the realist tale. Despite his assertion of a semiotic approach to culture, we would do well to keep in mind Geertz’s (1973) belief that “ethnographic findings are not privileged, just particular” (p. 23). As such, I have elected to adopt impressionist sensibilities that presence the lived experience of my musical relationships with a dialogic orientation that as Van Maanen wrote (1988) “braid[s] the knower with the known” (p. 102). In composing the conversations, I have relied upon my extensive field notes and memories of individual persons to recreate those events as I remember them in my experience. In some instances, such as in the extended, non-musical conversations, I have rendered verbatim transcripts in the form of a conversation between the member I am conversing with in the story and myself.

Further, my relationship with music, primarily through playing bass, has shaped how I have approached the rendering of the musical experiences composing this dissertation. The role of the bass within an ensemble is typically not to perform the melody (the catchy part of the song) but the underlying rhythms we tend to hear more in
our bodies than our ears. Though the bass is not flashy, it is a foundational piece of an ensemble for shaping the feel of the song, or providing the context in which the melody is voiced. As such, I try to evoke the same embodied experience of music as I feel it when I am in the process of making music both by myself and with others. Moreover, my experiences serving as the bass player for the southeastern Ohio rock band Broken Ring also inform my performative renderings of the experience of entering into a musical relation with others.

**Terminology**

A note on some of the terminology employed in this dissertation will be useful for the reader’s experience of the text. First, when I invoke the term music in this dissertation, I am referring to those organized sounds we recognize as music but do not include lyrics. This is not to say that lyrics are not significant to the experience of a song (they are), rather, not all the songs and improvised jams I played with members of The GP had lyrics. As such, in order to preserve my analytic capacities, I separate lyrics from my understanding of music in order to show how music may mean without reliance upon words. Only when lyrics are important to experiencing a particular part of the story will I draw attention to them in relation to the music backing them. Otherwise, when I invoke the term music, I mean those organized sounds absent of lyrics that we recognize as music.

I also would like to clarify that throughout the dissertation I make a distinction between language and music in order to differentiate symbolic from embodied expressions. In doing so, I do not wish to imply that music *is not* a language in and of itself. It certainly is. As will be seen, performers have the capacity to arouse emotions –
meanings – within others through the musical manipulation of sound. And music has its own formal notation system to record songs expressed through the ephemeral medium of sound for future performances. However, in order to discuss music’s unique relational and expressive capacities as a means of co-creating and sharing embodied meanings, I need to separate it from those languages that objectify human experience and place it at a remove from life through linguistic expressions. This distinction may seem blurry and glosses over performative approaches to writing that seek to bring the body back into play (see Pollock, 1998). But my intent is not to argue that language is unable to incorporate and affect us bodily. Rather it is to showcase music’s unique capacities and possibilities as one modality of meaningful expression among others. So, while the distinction between music and language is theoretically rather blurry, it is a distinction I make in this dissertation, again, to facilitate my analytic capacities concerning my lived experiences of making music as a means of self-expression and connection with others.

Additionally, we should arrive at a shared understanding of the term aesthetic. Drawing from Dewey (1934) as mentioned above, those expressions we understand as aesthetic do not enter human experience from without, but are renderings of the artist’s lived relation with his or her environment. Moreover, Dewey notes that those expressions we understand as aesthetic include a multitude of sensorial experiences that do not exist in a hierarchical relationship with each other – for example privileging sight as a means of knowing over touch. Rather, as Buber (1965) noted above, each medium says something that is otherwise inexpressible in another. Further, aesthetic expression in general, and music in particular, is capable of filling in the blanks left by linguistic modalities of meaning making. As such, when I invoke the term aesthetic, I mean those
modalities of expression capable of presencing the otherwise ineffable contours of human experience through any and multiple sensorial mediums. In this dissertation I will focus solely on the aesthetic capacities of sound, notably music, as both an aural and tactile expression.

At this point we are ready to turn to the story. In the following pages I will rely upon the assumptions that human ontology is fundamentally relational and that music is a meaningful modality for establishing relationships among diverse selves and others. This chapter has provided only a general and initial interpretive framework for understanding this dissertation, as the significant details will be fleshed out in the story that follows. Linguistic means of relation have surely advanced the human species and will continue to do so, but there is more to the story, and music will fill us in on those details. And with that being said, let us turn to my story.
"We humans are a musical species no less than a linguistic one" (Sacks, 2008, p. xi).

I stand in a short line at a local coffee shop while on break from a graduate seminar. A small stack of flyers resting on the bakery case catches my attention. I grab one and find that it describes a local, non-profit organization called The Gathering Place that provides a home-like atmosphere for people living with mental illness (see also The Gathering Place, 2003). On the bottom of the flyer is noted their desire for volunteers, which piques my interest. After placing the flyer in my pocket to think about more at another time, I realize the clerk is waiting patiently for me to order. I quickly apologize and order a small coffee.

A couple weeks later, I sit at my office desk and look over the flyer. My gaze falls again on their call for volunteers. My curiosity overtakes me, and I grab my nearby phone and punch the appropriate numbers on the keypad.

:::Ring:::::Ring::::::::Ring::::::::Ring::::: “This is taking a while,” I think to myself. :::::Ring:::: I contemplate trying again later when a woman’s voice interrupts, “The Gathering Place.”

“Hi,” I respond caught unawares. “I, uh, found a flyer for your organization at a local coffee shop mentioning volunteer opportunities, and, uh, if possible, I would like to volunteer.”

“Well,” she says. “I can handle that for you. I’m Donna, the volunteer coordinator.”

“Excellent,” I reply.

“We will have to setup an appointment. Can you come in soon?” she asks.
“Yeah, I can come in this week,” I respond considering my schedule. I hear muffled voices in the background, and the sound of clanking glass.

“Alright,” she says. “Let’s do Friday afternoon. How does two o’clock sound?”


“Oh,” Donna says. “Just come into the house, we are at 7 North Congress. Someone will make sure we find each other.”

“Sounds good,” I reply. “I’ll see you then.”

“Yep,” Donna says. “See you then.”

Orientation

The spring sun shines warm from the clear blue sky accentuating the green leaves of the trees and modest lawns lining North Congress Avenue. A gentle breeze caresses my bare forearms cooling my skin from the sun’s warmth. I breathe in deeply the smell of new life permeating the air to settle the butterflies in my belly as I search for 7 North Congress among the nondescript residential homes lining the street. I find the house at the end of a long row of residential houses, and were it not for the few flyers posted in the front door, I would likely have walked right on by. I spring up the front porch steps and stop before the entrance. Part of me feels compelled to knock, but I turn the knob and let myself inside.

The house feels dark in contrast to the vibrant light outside, especially as I close the door behind me. There is a sweet aroma in the air causing my stomach to voice subtle hints of hunger. The foyer and the rooms I am able to see from the front door are empty. Slowly, I walk into the sitting room and see three people sitting in silence at the dining room table: a woman with an aged face and mousey hair, and a man with a sailor hat.
playing cards with a younger man. This younger man is possibly a student, like myself, considering his clean clothes and well-groomed appearance.

“Heh-woe,” says the mousey-haired woman noticing me walking towards the dining room. “Awre yoo a vovunteer?” She enunciates her words with a heavy tongue, but her eyes reflect a sharpness not immediately present in her speech.

“Yeah, or well, I would like to be,” I say. “I'm here to meet Donna for orientation.”

"She's nah hew, but Jason knows yoo comin'," she says. "I’w fine ‘im for yah.” She stands and walks toward the kitchen.

“Thank you,” I reply.

“You’re wewcome,” she says.

I take a seat at the table and watch the two men play their card game. Before each of them are groupings of cards based on three or four of a kind and suited runs of three or more consecutive cards. A piece of paper with numbers on it rests before the sailor. “Rummy,” I think to myself recognizing the game. As they play, they keep their attention on their hands and do not acknowledge my presence. The student frequently looks down at his lap towards the smartphone resting on his knee.

“Steve?” a voice calls from the kitchen drawing my attention.

“Yeah,” I respond looking towards the source and find a man of about 30 with dark hair and brown eyes. He is wearing an Ohio State t-shirt.

“Come with me,” he says disappearing into the kitchen.

“Will do,” I say and stand up to follow him.
I enter the kitchen and find him standing at the table in the middle of the room. An empty dish and jar of peanut butter rest atop the table next to a large bowl filled with fruit. He turns to a cupboard behind him and grabs a box of saltine crackers.

“By the way,” he says to me extending his hand. “My name is Jason.”

“Nice to meet you,” I reply taking his hand.

When we release, he turns his attention to opening the peanut butter and spooning out a large dollop that he places in the dish before replacing the top. He directs his gaze towards me, “Donna can’t be here today, so I’ll be conducting your orientation.”

“Sounds good,” I reply.

“Well alright,” he says enthusiastically. “So what do you know about what we do here?”

“Nothing, to be honest with you,” I say. “But I am curious about the organization, which is what drew me here.”

“Sounds good,” he says with the same enthusiastic tone. “That’s what we like.” He stuffs one of the crackers in his mouth and chews before starting again. “So, what we practice here is a lot like the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation. Are you familiar with it?”

“Nope,” I reply.

“Well . . .” he begins and goes on to discuss, the philosophy of the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation that I addressed in chapter one. After he describes the specifics of the approach in between eating crackers with peanut butter, he says, “We
are able to provide our services at a daily rate of approximately $17.00 per person.\textsuperscript{20} Far cheaper than professional mental health care. So, we provide a valuable service to those living with mental illness who wish to take an active role in their recovery.”

I nod to show I am listening.

“As a volunteer,” he continues. “Your responsibility is to show up when you say you will, so the members can grow comfortable with you.” He hands me a sheet with a list of my responsibilities in detail (see Appendix C). “While you’re here, feel free to talk with the members, play cards with members, cook with the members, or whatever else the moment brings. Essentially, when you are here, be present. And when you are interacting with the members, be sure to enact a helping relationship.” He pauses to spread peanut butter on a cracker.

“What do you mean by ‘helping relationship?’” I ask curiously.

Though his mouth is full, his eyes widen slightly in acknowledgement of my question. He swallows and begins, “So, when you are conversing with them and listening to the them, your concern should be oriented towards them and not yourself. We don’t have many issues with volunteers, but we do, on occasion, have some student volunteers bring in their homework, which is not something we allow. When you are here we want you spending your time with the members and helping out the organization.”

I wonder how he would view the individual playing cards in the dining room who is constantly checking his smartphone.

\textsuperscript{20} Plotnick and Salzer (2008) corroborate Jason’s comments with regard to the role of clubhouses in a community mental health network, noting they were both cheaper than psychiatric hospitals and reduced their burden.
“And don’t give out your contact information in order to maintain boundaries between the members and your personal life. Other than that, feel free to hang out with the members in whatever way that suits you. And if there is something that needs to be done around the house, feel free to lend a hand should you like. Sound good?”

“Yeah,” I say. “Sounds great.”

“The more you are here, the more you will get the hang of how things work. Also, if you have any special talents that you can contribute, the members appreciate learning new things and being exposed to new experiences.”

“Well,” I say. “I play music, bass guitar, if that counts as a special talent.”

“Yeah,” he says as his face lights up. “We host some music programs up here each week. We currently have one program, led by Jordan, one of our members, who brings in his guitar and plays songs with the other members. And on occasion, we get the music therapy students from the university in here from time-to-time. Would participating in the music programs be something that interests you?”

“Yeah,” I respond, my voice betraying the excitement I feel. “Absolutely.”

“Well, if you have any questions, feel free to let me know. And before you go, be sure to sign up for hours. Just so we know when you will be here,” he slides over a sheet of paper that had previously escaped my attention.

“Will do,” I say. “When did you say the music programs were?”

“Oh,” his eyes widen. “I didn’t. We don’t have any music therapy students now, but GP Jams, which is lead by Jordan, one of our members, meets on Thursdays at 1:00 p.m.”
“Okay,” I say nodding. This time does not conflict with my university obligations and would give me a week to incorporate this new experience into my weekly routine. I grab a pen from pocket and write my name and the time of my volunteer shift: Thursdays at 1:00 p.m.

“Well,” I say reaching out to shake his hand. “I’ll be here in a few days.”

“Sounds good,” he says shaking my hand. “Hope you enjoy the experience.”

The Opening Jam

I walk up the hill that is North Congress Avenue towards The GP with my large bass case in hand. In contrast to my last visit, the sky today is overcast and there is a slight chill in the air cold enough to necessitate wearing a coat. On more than one occasion, I lightly bump a passerby. They look at my case and brush off the encounter after I offer a quick apology. The GP comes into view as I crest the hill and reach the intersection where I wait for the crossing signal to beckon me across. Waves of anxiety wash through my body as the signal grants me passage and the house looms larger with each step. Questions fly through my mind: What are we going to play? What if we do not share common musical interests? What if we do not have something to talk about? Should I have prepared some songs for this? Before I have time to formulate a response to these questions, I find myself at the front door and walking into the house.

Warm air encompasses me as I close the front door and wipe my feet on the doormat. The aroma of lunch, possibly chicken soup, and the murmur of conversation permeate the air. I turn my attention towards the sitting room where I see two men facing each other with a drum between them. One of them is a small-framed man who looks in his early twenties with buzzed, blond hair. He is hunched over a guitar resting in his lap
with one hand atop the drum. The other man is older, with a graying beard, who I remember passing on occasion during my trips downtown for food and coffee. The man with the guitar is showing the other how to beat out a 4/4 rhythm: ::Bwang:: ::Bwang:: ::Bwang:: ::Bwang:: The bearded man tries to follow but does not hit the beats with the same precision and regularity as the guitar player. Together, they sound like a horse galloping with an irregular rhythm: ::Ba::Bwang:: ::Ba:Bwang:: ::Ba::Bwang:: When I walk into the sitting room, they both turn to look at me.

“Hello,” I say reaching out my hand to the man with the guitar. “I’m Steve, the bass player. I met with Jason last week about volunteering with the music program.”

“Hey,” he says shaking my hand with a weak grip and looking me in the eye before quickly averting his gaze. “This is GP Jams. We heard you were coming today,” he follows in a quiet voice.

“I’m Paul,” interjects the bearded man in a raspy voice extending his hand. His beard has flecks of dried spit and/or food, and his fingers have the burnt orange color of a frequent smoker. “Nice to meet you,” I say shaking his hand briefly before letting go then proceed to rub my hand and fingers slyly against my jeans.

“And I’m Jordan,” says the guitar player in a muted voice.

“Nice to meet you, man,” I reply looking at him.

I take off my coat, sit down on the piano bench, and remove my bass from its case. Both Jordan and Paul watch me, arousing a feeling of self-consciousness. My relatively new pair of jeans and button-up shirt stand in stark contrast to Paul’s stained pants and shirt and Jordan’s tattered sweatshirt. I extract my bass from its case, rest it in my lap, and play a scale to warm-up my fingers.
“Could you float me an E?” I say, looking up at Jordan. “I want to make sure you and I are in tune.”

“Sure,” he says plucking the low E, the thickest string on the guitar. The frequencies of our notes are not aligned creating sonic waves that reverberate through the bass into my body. I adjust the tuning peg on my bass’s headstock. The waves intensify the closer they get to becoming in tune with one another making my body feel on edge—a reminder that sound is an embodied experience that is tactile as much as it is aural (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997). When aligned, our instruments sound in unison. The placid sound after the rough, sonic waves sounds/feels much like the relief of scratching a pesky itch in the middle of the back. Using my E string, I tune the remaining three as Jordan and Paul watch.

“So,” I say. “This is my first time. What do we have happening here?”

“Well,” Jordan says, “To be honest, man, we just play. Paul and I are about to do Free Bird. If you know it, you can jump in.”

“Well, I’ve never played the song, but I can read your fingers and follow along.” I say.

Jordan nods at me. Paul removes the drum from between Jordan and himself and sets it aside before picking up a guitar from an open battered case next to his chair covered in stickers supporting a former Democratic governor and the local music store.

---

21 As a note to the reader, if you have access to the music referenced throughout this dissertation, I encourage listening to it as you read. Music is embodied and capable of presencing a variety of experiences from one’s own life (Levitin, 2006; Shepherd & Wicke, 1997). My experiences of these songs are my own, and in keeping honest with the dialogic beliefs guiding this writing, I encourage the reader to enter into the songs with his/her own experiences.
After positioning it comfortably against his body, he looks at Jordan with his left hand resting on the fret board and his right hand holding a pick ready to strum.

Jordan looks at me, and I nod to let him know I am ready. He then looks at Paul, who nods back. Then he begins strumming a G-chord, then a D-chord, then an E-minor chord, followed by an F-chord, a C-chord, and then a D-chord before coming back round to the G to repeat the phrase. Having heard the song numerous times in my life prior to this point, I jump in and follow along with little effort. The ease with which Jordan strums the chords shows his familiarity with the instrument. However, despite Jordan’s obvious ability to play the guitar, there is no life in this progression. His chords sound emotionally flat and metronomic in their rhythm—unmusical. His eyes are open and fixed on Paul, and his face is expressionless. But before this impression of the performance gets the best of my perception of the situation, I notice Paul’s attention switching between Jordan’s hand and his own to ensure he frets the chords properly. It appears Jordan’s lackluster performance has everything to do with the fact that he is teaching Paul the song.

Music is an aesthetic expression presenced in the relation between the performer and the audience (keeping in mind performers may be audiences to themselves). When I invoke the term aesthetic throughout this dissertation, I mean those expressions perceived bodily that convey, as described by Dewey (1934), the “fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things” (p. 18) – or in other words, an experience. Musicians require the technical capacity to manipulate sound through their medium, in this case guitar, in order to exploit it to its fullest extent to evoke meanings not possible through other mediums, such as painting, dance, and language among others.
To those who are listening, the robust tone of Jordan’s chords sounds not only the chord but also his skill and comfort with the guitar. Although technical proficiency is important in order to perform a song, it is not a sufficient condition for fostering and bringing an aesthetic experience to completion through sound. Also needed is a degree of resonance between the aesthetic object and one’s life dwelling within his or her social and physical environments.

Bakhtin (1990) referred to this resonance as the unity of answerability, which is what distinguishes an object experienced as “aesthetic” from one experienced as “mechanical.” In the former experience the artist/audience answers the aesthetic address posed to him or her with one’s own life. Or voiced differently by Dewey (1934), we understand an aesthetic object as stemming from human experience as opposed to some place outside of our lived reality. The idea being that the person(s) who renders or is in the presence of an aesthetic object, in this case a song, experiences it as such because there is a resonance with his/her own life. What is absent in Jordan’s strumming of the introduction to “Free Bird” is this unity of answerability, a performance of the song with feeling that evokes a similar sentiment in others. But the purpose of Jordan’s playing -- as I infer from the intent with which Paul watches his fretting hand -- is to teach Paul the “mechanics” of the chords, as opposed to breathe life in them. After all, we need to learn words before we may speak.

After watching Jordan for a while, Paul positions his fingers on the fret board before strumming each chord on his own guitar. His heavy strums sound distorted and arrhythmic in relation to Jordan’s and my progression creating an uncomfortable imbalance in our sound. Again, technical skill is not enough to evoke an aesthetic
experience. Within a musical ensemble, each performer must play his/her instrument in relation to one another with a mind towards establishing a balanced whole. Dewey emphasized that artists manipulate their mediums through discerning practices of selection and retention in order to evoke an experience within their audiences, including themselves. Paul’s heavy strums do not sound in relation to Jordan and myself in an integrated way but are an independent force overwhelming us. Part of me desires to stop playing and tell him to strum the strings softer and play with us for a more musical sound. However, I keep silent thinking about Jason’s words that the organization is for the members. If Paul’s playing is an issue, I am sure, though without a particular reason, that Jordan will say something. We continue the progression until Paul is able to follow along on the guitar (more or less). Jordan nods at Paul, who draws a breath and begins singing.

“If I leave here tomorrow / Would you still remember me.”

Though Paul’s guitar skills lack a little something to be desired, his voice sounds with sincerity. It has a Bob Dylan esque quality, smoky and gruff, yet tonally and emotionally on par with the lyrics. While singing, he loses the flow of the song in his strumming hand and quits playing the guitar. I empathize with him; it is a difficult task to simultaneously sing and play an instrument. But as a result of Paul ceasing his guitar playing, Jordan and I are able to presence more fully the musicality of the progression, and the three of us begin to play and sing in relation to each other, our sounds balanced.

“For I must be traveling on, now / ‘Cause there’s too many places I’ve got to see.”

My bass sounds notes octaves below what Jordan is able to reach with his guitar. Jordan’s strumming shapes my otherwise banal, whole-note bass line with a harmonic quality accentuating the major and minor chords. And Paul’s voice, in key with Jordan
and I, provides the lyrical definition to our reflective chord progression. Each of us voices a different sound through our respective instruments (voice included), and this difference is bound in relation to one another through the song “Free Bird,” our living center as an ensemble.

“And if I stay here with you girl / Things just couldn’t be the same.”

Music’s dialogic qualities emerge in the meeting of performer and audience that gives rise to song. Ensemble musicians, as Buber (1958) might describe, enter mutually into and take a stand in the “living center” of relation, or song. The living center is the presencing of the unity of mutually influencing selves and others in their meeting within a simultaneously shared and unfolding present. Dewey (1934) believed music was the highest of the arts because musicians are required to grant their audiences access to the process(es) that give rise to song in addition to performing the wholeness of the song. The relation between performer and audience when taking a stand in song is one that concurrently provides definition for self and other in the event of meeting while remaining sensitive to the unfolding quality of the present.

“And I’m as free as a bird now / And this bird you cannot change.”

I turn my attention to the dining room adjacent to the sitting room and see two male members at the table reading either a newspaper or a magazine. One of the men turns his attention toward the sitting room and nods in rhythm with the progression Jordan and I are maintaining. I nod at him before turning my attention back to our ensemble.

“Ohhhh and this bird you cannot change / And this bird you cannot change / The Lord knows I can change”
Paul stops singing but does not resume playing guitar while Jordan and I play through the phrase once before beginning the second verse. When the time comes for Paul to sing, he interrupts us. “Isn’t there supposed to be a guitar solo there, Jordan?” he asks focusing his attention on him.

“Probably, Paul,” Jordan says, stopping his playing. I follow suit. The song disappears and along with it the center holding us together in our difference. “But I don’t know it, and it would be hard to play on an acoustic.” Acoustic guitars typically have heavier gauge strings than electric guitars, and their size requires more strength in order to fret a clear tone; a difference much like moving one’s hand through water as opposed to air. The flashy electric guitar work of Allen Collins and Gary Rossington (Lynyrd Skynyrd’s guitar players) throughout “Free Bird” would be a difficult feat on an acoustic guitar for the most talented of players.

Paul’s face droops slightly and a little sparkle leaves his eyes, but he persists with his inquiry. “Can you find it online?”

“Maybe,” Jordan says. “But I will have do that later.”

“Okay,” Paul replies as he stands and reaches into his pants pocket to extract a pack of cigarettes. He pulls one out, places it in his mouth, and begins to walk towards the back of the house.

“Going to smoke, Paul?” Jordan asks, but it is not so much a question as a statement of fact.

“Yeah,” Paul answers without looking back.
Apart from the two members in the dining room, both of whom are now focused on their reading material, Jordan and I are left alone in the sitting room. Silence hangs between us for a brief moment before Jordan asks, “So, what kind of music do you play?”

“A lot of music,” I reply chuckling as I realize the nondescript quality of my response. “Pretty much anything. Though I do like the Red Hot Chili Peppers [RHCP] and Primus. They have talented bass players.” A relevant side note: music is dialogized much like language (see Bakhtin, 1981) in that what we understand as music and how we approach its making is influenced by those performers and composers who came before ourselves. I began learning bass at the age of sixteen by taking formal lessons to learn basic playing techniques. But I grew bored after a year and continued my education on my own playing along with RHCP and Primus albums mimicking Flea’s slap bass and Les Claypool’s strumming techniques. The follow words from Bakhtin illustrates succinctly my growth as a bass player if read replacing “word” with “song” and “language” with “music”):

The word in language is half someone else’s. . . . [T]he word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language . . . but rather it exists in in other people’s mouths, in other people’s context, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it ones own. (p. 294)

Though I like to believe I have a unique bass playing style (and it certainly may sound unique to a casual listener), my influences are clearly evident to those with an intimate understanding of the bass playing styles of Flea and Les Claypool.

“Cool,” Jordan replies meekly upon hearing my interests. Then without prompting, Jordan begins playing a guitar riff that I immediately recognize as the song
“Otherside,” by the Red Hot Chili Peppers from their seventh studio album *Californication* released in 1999. I follow on the bass providing the root notes to his chords as if by second nature. His playing is a little less polished, an experience I know from playing a song I learned years prior but never again rehearsed. My playing, on the other hand, is more confident having spent many years listening and playing along with this album while polishing my bass technique. Together, we play the intro riff, and the minor quality of the phrase fills the room. Jordan stops soon before the point where the first verse would begin and looks at me. “That’s all I know,” he says offering a brief smile.

“It’s cool,” I say with a grin. Silence follows my response that is broken only by my absent minded strums on my bass. Eventually, I silence my strings and look at him. “So, how about yourself?” I ask in return wanting to learn a little bit more about Jordan.

“Metal and Alternative Rock,” he says. We sit together in silence in the wake of his response.

“What bands do you like in particular?” I probe.

“Do you know any Alice in Chains?” Jordan inquires looking at me. Alice in Chains came into the public consciousness when Grunge entered mainstream popularity during the mid-1990s. Grunge is a subgenre of rock characterized by an apathetic sound and near despondent lyrics that originated in the Seattle area, sparking the interest of Generation X in particular (see Strong, 2011). Notable bands that fall under the Grunge sub-genre include Nirvana and Pearl Jam, as well as Alice in Chains.

“I know their music, but I don’t know how to play any of their songs off the top of my head,” I reply. “But I can follow you.” In my experience it is easier for a bass
player to jump into a song without knowing the progression, because there are less
harmonic demands upon the instrument. A bass player can get away with playing solely
root notes, whereas guitar players have the harmonic demand of acknowledging the
major and minor qualities of the song in their playing. In other words, bass players are
able to contribute meaningfully to the experience of a song with less information.

Jordan nods at me, turns his attention towards his guitar, and begins playing the
opening riff to a song I recognize as “Down a Hole” from their 1992 album, Dirt. He
finger picks an A-minor chord letting the individual notes harmonize together to create
the somber tone that characterizes Grunge music. There is an ineffable depth to his sound
that was absent during our performance of “Free Bird.” I cannot say for certain how
Jordan approaches his playing of “Down in a Hole,” but it no longer sounds as if hung
together by some external, mechanical unity such as a metronome. Instead, his playing
during the phrase has a breath-like quality as if alive.

I listen to the progression in order to get it in my mind before translating it into
my fingers to provide lower octaves of sound to support Jordan’s chords. Together,
Jordan and I play the opening riff. Jordan’s clear finger picking, again, shows his
familiarity and experience with the instrument. When we get to the point where the first
verse should start, he does not sing. Instead, we continue to play the progression
instrumentally. Then, without warning, Jordan switches chords to play the chorus, while I
still continue to play the verse. Sensitive to the clashing of our notes against one another,
I silence my bass and watch Jordan to get a flow for the chorus. When I regain the feel of
the song, I jump back in and follow his guitar. He still does not sing, and for that matter,
neither do I.
We play through the verse and chorus progressions with smooth transitions now that I am familiar with the switches. Since Jordan is not singing, I decide to take some liberties with the bass line. In addition to playing the root notes of the chords – the traditional role of the bass player in an ensemble – I layer in notes that accentuate the minor key to flesh out the gloomy contours of the song as per the demands of the Grunge genre. The minor reverberations of the chords wash over my body evoking a somber contemplation. I close my eyes and sway slowly in time with our chord progression. My awareness of anything beyond the song diminishes. I slip into the music letting the subdued rhythmical sound encompass and permeate my body. The lyrics of Layne Staley, the lead vocalist of Alice In Chains, echo in my mind, “Down in a hole / feelin so small / Down in a hole / losin’ my soul / I’d like to fly / But my wings have been so denied.”

Musicians arouse an embodied experience in both themselves and their audiences by casting a sonic shroud over those who allow themselves to stand in relation to the living center of the song. It is useful to think of the living center that is song as an embodied event that arouses a shared experience through establishing a temporal and affective relation between self and other. Shepherd and Wicke (1997), sociologists and cultural critics, offer the term states of awareness to describe the embodied experience of music that is suitable for fleshing out the temporal and affective dimensions of musical expression. Concretely speaking, the relation established between Jordan and myself in

22 Shepherd and Wicke brought forth the idea of states of awareness while describing music’s qualities as semiological system that means distinctly from linguistic systems. My use of this term, however, is read with a dialogic perspective in mind. I am not concerned so much with the argument that music is an expression distinct from language, as I am with presencing the depth of the relational quality of human experience. My rendering of music’s expressive capacities is to highlight the ways through which, as Levinas (1981) described, “the other affects us despite ourselves” (p. 129).
performing “Down in a Hole” is not only a cognitive one to ensure that I am playing the right chords but also an embodied relation provoked through the temporal and tonal manipulation.

Slipping into the song as I experience playing with Jordan in this moment is to fall into what Alfred Schutz (1971, 1976) would refer to as the durée, or the inner sense of time as expressed musically by the performer. Levitin (2006) noted that musicians may also refer to this as “the groove” or “the pocket” when the music plays the members of the ensemble, as opposed to the other way around. In these moments though the duration of a song may be measured in minutes and seconds according to “commonsense reality,” the song actually is not experienced as minutes and seconds as measured by the clock (unless, of course, the tempo is 60 beats per minute). The slower tempo of “Down in a Hole” creates an elongated experience of time that differs from the chronologically metered moments of commonsense reality. Implicated in this temporal relation established when entering into the “living center” of the song is the affective quality of states of awareness.

Musicians produce the affective qualities of music by manipulating sound through some instrument/medium (including one’s voice). When hearing sound, what we discern is the pitch—the frequency of sound vibrations created by an instrument that we interpret psychologically as highness or lowness. 23 When a pitch is maintained at a certain frequency it is called a tone (or note when given a specific name such as A or E⁵). There

---

23 As an interesting side note with regard to pitch as a psychological experience, Levitin (2006) observed that in Ancient Greece, the understanding was the inverse. Higher tones were referred to as low notes, because the shorter pipes used to create them were lower to the ground. This is an important detail to keep in mind as I move forward. Those sounds we understand as music are as much a product of the culture into which we are socialized as they are the expressions of a musician.
are 12 distinct tones/notes in Western Music. Of these 12 notes, there are 7 groupings, or keys, and each distinctly shapes the affective contours of sound. Neurologist and musicophiliac Daniel Levitin (2006) noted that in the West, major keys are associated with feelings of happiness and minor keys with sadness for reasons that are largely cultural. “Down in a Hole,” being in a minor key, arouses a state of awareness more somber in quality that fits the dour experience of Grunge music.

As I continue to dwell within the song, memories from high school flash through my mind. I am sitting in a bus, alone, looking out the window on my way home from school. Then, my friends and I are tubing down the Apple River laughing and talking about crushes and sports and whatever else we used to discuss in our naïve youth. Now I am driving to watch our high school football team, and then a concert with my friends, and now I am on a bus with my track team on our way to a meet. Though some of my memories of “Down in a Hole” resonate with the somber quality of the song, such as sitting alone on the school bus, the emotional resonance between the song and the memory is not a necessary condition for the memory’s arousal. Levitin argued that music has the capacity to unlock memories in our mind from particular times and places when the song was experienced. Rather, the body remembers events during which the song was experienced regardless of that experience’s emotional quality (a point to keep in mind for later).

Of particular significance to this dissertation is music’s capacity to evoke affective experiences without specifically naming them. Susan Langer (1942) referred to this as music’s “non-discursive” capacity to arouse feelings without relying upon a

---

24 I get the word musicophiliac from the title of Oliver Sacks’s (2008) book Musicophilia.
system of signification in the sense of denoting specific objects or experiences (i.e. language). Though music (non-lyrical) lacks a denotative capacity, Langer argued that “[t]he real power of music lies in the fact that it can be ‘true’ to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot” (p. 243). And what happens in this being true to the life of feeling is that music invites the audience to fill that feeling with their own experiences, which, I argue, is distinct from hearing linguistic objectifications of experience and then attributing feelings to them. Simply put, music is the showing to language’s telling. And in this instance the music shows me feelings and memories of a time that has come and passed.

Eventually, Jordan and I lose interest in the song and our fingers become less committed to playing as we taper into an unresolved silence. I open my eyes and become aware of the house, Jordan sitting near me, and the two members in the dining room table still immersed in their newspapers. Based on their older age I take them for fans of classic rock and wonder if they recognize the song we played. We sit for a minute in the silent wake of the song.

“That was kinda cool,” I say looking up at Jordan.

“Yeah,” he says looking down at his guitar.

We continue to sit in a silence broken only by our meandering hands on our respective fret boards.

::::SLAM::::

Jordan and I turn our attention towards the kitchen at the back of the house. Paul walks through the dining room toward the sitting room, the smell of cigarette smoke following close behind him. The scent arouses within me the urge for some nicotine, and
I pat the pack of cigarettes in my coat to find reassurance. Paul sits down near Jordan and I and grabs the drum. “So, what are we going to play now?” he asks.

“I dunno,” Jordan says. “It’s up to you, Paul.”

Paul looks at me as if to ask if I have any suggestions. Instead of offering a response, I look at my watch to catch the time.

“I’ve gotta take off, gentlmen,” I say in a rather informal style. Something about the feel of the house and the dress of both Paul and Jordan made me feel as if it would be an appropriate closing. I put away my bass, close the case, and grab my coat.

“Thanks for comin’, man,” Jordan says quietly.

“Yeah,” Paul says.

“Same time next week?” I ask.

“Yeah,” Jordan said.

“Sounds good. See you then.” I say, putting on my coat and walking towards the door to make my way back to my office. Heading there, I ponder the musical experience—the seamless playing Jordan and I were able to accomplish, the arousal of memories from high school, and swaying in time with the durée.

Wicked Wiccan

Several weeks have passed since the initial jam, and I have continued to remain an active participant of GP Jams. This week I find myself pressed for time and decide to drive to The GP as opposed to walking there. As I pull onto North Congress, I notice and claim an empty, metered space that is available directly in front of the house. When parked, I get out of the car, remove my bass from the backseat, and cross the street. The sound of voices from the back porch catches my attention, and I peer around the house to
investigate. I see Jordan and Paul standing and smoking cigarettes on the back porch.

Instead of entering the house through the front door, I decide to walk up the back ramp
and have a smoke with them.

When I arrive on the porch, I find not only Jordan and Paul but several other
people sitting around the picnic table. Most of these people are men with the exception of
one woman wearing a tie-dyed t-shirt. And most of them are smoking except for one man
with a Navy hat on top of long, thinning brown hair that covers his ears. I set my bass
case down away from the group, stand near Jordan at the end of the picnic table and
retrieve my pack of cigarettes from my pocket. When I enter the circle, the people sitting
around the picnic table look at me and then at my bass case behind me. I wave politely as
I place a cigarette between my lips and light it. After examining me, some of the people
around the table resume their conversations that were in progress before my entrance.
But one person sitting near me with slicked-back black hair and a yin-yang pendant
around his neck continues to look at me.

“H-hey, w-whatsyourname?” he asks in a baritone voice, the words rushing out of
his mouth. His eyes are wide and bright.

“I’m Steve,” I say extending my hand.

He reaches his out and shakes mine. I feel a slight tremor in his hand. “N-nice to
m-meetyou,” he says. “I’m W-wicked W-wiccan.”

“Wicked Wiccan?” I repeat to clarify.

“Yeah,” he says.

“What’s that you got there?” asks the man with the Navy hat. “I’m Tom by the
way,” he follows.
I reach out to shake his hand. He does the same and clasps my hand in a firm grip.

“Nice to meet you,” he says.

“Likewise,” I reply. “And in that case, I have an acoustic bass guitar. I’m gonna be playing with these two guys in just a minute,” I say looking over at Jordan and Paul.

“Yeah,” Paul says taking a drag off his cigarette, while Jordan nods.

“So,” Wicked Wiccan says. “A-are youa volunteer?”

“Yeah,” I say. “I’ve just been jamming with Jordan, and Paul here. And so far it’s been a good time.”

“W-why youhere?” He continues. “A-are you a student? Or a-are youherefor c-community service?” He laughs a machine gun-like burst after the mention of court mandated service.25

Wicked Wiccan takes a drag off his cigarette and nods at me, his hand shakes slightly.

“So,” Tom asks. “What kind of music do you like to listen to, Steve?”

“Oh pretty much anything.” I say. “I’m a huge Red Hot Chili Pepper and Primus fan. But I like a lot of music, mostly rock though.”


I smile. “Of course I know Tom Petty,” I say in a playfully offended tone before taking a drag off my cigarette.

__________

25 The Gathering Place serves as a place where persons perform community service hours as part of a sentence for an infraction of the law, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or being caught in possession of drugs.
“Good,” he says, nodding. “He’s one of my favorite musicians. I saw him live during the eighties. It was a great show, though I don’t remember it much.” A smile breaks across his clean-shaven face. “It was the eighties, you know,” he continues and laughs. Then he points to his head, “My memory is not so strong. Lots of drugs.”

I chuckle politely, and in a fraudulently reminiscent tone say, “Yeah. The eighties.” Though I was born in 1982, I was not of age to experience the drug culture Tom references and has apparently enjoyed. There is a brief gap in our exchange filled by the conversation taking place at the other end of the table. I take a drag off my cigarette before saying to Tom, “I saw Petty a few years ago, in Tampa.”

“Yeah?” Tom says.

“Yea . . .” I start, but Wicked Wiccan speaks over my affirmation of Tom’s question.

“C-can you play any Petty songson your guitar,” he says. The words fly quickly out of his mouth and it takes me a second to pull them apart.

“Yeah, I can play a few Petty songs on my bass, but it would be hard to tell what song I am playing without a guitar,” I say but not as a copout to prevent him from asking me to play a song for him.

The traditional responsibility of the bass in an ensemble is to help maintain the rhythm and support the melody. In my experience, often times this role is overshadowed by the lead guitar and vocalist. But this does not mean the bass is without its merits. Dewey (1934) noted that bass notes, and the rhythms they help maintain, represent the lower forces of experience underlying being, while the higher notes (i.e. guitar) and the melody they play represent the living forces of life. And music, unlike other forms of
aesthetic expression, has the capacity to convey multiple levels of experience simultaneously. Though cognitively the sound of my bass may be lost underneath the melody while performing in an ensemble, it is still felt and expressed through the tapping of one’s toe, or a more dynamic form such as dance. But instead of becoming disheartened in a less visible role, I find that bass guitar, as Buber (1958) said, “teaches you to meet others, and to hold your ground when you meet them” (p. 33). After all, the prestige of the lead guitar and vocalist stems, in part, from the band providing them with compelling grooves upon which they may demonstrate their talent.

“But, yeah,” I say, turning back to Tom to finish my story. “It was an amazing experience. I’ve never been to a concert where every person in the audience knew the words to the song. It was a giant sing along.”

“Yeah,” he says nodding. “What’s your favorite song?”

“I dunno, that’s a tough question,” I reply. “He opened with ‘You Wreck Me’ at the show, and that has found its way into my heart, but that could change.”

“Yeah,” Tom says. “I hear ya. For me, it depends on my mood.”

I nod, and say, “I absolutely agree.”

The woman talking with the men on the far side of the picnic table stands up catching my attention. She looks about at everyone around the back porch. “Don’t forget, you guys, to sign the card on the table for Randall,” she says with a relaxed authority. “His uncle passed away recently, and we want to get the card sent out to him by the end of the week.”

“Will, do, Jessica,” says Tom.
She looks over at him and then at me. She extends her arm across the length of the table, “I’m Jessica, by the way. One of the staff members. Are you a volunteer?”

“Yeah,” I say, reaching my hand across the table to grasp hers. “I’m Steve. Nice to meet you.” We shake and release our grasps.

“Yeah,” she says. “Jason had mentioned you a couple weeks ago. Let us know if you have any questions.”

“Thanks,” I say as she turns to enter the house through the back door.

Jordan follows Jessica’s lead and leans over to stamp out his cigarette in one of the ashtrays. “You ready, Paul,” Jordan says.

“Yeah,” Paul replies taking a final puff from his cigarette that he has smoked all the way down to the butt.

“I-I’mgonnafollowyouguys,” Wicked Wiccan says stamping out his cigarette.

“Cool,” I say extinguishing mine and grabbing my bass before joining the group. We walk single file through the back door and then the dining room. I take a seat at the piano bench when we arrive in the sitting room and set my bass on the floor in front of my feet. Jordan and Paul both take a seat and each grabs one of the two guitars resting on the floor. Apparently Jordan had retrieved the instruments before going to smoke.

Wicked Wiccan takes a seat near me as I lean over to unlock and retrieve my bass. Before I am able to pluck a note, he reaches over and plucks one of my strings.

“H-hey,” he says to me. “C-can youplay any [Led] Zeppelin?” Before I can offer a response, he continues, “H-hey canyouplay any Pink Floyd? H-how about some Ozzy?”

Overwhelmed by his barrage of questions, I respond, simply, “Yeah, I can play those.” I then begin strumming the intro bass riff to Ozzy’s “No More Tears.”
Wicked Wiccan stops his questions and listens for a second before bursting into his rapid chuckle. He soon stops and looks at the unused djembe in the middle of the room.

“H-h-hey, S-Steve,” he says looking at me. “Do you know any interesting drumbeats?” And before I could reply, he continues, “Can I show you mine?”

“Yeah,” I say.

He begins pounding out a series of beats in rapid succession with barely perceptible pauses between his strikes. I listen and try to play along on my bass, but there is no discernable structure to his rhythm. I stop and listen until he stops shortly after.

“Pretty neat, huh,” he says and chuckles. His face bursts open with a wide grin and his eyes sparkle.

“Yeah, man,” I say. “Show me again what you did there.”

He beats out, not an identical, but a pretty close rendition of the series of beats he laid out previously. There is still no discernable rhythm to his playing. I listen until he brings his playing to a close.

“W-whadya think?” he says. His eyes squint from the size of the grin on his face.

“Yeah, yeah, man,” I say nodding. “That sounds pretty intense.” Then I turn my body to face him. “Here,” I say grabbing the djembe and putting it between us. Then, feeling an unexpected boost of confidence, I say, “I’m going to pound out a simple beat, and I want you to follow along.”

Wicked Wiccan stares at me; then looks down at the drum.

I rest my hand atop the drum head and pound out quarter notes leaving plenty of surface area for him to join me. He rests his hand atop the head mimicking my placement.
“Here,” I say. “Match my beat.”

He begins pounding on the drum. Like Paul, he strikes around my beat as opposed to with me, and again, that horse with the irregular gait gallops through the room: :Ba::Bwang:: ::Ba::Bawang: :BaBawang::::::: After a brief while, I stop us.

“Alright,” I say. “It sounds like you are trying to anticipate the beat, you’re trying to catch it before it comes. Instead, try to feel the beat, and let it move your body, as opposed to your body finding the beat.”

My instructions wash through my mind, and I wish I knew a better way to explain the beat. One difficulty to overcome when helping others come to understand music is using language in such a way so as to express musical experiences. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) spoke to this incongruity between linguistic expressions and musical feelings, “In its hegemonic forms and manifestations, language does not wish to bring the body into play directly . . . as a site for utterance” (p. 182, emphasis original). For me, finding the beat is not a cognitive process – the more I think about it, the more I lose it. Instead, the beat is something that I feel. The musical vibrations in the air move my body rhythmically, an experience of which I become cognitively aware after the fact. But how do I share with him my embodiment of the beat?

I look Wicked Wiccan in his dark eyes. He looks back at me. “Follow me,” I say. “But don’t look at your hand. Just look at me and feel the beat.”

He nods. We do not break eye contact.

“I’m going to count off. And on one, you and I are going to start hitting the drum.”

“Y-yeah,” he responds, our eyes still locked.
“Alright,” I say, then take a deep breath. He mimics me.

“One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . .”

And on one, he and I start hitting quarter notes. My strikes are steady with the beat, while his are still slightly off rhythm: :Ba:::Bwang:: ::::Ba::Bawang: :BaBawang:::::::

“You’re anticipating the beat,” I say quietly, almost in a whisper. “You’ve got to feel it.”

His strikes, though still irregular, slowly begin to grow closer and closer to the beat I have established. Our eyes remain locked. As we look at each other, I observe the rise and fall of his body with each breath slows slightly, as well as how my breathing matches his. Eventually, there is no discernable difference between the sounds of my hand and his as we become locked in the rhythm of the living center of the beat:

::Bwang:: ::Bwang:: ::Bwang:: ::Bwang:: We continue to strike the drum in unison while making eye-contact. The intensity of his gaze reverberates though my body as I stare into his eyes that grow deeper with every drum beat. Eventually, I bring my hand to rest. Wicked Wiccan continues to pound out beats and stops upon realizing I have ceased.

“Yeah,” I say nodding. A smile breaks out on my face. “That’s the spot. Whenever you play, try to keep that feeling in mind.”

“Yeah,” he says in relaxed voice and falling silent as opposed to uttering a string of rapid-fire words.

As mentioned previously, music derives its capacity to evoke embodied states of awareness in part through temporal groupings of notes, particularly through tempo and rhythm. Tempo is an easy idea to grasp in that it refers to the speed of a song, specifically how many beats per minute. Rhythm, on the other hand, is a little more complicated and
refers to the duration of notes and their temporal relationships with one another. Rhythmically, we recognize songs as both distinct from and similar to one another through the groupings of notes. Levitin (2006) offered the examples of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and the “Alphabet Song” as songs that share identical rhythm structures that differ lyrically. In contrast, I offer three different renditions of “All Along the Watchtower”: Bob Dylan’s (the composer), and the covers performed by Jimi Hendrix and The Dave Matthews Band (DMB). Each performs the same song but manipulates the temporal structure both with regard to the grouping of notes and the tempo. Each artist uses the same chord progression, but the performances of Dylan and Hendrix have upbeat tempos creating an urgent feel. DMB’s performance has a slower tempo that creates purposeful meandering that accentuates the mystery of the minor chord progression (at least during the first verse). In each performance the chord structure and lyrics of the song are identical. But the arrangement of the notes and pace of each song—rhythm and tempo—is distinct with each configuration creating three distinct experiences of the same song. Now the rhythm that Wicked Wiccan and I were pounding out is not as complicated as these aforementioned songs, but that does not diminish rhythm’s significance in this experience.

Rhythm is not solely an organization of notes but a quality of human ontology. Dewey (1934), for one, spoke to rhythm in aesthetic experience, notably music, as an ontological expression of “the basic pattern of the relations of the live creature to his environment” (p. 156). The sun rises and sets, persons sleep and wake, and some of us enjoy a cup of coffee each morning (among many other activities), and it is the artist’s responsibility to answer for this underlying pattern. The bass notes, as mentioned
previously, perform this element of experience. Tangentially but significant within the context of this dissertation, psychologists and psychiatrists invoke rhythm with regard to envisioning treatments. For example, Frank’s (2007) interpersonal and social rhythm therapy encourages those seeking help for mood disorders such as bipolar and depression to schedule their days to prevent triggers that may spur a manic cycle or an onset of depression. And in the case of music therapy, drumming (among other musical activities) helps individuals regulate breathing by focusing attention on the present, particularly the rhythm of the song (see Grocke, Block, & Castle, 2009). Entering into the rhythm of the “living center” means being vulnerable to the temporal contours of being when experiencing ourselves in relation to others (see for example Buber, 1958; Goffman, 1959). And this shared time is one that has corporeal significance with regard to relation. Language arouses common ideas. Music arouses common, embodied experiences of self, such as the change in the breathing of both Wicked Wiccan and myself.

I look at Wicked Wiccan for a while before turning my attention to Jordan and Paul. They watch Wicked Wiccan and me, and I wonder, briefly, how they experienced the drumming.

“What are we gonna play guys?” Paul asks in a tone that leaves an impression that he did share in the same experience as Wicked Wiccan and I.

Paul

“I dunno, Paul,” Jordan says looking at Paul and then myself. I shrug in response to Paul’s question. Wicked Wiccan sits and looks on but does not offer any suggestions. The silence begins to get to me, and I start playing around on my bass before settling into what I soon recognize is the iconic guitar riff from Wild Cherry’s “Play That Funky
Paul looks at me, his eyes light up and almost instinctually begins singing,

“Heeeeeeeyyyyyyy, do it, now.”

Jordan, watching my hands, begins to play an E-chord to shape my bass line with a major resonance. Wicked Wiccan watches Paul and bobs his head with the beat; a smile spreads across his face. Then, Paul places his guitar on the ground, stands up, and awaits the chorus as I continue to play the iconic riff. When his moment comes, he begins to sing.

“Once I was a funky singer / Singing in a rock n’ roll band.”

He shakes his body in rhythm with the song. Laughter draws my attention away from him towards the dining room. I see two women watching the performance from the kitchen door. One of the women I recognize as Jessica from the back porch and both have smiles on their faces.

“I never had no problems, yeah / Burnin’ down one night stands / And everything around me, yeah / Got to stop to feeling so low / And I decided quickly (Yes, I did) / To disco down and check out the show.”

“Go Paul,” Jessica shouts from the kitchen door. I turn my attention from the dining room back to Paul. He is shuffling with a greater intensity than when I had looked away. A smile spreads across my face because Paul’s grooving with the song is a sight to behold. Also, this song is the first I have offered to the group since I started three weeks ago, and I am happy it is receiving such an enthusiastic response.
“Yeah, they was dancin’ and singin’ and movin’ to the groovin’ / And just when it hit me somebody turned around and shouted.”

As the song transitions from the verse to the chorus, I become aware that I do not know the appropriate chord change. I continue playing the verse riff and hope no one notices. Jordan follows my lead. I do not think he knows the transition either.

“Play that funky music white boy / Play that funky music right / Play that funky music white boy / Lay down the boogie and play that funky music till you die.” I walk down an E-major scale with Paul on my bass as he sings the final lyrics of the chorus.

“Til you die,” he echoes.

I look at Jordan who does not seem to notice or care that I maintained the same riff throughout the song. Then Paul, skipping a verse, sings the lyric that heralds the guitar lead, “Now play some of that electrified music.”

Paul looks at me as I continue playing the verse riff as if expecting me to play the solo. “Isn’t there a solo there?” he asks me in a tone reminiscent of several weeks ago when he was imploring Jordan to play the “Free Bird” solo.

I do not quit playing. Instead, feeling a spurt of confidence with the enthusiastic uptake of “Play that Funky Music,” I say to Paul, “I think you should take it.”

“But I don’t have a guitar,” Paul says looking at me.

“Play the air guitar,” I reply.

“Really,” he says. I nod at him and catch Jordan nodding at him as well.

Paul pauses for a moment, then suddenly holds in front of him an imaginary guitar and begins to play the solo. “Deeewww, Dah-Dah-Dew Dah-Dew,” he sings in a screeching, musty voice that complements my bass line. His body convulses with each
note he strikes/sings. The fingers on his fretting hand (his left) are moving quickly; I can almost hear the rapid picking and fingering of his solo. Paul closes his eyes and his face breaks into a grimace. Flooding my mind are the images of the pained faces of Eddie Van Halen (Van Halen), Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin), and Kick Hammett (Metallica) when they are mid-solo. Their faces (and Paul’s) show the expression that performance studies scholar Philip Auslander (2006) referred to as “guitar face” to describe the emotional facial displays of lead guitarists in the middle of a solo. From my experience performing live, these faces are not an affectation but a physiological response to playing. And further, consider the following from Levitin (2006) worth quoting at length:

If music serves to convey feelings through the interaction of physical gestures and sound, the musician needs his brain state to match the emotional state he is trying to express. Although studies haven’t been performed yet, I’m willing to bet that when B.B. [King] is playing the blues and when he is feeling the blues, the neural signatures are very similar. . . . And as listeners, there is every reason to believe that some of our brains will match those of the musicians we are listening to. . . . even those of us who lack explicit training in music theory and performance have musical brains, and are expert listeners. (chapter 7, para. 45)

So not only is guitar face a physiological response to the playing of a particularly moving phrase of a song but an outward expression of a felt emotion that establishes a relation between performer and audience.

Supportive laughter echoes from the kitchen. Without breaking my playing, I turn to look at the source and see Jessica and the other member still smiling. Even Jordan cracks a smile as he watches Paul perform his air guitar solo. Memories flood my mind of
when I would put on a RHCP album while alone in my bedroom, grab my bass guitar, and jump around pretending I was Flea. My already large grin grows.

Music’s capacity to arouse states of awareness opens an opportunity for an alternate experience of self. During this performance, Paul is no longer the man whom I recognize shuffling the streets of Athens. I could almost see a drummer emerge behind Paul and a bassist appear on his flank as he performs before thousands of screaming fans, and I have little doubt Paul saw them too. Oliver Sacks (2008), another neurologist and musicophiliac, noted, "Music can also evoke worlds very different from the personal, remembered worlds of events, people, and places we have known" (p. 384), such as the world of the rock and roll stage. Paul’s performance reminds me of the following words expressed by Auslander (2004) while arguing for the cultural significance of popular music, “[p]erhaps the ultimate response to popular music performance is when a young person aspires to become a musician him or herself and join the performers he or she has seen onstage” (p. 13). In this moment, Paul is no longer Paul. Instead, he is Bryan Bassett, lead guitarist from Wild Cherry. If Paul’s dream is to perform a live show, he certainly is doing that now. Eventually, Paul brings his guitar solo to a close as Jordan and I continue playing the song.

Paul shifts his attention between Jordan and I, the smile fading slightly from his face. “That’s all I know guys,” he says. Jordan and I stop simultaneously. Applause breaks out from Jessica and the other members watching from the kitchen door. “Yay, Paul!” shouts Jessica.

“Thank you. Thank you,” Paul says taking a seat. His posture is slightly more erect then before he performed.
“Nice job, Paul,” Jordan says putting his guitar in its case.

“Yeah,” Paul says looking at him. “Are we done, Jordan?”


“Okay,” he says as he stands and walks toward the back door. I place my bass in my case, as Jordan does the same with his guitar. Paul left his guitar lying unceremoniously on the floor. When Jordan was done putting away his guitar, he proceeded to pick up Paul’s.

“Do you need a hand bringing those instruments upstairs?” I ask.

“Sure, man” he says. “You can grab the drum.”

“Sounds good,” I say taking it in hand.

“Alright,” Jordan says with the house guitar and his own in his hands. “Are you sure you don’t want to take your bass with you? Sometimes things have a habit of walking away on people here.”

“Nah,” I say. “It’s too clumsy to carry, especially with this drum. And I’m sure that if someone took it, that person would not be too hard to spot. It is rather bulky after all.” I look down at the case and then back on Jordan.

“You sure,” he says, skepticism drips from his voice.

I nod.

He walks up the staircase, and I follow. When we reach the upstairs landing, we take a right down the hall and walk towards the back of the house. The glass-paned door leading into the sun room stands ajar, and Jordan pushes it open gently to let us in. When I sneak in behind him, he closes the door so he can access the instrument closet. He grabs some keys from his pocket and undoes the lock with some struggle. When opened, I see
the closet holds two public address speakers (PAs), another guitar case, and a blue bin full of patch cords to connect the speakers to amplifiers and microphones. Jordan rests the guitar atop the blue case before grabbing the djembe from me and resting it alongside the guitar. When done, he locks the door, and I follow him out of the sun room. On the way back down the hall, he stops in the staff office and gives the keys to Jessica.

“Take care, Jordan,” she says.

“You too,” he replies.

Together, we walk back down the stairs. My bass still rests next to the piano in the sitting room. Though I was not worried that someone would take it, I am relieved to see it still there in light of Jordan’s warning. After grabbing it, I turn to walk out the front door and reach into my coat pocket for my keys. Jordan, who is looking out the front door, turns his head at the jingle.

“Hey, man” he says. “Did you drive here?”

“Yeah,” I say. “That’s my car across the street,” I continue nodding my head in the direction of the door.

“It started raining, and I don’t have my bus pass,” he says. “Is it cool if you give me a ride? I don’t live too far away.”

I look out the front door and see the water dripping from the trees. “Yeah,” I say sympathizing with him. “I think I can do that.”

“Thanks man,” he says. And together, we walk out to my car and ride together to his apartment, the silence broken only by his navigation instructions along the way.
Jordan

Because of an obligation beforehand that would impede my ability to arrive on time if I were to walk, I drive again to The GP today and park across the street at one of the available metered spaces. I walk into the house with my bass in hand ready for another GP Jam session and see Jordan walking down the stairs with the guitar and djembe in his hands. He looks over at me and nods.

“What’s up, man,” he says.

“Not much,” I reply.

Paul is in the sitting room watching Jordan and I intently as we enter the sitting room and place our instruments on the floor in the center of the room. Jordan takes a seat in the plush chair in the corner of the room and begins to remove his guitar from its case. Meanwhile, I sit on the piano bench and lean over to extract my bass.

“Hey, Steve,” Paul says while giving a brief wave.

“Hey, Paul,” I reply.

Jordan reaches into his pocket for his tuner. “So how are you guys doing today?” I inquire with my bass resting in my lap.

Paul and Jordan simultaneously and respectively respond: “Good,” and “Just another day.”

“Fair enough,” I say looking over at Jordan and see he is still tuning his guitar.

“Are you ready to float me an E?” I ask.

“Yeah,” he says. “Just a second.” He finishes tuning and plucks the low E string so I may tune my instrument.

“What are we gonna play, guys?” Paul asks looking at me and then Jordan.
Jordan does not respond and turns his attention towards me. I shrug my shoulders.

We three sit in silence for a few moments, and then Jordan begins to arpeggiate an $E_b$-minor chord (listen to Track 1 on the enclosed CD). I do not ask him what song he is playing. Instead, I watch his fingers move from the $E_b$-minor down to the $D_b$-major after four beats. And after another four beats, he moves down to the $B$-minor, which he picks for eight beats before coming back round to the $E_b$-minor. When I get the feel of the phrase, I play whole tones that ring for four beats and resonate warmly with Jordan’s arpeggiated chords. As we play through the progression, Jordan does not sing, and I take liberties to enhance the minor quality of the progression. Paul grabs the djembe and begins to beat soft, arrhythmic quarter notes that do not prevent Jordan and I from holding the beat we have established. Again, I close my eyes. My awareness of the house diminishes as I fall into the durée. The progression, beginning in a minor key, provokes within me a contemplative anticipation. I feel as if something significant is about to happen. As to what this something significant is, I do not know—the only thing of which I feel certain is its inevitable approach.

The rhythmic and temporal qualities of music endow it, unlike other mediums, with the capacity to convey the activity of human experience, particularly the ever-unfolding quality of our selves, others, and the social worlds in which we dwell. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) described the relationship between *music* and *stasis* as one that is “irreconcilable” (p. 124). As such, music is uniquely situated within a dialogic orientation towards human interaction to foster a relationship between persons that acknowledges the temporal quality of human existence. As Rawlins (2009) argued informed by dialogic sensibilities, “Being alive is never a static condition. From the
moment we draw our first breaths outside our mothers' bodies, we enter a world of human activity” (p. 15). Music is the embodied expression of the activity underlying human experience.

As mentioned previously, an aesthetic experience emerges in the unity of answerability when an artist/audience meets the object to be rendered or perceived as aesthetic with his or her own experiences of the world (see Bakhtin, 1990; Dewey, 1934). And among our experiences of the world is the ever present reality of change. We do live our day-to-day lives with some degree of patterned regularity that music is able to invoke through rhythm. But we also change and grow through living consequential moments in our social and physical environments – an experience our emerging musical progression felt on the verge of expressing.

Jordan continues to lead me somewhere with this chord progression—repeating it without resolve. In the commonsense reality, minutes (maybe tens of minutes) pass as Jordan and I continue to play and replay the phrase. And with each pass through the chords, the anticipation grows within me. My body yearns for the answer to know what is next. What does this feeling mean? Where is this song taking me? Then, as if feeling my anticipation, Jordan switches from starting the phrase on the E♭-minor to beginning on the D♭-major.

The major shift (in key, not magnitude) breaks the anticipation with a sound of hopeful optimism. Dewey (1934) would refer to this moment as the culmination of an experience when the fever of the contemplative anticipation finally broke into a life-altering revelation. I watch Jordan arpeggiate four beats each of D♭-major, B-minor, B♭-major, and A-major before returning to the D♭-major to restart the phrase. After this first
run-through, I jump in with my bass, again filling out his arpeggiation by sounding whole tones before layering in notes to accentuate the major resonance of the phrase. We run through this progression several times before Jordan switches back to the minor progression beginning in E♭. Our notes clash briefly as I play the D♭, but I adjust quickly back to the minor progression.

I weave in and out of the minor and major progression with Jordan, lost in the durée, as Paul keeps us loosely together with his meandering beats. As a whole, alternating between the major and minor phrases stimulates within my mind an image of my life in broad strokes. I perceive my life punctuated by moments of contemplative anticipation and the ensuing hope when resolved: awaiting acceptances and/or rejections from graduate schools (they said yes) -- and that pregnant pause when I asked my then-girlfriend if she would marry me (she said yes). However, conspicuously absent in my reflections at this time are those moments when the culmination of the anticipation gives way to temporary despair. But this optimism is only because the ebb and flow of this music does not take me to those moments. Music, like language, is a living organism (Bakhtin, 1981), and who’s to say that this array of chords, this utterance, will not be arranged in such a way so as to unfold differently at another time? Perhaps with the addition of some more minor chords and a less peppy rhythm, this jam may have led me into more somber reflections.

Speaking to music as a living organism, not only does music continue to grow and change as it is used by a universe of diverse others, but music performs its living quality in a fashion parallel with life. Music’s dialogic capacities in part stem from the ephemeral nature of sound – once a song is complete, we have only a memory upon which to rely.
As such, musicians have a unique demand upon their medium in that the audience is allowed privileged access to the creative process, *the life*, of song – a quality of music that Dewey (1934) argued distinguished it as the highest of the arts. The point of significance here with regard to dialogic orientations towards human experience is that entering into the *living center* is to participate in the becoming of the song in a way that reflects the continuous unfolding of its being – the life of a song.

And the life of a song in many ways unfolds in a similar pattern to our lived experiences. Rawlins (2009) argued with regard to the experience of life as dialogic, “As human beings, we are always involved in the process of becoming who we are” (p. 16), a process which he believes is fundamentally hermeneutic. And this becoming of ourselves is an inherently social process, for it is in our meetings with others that our selves come to have definition. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) believe that persons understand music hermeneutically in that we make sense out of the notes we hear based on those we have already heard and the ones we anticipate hearing. In this way, music, like the activity of life, unfolds towards a future that is influenced by the past. The rhythmic shifts from minor to major in Jordan’s progression perform the event of becoming as one state of awareness (contemplative anticipation) gives way to another (hope) and then back again—or wherever else Jordan may find fitting at another moment. And the gravity of the consequential moment as expressed musically is felt in the relation of the notes played as we understand them hermeneutically in our experience of the song. Meanwhile, as we have learned, bound up in chord progressions are numerous memories of lived experience. As songs unfold, implicated and intertwined in that unfolding are the
experiences that we bring to bear on the music. Music and life mutually implicate one another (Dewey, 1934) – music unfolds with life.

Eventually, I feel Jordan slowing the tempo of the progression and eventually bringing the song to a close with a final strum of the E<sub>b</sub>-minor chord. I again become conscious of the presence of my self within the house and then of Jordan and Paul sitting next to me. I look into the dining room and find it empty. We glance briefly at each other at the conclusion of the song and sit in silence. Jordan looks slowly around the room absently mindedly.

“I’ve never heard that before,” I say.

“Oh, it’s just something I wrote,” he says turning to me.

“Well, it sounds quite good,” I say, impressed.

“Thanks,” he says looking down at this guitar. Again, silence.

Paul looks from Jordan to me and then back again. “I’m gonna have a cigarette,” he says standing up.

“See ya, Paul,” Jordan says, looking at me with a smirk on his face.

“I’ll be back,” he replies and walks towards the back door.

Jordan and I sit alone and silent in Paul’s absence with our instruments in hand. Nobody was in the dining room, though voices echo from the kitchen. After a moment Jordan looks at me, “Do you know any Tool?”

“Yeah, I know a bit of Tool” I say. Tool is a band that entered the public consciousness in the mid-nineties known for their heavy, shadowy sound and dark lyrical subject matter. My high school friends and I listened to their albums before track and field events to get our minds focused on our respective races. I began playing the opening
riiff to the song “Schism” from their 2001 album *Lateralus*. Jordan nods when he recognizes what I am playing. I stop after a couple runs through the riff. “That’s all I know of that song.”

He nods approvingly and asks, “Do you know ‘Sober?’” “Sober” is one of their first singles from their 1993 debut album *Undertow*.

“Yeah,” I say, detuning my E-string one step to what is referred to as drop-D tuning. The lower tone will provide for a deeper resonance for this song in particular. And with a small laugh, I say, “It’s rather easy. Just two notes.”

Jordan smiles and begins de-tuning his guitar in a fashion identical to mine. “Yeah,” he says with a chuckle matching my own.

Without waiting for him to finish, I begin laying down the heartbeat like bass line on my freshly tuned low D string: Duh-duh <pause> Duh-duh <pause><pause>. Then I move one step up to the Eb: Duh-duh<pause>Duh-duh<pause><pause>. After, I return to the D and repeat. Jordan watches me for a moment as he adjusts his low D-string before layering atop my bass line the similar progression two octaves higher. Our sounds meld together and complement each other while remaining distinct in their individual integrity. The low notes from my bass envelope the chords from his guitar, which in turn, provides my sound with the vibrant contour of Jordan’s chords that perform clearly the minor feel of the song. The cardiac rhythm of the song provides an interesting perspective for considering the “living center” that is the song uniting Jordan and me. I close my eyes and that familiar feeling of entering into the durée overtakes me.

We play synchronized for a short while, my consciousness consumed by the heartbeat like rhythm of the song. The minor quality aroused through our alternating of D
and E♭ shroud our sound in mystery. Then Jordan deviates from the cardiac progression of my bass-line by strumming syncopated quarter notes that layer a sense of urgency into our sound. Then, catching me by surprise, he begins to sing.

“There’s a shadow just behind me / Shrouding every step I take.”

His voice is flat in relation to our progression, almost as if he is not providing enough breath support to fulfill the promise of the note.

“Making every promise empty / pointing every finger at me. / Waiting like a stalking butler / who upon the finger rests / Murder now the pattern must we / Just because the son²⁶ has come?”

At the end of this line, Jordan and I, like the song, simultaneously begin strumming our strings harder. His voice increases in volume.

“Jesus, won’t you fucking whistle / Something but what’s past and done?”

Hearing the profanity pulls me out of the durée, and I look around to see if there was anyone within earshot. Finding no one, I close my eyes and focus on the song.

“Jesus, won’t you fucking whistle / Something but what’s past and done?”

With the completion of the final lyrics, Jordan and I sound Ds from our instruments and let them ring with a full resonance as we break into the chorus.

“Why can’t we not be Sober / I just want to start this over / Why can’t we drink forever? / I just want to start this over.”

Jordan and I fall back into the heart-like rhythm alternating between D and E♭. I bob my head in rhythm with the song and look up at Jordan. His gaze is fixed elsewhere not within the house. Then he begins singing the next verse,

²⁶ “Son” is a reference to Jesus Christ.
“I am just a worthless liar / I am just an imbecile / I will only complicate you / Trust in me and fall as well / I will find a center in you / I will chew it up and leave / I will work to elevate you / Just enough to bring you down.”

Together, we announce the chorus by letting our instruments ring nice and full on the D, while Jordan sings the lyrics. When finished, we fall back into the cardiac beat, but this time Jordan begins singing the outro to bring the song to a close.

“I want what I want / I want what I want / I want what I want / I want what I want.”

At the last utterance of that lyric, Jordan and I play the heartbeat like rhythm loudly and bring our strings to rest before striking the next notes in order to block-off and accentuate their sound as well fully presence the silence that follows. Then Jordan looks at me, and we strike our last notes full and loud and let them ring. The full sound of the D-chord fills the room and lingers in the air until our strings grow tired and come to rest.

Jordan looks up at me, and I look back at him. We nod at each other, and I say, “That was cool.” Jordan says nothing, he just continues nodding. Together, we sit in silence. I strum meandering random notes on my bass, while Jordan does the same on guitar. However, today silence bothers me. “What brings you to The GP?” I ask.

“Well,” he says then pauses. “I used to be up at ABH for about four months.” ABH is Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare and is what became of the Athens Mental Health Center after it closed in 1993.

“I am what they call a polyaddict. I’m addicted to alcohol, opiates, and benzos. They said that this would be a good place to stay to keep my sobriety.”
Substance abuse was included as an entry in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* in 1987, at which point The GP opened their membership to include this new classification of mental illness.

“Wow,” I say. From my experience, nicotine is a hard enough addiction to deal with, particularly the mood swings I exhibit when it is absent from my system. I cannot image having to cope with the withdrawal from multiple substances simultaneously. A thick silence hangs in the air.

“And I just like doing the music really,” Jordan says breaking the silence. “Music is pretty much everything to me.”

“Really,” I say.

“Music is what got me through everything. Like, I’ve always been an introverted person; you know what I mean? I’ve never really had a lot to say. Like in school, my teachers would ask me to read a paper in front of the class, but I couldn’t go up and read the paper. But I have no problem with playing at an open mic. And like with my girlfriend, if I can’t really explain what I am feeling, I will play a song for her. It seems like a lot of times what I am trying to say doesn’t come out the right way.”

“And music helps you do that?” I ask for clarification.

“Yeah, man,” he replies. We fall silent.

“I tend to not really talk about my problems, I just tend to listen to music, or I’ll write poems and stuff. I’ll write about whatever’s going on with me. Whenever I’m happy, I don’t really write. I’ll just listen to whatever. But there are other times, where I just need to hear a particular song. Like ‘Sober’, for example,” he says. “That is one of
the most accurate songs I have ever heard,” he says.

“Really?” I ask. “What do you mean?”

“Well, think of the lyrics man,” he says, and then begins to rehearse selected phrases. “I am just a worthless liar / I am just an imbecile / I will only complicate you / Trust in me and fall as well / I will find a center in you / I will chew it up and leave / I will work to elevate you / Just enough to bring you down.” He pauses when he is done and another silence descends on us.

“If that isn’t addiction, I don’t know what is,” he continues. “I mean, you trust in an addict, and you’re done. The constant lies. Not being able to handle responsibility, because the only thing you care about is getting the high.”

“Huh,” I respond at a loss for words. Silence again descends upon us, and I dwell in the self-disclosure Jordan shared.

Shepherd and Wicke (1997) noted that “music’s ability to circumvent the world of objects allows it a characteristic access to the unconscious that is not open to language” (p. 63). I have the tendency not to pay full attention to lyrics when I listen to a song. Rather, I focus my attention instead on the non-discursive (Langer, 1942) aspects. Now, I hear the lyrics replay in my head, “I am just a worthless liar . . . Trust in me and fall as well.” The cardiac rhythm of the song, the only part that I devoted my attention to until now takes a new meaning in mind—the continual pulse of a person in need of a fix. I think about my smoking habit and the times I have tried to quit. Three or four months are the longest I have gone before caving. And each time before I fall, I say to myself that I can control my urge, that it is just one cigarette. But that one always leads to a second, which tends to lead to purchasing a pack, and before I know it, I am smoking again.
Again, music and life implicate each other in that one can be a window onto the other (Dewey, 1934). Jordan’s experience with addiction sheds light on the song, allowing me to experience the song as an expression, in part, of Jordan.

Jordan changes the subject, pulling me out of my thought. “I’ve always wanted to play in a band, but I never knew anyone that really played,” he says. “Do you play in any bands?” he asks with a hopeful tone in his voice.

“Yeah,” I say. “A local rock band. We call ourselves Broken Ring.”

“Cool,” he says with the hint of a defeated feeling. Then he continues, “I mean I wouldn’t mind playing by myself, but I don’t know how to get myself out there. I mean, open mics are alright, but I want something that can get me paid. I mean, how do you even get started doing that.”

“I don’t know,” I say, honestly. I joined Broken Ring after they had established themselves in the community. So the hard work of starting the band and getting their foot in the door was, for the most part, already accomplished. “Just be willing to put yourself out there,” I say in an attempt to offer some advice.

“Yeah,” he says. “Some of these places want a CD of my stuff or they are asking about sound equipment. Some places say it is $30 for the sound guy, and I don’t want to pay that. I mean, how hard is it to plug your stuff in.” He chuckles with the utterance of the last sentence.

“Yeah,” I say with a brief laugh. But the people doing sound during a performance play a critical role in ensuring the audience has an enjoyable experience of the show. The sound the performers hear on stage is not the same sound that the audience hears. However, I refrain from saying this in fear of quashing his hopes.
:::SLAM:::

Jordan and I both look towards the kitchen see the cause of the disturbance, and we see Paul walking through the dining room at an urgent pace.

“What are we going to play now guys?” he says taking a seat and shifting his attention between Jordan and I.

“I don’t know, Paul,” Jordan replies.

“How about ‘Free Bird’?” he asks.

“Sure,” Jordan says as he hands his guitar over to Paul and grabs the djembe.

Paul focuses his attention of the neck of the guitar and struggles to get the G-chord under his fingers to start the song. When he does find it, a few of the strings buzz from the lack of pressure he applies to the fret board. I try to play louder on my bass in order to cover the buzzing. We run through the introduction to together with some awkward moments, and then Paul starts to sing. I look at Jordan while holding down the bass line. He looks at me and we chuckle before out turning our attention back to playing the song.

Footsteps coming down the stairs draw my attention away from Jordan and Paul. Jessica, the staff member who I remember meeting on the back porch several weeks prior, is walking into the foyer; her attention focused on Jordan.

“Hey, Jordan,” she says.

Jordan stops playing and looks up at her as if coming out of a daze. “What’s up?” he asks looking at her before averting his gaze.

“I just wanted to let you know that the music therapy people will be coming next week after GP Jams.”

“You’re welcome,” she says and walks through the dining room towards the kitchen.

“So, what should we play now?” Paul says looking between Jordan and I.

“I don’t know, Paul,” Jordan says. “I think I’m done for the day.”

“Okay,” Paul says as he stands up and walks towards the back door with his hand in his pocket.

“Hey,” Jordan says to me after Paul leaves. “Do you think you could give me a ride?”

“Yeah,” I say thinking I had a free moment, and he did not live to far away. We pack up the instruments, make our way to my car parked nearby, and drive to Jordan’s apartment in relative silence.

“So, those music therapy people are coming next week,” I say looking over at Jordan in the passenger seat as we wait for a few cars to pass before I can take the left into the driveway to his apartment.

“Yeah,” Jordan says. His distaste for them is apparent in his tone. “They treat us like children,” he says.

“Yeah?” I say as we pull alongside his building.

“Yeah, man,” he says stepping out of the car and opening the back door to retrieve his guitar. “You’ll see what I mean.” Then he follows, “You are studying communication, maybe you can say something to them.”

“Sounds good,” I say with a with a smile. “Alright, you ta . . .”
“Hey,” Jordan says sticking his head back in the car and cutting me off. “Do you think that next week you could pick me up in Chauncey?”

“Chauncey?” I reply.

“Yeah, man,” he says. “I’m trying to take legal custody of my girlfriend’s child, because his dad is a deadbeat. But in order to satisfy child and family services, I had to find a residence larger than my one-bedroom apartment. The only place we could find that is big enough and cheap enough was in Chauncy, and it will be a couple weeks before I am able to get a car.

“Yeah,” I say. “I can do that.” Thinking this will only be for a couple weeks.

“Thanks, man,” he replies.

“I’ll see you next week to chill with those music therapy people,” I say in a playful tone.

“Right,” he says. His derision is palpable. “You’ll see.” He closes the door and walks to his apartment with his guitar in hand.
CHAPTER 5: MUSIC THERAPY

Jordan and I arrive at The Gathering Place around 1:00 p.m. after I picked him up at his new home in Chauncy that he shares with his girlfriend and her infant son. We take a seat in the sitting room and remove our instruments from their cases. The music therapists will be arriving at 1:30 according to Jessica’s instructions from last week. Jordan retrieves his tuner from his lap and begins plucking his strings and adjusting the tuning pegs on the headstock of his guitar.

“I’m set, man.” Jordan says to me as he tweaks the final tuning peg.

“Excellent,” I say as he plucks his E-string. I do the same and adjust my tuning peg until our clashing tones smooth into a placid sound before tuning the rest of my strings. “Well, I’m set,” I say when finished.

We sit in silence together. I noodle around on my bass. Jordan does the same on his guitar, and eventually begins playing the intro riff to Metallica’s “No Leaf Clover.” During high school my friends and I were huge Metallica fans, and they were the first major band that we had seen perform live. They performed “No Leaf Clover” at the show we saw. The song is in E-minor, and the opening riff is a series of eighth notes that create the impression of a train chugging down the tracks. I follow along with Jordan playing my low E-string to fatten the tone of his guitar. Together, we become a freight train. After a couple measures of this progression, Jordan breaks into the second half of the intro that has a slower and more mysterious feel, still in E-minor, as if the train has suddenly found itself unexpectedly in an enchanted land. Instead of playing the train-like eighth notes, I play whole tones to provide a cushion for Jordan’s sound and then embellish his line with notes that embellish the minor key of the song. I feel myself fall
into the durée, but movement out of the corner of my eye and the sound of the front door closing quickly pull me out as my attention turns towards the foyer.

A young man and a middle-aged woman stand in the foyer, both wearing khaki pants and green polo shirts with the music therapy department’s insignia printed above the pocket. They are carrying a guitar, keyboard, and two duffel bags between the two of them. Without breaking my playing, I watch as they walk into the sitting room, rest their equipment near the fireplace, and survey Jordan and I playing the introduction to “No Leaf Clover.” Jordan and I stop playing. I look at Jordan, and he rolls his eyes at me out of the sight of the music therapy students; then I shift my gaze over to them.

“Hey,” I say extending my hand to the male student. “I’m Steve.”

“Nice to meet you,” he says in a friendly tone. “I’m Eric.”

“And I’m Paige,” says the middle-aged woman extending her hand. I see her eyes scan my body. I did not have any academic obligations today, and as a result, I decided to dress down wearing faded blue jeans and a hooded sweatshirt not too dissimilar from Jordan.

“Need any help with your stuff?” I ask looking at their equipment on the floor.

“Oh, we’re good,” Paige says.

“And this is Jordan by the way,” I say looking over at him. Jordan is slouched over his guitar fixing his gaze near the floor. The last time I remember seeing him in this posture was during the first times we made music together.

“Hey Jordan,” Paige says waving at him with a kind smile.

“Hey,” he replies looking up but not making direct eye contact.

“Hey,” Eric says in a friendly but meek tone.
“We are going to get our stuff set up before we start the session,” Paige says. Then she looks around the room. “And this will buy us a couple moments to see if anyone else joins before we proceed,” Paige says.

“Sounds good,” I say before turning to Jordan who looks at me and gives me a minute look of disgust. As they set up, I strike an E on my bass in an attempt to arouse Jordan’s fingers. He plays the introduction to “No Leaf Clover,” and again that train is barreling through the sitting room and bursting forth once more into that enchanted land. The music therapy students cast the occasional glance over at Jordan and I, watching as they remove various percussion instruments from the duffel bag and set them in the middle of the sitting room. When the bag is empty, Paige walks over to Jordan and I.

“Alright, guys,” she says. “I think we are going to start if you want to participate.”

“Yeah,” I say and stop my playing. Jordan stops playing as well but does not vocally respond to Paige’s request.

Then Paige directs her attention towards the dining room table and says, “And you can feel free to participate if you like.” I turn to see whom she was talking to and find a member whose presence in the room had escaped my attention. He stares mutely at Paige, his arms crossed around his chest, and shakes his head.

“Well, alright,” says Paige turning to Jordan and I. “Do you think others will be joining?” she asks looking around the room.

Jordan does not respond.

“Possibly,” I say noting Jordan’s silence

“Well, we have a rhythm activity we can do while we wait for other folks to arrive,” Paige says. She hands Jordan and I sheets of paper describing 4/4 and 3/4
rhythms along with bars of music to read. 4/4 is a common time signature pervasive in most music one might hear on the radio. The 3/4 time signature signifies a waltz. Journey’s “Open Arms” is an example of a song with a 3/4 time signature. To get the feel of a time signature, count to three or four when a song plays, and if your counts align with chord changes and the beginning/end of a chord/verse, then you have hit the right time. (There are more time signatures than 3/4 and 4/4, but they are not pertinent to this discussion). Eric grabs the two chairs from the computer desks and brings them over to Jordan and I, so he and Paige can sit with us.

I look at Jordan when I see my sheet. Again, he rolls his eyes and lets out a quiet sigh.

“What we have here are basic rhythms that we are going to clap out to help us get warmed up,” Paige says taking a seat.

I look at the sheet; then I look over at Jordan. He meets my gaze and gives me a look that seems to suggest, “See what I mean? They treat us like children.” Then I look at Paige with a slight look of disbelief. What I wanted to ask her was, “Did you not just hear us playing a moment ago? We clearly know how to play in rhythm.” However, what I decided to say was, “Okay?” with an upward inflection to express subtly our feeling of dissatisfaction with this choice of activity. To me, it seems like they have arrived with a predetermined expectation of the musical capacity of the members prior to coming to the house. As Buber (1958) might say, our personhood was fixed in the limits of a particular type of It prior to the moment of this meeting.

“So,” Paige begins, “What we are going to do is clap out these rhythms as they are on the sheet.” I look down at the paper. There are five staffs extending down the page,
each composed of five parallel lines about a centimeter apart running horizontally across the page. Each staff has either a 4/4 time signature or a 3/4 time signature. At the top of the page are simple quarter note rhythms that get progressively more complex down the page ending in eighth note rhythms at the bottom.

Again, I look over at Jordan to gauge his impression of the activity as Paige describes rhythms. His gaze is directed at the sheet, but I get a sense he is not listening. Meanwhile, Eric sits silently next to Paige.

“These are quarter notes,” Paige says pointing to the notes that comprise the first staff. “You’ll see that there are four per measure, so what we are going to do is play them on the beat”

“Sounds good,” I reply trying to mask my disinterest and speaking for Jordan, who appears exceptionally withdrawn compared to my experiences of him at GP Jams. Eric nods with a small smile on his face that betrays a sense of discomfort.

“Alright,” Paige replies. “I’m going to count off four beats and demonstrate how to play these notes.” She counts of the tempo for the rhythm, “1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4,” and then proceeds to pat out the quarter notes by slapping her thigh, lightly, but loud enough to make a percussive snap. When she completes the four measures that comprise the staff atop the page, she stops. “Now, I think we should try it as a group.”

I nod, Jordan stares absentmindedly, and Eric continues to watch silently with a small smile spread across his face.

“Alright,” Paige says. “1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . .”

Paige, Jordan, Eric, and I all, without difficulty, pound out the quarter note beats on the first staff of the page.
“Wow,” Paige says in an enthusiastic and supportive tone. “You guys are good. Do you think we can take the next staff with the eight notes?”

I look at Jordan who returns my gaze. His eyes are distant. I feel as if he has checked out of this interaction. Then I turn my attention back to Paige. Although I do not feel it is my place to criticize the approach they are taking with this session, playing these rhythms – especially after they heard Jordan and I play the Metallica cover with a degree of familiarity – I experience as a borderline offensive assumption about our ability to make music.

Jordan’s suggestion the previous week that I should say something sounds through my mind, and I throw some caution to the wind. Though part of my role at The GP as an ethnographer is to observe how the members and organization use music as a means of expression without interfering with their process, I also cannot ignore my pragmatic sensibilities as a researcher to hold my communicative beliefs accountable to the lives from which they emerge (see James, 1991) for the benefit of the persons who welcome (or at least tolerate) my presence. And further, I feel I have an obligation to Jordan as a member and person to speak on behalf of his capacity to make music.

“To be honest,” I say. “I don’t think this is working.”

Paige’s eyes widen. “Oh?”

“Yeah,” I say and speak with a confident, articulate voice that betrays my education. “I mean, Jordan and I are rather comfortable with our instruments, as well as playing basic rhythmic patterns, and unless other folks come, it may be nice to play some songs.”

Then Paige continues, her eyes less wide, “I think we can do . . .”
The four of us look back towards the kitchen to the source of the interruption and see Paul cruising through the dining room towards the sitting room. He takes a seat at the piano bench. In his hand is a foam cup, and the smell of cigarettes follows him into the room.

“You can’t have that drink in here, Paul,” Jordan says. A rule of the sitting room is no drinks because of the computers.

“Oh,” he says looking at the cup before standing to place it on the dining room table before returning to his spot on the piano bench. When he sits, I notice the front door open and see a middle-aged woman with auburn hair enter and close the door quietly behind her.

“Sorry I am late,” she says entering the sitting room. “Hey guys,” she says to Paul, Jordan, and myself. “I’m Paige and Eric’s music therapy professor this term. I’ll be stopping in on occasion to see how they are doing.”

“Hello,” I say. “My name is Steve.”

“I’m Paul,” he chimes bringing his hand up in a brief wave.

“Jordan,” he says quietly, making brief eye contact then returning his gaze to the floor.

“So,” Brenda continues in a cheerful tone directing her attention toward Paige and Eric. “What are you guys doing?”

“Well, Brenda,” Paige begins. “I think that we are about to play a song. Did you guys have any requests?”
Jordan says nothing in reply to Paige’s questions, and I refrain from offering a suggestion with Paul present. This session is more for both of them than for me. The only reason I was vocal before is because Jordan was most likely not going to engage them. But, if Paul keeps true to my experience of him at GP Jams, he will no doubt offer a suggestion.

“Can we do ‘Free Bird?’” Paul asks.

“‘Free Bird?’” Paige echoes.

Eric smiles and nods, “Some Lynyrd Skynyrd, huh?”

“Yeah,” Paul says.

“Do we have the music for that song?” Paige asks.

“I don’t think so,” Eric says.

“You don’t need the music,” I say. “We can teach you. We’ve played this song several times before.”

“Well,” Paige starts. “I’m going to get the guitar,” she finishes as she stands up and grabs the case that is resting behind her. Then Eric grabs a drum from the center of the floor that looks similar to the djembe that The GP has for member use. After they grab their instruments, they reclaim their seats in the circle that has formed comprising Jordan, Paul, and myself. Brenda sits just outside the circle. (She has not yet shared her name with us.)

Paige strums a G-chord, and I pluck a G on my bass. Our instruments ring in tune. Jordan does not strum a G to see if Paige and he are in tune, but it is not necessary because he and I were in tune before the music therapist joined the group.

“Well,” Paige says. “It seems like we are ready.”
“Well, Jordan,” I say looking over at him. “Do you want to kick us off?”

He does not respond to my request vocally, but instead begins playing the G-chord that starts the song before continuing the rest of the progression. His chords sound quiet and emotionally flat, not unlike the time when he was teaching Paul the song during my first session of GP Jams. But it is not the mechanical flatness as a result of teaching Paul the chords. Rather, his chords seem to sound the disinterest that reads on his face.

As Jordan plays the progression, I tell Paige and Eric, “The chords are G, D, E-minor, followed by an F, C, and then D. After which, we repeat the phrase. Got that?” I finish with a chuckle knowing I dropped a lot of chords on them.

“Yeah. I think so,” says Paige with a smile and chuckling in a register insinuating she gets my joke.

I begin playing along with Jordan. Paige watches Jordan’s fingers for the appropriate changes, and when she strums, her chords overpower Jordan’s disinterested sound. Eric begins pounding out a slow, quarter note drum beat on the djembe they brought with them. His strikes match the beat established between Jordan, Paige, and myself with solid precision.

“Who’s going to sing?” Paige asks without breaking her strumming.

“I think Paul’s got this,” I say looking over at him with an encouraging smile.

“Yeah,” he says sitting erect on the piano bench readying himself to sing. Then he begins the verse when the phrase comes back round, “If I leave here tomorrow . . .”

As we play through the verse, Paige’s and Eric’s skill maintaining a consistent rhythm creates an opportunity for me to fall into the durée. I close my eyes and let the
song encompass me. Paul’s voice, in its Dylanesque tone, announces meaningfully the tone of a travel-weary, though committed, vagabond.

“Would you still remember me?”

Suddenly, Paige’s guitar drops out, and I open my eyes to see Brenda removing the guitar from her hands.

“Play this,” Brenda says thrusting a tambourine into her hands that she must have retrieved from the duffle bag resting on the floor.

With Paige’s guitar absent, the instrumental musicality of the song depends upon Jordan’s disinterested strums. However, his disinterest regarding playing with the music therapy students feels stronger than playing the song. As we continue to play, I find it difficult to fall into the durée when Jordan is not present in his playing and grow confused as to why Brenda interfered with the song. Prior to switching out Paige’s guitar, we had a solid flow going. But without her strums the song sounds flat. Paul continues to sing and Jordan continues to strum through this interruption. I continue to play as well, but I no longer feel the durée as I did before and question the therapeutic value of Brenda’s decision for Paige to switch instruments.

When Paul finishes the first verse, he stops and says, “That’s all I know guys.”

All of us stop playing and look around at each other.

“That was very good guys,” Paige says in a voice reminiscent of a kindergarten teacher. “You’ve got a good voice there, Paul.”

“Yeah,” Paul says straightening his posture.

“How about you guys do the relaxation activity,” Brenda says to Paige and Eric at the completion of the song.
“Sure,” says Paige.

Eric turns in his chair, sets the guiro down behind him near the duffle bag, and then grabs a black messenger bag resting next to his chair. He sets it in his lap and proceeds to extract a laptop computer. Setting the bag he aside, he places the computer on his lap, opens the top, and begins moving his fingers on the track pad with his eyes glued to the screen.

“While Eric is cuing up the song, I want to brief you on what we are going to do,” Paige says. “We will play a song, and you will close your eyes as we lead you through a guided meditation. Sound good?”

“Yeah,” Paul says as I nod. Jordan does not offer any indication that he heard what she said.


“Well, alright,” Paige follows. “Now, if you could close your eyes.” I look over and see Paul close his eyes with his hand resting palm down on his thighs. Then I glance at Jordan who continues to look at the floor, his eyes open. After looking at Jordan, I close my eyes genuinely anticipating this activity.

“Eric,” I hear Paige say followed by a soft click.

A synthesizer flows through the small speakers on his laptop that sounds long, sustained tones creating in my mind an impression of a tonal wind.

Then Paige begins to speak softly, “Take a deep breath in through the nose and out through the mouth.”

---

27 I did not have a pen and paper while listening to this meditation. This script is from an online source offered by Gillian Bowles (2006). Though this script is not exactly what
I breathe in deeply through my nose and hold it before letting it out through my mouth. The sound encompasses me.

“Allow your body to just let go.”

I again breathe in deeply. The sound massages my body.

“Become aware of any tension in your body and just breathe into that area for a moment.”

I exhale.

“Now as you take in each breath say to yourself ‘I am’ and as you breathe out say to yourself ‘relaxed,’ in ‘I am,’ out ‘relaxed,’ in ‘I am,’ out ‘relaxed.'”

I follow Paige’s guidance thinking the phrase, “I am relaxed.”

“Just allow your mind and body to be peaceful; if thoughts come just let them pass and go back to focusing on your breath. As it now gently flows in through your nose, notice the coolness of the air just as it enters your nostrils.”

I feel the air. The synthesizer that sounds through Eric’s speakers continues to envelope me in its calming, sonic breeze.

“I am relaxed,” Paige continues. “Now picture yourself in a beautiful meadow surrounded by wildflowers. You can hear birds a little way off and you know that you are completely safe.”

A meadow appears in my mind. I see the long grass growing in the field. A blue sky shines overhead, and the sun reflects off an azure pond. I experience the sound from Eric’s computer as a sonic wind blowing across my face.

---

was spoken by Paige, it is close enough to evoke an experience that rings true this particular relaxation session.

154
“You can feel the warmth of the sun on your face and body. As you gently lay down on the soft grass and feel supported by the earth and warmed by the sun. You know that you have everything you need.”

My awareness of the house has almost completely faded with the exception of Paige’s voice. I am in the meadow, and Paige’s voice sounds from the heavens.

“Your mind, body and spirit are happy, healthy and relaxed. Just lie here for a moment and enjoy this wonderful place of peace and calm.”

In addition to the sounds coming from Eric’s computer, I hear birds chirping and the sound of a musical wind rustling the long grass. Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) argue that music has a rhetorical quality whereby lyrics in conjunction with music create messages that have both conceptual and emotional content. They describe music’s rhetorical qualities through discussions of the virtual experience constructed lyrically in conjunction with virtual time expressed through the music. Rhetorical speaking, music may provide congruent or incongruent messages when considering how virtual experiences are layered in virtual time. The nature scenery evoked in my mind by Paige is congruent with the breeze-like musical background.

“Now, when you are ready, just breathe a little more deeply, feel the vital flow of energy through your body as you gently come back to the room and continue on with your day refreshed and re-energized, knowing that you can return to your special place of calm anytime you want just by recalling it.”

The meadow begins to fade as Paige calls me back to the room. The murmur of voices from the kitchen replaces the sound of birds and the wind blowing through the grass. Slowly, I open my eyes and see Paige and Eric. I look over at Paul who is opening
his eyes, and then at Jordan who is still staring at the floor. Brenda continues to watch from just outside the circle with a smile on her face. A contemplative silence emerges among us.

“How did that feel?” Paige says softly looking between Jordan, Paul, and myself.

“Good,” Paul says.

I nod. Part of me is still in the meadow and silent in the wake of the meditation.

Jordan remains silent.

“Well, good” Paige says glancing at her watch. “To close, I would like to play a Buddhist Blessing song to wish you well until our next meeting.” She reaches behind her to grab the guitar that Brenda had removed from her hands earlier.

She begins strumming a chord that looks like an A-minor on the 5th fret creating a major sound that fills me with a feeling of lightness as if I am floating. The she shifts her position to the 3rd fret for a measure, then returns back to the 5th fret, which she strums for a measure before playing a G-chord for a measure and then returning to the beginning to complete the phrase.

Paige begins playing the phrase a second time, but this time she sings: “May you be filled with loving kindness / May you be well / May you be peaceful and at ease / May you be happy.” Then she repeats the last lyric, only slower, “May you be happy.” She lets the final note ring when she is done, and a brief silence follows.

“What did you think of that?” she asks us.

I wait for Jordan and Paul to reply before saying anything. However, they do not respond, and I answer in their stead (but not for them).

“I like it,” I say. “It’s quite relaxing.”
“Yeah,” Paige starts. “It is, isn’t it?”

“It’s one of my favorites,” Eric says.

“Yeah,” I say.

“Well,” Paige says. “Eric and I have to get going, but we’ll be here next week. Be sure to let the folks here know that we are doing this, so we can get more people to participate.”

“Sounds good.” I say, as Paul says, “Yeah.”

Paige and Eric then begin packing up their instruments, and Jordan and I do the same with ours. Paul stands and walks towards the back door, presumably for a smoke, without offering to help pick up.

When Jordan and I are packed, he looks at me and asks, “Ready to go?”

“Yeah,” I say. I then turn to Paige, Eric, and Brenda who are still packing their gear, “Need a hand with those instruments?”

“We’ve got it,” Brenda says with a smile.

“Alright,” I reply. “Let’s head out then, Jordan,” I say turning to look at him. He nods, and we make our way to my car parked across the street.

“I can’t stand those music therapy students,” Jordan says to me in the middle of our drive to his house in Chauncy. “They always treat us like we are children. I mean, I’m mentally ill, I’m not fucking retarded.” The tone of his voices rises and becomes more forceful. “I have depression,” he says with emphasis. “Not a fucking learning disability.” The anger in his voice is palpable. “I mean, for someone who needs that kind of treatment and attention, like Paul, I suppose it works, but for you and me? Did they not
hear us playing when they walked in? And then to give us those rhythm sheets. I’m glad you said something, man, because I felt like I was going to lose it.”

“Yeah,” I say. “Paige was sounding a bit like a kindergarten teacher in there.

“Yeah,” Jordan says. “They all sound like that.”

Learned Musicians

Jordan and I sit in the sitting room with our guitar and bass resting in our laps respectively. We hear the front door open and the screen door slam and both of us look to see who is entering the house. Paige and Eric both stand in the entry way laden with instruments. Paige has a guitar case and a duffle bag, and Eric, too, holds a duffel bag, as well as a black, soft-sided case that I do not recognize from our previous interaction.

“Hey Guys,” Paige and Eric say, almost in unison.

“Hey,” I say. Jordan does not verbally acknowledge their presence. Instead, he looks at them, nods, and offers a brief smile before turning his attention towards the floor and absent-mindedly strums out chords. I turn my attention from Jordan to Eric.

“What do you got there?” I say looking at this black case.

“This is my trumpet,” he says.

“Really?” I say. “I’ve never jammed with a trumpet before. Well, that is if you do not count high school band.” I chuckle and ask, “Will you be playing that today?”

“I think so,” he says with a smile.

Paige and Eric drop their loads on the sitting room floor and begin removing percussion instruments from the duffel bags.

“Need help?” I ask watching them extract a tambourine, wood blocks, maracas, and sleigh bells.
“Nah, we’ve got it,” Eric says smiling.

As Paige and Eric unpack their instruments, two middle-aged men enter the room. One has dark hair and skin and the other is tall with a neatly trimmed goatee flecked with grey hair.

“Oh, it looks like our attendance has jumped from last week,” Paige says excitedly. “Who are these new faces? We know Jordan and Steve,” she declares looking at us before shifting her attention to the newcomers. “My name is Paige, and this is Eric,” she says pointing first at herself and then gesturing over to Eric, who looks towards the two members and smiles before turning back to unpacking his bags.

“I’m Adam,” says the member with dark hair taking a seat by the phone.

“And I’m Derrick,” says the goateed man as he takes a seat at the piano.

“Is this the music therapy session we’ve been hearing about?” Adam asks.

“Yeah it is,” she says in a welcoming tone extending her hand to Adam.

“Nice to meet you,” Adam responds.

Derrick responds by playing some chords on the piano with an ease that suggests a certain familiarity with the instrument.

“Well, Adam,” Paige says chuckling. Her eyes reveal noticeable surprise upon hearing Derrick’s confident approach to the piano. “It seems Derrick has already selected his instrument, but Adam, we have a variety of instruments for you to play. Feel free to use whatever one catches your fancy,” she says looking at the floor. In addition to the instruments above, there are now a couple djembe-like drums, a cabasa (beads wrapped around a tin cylinder that one shakes to make sound) and clackers (an instrument that looks like a wooden accordion and makes an onomatopoeic “clacking” sound). Eric folds
the duffel bags, places them out of the way, and then bends over to unzip his trumpet case.

“Also, Eric has brought his trumpet to play along with us today as well,” Paige says. “But, I don’t think that you guys will wanna use that. We don’t wanna be swapping spit here,” she finishes with a laugh.

Adam and I smile in response to Paige’s joke. Derrick’s attention remains focused on the piano as he continues to meander around the keys in a progression that sounds simultaneously familiar and foreign. Jordan's gaze is focused on the floor in front of him, as he strums soft chords absent-mindedly.

Eric extracts a silver trumpet that shines brilliantly in the light filtering through the windows overlooking North Congress. He brings the mouthpiece up to his lips and plays a scale. His fingers gracefully press and release the valves. The clear, brass sound fills the room, and I am sure, is audible throughout the house and potentially the back porch. The sound excites me. Everyone’s attention in the room is now focused on Eric.

“Beautiful,” I say with a smile and begin to play a twelve-bar blues riff in A-major. Jordan looks at my fingers halfway through the progression and begins to play along with me. I notice Derrick and Eric watching my fingers intently. “I’m playing in A-major,” I respond to their unspoken inquiry. Derrick turns his attention to the piano and Eric, again, brings the trumpet to his lips.

Derrick’s contributions from the piano add a contour to Jordan’s and my sound not present during GP Jams. His delicate strikes of the keys feel like sandpipers walking through the waves of Jordan’s chords. Adam watches us play and bends over to grab one of the drums provided by Paige and Eric. He begins pounding out the quarter note
heartbeat of the song and presencing the living center of our relation (Buber, 1958). Eric listens to us before layering in a trumpet solo over the twelve-bar blues riff, while Derrick begins striking chords in unison with Jordan and I. The trumpet sounds forcefully through the house in contrast to Jordan’s and my soft tones and Derrick’s delicate playing. Eric looks in Jordan’s direction during his solo—it’s the look I recognize our guitarist give our pianist in the band when he wants to pass off his solo. But, Jordan does not make eye contact. His gaze is withdrawn similar to the previous meeting, however there is more feeling present in his playing than last week. Enough that I am able to I close my eyes and experience the durée. Our sound arouses the image of a smoke-filled blues bar with glasses of scotch and the dull, orange flashes of someone taking a draw of his/her cigarette or cigar. I take a seat here and hold down the groove with my bass.

The piano and trumpet provide elements that shape the sound of Jordan’s guitar and my bass differently than what I experience during GP Jams. Different instruments create different sounds, and the distinct sound of an instrument is referred to as timbre (Levitin, 2006). It is through timbre that we are able to discern the flute from the trumpet, distinguish guitars from one another as a result of material differences in their construction, as well as to help identify the voices of those we speak to in our daily lives as friends, family, or strangers.

Taking the idea of timbre within the context of dialogue, we may perceive the musical meeting as an event exhibiting what Bakhtin (1973) would describe as polyphony, a “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness.” Like the novel (a source, in part, of Bakhtinian thought), songs may be comprised of multiple instruments/voices simultaneously sounding individual phrases each with an
ideologically situated voice. Listening solely to a particular instrument, one may get the feel for specific aspects of the song such as its rhythmic qualities, such as those as voiced by Paul and me on drums and bass, or its harmonic structure, as voiced by Derrick and Eric on the piano and trumpet. But, as Bakhtin argued, to focus on a single word, voice, or accent in the meeting between self and other is to overlook the consequential ways in which sometimes contradictory ideologically situated persons resolve themselves into a polyphonic unity (p. 37). To focus on any one particular performer is to filter out the integral role played by the other members of the ensemble with regard to arousing the particular states of awareness (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997) that flavors each performer’s individual contribution. But it may seem that individual consciousnesses may seem to merge in the living center of the song and lose their individuality.

Music’s polyphonic qualities shape and reflect an affective and temporal unity that allows those who bear witness to its performance to draw upon their own experiences to provide meaning to the song. When musically presenced, songs unify persons by enshrouding them in an affectively and temporally charged experience that seems to merge the various participants’ consciousnesses. But this unification does not come at the expense of individual voices losing their distinctness. I cannot mimic the trumpet on my bass, and nor may Eric mimic my bass on his trumpet (the same goes for Paul’s drum and Derrick’s piano). Each of our sounds adds a flavor to the ensemble that is both unique and must be addressed by those bearing witness to our performance. In other words, music uniquely demonstrates polyphony by sounding individual perspectives in such a fashion that they may not be easily glossed over even as they are enfolded into an encompassing unity. And to clarify, I would be naïve to insinuate that music presences
the “mechanism” that is polyphony; after all, music, though it means in our bodies, is still an abstraction of experience much like linguistic means of relating (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997). But what music offers us is a different perspective on the ways in which sometimes contradictory experiences come together meaningfully by starting with the affective and temporal unification of persons in song.

The five of us play for what feels like several minutes before my attention returns to the house. Paige looks around at us in a manner that reflects both entertainment and a desire to formally start the session. In her hands is a small stack of papers. Eric, catching her gaze, moves his trumpet away from his lips. The rest of us bring our playing to a close.


“Really?” I say looking at him with a puzzled look. “Never?”

“No,” he says. “When I play with people, we usually have sheet music. I’m not in many situations where I just pick up an instrument and play it.”

“That’s too bad,” I say genuinely.

One thing I appreciate about my informal approach to playing bass is that I did not develop a dependence upon sheet music to play my instrument. Only a handful of times did I use sheet music for bass guitar, and most of those were during a short stint with my high school jazz band. Once I did audition to play bass at my university. At that time a professor gave me some sheet music and a week to practice; my inability to read the music became apparent rather quickly. But what is significant with regard to making music with others is that there is not a unitary understanding of music shared by all. Music is subject to ideological forces that shape meaning according to who invokes the
term. This case in particular shows what Bakhtin (1981) would refer to as a professional stratification within music that separates those who are musically literate from those who have a lay understanding.

“Well, shall we get started?” Paige says corralling us in from our blues jam.

:::SLAM:::

The bunch of us turn our attention to the back of the house and watch Paul cruise through the dining room.

“Hey guys,” he says.

“Hey Paul,” Adam, Derrick, and I respond almost in unison.

“What are we playing today?” he asks.

“Well,” Paige says. “We are just about to get started.”

Paul takes a seat near Adam and looks at Paige expectantly.

“What we brought today is 'Let it Be' by The Beatles,” Eric says.

“You all know who The Beatles are right?” Paige asks.

“I would feel bad for the person who didn’t know The Beatles,” says Derrick from the piano. His comment elicits a laugh from the circle.

“That’s fair,” Paige says lightheartedly with a chuckle of her own. “I’m going to pass around the lyrics and the chords for the song so we can sing and play along.” She hands half the stack to Eric who places his trumpet in the case before accepting them. Together they distribute one sheet to everyone in the group.

“What we are going to do is perform ‘Let it Be,’” she says handing sheets to Jordan and me. “Feel free to grab one of the percussion instruments on the floor. It
appears we have Jordan on guitar, Steve on bass, and Derrick on piano.” When she reaches Adam, she asks, “Are you fine with the drum, Adam?”

“Yeah,” he says nodding and tapping the head of the drum with his fingers.

“What are you going to play, Paul?” she asks. “Did you want to play the cabasa?” She picks up the wooden cylinder with the beads by the attached handle, rests the beads in one hand, and with her free hands, she twists the handle causing the beads to rub against the tin surface not unlike a washer board.

“Yeah,” Paul says taking the cabasa from her and playing it as she had demonstrated.

“Eric,” Paige says. “Did you want to sing with me?”

“Yeah,” Eric replies taking Paige’s unused sheets and adding them to his stack. He places the papers on the ground near his trumpet case but keeps one for himself. Meanwhile, Paige retrieves her guitar from the case, takes a seat in the circle, and looks at the sheet of paper.

“Alright,” Paige says. “I’m going to play the chords of the song so we get a feel for it. Then you can jump on in. Before I start, do any of you have any questions about your chords?” She looks at Derrick, then Jordan, and then myself. None of us expresses the need for clarification. “Well,” she says. “I’m going to start.”

She plays the C-major chord that starts off the song, then moves down to the G, then up to the A-minor, and then down to the F. She then comes back round to the C, returns to the G, but this time goes down to the F. Finally, she strums the iconic walk down from E, to D-minor before returning again to the C: dah-duh-duh-dah.
“That’s the verse,” Paige says when she finishes. “The chorus is a little bit different.”

She strums an A-minor chord, then goes down to the G, then down to the F, then up to a C. Instead of returning to the A-minor, Paige starts the phrase with G, then goes up to the C, before going down to the F, and then repeats the iconic walk back down to the C.

“That’s all the song is,” she says. “Do you think you can do this?” she asks us collectively.

We nod.

“And everyone is encouraged to sing along,” She says. “I’m going to count off from four, and we’ll play through the chords once before we sing. You ready to keep the beat Adam?” she asks looking at him.

Adam nods.

Seeing this, Paige proceeds into the song, “One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . .”

Paige, Jordan, Derrick, and I hit the opening C almost in unison and the intersection of our sounds, again, creates a full resonance not experienced during GP Jams. Paige’s guitar adds a level of volume to both Jordan and I, and Derrick’s piano chords provide a brighter dynamic to our sound altogether. Adam softly hits out a drum beat that is both present and careful not to overwhelm the instruments. Paul begins turning the cabasa in his hand creating the washboard-like sound Paige had made earlier. His sounds are a touch on the loud side in relation to the rest of us and slightly out of rhythm. Paul, Eric, Paige, and Derrick begin singing as we enter the verse.
“When I find myself in times of trouble / Mother Mary comes to me / Speaking words of wisdom / Let it Be”

Their voices in unison embody two distinct *intonations* that sound more than their notes. Voloshinov (1973), a contemporary of Bakhtin, described *intonation:* as:

*Lying] on the border of the verbal and the nonverbal, the said and the unsaid.* In intonation, discourse comes directly into contact with life. And it is in intonation above all that the speaker comes into contact with the listener or listeners – intonation is social par excellence. It is especially sensitive to all the vibrations in the social atmosphere surrounding the speaker. (p.102, original emphasis)

Or more directly put by Bakhtin (1986), “One means of expressing the speaker’s emotionally evaluative attitude toward the subject of his speech is expressive intonation, which resounds clearly in oral speech” (p.85). But taken together, these two thoughts provide a picture of intonation that refers not only to the sounding of a particular note, but sounding an ideological position as that position is expressed in the performance of the song. And each of these positions presences themselves in the polyphony that is song.

Paige and Eric both sit up straight and breathe with their bellies to support their voices, and their mouths are more expressive to sound the lyrics—a manifestation of the professional stratification mentioned earlier. Paul and Derrick, though both singing in tune, lack the polished sound of Paige and Eric. However, they sing with a conviction that makes their voices sound more human than Paige’s and Eric’s voices, in my opinion. I think of this distinction as not unlike using technical vocabulary rather than lay terms with regard to describing every-day life experience (i.e. saying “Look at that dyad” as opposed to “Look at that couple”).

“And in my hour of darkness / She is standing right in front of me / Speaking words of wisdom / Let it Be.”

When we get to the chorus, I feel the urge to sing along, and Adam does as well.

“Let it be / Let it be / Let it be / Let it be / Whisper words of wisdom / Let it be”

Jordan, meanwhile, strums his guitar in a disinterested manner while staring at the floor. It is of little surprise to me that he does not join in the singing. Adam and I silence our voices as Paul, Eric, Paige, and Derrick continue on with the second verse.

“And when the broken-hearted ::RING:::: people.”

We all look at the phone on the end table near Adam but do not stop playing. Jordan immediately sets his guitar down and gets up to answer it. “The Gathering Place,” he says and takes a seat in the dining room.

“Living in the world agree / There will be an answer, let it be / But though they may be parted / there is still a chance that they may see / There will be an answer / Let it be.”

Again, Adam and I join in with the chorus.

“Let it be / Let it be / Let it be / There will be an answer / Let it be.”

Paige’s voice has increased slightly in volume since the beginning of the song, and her learned style of singing becomes more accentuated. Her voice slightly overpowers ours through the chorus.

“And when the night is cloudy / There is still a light that shines on me / Shine on till tomorrow / Let it be / I wake up to the sound of music / Mother Mary comes to me / Speaking words of wisdom / Let it be.”
Adam and I add our voices to the chorus as we sing through one final time. Paige does not overpower us during this run through the chorus, though her voice is still present. Those of us playing stringed instruments strum/strike the final chord and let it ring out as we sing the last “Let it be.” When the chord falls silent, Paige begins speaking.

“That was very good,” she says in an enthusiastic and encouraging tone.

I look over and notice that Jordan’s seat is still empty, and the phone is still off the hook. “Well, did you tell him to stop?” I hear him utter from in the dining room and look back and see him slouched in a chair facing away from the music therapy group. “If you don’t tell him to stop, he’s not going to stop.” I turn my attention back to the music therapy group.

“You know,” Adam says looking around at us. “Paul McCartney is really dead.”

All of us in the circle focus our attention on Adam.

“He died in the sixties in a car accident,” he continues in a confident voice. “And the British government was afraid that if word got out about Paul’s death that women all over the country, and perhaps the world, would commit suicide. They loved him that much.” Adam nods knowingly and seriously as he continues, “Also, what would the British government do without all that tax revenue those boys were bringing in? So they found a replacement, William Sheers Campbell, through a Paul McCartney lookalike contest.”

Nobody speaks when he finishes.

---

28This information should not be confused with the delusions associated with schizophrenia (Walker, Mittal, Tessner, & Trotman, 2008). The theory that Paul McCartney is dead is alive and well in the conspiracy community (see Gilbert, 2010), and not a personal fantasy unique to this particular individual.
“Yeah,” Paige says in response to Adam’s comment. There is a brief silence as if she is pondering what to say as a follow-up. “Well,” she says, “Does anyone know who Mary is in the song?” Adam looks at the ground, and then over at me. “They never listen, man,” he says as an aside though not sounding dispirited. I offer him a smile in return.

“It’s Paul’s mom,” Derrick and Paul say almost simultaneously.

“Yeah,” Paige says. “Many people think he’s talking about the Virgin Mary, but it’s Paul’s mom. I think it was a neat fact and wanted to share.” However, no one acknowledges it.

The Term Activity

“So,” Paige says in a tone suggesting we are moving away from our performance of “Let it Be,” “Eric and I think that it would be a neat idea to have some sort of term project that we do together before he and I leave. And we were thinking that it might be fun to put on a concert at The Gathering Place.”

There are nods of approval from around the circle. I too nod along with them.

Derrick chimes in, “I think a concert would be fun.”

“Excellent,” Paige says. “Which means we should start figuring out what we want to play. Eric and I brought some songs to consider.” She bends over to retrieve a sack next to her chair from which she pulls a manila folder with sheets of paper. “We have Joe Cocker’s version of ‘With a Little Help from my Friends’ and Bob Marley’s ‘Three Little Birds.’”

“Do you guys like Bob Marley?” Eric asks.

“Yah, mon,” Derrick and Adam say almost simultaneously.

“We could do ‘Free Bird,’” Paul suggests.
“Yeah?” Paige asks. “Would you be willing to sing on that song, Paul?”

“Yeah,” he says.

“Well, we’ll keep it as a possibility,” she says with a smile. Then turns to the rest of us. “So, did you guys want to run through these songs?”

“Sure,” Derrick says.

“Alright,” Paige replies as she begins to hand out both pieces to each of the members in the circle. “But be sure to be thinking about songs that you may or may not want to play, so we can really put on a show.” We spend the rest of the session learning the songs.

Driving

“You disappeared for a while there,” I say to Jordan playfully as we drive towards his place in Chauncy.

“Yeah, man,” he says groggily. “My girlfriend called to say that her son was acting up. It was no big deal though. I think we are going stir crazy, man. Without a car, we don’t get out very much. I’m getting to a point where I don’t mind going to music therapy, because at least it gets me out of the house.” He chuckles when he ends the last sentence.

“Fair enough,” I say. “But, you know man, it might be fun to put on a show and get some live experience under the belt.”

“Yeah,” he says, but it doesn’t sound like he means it. “Hey man,” Jordan says to me. “So, why did you come to The GP, other than your project or whatever?”

I sit in silence for a moment contemplating the question. “Well,” I start. “I’ve had some experiences in life where my mental health has been compromised. I’ve got a bit of
a sordid past. My father died when I was young, and I became a rather reserved individual. I used to drink a lot and smoke more weed than was probably healthy later in life to cover up that pain.”

I catch Jordan nodding along with this statement.

“In 2004, I started seeing a psychiatrist who prescribed me Paxil® for what I either perceived within me as feelings of anxiety or a psychosomatic response to a television commercial I saw for the medication. Then one night several years ago, under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, and Paxil®, I ended up starting an empty bar on fire in what a counselor later would tell me was a ‘drug induced psychosis.’”

“Shit,” Jordan replies. His tone is no longer withdrawn but has acquired a spark of interest. “No you didn’t,” he finishes in a tone that suggesting I should cut the charade. “None of this happened.”

“Yeah, man,” I say in a serious tone. Then I look over at him briefly before returning my eyes back to the road. “This is for real.”

“I never would’ve guessed,” he said. “Man, you should probably be in prison, right?”

“Yeah,” I say. “Instead, I got a bunch of probation and a rather large amount of restitution to pay.”


A silence falls upon the car that I decide not to disturb.

“But to get to your question, I started seeing a counselor after that and found the experience rather beneficial. During our meetings, we talked about my feelings regarding the fire and my fear of what the criminal conviction might hold for my future. And in
these talks he helped me realize the ups and down that go along with feeling human. So, after that event, I have come to develop a chip on shoulder regarding psychiatry and was intrigued when I heard about The GP’s social approach to living with mental illness.”

“Yeah,” he says. “Well it ain’t perfect, man. There are some people there who don’t want to work and fake it. Sometimes it seems people would rather go there and feel sorry for themselves instead of trying to go out and make their lives better.”

“Really,” I say.

“Yeah, man,” he says. “Just pay attention. You’ll see. I’m not such a fan of the place myself at times. As you can see, there are a lot of older men up there, and I don’t have many people to talk to. But it sure beats ABH [Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare]. There they just give us medication and tell us to watch T.V. Once a week we see a counselor or attend group, but other than that, it’s a lot of nothing. At least at The GP, we can come and go as we please.”

I pull into Jordan’s driveway. He steps out of the car and grabs the guitar from the backseat.

“Anyway, take care, man,” Jordan says and closes both doors. I back out and drive back to campus.

Music Talk

There is a bunch of people present for today’s session of music therapy: Adam, Derrick, Paul, Jordan, Wicked Wiccan, and Tom (the member who likes Tom Petty who I met on the back porch). We have finished rehearsing “With a Little Help From My Friends” and “3 Little Birds” for our upcoming concert, as well as “Free Bird” and “Play that Funky Music.”
“So, why do you guys listen to music?” Paige asks looking around the circle.

There is an extended pause after her question, as we all look at each other to avoid her eye contact and wait for someone else to speak.

Wicked Wiccan chimes in, “Well, I’m bi-polar.” We all focus our attention on him. He sounds calmer than I remember from our first interaction. “The music I listen to depends on my mood. If I want to calm down from my mania, I'll listen to something quieter. If I want to intensify my mania, I'll turn on some like punk or heavy metal or something.” He stops and a silence descends upon the group.

Paige probes his response, “So music affects how you feel?

“Yeah,” Wicked Wiccan responds. “I think that's the electrical, like the shock or whatever you call it, the vibe in your body that's gets turned on when you hear like a -- like if you hear a fire truck and its horn, you're like, it's like an emergency; but you hear someone like sing or something, depends how they're singing that, like if it's quiet, like a soft sound or a hard sound, it will change your vibe, you know, like it will make -- you know, slower will make your vibes go slower and faster will make your vibes go faster.”

“What would you do if there was no music?” Paige asks.

“Well,” Wicked Wiccan starts. “If it was just -- if it was -- if there was no TV music, no radio music, no iPod music I'd be totally shut down.”

Chuckles circulate around the circle along with a few knowing nods.

Tom bursts into the conversation, “God, shudder the thought. A world without music, that would be -- that would be a pretty dead world, man. It would be a pretty dead world. I hope it never happens.”

The laughter increase after hearing this sentiment from Tom.
“Yeah,” Paige agrees with a chuckle of her own. “So, what role does music play in your life, Tom?” she asks looking at him.

He sits for a short while looking up at the ceiling before he responds, “To vent, write down feelings, ideas, thoughts, ideas on paper, try to make a song out of it that might be something other people would like to listen to.” He pauses for second. “So it's just, for me, more effective because I don't -- I have a high school education, that's all I have. I don't know a lot of words . . . I just don't. I don't know a lot of words. I don't -- I just don't have the vocabulary that a college student has, for example . . . but even if I can't play it on guitar, I can put a recording on to communicate a feeling.” He pauses for a second before asking, “Do you see what I mean?”

There are nods around the circle, and Paige says, “Yeah. I know what you mean. There is something about music that just gets inside you.” Her hand rests atop her chest as she says these words. Again, Shepherd and Wicke (1997) noted music’s characteristic ability to “circumvent the world of objects” allowing it unique access to the unconscious (p. 63). There is a brief silence after Paige’s comment, before Adam enters into the discussion.

“The universe is made of vibrations,” he says in a warm tone. “That’s all we are is vibrations. The sun vibrates, the Earth vibrates; we vibrate. And what is music but vibrations.”

Adam’s thoughts on vibrations as a central quality of the universe have a rich history and empirical support. Greek philosopher Pythagoras believed that the universe was constantly vibrating and emitting a tremendous noise that we learn to tune out as infants (see Richards, 2009). But when Pythagoras advanced this hypothesis, it was
without the knowledge humans currently possess about the universe in which we live.

The National Aeronautic and Space Administration (2003) recorded that a black hole in the Perseus cluster emits a $B_5^b$ 57 octaves below middle-C. (Middle-C being a significant point of reference for literate musicians that links the bass and treble clefs). We are unable to perceive vibrations as low as those emitted by the black hole, but it lends significance to Pythagoras’s ancient musings.

“You know,” Adam continues. “There will be times at home when I pick up a guitar and strum an A chord. And after awhile, I start to turn in circles almost as if the music is carrying me.” He pauses, “And did you know that you can heal yourself through vibrations. There are these frequencies that are referred to as the Solfeggio frequencies that have the power to realign our cells and bodies and bring us to a higher state of awareness. The Catholic Church has them locked away in the Vatican. Wouldn’t want those getting out, because then there’d be no need for health care, and the powers [read: health care industry] wouldn’t like that.”

There are nods around the circle as Adam shares his thoughts. This time his words seem well received by the circle. In fact, music’s documented effects on the body provide legitimacy to Adam’s claims of its restorative capacity. For instance, music stimulates the whole brain, not just a localized region as in the case of speech, and this is why people who have lost their ability to speak as a result of a stroke are able to share thoughts through song (Levitin, 2006; Sacks, 2008). Stuckey and Nobel (2010) surveyed the

29 Red Ice Creations (2006) posted an article that describes the physiological and spiritual influence that these solfeggio frequencies have upon the body. Scott Mowry (2009) alludes to the conspiracy that the Catholics have hidden the frequencies because of their healing powers.
impact of creative activities on patient healing processes and noted music’s capacity to reduce stress, lower one’s heart rate, and promote experiences of well-being.

“Yeah,” Brenda interjects from outside the circle in a tone suggesting agreement with Adam. The attention of everyone in the circle turns towards her. “I worked with a young, autistic boy who wasn’t speaking. I believe he was in the third grade. When I started working with him, all he would do was hum, but I had no problem doing vocal improv, so we would hum back and forth to each other. So we spent several sessions humming to each other, and then his mother told me once that he loved the ABC song, so we spent a session doing that. When we would hum the song, I noticed his mouth would start to move, as if he wanted to speak. So I adapted the song so all the letters would sound like vowels. After that session, I heard a week later that he had started to speak.”

Smiles break across the faces of several persons in our circle, myself included, and a silence descends upon the circle. I see Paige look down at her watch.

“Well, guys,” Paige says. “It’s about time that we need to start packing up. But before we go, do you have any suggestions for songs that we should bring in the future that you might like to play?”


“Yeah,” Jordan says. “Pete does like Dream Theater.”

“Whose Pete?” Paige asks.

“Oh, you’ll be meeting him,” Tom says in a reassuring voice. “But anyway, Pete has been trying to get me into Dream Theater, and that's another musicians' band. I'm not a Dream Theater fan. That's just, it's like listening to a metronome. That's what Dream
Theater reminds me of, listening to a metronome. Because there's, there's very little interpretation going on. It's just like chick, chick, chick, chick, chick. And it's just like their live versions are the exact same as the studio version, and there is no interpretation whatsoever on their live music from their studio music.”

Dream Theater is a metal band that plays complicated rhythms with precise timing. They feel almost as if they are playing for a metronome as opposed to negotiating the time through their interactions with each other. What Tom speaks to when he invokes the term “musician’s band,” such as Dream Theater, is a group of players who emphasize the technical aspects of playing a song, such as playing complicated time signatures in perfect time. The absence of the unity of answerability (Bakhtin, 1981) comes to mind when I think of Dream Theater, or more to the point, Kenneth Burke’s (1961) statement, “rotten with perfection.” I can relate with Tom’s understanding of “musician’s bands” in that a significant reason I like bands such as the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Primus is because their live shows provide a different experience of their music. As a band, they elaborate upon their songs with extended solos and rhythmic variations not performed on their albums.

“Well, Tom,” Paige starts. “We’ll see what we can find.”

Presencing the Jam

Both prior to and as you read this vignette, I encourage the reader to listen to Track 2 on the enclosed CD. While listening to the song, keep in mind that this track was not scripted but performed once, and only once—an expression of the once-occurrence of being with others (Bakhtin, 1991).
Today, we have a full house at music therapy. Derrick sits at the piano with his fingers splayed on the keys and meandering through scales. A young man with dirty blonde hair who I do not recognize stands in front of a set of bells (a series of metal bars arranged like piano keys but played with a rubber mallet not unlike a xylophone). Paul sits next to him holding maracas. Adam sits next to a bearded man who I do not recognize, and each of them has djembes. Paige has her guitar, while Eric is in the center of the room operating a laptop computer. Jordan and I sit together with our guitar and bass respectively.

“Alright, guys,” Paige says bringing us in. “We have two new members to our group. This is Billy,” she says gesturing the man behind the bells. “And here we have Pete,” she says.

“Hey, Pete,” say Adam and Jordan almost simultaneously in a display that suggests they already knew him.

“Nice to meet you guys,” Pete says extending the joke.

Billy remains silent during this interaction.

“So, guys,” Paige says with a smile on her face looking around the circle. “We recently found out that Eric’s computer has a microphone and thought that it might be fun to record a jam that we can listen to later. Would this be something you all are interested in?”

Nods go around the circle, and Paige’s smile widens.

“Good,” she says. “Now, I think we should do one of our jams. Jordan, do you remember that chord progression you were playing last week before we left?” she asks looking over at him. “I really like it and think we should do something with it.”
Jordan snaps up as if he has been caught by surprise. “Yeah,” he says meekly. “I think it was . . .” He experiments with chord progression until he finds the one to which Paige refers. Before responding, “E-minor, C, and then A-minor.” He plays through each of the chords and the haunting quality of our jam last week floods my mind. I play along with Jordan as he runs through the chords again. Derrick’s fingers do a little dance on the keys along with Jordan and I.

“Yeah,” Paige says nodding. “That sounds about right. Do you all remember that progression from last time?” she asks looking at Billy, Pete, and Adam, who all nod in response.

“Excellent,” Paige says, then asks, “Are we about ready to go, Eric?”

“Yeah,” he replies. “I’m all set.”

“Now,” Paige continues. “When Eric hits record, let’s be quiet, then I’ll nod at Jordan, who will start with the progression.”

Her instructions are met with nods.

“Alright, Eric,” Paige starts. “We’re ready.”

Eric clicks a button on the computer and nods at Paige. After a few brief seconds of silence, Paige looks at Jordan and nods.

Jordan begins strumming out the progression in the key of E-minor. Upon completing the phrase, Paige and I join in with our instruments providing both depth and volume to his sound. Pete and Adam enter on the drums hitting a mixture of quarter and eighth note beats. Paul, meanwhile, shakes his maracas more or less in time with the rest of us that adds a tasteful embellishment to the percussion. Billy and Derrick begin to weave in melodious phrases on the bells and piano that accentuate the minor contours of
the sound creating a tremulous, uncertain feel. Their phrases inspire me to incorporate octaves into my bass line to fatten our sounds and improvise transitions by playing notes accentuating the minor contour of the progression. I close my eyes and begin wavering in and out of the durée. However, Pete and Adam, who have yet to agree upon a beat to which they both can commit, prevent me from entering fully into the temporal dimension of the music. Their strikes lack a solid precision, and at points, sound as if they are playing two different beats. Meanwhile, for the most part each of us holds the song together, and I still feel as if this progression is taking us somewhere.

Paul begins to cough, causing me to open my eyes and become conscious of the corporeal presence of the other performers. I look at Paul and watch him continue to shake one maraca as he coughs into the back of his other hand. Fortunately this cough does not develop into one of his spells that sometimes take a long time to quell, as occasionally happens during GP Jams. I glance briefly at Pete and Adam, who are looking at each other and still negotiating a beat. Billy and Derrick have their attention focused on the bells and piano respectively. Paige is playing her guitar and looking at the computer. Jordan continues to play, and I am able to hear his strums over Paige’s strums, which suggests that he may enjoy playing this progression (after all, he did share it briefly with us last week). I close my eyes, feel the song, and continue playing my bass.

Suddenly there is a subtle feeling emerging in the song that I cannot quite explain. The song feels as if it is beginning to pull together. Pete and Adam stopped their negotiations over a beat and have settled into a driving march that pulls my bass along with it. I get the feeling that if I stopped playing now, the beat established by Pete and Adam would pick me up and move my fingers for me. Paige, Jordan, and I strum our
instrument perfectly in time, and I feel myself falling completely into the durée. Billy’s bells continue to sound their mysterious aura. Derrick falls silent on the piano for a few measures, but in a run of notes, he returns, dancing his notes atop the mysterious progression Billy sustains on the bells.

This is a significant moment. The only shared knowledge of this song we are playing is that the chord progression is E-minor, C, and A-minor. The phrases Billy and Derrick play on their instruments and the beats Pete and Adam pound are unique to this playing of the song and created in this meeting. Dialogically, such moments that presence the connected nature of human experience in the meeting between self and other are referred to as “peak experiences” (see Goodall & Kellet, 2004). Eric Eisenberg (1990) provided a partly musical take on the “peak” experience through the idea of “jamming,” or experiences of “fluid behavior coordination” that create moments of transcendence when the group feels as one. Of value in Eisenberg’s description of “jamming” useful for my understanding of the dialogic potentials of music is that it is an experience that is possible to achieve within non-disclosive relationships. Participants in the experience only need a rudimentary knowledge of the others involved to enter into such a relation. Except for Jordan—with whom I have come to develop a relationship during our rides to and from The GP—the others in the circle are a mystery to me beyond the musical relationship we have established. Moreover, this is the first time I have jammed with both Billy and Pete. But despite this mystery, we are still able to enter into a polyphonic relation, the “living center” of song.

Eventually, the drumbeat loses its urgency and precision. The moment when the relation between all of us is presenced disappears as quickly as it arrives. As Buber
(1958) exclaimed, “How delicate are the appearances of the Thou!” (p. 98). We would do well to remember music’s ephemeral quality with respect to our perception. Unlike those aesthetic expressions that culminate in tangible objects like painting or sculpture, music exists in our perception only so long as it is being played.

Adam and Pete go back to negotiating a beat between the two of them. Our sound as a whole falls as if it has lost the unity established when Pete and Adam brought our progression to a culmination with their deliberate and driving beat. Derrick begins to meander around on higher notes with the feel insinuating this song is coming to a close. I play a run up a scale and let my bass ring out. Paige and Jordan slow the tempo of the song. They strike the final chord and let it reverberate around the room. Then Jordan plays strums an E and octave above Paige that punctuates the end of the song.

Silence follows the end of the progression. Eric reaches up to the laptop, presses a button, then looks at us and says, “That’s it.” There is a collective release when given the clear signal that the recording of this once-occurrent collectively shared musical moment fades out and into another less involved kind of co-presence.

Conflict

“Let’s play some CCR [Creedence Clearwater Revival],” Paige says enthusiastically and turns to the rest of the group, “Derrick, you said you had liked them, right?”

“Yeah, I do,” he says.

“Well,” Paige begins. “We hope you like Suzie-Q.”

“That’s a good one,” he says.
“Well, good,” she says. “Now, the song is mostly in E, but there are some weird changes at the end of the verses that we should be mindful of.”

Paige begins playing the E that undergirds most of the song. “Alright, then we switch to A, and then C, and then B, and then E.” She plays each of the chords in turn. “And it will probably take us a bit to get the lyrics lined up. But I think we should take a crack at it.”

Paige starts strumming the E-chord, then I join in with her on my bass. Jordan joins in, softly, with his guitar. Then Derrick comes in with the piano. Adam and Paul come in with the drums, and Billy begins hitting claves together creating a high pitch clicking sound resembling a metronome. Adam and Paul are slightly out of sync with one another making the rhythm feel wobbly. When we get to the first verse, Billy, Paul, Eric, Paige, Derrick, and Adam begin singing.

“Oh Susie Q / Oh Susie Q / Oh Susie Q / Baby I love you / Susie Q.”

The lyrics fall out of sync with the chord changes. We hold on the E at the completion of the verse. Paige looks around at us.

“Have we all found our spots,” she says without creating a break in her playing.

There are nods throughout the circle as everyone continues to play the song.

“Alright,” she says. “Let’s do the second verse.” And the same voices begin singing.

“I like the way you walk / I like the way you talk / I like the way you walk / I like the way you talk / Susie Q.”

This time, the lyrics and the chord changes match-up rather closely to how I know them performed on the album. At the completion of the second verse, Paige looks around
and says without breaking her strumming, “There we go.” There is a smile on her face as she looks over at Adam, “You’re singing quite well.”

Without breaking his playing, Derrick looks over at Paige as she expresses this sentiment about Adam.

“Thanks,” Adam replies without breaking his drumming.

“No problem,” she replies then looks around at the rest of the circle. “Let’s continue,” she says and begins singing the third verse.

“Say that you’ll be true / Say that you’ll be true / Say that you’ll be true / And never leave me blue / Susie Q.”

Adam’s voice sounds a little louder during this verse than in previous ones. Paige looks over at him while he sings, and a smile cracks on her face. “And last verse!” she says.

“Say that you’ll be mine / Say that you’ll be mine / Say that you’ll be mine / Baby, all the time / Susie Q”

At the completion of the verse, we bring the song to a close by playing an E-chord and letting the sound ring out to silence.

“Well!” Paige says. “I think we may have another song to add to our concert.” Nods go around the circle.

“Adam,” Paige says. “Do you think you would be willing to sing that song?” Again, Derrick turns his attention from the piano to Paige and Adam.

“Sure,” Adam says looking at Paige. Neither of them notices Derrick looking at them.

“Good,” she says.
Derrick nonchalantly stands up from the piano and walks toward the back door. A few pairs of eyes follow him out of the room. With members such as Paul constantly entering and leaving for cigarettes, Derrick’s exit does not draw sustained attention from the circle.

More Than a Feeling

Derrick, who has been a regular member through most of the term, is conspicuously absent from today’s music therapy session, and Paige has assumed his former position behind the piano. There is a full house for today’s session with Tom, Pete, Adam, Wicked Wiccan, Billy, Eric and Paige, as well as a middle-aged man who I do not recognize. Brenda watches from the staircase just outside the circle.

“So,” I say to Paige desiring to strike up a small conversation before the beginning of the session, “You know how to play the piano as well as guitar, huh?” I am not really surprised that she would know how to play both.

“Yeah,” she says directing her attention to me. “Music therapists should have a thorough knowledge of piano as well as guitar. They are great accompaniment instruments if people want to sing, and someone can play just about any song on them. Guitars tend to be favored though, because they are more portable than a piano, of course.” She chuckles at the completion of her statement. “Could you imagine hauling this thing around all day?” she asks, and we share a laugh as she puts on a display of straining to pick up the piano.

When our chuckles subside, she turns to the group. “Hey guys! Today, we’ve got Boston’s ‘More Than a Feeling’ that we would like to try out. I remember hearing that some folks here are Boston fans.”

Paige leans over to retrieve a stack of papers from her bag, splits it in half, and passes them to her left and right. There is a rather large circle here today. I see Jordan, Paul, Tom, Wicked Wiccan, and Pete. Tom has a guitar in his lap, and Pete has a drum resting in front of him. Jordan has his guitar, and Paul has a drum. Wicked Wiccan sits on and watches. Everyone is either taking a sheet or patiently waiting for the stack to come around. There is also one man I do not recognize. He looks middle-aged and is wearing a tucked-in flannel shirt. The music therapy professor, Brenda, sits on the stairs and watches us from outside the group. When the stack comes by me, I see it is the chords and lyrics for “More Than a Feeling.”

“Derrick is being a bit of a baby,” Adam says quietly leaning towards me as I send the stack of papers on its way around the circle. “When Paige asked me to sing on Suzie Q, he took offense to that, because he wanted to sing. If you ask him, he’ll say it’s a personality difference between he and Paige, but it’s because he wasn’t allowed to sing. Anyway it isn’t a big deal. It is just a big misunderstanding, but I wouldn’t expect to see him at these things anymore.”


“Eh,” Adam says shrugging his shoulders and offering a helpless look. “What can you do?”

“It seems we have a new person,” says Paige over the din sounding from the circle. Adam and I turn our attention to her and see her looking at the newcomer. “I’m Paige;” she says extending her hand.

“Tony,” says the man in a confident voice and extending his hand to clasp hers.
Paige then gestures over to her partner who waves meekly. “And this is Eric.”

“Welcome to the music therapy session,” Paige says and then points to the usual myriad of instruments on the floor. “Please feel free to play whatever suits your fancy.”

Tony continues to sit. “I’ll just listen, if you don’t mind?” he asks.

“Not at all,” Paige replies.

“Alright,” Eric says. “Does everyone who is playing have an instrument?” Nods ripple around the room. Then he continues, “I’m going to take the lead on this one. The intro to the song is D, C, and then G., and when we get to the chorus, that is G, C, E-minor, and then D.” He strums each of the chords in turn. I pluck the appropriate strings on my bass to get the feel of the song in mind.

“Ready to do this, guys?” Eric asks. His question is met with nods from around the circle. Then he begins strumming the intro chords, and I join him. Tom pats his knee along with the beginning of the song. Pete begins pounding out a consistent beat on the djembe he has in front of him. Derrick is sitting at the piano bench sounding chords. Paul has a guitar he strums haphazardly trying to keep up with the rhythm of the song. Jordan too has a guitar, but his disinterested strums are barely audible. Everyone but Jordan, Tony, and myself begin singing.

“I looked out this morning and the sun was gone / Turned on some music to start my day / I lost myself in a familiar song / I closed my eyes and I slipped away.”

Paige’s piano playing differs from Derrick’s relaxed style. Her sound has a metronomic precision that creates a rhythmically rigid feel, a professional stratification (Bakhtin, 1981), or a particular intonation if you will (Bakhtin, 1986; Voloshinov, 1973) of properly instructed musical expression. And Brenda, Paige, and Eric’s voices betray
their formal technique against the less trained vocal chords of the members. Both the sound of the piano and the voices betrays the professional stratification (Bakhtin, 1981) of music in contrast to the informally taught musicians in the circle.

Eric begins strumming an A-chord on his guitar to build into the chorus, and Pete intensifies his drumbeat to push the song out of the verse. I follow along with both of them by increasing the intensity with which I play my bass. The same voices begin singing the chorus.

“It’s more than a feeling.” (Tom sings the echo in a nasally falsetto, “More than a feeling”). “When I hear that old song they used to play.” (“More than a feeling,” Tom sings). “I begin dreaming.” (“More than a feeling,” Tom sings). “Til I see Marianne walk away / I see my Marianne walkin’ away.”

At the close of the chorus, we return to playing the verse chords.

“So many people have come and gone / Their faces fade as the years go by / Yet I still recall as I wander on / As clear as the sun in the summer sky”

Again Eric hits the A-chord, and then he, Pete, and I begin building our sound into the chorus with Tom singing the background vocals. Instead of going back into the chorus, they repeat, “I See my Marianne walkin’ away.”

Eric then says, “Now we hold the verse chords, while we perform the guitar solo.” He begins playing a solo on his guitar for a couple of measures, but sadly, he does not portray any “guitar face” (Auslander, 2006). When he finishes, he begins strumming the verse chords and looks around the circle. “Whose next?” he asks with a smile.
His eyes fall on Jordan, who shakes his head. Then he turns his attention to me, and I too decline his offer with a shake of my head. “Hey Pete,” Eric says. “Wanna do a drum solo?”

“Sure,” he replies and then begins hitting out a complicated rhythm as the rest of us maintain the rhythm of the song with our instruments. He stops after a couple measures and falls back into the beat.

“Anyone else?” Eric asks. And after hearing no response, he says, “Well, let’s go back to the verse. One, two, three, four.” On four, there is a collective intake of breath from the singers.

“When I'm tired and thinking cold / I hide in my music, forget the day / And dream of a girl I used to know / I closed my eyes and she slipped away / She slipped away”

Eric, again, hits the A-chord, and we build into the chorus, which we repeat several times before we find a G to end on that brings the song to a fitting finish.

When our instruments fall silent, Eric looks around the group and asks, “What do you guys like about that song?”

“What’s not to like about the song,” Tom says. “It’s Boston.”

“Yeah,” Pete says chuckling.

There is a lull after Pete’s chuckle, and Eric begins, “What I like about the song is the line in first verse: ‘Turned on some music to start my day,’ because that is how I start my day.”

There are acknowledging nods throughout the circle.
“Yeah,” Pete says. “When I was younger, I had a tendency to start my day like that, but I always played my music a little on the loud side. I don’t think my neighbors appreciated that.” he finishes with a chuckle. There is another lull in the conversation as Pete’s chuckle fades.

“You know,” Tony says looking across the circle at Brenda, who is again present and sitting outside the circle. “Don’t let anyone tell you that what you do is crap.”

Everyone’s attention falls on Tony.

“I tell people that I go to music therapy, and I am here from time-to-time each term you folks come through. They laugh and ask what’s that? As if it’s nothing. But don’t buy into that. There is some real stuff happening here.”

“Yeah,” Brenda says. There is something about her voice suggesting Tony’s statement is both unanticipated and sought after. “Tell us more,” she probes.

Tony continues, “You know, God gave us tools for our time on this Earth, and music is one of those tools. And, and what we forget is that our soldiers and our public service workers, they are forced to suppress trauma. When our soldiers are forced to go into battle, they are told to ignore their emotions and ignore their fear because that is the only way to survive and move on in those conditions. And when they come back, they are broken. They do not know how to experience those emotions they have suppressed, and the things is those emotions do not go away. They continue to sit in the body. They say there are three instruments that mimic human wailing, and those instruments are the violin, the flute, and the human voice. And there is something about these that when used in such a way, they sound like wailing. But what happens is that those sounds, we feel them, and they get inside us, and they help us draw those emotions out and disrupt that
message that they need to be suppressed. The wailing in particular helps bring out that sadness and that fear that is buried within them”

The air in the room feels heavy with Tony's testimony.

“What happens when those emotions are ignored?” Brenda says leaning into the circle towards Tony. There is a tone in her voice that suggests a genuineness and reminds me of those counselors I have seen and developed a solid rapport. Tony stares back at her looking as if he is about to respond when a voice interjects.

“You snap.”

I look over and see Jordan’s eyes are no longer distant but clear and present. He continues speaking, “It sits in there until you take it out on something or someone. Tony’s right, I was in the army for a while, and that’s what they tell you, to ignore that emotion, suppress it. But it doesn’t go away. It just stays there until it comes out, and then it comes out on the people who are not the cause of it.”

“Yeah,” Tony says looking over at him. “These people are broken. But music can help draw that pain out. The violin, the flute, and the human voice.”

Silence descends upon the group when Tony gets done speaking. Eventually, Pete continues the conversation.

“To speak to Tony’s point, though a little indirectly,” Pete begins, slowly. “I’ve spent some time in treatment for panic and anxiety. Which is a horrible experience and anyone who has gone through it can attest to this. And the thing with panic and anxiety is that you live in fear of the next time that it is going to happen, and so I would use music, among other things, to take my mind off the panic. It provides an escape, a different world that I could go to escape that fear.”
Again, knowing nods circulate around the room followed by the silence of an audience with their attention focused on the unfolding experience.

Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) description of music’s rhetorical capacities to fashion virtual worlds which we may occupy that are different from our daily lived reality again surfaces in my mind. Their understanding of music’s rhetorical capacities is predicated on the belief that music is solely an aural phenomenon. Consider the following in the construction of their argument, “Since music as communication is an oral “performing art . . . perceived by the ear” (Vickers, 1984, p. 17), its rhetorical functions are “entirely perceptible” through the single sense of hearing (Langer, 1953, p. 113)” (p. 403). Paying the testimonies of my fellow players their due with regard to music’s capacity to influence our experiences of ourselves, we would do well to remember there was no mention of lyrics. What was invoked instead were the wailing qualities of the flute, violin, and voice, and the capacity of song to provide an escape from the fear of a panic attack. Though hearing plays a significant role in how persons perceive music, to focus on its aural aspects is to overlook the tactile qualities of sound as it washes over our bodies in waves (literally).

The Day Before the Show

“Well, guys,” Paige says. “I think we should do a dress rehearsal. What are the songs that we are going to perform?”

‘With a Little Help from my Friends,’ and ‘Suzy-Q,’” Adam says.

“‘Play that Funky Music,’ and ‘Free Bird,’” Paul says.

“And ‘Three Little Birds,’” says Eric.
“That’s quite a list,” Paige says. “Ya’ll should be proud of the work you have put into this concert.”

“So, how do you guys feel about performing next week?” Paige asks.

There is a brief silence before Jordan speaks, “I don’t think it’s a good idea.”

Muted exclamations of surprise circle through the music therapy circle.

“What do you mean, Jordan?” Paige asks kindly.

“People will stare at us and judge us,” he says, his voice noticeably withdrawn. “I don’t want to get made fun of.”

Jordan’s concern is not necessarily without warrant. Founding member, Alan Stein said to me during a conversation:

Members looking out for one another, staff people advising members, and then volunteers offering a hand every now and then. And that’s sort of the thing that The Gathering Place has. It’s goal is to avoid the stigma. I’m afraid—I hate to say this, The Gathering Place is sort of a stigma. I don’t like to identify myself as a member because it’s a mental health organization. (personal communication, June 22, 2012).

Speaking to Stein’s experience, there is a story circulating around The GP that I caught wind of while having a cigarette on the back porch one day – the sign hanging from the front porch had disappeared. Some members believe that it was an intoxicated university student who may have taken the sign one night. But there are others who believe that a member removed it in order to limit any outward identifiers that signified the house as something other than a person’s residence in order to dissociate the house from the stigma of mental illness.
“No one’s going to do that Jordan,” I say.

Jordan looks at me with a look that tells me that he is not convinced.

“Yeah, Jordan,” Adam chimes in. “It’ll be alright.”

“I don’t know,” Jordan says staring at the floor and drawing the discussion to close.

The Show

The sun shines warmly overhead against a clear blue sky speckled with tufts of clouds. There is a slight breeze in the air that occasionally rustles the leaves on the trees growing in front of the house. One of the metered spaces in front of the house is free. When I park, Jordan and I get out of the car. He grabs his acoustic and small amp from my back seat, while I take a minute to unload my large speaker and heavy amplifier from the trunk. My acoustic bass does not have the volume to contribute meaningfully to an outdoor performance, so I brought my electric in order to overcome this obstacle. I remove my electric bass from the back seat and sling the case over my shoulder before grabbing my speaker and amp and walk awkwardly across the street and up onto the porch.

I set my bass amp in the corner of the porch alongside the ramp leading to the back of the house. Paige set her keyboards up on the other side of the bay window from me, and Jordan sits next to her in a chair alongside his small guitar amp. Adam digs around for patch cords in the blue bin from the sunroom closet for the public address speaker resting on the railing of the front porch. Billy has his trombone and stands near Eric who has his trumpet. The sunlight that finds its way inside the porch reflects dazzlingly from their horns. Their brass instruments sound loud enough so they do not
require amplification. Paul stands next to me for when we do “Play that Funky Music” together. Extension chords run from the sitting room outlets through the front window for those of us with instruments that require electricity – specifically my bass, Julie’s keyboards, Jordan’s guitar amp, and Adam’s speaker. I grab a power cord from my case and plug into one of the extension chords before removing my bass from its case and patch it into my amplifier. I play a scale to make sure everything is working, and my warm tone sounds from the speaker. Eric looks over at me with a smile.

“Sounds good,” he says.

“Thanks, man,” I reply with a smile.

Brenda and three women I do not recognize stand on the sidewalk in front of the house. One woman with long, sandy blonde hair has a basket in her hands, which she places on the front steps after examining the length of the front porch. She then walks up the steps and enters the house.

The woman with the blonde hair emerges from the house with a plate of cookies and a pitcher of red juice. She places them on porch near the basket she had set down earlier. “I’ve got some treats for you guys,” she says. “And hopefully we can get some passers by to drop in a couple bucks.”

“Thanks, Jillian!” Paul shouts across the porch to her.

“Whose that?” I ask Paul.

“That’s the director,” he replies.

I nod in reply.
Eric begins looking around the front porch. He and Billy appear ready. When he looks at me, I nod to let him know I am ready to play. Then, he looks over at Paige who gives him a thumbs-up. Following Paige, he turns his attention to Jordan.

“You ready, Jordan?” Eric asks to pull his attention away from the floor.

“Yeah,” he says meekly.

“And Adam,” Eric says. “You ready to go?”

“Yes I am,” he says into the microphone that he has just finished hooking up.

Then he sits down and grabs a drum. Pete is not here today to help us out with the percussion section.

“Shall we do this?” Eric says setting down his trumpet and picking up an acoustic guitar. All of us, except Jordan, express our readiness in a flurry of nods and vocal affirmations. “Alright, let’s do “3 Little Birds.” One, two, three, four.”

All together, the guitars, keys, bass, and drum all come in on the opening note and fall into a reggae rhythm. Paige’s piano sounds loud and clear, but Jordan’s strums are not audible. I look over at him and see him slouching over his guitar in such a way as to make it difficult to see him from the sidewalk. His hand strums his guitar lazily, as if he is only pretending to play. However, Eric’s strums are present enough to hide Jordan’s absence. With the first verse, everyone but Jordan and me begin singing. “Don’t worry / about a thing . . . “

The majority of people driving by have their windows rolled down to let in the warm air and sunshine. Every thirty seconds, the stoplights at the intersection would create a build-up of traffic and an audience for our performance before ensuring them safe passage to continue their journey. There is a certain rhythm that develops watching
the cars pileup and release and pile up and release. While waiting, these people watch us from their cars. Some nod their heads along with our songs, a few sing along, some honk their horns, and others give a thumbs-up at us out their windows. And people walking to and from campus also pass by on the sidewalk, though not with the same regularity as the traffic. But like our vehicular audience, some of these passersby nod along or stop and watch for a brief second. One woman walking began a little dance as she walked by. Each of these vocal and visual responses from our pedestrian and vehicular audience to the music are communicative acts of acknowledgement. And of course, there are people both in the vehicles and walking along the sidewalk who do not pay the slightest bit of attention to our performance. But for the most part people acknowledge us.

There are claps and shouts from Jillian, Brenda, and the other women on the sidewalk who I do not recognize when the song draws to a close. I look around at the performers and see smiles and congratulations going around.

“That’s was pretty cool,” I say.

“Yeah,” Paige says.

I look over at Eric who nods to me. I then look at Paul and ask, “Are you ready?”

“Yes,” he replies.

I began playing the opening riff to “Play that Funky Music” and notice our sidewalk audience start dancing

“Heeeeyy Do it, now!” Paul blasts into the microphone. He still has the grit and dirt in his voice that is perfect for the song, as well as his capacity to sing in key. There are more praises from our vehicular audience during this song. Like during our GP Jam
session, Paul is dancing with the groove on the front porch as he sings the song. He looks as if he would make a decent front man for a local band.

After “Play that Funky Music,” we gear up to play “Suzy Q.” Adam steps up to the microphone to sing for the cars and the sidewalk audience. His performance is met with nods of support from both, and I catch multiple people singing along with the song.

Our last song is Joe Cocker’s version of the Beatles song “With A Little Help From My Friends.” Julie began an intro riff on her synthesized organ sound, then she counted off four, and we all came blasting in with the intro.

\[\text{G-DD-A-} \]

Paige’s chords on the synthesizer, the warmth of my bass, and the blazing brass of Eric’s trumpet and Billy’s trombone create a full sound that causes the heads of those in our vehicular audience to turn and look.

\[\text{G-DD-A-} \]

There are some cheers from the cars, as well as from our sidewalk audience. \[\text{G-DD-A-G-} \]

\[\text{D-DD-A-} \]

We hold the last note and decrescendo until the only sound present is Paige’s piano.

“What would you do if I sang out of tune / Would you stand up and walk out on me / Lend me your ears and I’ll sing you a song / And I’ll try not to sing out of key.” In addition to the singers on the stage, our sidewalk audience has also joined in.

\[\text{G-DD-A-} \]

“Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends / Mm, I get high with a little help from my friends / Mm, gonna try with a little help from my friends / Ooo, ooo, ooo.”

Then Adam takes over the vocals, “What do I do when my love is away?”

Paige, Eric, Billy, and Paul respond back, “Does it worry you to be alone?”
Then Adam, “How do I feel by the end of the day?”

And the others, “Are you sad because you’re on your own?”

::::::G:////////////////D:////////////////A::::::: “Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends / Mm, I get high with a little help from my friends / Mm, gonna try with a little help from my friends / Ooo, ooo, ooo.”

“Would you believe in love at first sight? / Yes, I’m certain that it happens all the time / What do you see when you turn out the light? / I can’t tell you but I know it’s mine.”

::::::G:////////////////D:////////////////A::::::: “Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends / Mm, I get high with a little help from my friends / Mm, gonna try with a little help from my friends / Ooo, ooo, ooo.” Out sidewalk audience is singing nearly at the top of their lungs as we continue to play through iterations of the chorus. As we draw the song to a close, our sidewalk audience cheers and claps. And when our instruments fall silent, we begin putting them away.

“Congratulations everybody. Don’t forget to thank the music therapy students for all their hard work putting this together,” Brenda instructed everyone as she walked up the steps onto the porch. “They spent a lot of time here, and we should be very proud of the work they have done.”

There are thanks and handshakes going around between the members, music therapists and myself. During this time, I wondered, “What about the members? Don’t they deserve to be thanked by the music therapy students for the time and contributions they put into the show as well?” But I don’t say anything. Instead, I continue putting my
bass back in its case, pick up my equipment, and walk awkwardly to car parked across the street with Jordan following behind me.

I notice Jillian pick up the tip jar on our way out. It is empty.
CHAPTER 6: WALK THE WALK

Jordan, Paul, and I sit facing each other in the sitting room. The warm resonance of a G-chord closing “Free Bird” sounds from Jordan’s guitar and my bass and fills the room. Paul looks between Jordan and I as our sound eventually decrescendos to silence. The back door opens drawing our attention, and I see Pete emerge through the doorway and walk towards the sitting room.

“How’s it going?” Pete says taking a seat among Paul, Jordan, and myself in the sitting room.

“It’s going good, Pete,” Jordan says.

“Indeed,” I echo.

“Well, guys,” Pete says. “What should we play?”

There is a brief pause and then Jordan interjects, “How about ‘Walk the Walk’?”

“Sure,” Pete says in a warm tone.

“I don’t think I know that song,” I say looking between Pete and Jordan.

“We can show ya, man,” Jordan says, and Pete nods.

“I’ll show you how it starts,” Pete says to me, and then begins strumming a D, then G, and finally an A. Jordan falls right in line with Pete’s progression giving me the impression he has played this song before. Paul establishes a beat slightly out of rhythm with Pete and Jordan but does not compromise the flow of the song. I watch on, and when I get the flow of the tune, jump in with the group. Pete looks at me and nods when he hears that I have caught on to with the rhythm. Then he starts to sing.
“It’s a hard life / For a street wanderer[^30] / Puttin’ the money in the machine /
We’ve got to step out on faith / And dare to dream.”

At the completion of this line, Pete looks at me and says, “Then it’s going to be G, C, and then D in the same rhythm.” I nod at him, and together, Pete, Jordan, and I switch our chord progression. Pete draws in a breath and begins singing.

“We gotta make our way / Let go of yesterday / They’ll all tell you that you’re somehow lost / They talk a lot.”

Pete’s voice is higher than the first part of the chorus. Starting the phrase down on the G may be too low for him to vocalize. At the completion of this line, Pete turns his attention toward me and says, “Now it’s going to be E, G, and then D.” I nod, as he continues, “But the rhythm is different, so be sure to listen.”

Pete and Jordan strum their E twice and stop. Not anticipating this change in rhythm, I continue sounding half notes like in the verse that diminishes the impact of the purposeful silence created by their strums.

“We gotta,” Pete sings with a touch of a growl in his voice.

The G sounds the same two notes then silence pattern; I catch on this time.

“Walk the Walk.”

When Pete and Jordan hit the D, they let their notes ring, while I pluck the two notes then silence my strings.

Pete smiles at my differing rhythm as he sings, “If we’re gonna survive.”

[^30]: The original lyric here was “street soldier,” but Pete changed when he heard that it describes a member of a gang.
We repeat the chorus phrase strumming the E in unison. “We gotta.” Then strong G strums, “Walk the walk.” And letting the D play out, “It we’re gonna keep the dream alive.”

“We gotta / “Walk the Walk / And leave the fear behind.”

“Walk the walk / We’ll make that train on time.”

Then we fall into the verse progression, beginning on the D.

“We gotta / “Walk the walk / And leave the fear behind.”

“Walk the walk / We’ll make that train on time.”

Then we switch the progression beginning with G. “It may be nasty weather / The sky may blacken / But if we stick together / We can make it happen.”

After the second verse, Pete, Jordan, and I strike the E in unison, then the G, and then the D.

“We gotta / Walk the walk / If we’re gonna survive.”

“We gotta / Walk the walk / If we’re gonna keep the dream alive.”

“We gotta / Walk the walk / And leave the fear behind

“We gotta / Walk the walk / We’ll make that train on time.”

Pete looks at me at the completion of the chorus and says, “Now we are just going to switch between C and D for the bridge.” He strums a C chord for one measure, then D for one measure, and alternates between the two as he sings, “Some say the one who / Knocks someone down is tough / But I say the tough one.”

“Some say the one / Knocks / But I say / Is the one who gets back up.”

Pete and Jordan switch to A chord to build into the upcoming verse as Pete finishes off the bridge, “Is the one who gets back up.”
After the bridge, Pete and Jordan begin playing the D to mark the beginning of the next verse.

“Love and respect / These we’ll keep us on track / One day we’ll reach that point / And never look back”

Then we transition to the phrase beginning on the F♯.

“Though it may seem that / We’ve been here before / Well, that just means that / We know where we are.”

Then we transition to the chorus with full strums of the E, G, and then D.

“We gotta / Walk the walk / If we’re gonna survive.”

“We gotta / Walk the walk / If you want to keep the dream alive.”

“We gotta / Walk the walk / And leave the fear behind.”

“We gotta / Walk the walk / And we’ll make that train on time.”

“Keep your balance / Meet the challenge”

“Keep you head up / Let’em talk.”

“Walk the walk.”

“Walk the walk.”

Pete strums the final D with a sound that suggests this is the end of the song, and Jordan and I let our strums ring out. Then silence. We look around at each other. Paul stands up and walks towards the back porch.

“Yeah,” Pete says looking at Paul. “I think I need one of them too.”

Hearing Pete express his need for a cigarette aroused a craving within my gut. “I agree,” I say standing up.

“You comin’, Jordan?” Pete asks looking at him.
“No, man” he replies. “I’ve gotta give my girlfriend a call.”

“Alright,” Pete says as he and I make our way to the back porch.

We find Paul standing at the head of the ramp trying to light his cigarette as we take a seat around the picnic table. Eventually, Paul takes a big puff and releases a cloud of smoke, at which point he looks at us and waves.

“See you guys later,” he says.

“Where you going, Paul?” I ask.

“On a walk,” he replies.

Pete and I wave as he makes his way down the ramp before we retrieve cigarettes from our packs and light them up. As I exhale, I say to Pete, “I really enjoyed ‘Walk the Walk.’”

“Thanks,” Pete says with a cloud of smoke. “Yeah, that song is sort of a mental health anthem.”

“Yeah?” I inquire. “How do you mean?”

“That’s a bit of a long story,” he replies with a smile.

“Well,” I say. “We’ve got these fresh cigarettes and Jordan is on the phone with his girlfriend. I imagine we have a bit of time,” I finish with a laugh.

“I suppose we do,” Pete replies sitting up on the bench. “This is going back some years but, I was almost homeless, and I was staying with a friend. And, it was actually another patient from the hospital who let me stay with him for a while. And uh, he asked me one day. He said, uh, let’s go to The Gathering Place and get some coffee. And I had no idea what The Gathering Place was, but coffee sounds good. And I went with him, and that was the very first time I came here, umm. That would’ve been somewhere in the later
part of the 80’s. At least, 86 or 87. Somewhere around there. My memory is not very good with eighties.” Pete chuckles as he finishes this statement.

I offer a laugh as well. My meeting with Tom on the back porch and conversation about Tom Petty (Chapter one) comes to mind when he was telling me about his forgotten experiences of the eighties. Pete continues.

“That was the first time I came here. I felt very welcome when I came even though I was into bad stuff, multiple problems with drugs and alcohol, and uh whatever what was going on in my head. I don’t know what it was. You know. I ran into so many slammed doors and not welcome situations that uhh, I think I really knew it was a treasure when I stumbled on it.”

Pete pauses for a second.

“They had uh, speaking of music, they had a guitar there, cause a guitar was always sitting around and hardly anyone was playing it back then. So after I met Lisa Roeback, she was the director at the time. She was a director for a long time. As long as I was sober, I could go up, have some coffee, play guitar, and I was very new to guitar back then so it was kinda like launching out and starting up. So immediately, I think I experienced the welcomeness, you know, kinda like, we’re all here to help and comfort and whatever.”

Pete pauses thoughtfully for a moment though he does not sound finished. But in this pause, we are afforded a moment to presence the possibility of community through relations with others guided by dialogic sensibilities.

Adelman and Frey (1997) described community as “particular type of conversation, grounded in dialogue, not monologue” (p. 106, emphasis original).
Considered dialogically, community is not simply a generic designation for a group of persons who share a common cause, but a particular orientation we take when we enter into a conjoint relationship with others. Buber (1958) provided an understanding of this quality of relation that generates community:

The true community does not arise through peoples having feelings for one another (though indeed not without it), but through first, their taking their stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre, and second their being in living mutual relation with one another. . . . Living mutual relation includes feelings, but does not originate with them. The community is built up out of living mutual relation, but the builder is the living effective Centre. (p. 45)

And to further clarify our understanding of relationships that give rise to community, Buber argued that “[i]t is not the periphery, the community, that comes first, but the radii, the common quality of relation with the Centre. This alone guarantees the authentic existence of the community” (p. 115). Finally, Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994) clarified that “Martin Buber [does not] equate the notion of community with warm psychological feeling. Instead, [he] remind[s] readers of the importance of commitment to a common task, a common mission that pulls people together” (p. 291). This has been a long string of definitions, but the central idea to keep in mind is that community, dialogically speaking, emerges in the living mutual relation between selves and others who take a stand within and hold each other accountable to a living center. Community is not about the self, but about the self in relation to others.

It is easy to see connections between such a conception of community and The GP. For example, the *living center* in which members, staff, and volunteers enter into
living mutual relation is the belief that mental illness is not a foreclosure on the person behind the diagnosis (see also Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982). This relation arises from a place of concern and empathy for both staff and members in the day-to-day experiences of their lives. But instead of looking at the day-to-day practices of the organization, of which the reader already has some familiarity, “Walk the Walk” provides us with an opportunity to explore the relationship between community and music.

Making music together, I believe, is an inherently communal relationship. Though I see song and community sharing many different qualities, I do not believe they are necessarily the same thing. Community entails a more encompassing orientation towards relation, whereas music is but one modality of relation through which community comes to emerge in lived experience. As a modality of relation, I have shared how song serves as a living center in which selves and other experience common, embodied states of awareness (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997). Putting the living center of both song and community in conversation with one another, we presence an opportunity to draw meaningful and mutually informing connections between musical relation and that experience of community. As a helpful note to the reader, from here on out, I make a distinction between music and song – music being musical expressions in general and song as the living center into which performers and audience enter into a shared mutual relation. But Pete continues his story drawing my attention back to him.

“I think the next big thing that happened to me at The Gathering Place, and because of The Gathering Place, was acceptance of the idea that I did have something wrong with my mind, because I was in so much denial. I was willing to talk about it to people, because I almost couldn’t. But I didn’t like this idea that I had a mental illness,
and that I was schizophrenic, and part of that simply was because my own stigma. Because I had no idea what they actually meant, you know?”

“Yeah,” I reply though with little conception of the lived experience behind what he describes.

“One of the times, umm, that I was there, they were, umm, because every time I would talk to someone about schizophrenia, like a doctor or someone, they would try to explain it to me and I wouldn’t even listen. I was like no, this is not, there is nothing wrong with my brain.”

Pete takes a moment to cough. “Excuse me,” he says patting his chest.

“No worries,” I reply.

Pete nods and continues, “And so uhh, one day, we were up here, and someone was talking about a book, umm, which happened to be *Surviving Schizophrenia*, by E. Fuller Torrey. That book has almost immediately reversed my entire perspective on schizophrenia. That was the first time I really went wow, this might not be bullshit.”

Pete pauses and chuckles. A smile breaks across my face, and I return his laugh as he continues.

“And so, umm, and it just really opened my eyes and that was because of a conversation at The Gathering Place. And what I did, I’m gonna find out from the *printed book*, rather than talking to what I considered the enemy [psychiatrist]. It was this sort of endless thing and I’m not having it, and the person just trying to explain it doesn’t get it. I read a book and find out what this schizophrenia thing is all about. And that was it, I was a convert. I was like wow. I never thought of schizophrenia, or mental illness of any kind, as even a legitimate science, you know. And uh, so that really, you know, that
would’ve been a really good point in my life to say okay.” Pete looks down at his hand. “Now schizophrenia,” he extends one finger. “Plus alcohol,” he extends another. “And drugs equals disaster,” a third finger is extended on his hand. “So, I became willing to work on the mental illness aspect, but unfortunately I was nowhere near ready to work on the addiction aspect, so it was still a lot of years stumbling around.”

He chuckles, “and uh, pretty haphazardly, but.”

“It was a step,” I reply to acknowledge his sentiment.

“Yeah,” he replies before continuing. “And ahh, so, it took me a long time before I realized that I gotta work on that, I guess the double barrel thing, medication and sobriety. In 1992, I went to Zanesville to go to treatment. And ahh umm, and I think I had every intention of doing that, and probably succeeded at it for awhile, but it wasn’t long after I got out of the treatment center there that I relapsed and went through a whole ‘nother thing.”

Pete pauses and looks around as if searching for a thought. Then his eyes light up, and he continues.

“In 1995 was when I had a little family thing here in Athens. My brother still lived in Athens, then, and I didn’t even realize until years later that that was an intervention. So, they kinda rescued me from Zanesville, and I went back to the hospital in February of ‘95. And I got clean and sober, as well as, you know, made a very conscious effort to listen more and take my meds and stuff like that. So, ah, it’s then the Gathering Place became really important, because then, it’s like okay, I get it. And uh, and it wasn’t long in 12 step groups, and I learned this whole thing about giving back, and sort of trying to find a place in the community too, and realizing that it, that how
much taking I did even without, you know. Just expecting it. And how I finally made
more of the meaningful connections to the people around me. I need to give too as well as
get.”

“Yeah,” I reply nodding.

“So, in a way, it was almost like early, it’s almost like childhood. I was finally
becoming an adult at age 29. And ah, so, umm, and then the Gathering Place was very
important because, it’s you know, it’s really solid ground. And I think that is the whole
idea that the community of members, that okay, there are ones that are doing well, there
are ones other people go to, you know, and, and ahh, that can change around, sometimes
the people that are doing real well, umm, for one reason or another, aren’t doing so well
for a while, umm, but the people that weren’t doing well are now doing well, so they
 kinda come up and the, the counseling, or assistance, or volunteer spirit or whatever, sort
of naturally goes to where it is needed. When one person goes through something, has
surgery, they have to be in the hospital for awhile, the other people rally around, and you
know, speaking very realistically, I think the last several years, The Gathering Place, has
lost a little bit of this dynamic, but it was, during the time, of 95, when I was getting my
life together, it was a real strong dynamic that was, it still happens now up there, but it’s
not the way it used to be. It’s not as obvious, it’s really more subtle.”


“I guess one of the things that happened . . . was a particular point in time where
there was, there was, argument and things about by-laws and basically over the amount of
authority membership has. Meaning not those that were hired from the community, but
those who actually attended the place for a long time. It seems to me like until, until that
point, there was more of a core group of members that were really umm, sort of the center of the place, kind of like maybe, kind of like, if you look at it as a family, there were people that were kinda the parents and that really wanted to move with the times to consumer empowerment. And when, when, political heat began there, we lost, some of those important parental sort of members, and it’s really never been quite the same.”

Pete pauses for a moment, as I nod to show he has my attention. He continues.

“It’s had its ups and downs of course, and I think it’s in an up, but it’s never quite had what we had there . . . I’ve seen a lot of different mental health projects and community programs and things do the same thing over and over again, which is, the saying that okay, we want to have more decision making done by the consumer, we want to give them more control, we want them to have their own committee, make financial decisions, make them really feel like they are doing something. And very often, what happens, not always, but very often what happens is, instead of being a board of directors, it’s a sub-committee, or it gets diluted or something, and I think what really happens most of the time is that, okay we want this consumer run, we’re going with the movement now, and, but they, I don’t think that the consumers, the membership, or whatever, the clientele, whatever you call it, really gets . . . it always seems to be a cut off. Its like okay, well, we don’t want to discount our board, you know . . . and there is a point where if, if the consumers get to a certain point where the agency or program or whatever doesn’t want to release power, release decisions to, to the consumers is very, very frustrating, and uh we got all this way . . . We can’t really be a member-run organization if it isn’t member-run.”

Pete takes a drag off his cigarette, as I nod to show my attention.
“And if the current thing that is established doesn’t surrender control, then we won’t have any control. And I think it’s really been a tussle, a tug of war at The Gathering Place that has been more evident in past years, past few years, then umm, before all these issues came up as the bylaws. Nobody cares about the bylaws, we have our own, we talk to them, they talk to us, we agree on most of the stuff, but I guess those are the challenges that are faced when you are trying to put a community of people together and keep it together. It’s nuts.”

Pete pauses and I let my mind wander over what he has just shared with me. What stands out from Pete’s experience is that we get a feel for the experience of community as one that is simultaneously meaningful and contentious. Again, Buber’s notion of community does not imply “warm psychological feelings” (Anderson, Cissna, & Arnett, 1994). Adelman and Frey (1997) provide useful insight for understanding this fragility of community through their experiences volunteering at a hospice for people living with AIDS that translate well to the experience of living with mental illness:

People often assume that having AIDS is the great equalizer, the tie that binds the members of [Bonaventure House] together, but they forget about the enormous differences in background, health status, existing social support networks, and expectations about living at BH that make interpersonal connection and community building extremely difficult. (p. 31)

The same could almost be said word for word with regard to The GP.

We see illustrated in Pete’s testimony the meaningful though contested community that has come to be generated at The GP. His story reminds us of the role The GP has played in helping people like Pete live a life towards recovery with regard to the
experience of living with mental illness. During a potluck at the house to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the organization, I overheard one member say, “The Gathering Placed saved my life.” But it is a reality of community life that diverse persons with sometimes competing worldviews take a mutual stand in the living center of relation. The reader might remember polyphony (Bakhtin, 1973) from the previous chapter. As Pete said with regard to the consumer empowerment movement beginning in the mid-1990’s, there were differences between members of the house and the members of the board regarding what constituted an appropriate move towards granting house members more authority. These differences surpassed the capacity of The GP’s ability to accommodate them resulting in the loss of members – members who played a significant role in fostering the family-like community of the organization. But the meeting of incompatible worldviews is a reality of communal relation that we face as persons living with diverse others.

Gregory Shepherd (2001) was particularly aware of the obstacles to co-creating community between selves and others in a world with competing and not always compatible meanings. How may we achieve the ideal of communication, which Shepherd understood as “the simultaneous experience of self and other” (p. 32), when the bases from which we speak appear irreconcilably different? He found solace in the possibilities afforded through pragmatist philosophies that understand knowledge and meaning as verbs, the doings of humanity (see also James, 1991). Upon such sensibilities, he framed communication as a gift to offer a practical tool to foster the emergence of community through interpersonal interactions. He wrote, “We cannot communicate without giving of ourselves; nor can we communicate if not served by the gifts of other selves. This requires action on our part, and faith on that of others” (p. 34). When entering into the
living mutual relation in the living center of community, we give ourselves openly to
others with faith that they will do the same for us. Community exists only in so far as we
enter voluntarily into living mutual relation. And it is here that we find a meaningful
place in which to share the connections between music and community.

Conceiving of community as song is not just an act of poetic word play but
practically speaking, provides us an opportunity to realize Shepherd’s (2001) ideal of
communication in the context of community. As highlighted, community and song both
share living centers into which diverse selves and others may enter into living mutual
relationship. To enter into the living center of song, one becomes sensitive to the arousal
of states of awareness enshrouding those in a musical relation (Shepherd & Wicke,
1997). Within the context of our discussion of community, these states of awareness
serve as the embodied experience of the living center in which persons enter into a living
mutual relation, or as Shepherd (2001) might say, a simultaneous experience of self and
other. But this does not imply a homogenization of being, but rather the edifying
participation of diverse others who into the living center of song.

To illustrate, music means non-discursively (Langer, 1942) in that musical
expressions do not culminate in the form of a signifier that denotes a specific object or
event. Rather, the meanings persons experience in musical expressions are situated within
the unity of answerability (Bakhtin, 1990) when we answer song’s address with our
highly diverse and situated lives. And as persons with unique perspectives of the world,
our experiences of the living center of song are highly individualized. To draw two
parallels, one may see this theme in the broader notion of community when thinking
about the differing views of consumer empowerment, while still being committed to
persons living with mental illness. And considered through the notion of song, we see the same contention taking place in the musical relation in the negotiation of the drum beat on “Presencing the Jam” (Track 2). However, where these parallels diverge is how that difference was incorporated into the community/song. In the case of consumer empowerment, members were lost. While in the case of song, the living mutual relation in the living center became presenced in the alignment of the drums midway through the jam.

Moreover, entering into the living center of song, like community, is a volitional act. The experiences of both community generally and song specifically is not one that incorporates us into its living center, so much as we step into them. It is our willingness to give ourselves over to others through communicative/musical practices that are inherently for others –gifts we render onto and receive from others (Shepherd, 2001). And when we take a stand outside of living mutual relation, we put the whole, whether it be song or community, in jeopardy. Again, in the case of community generally, the issue of consumer empowerment was significant to the point where it was no longer possible for some members to continue standing in mutual relation with living center of The Gathering Place. And in the case of music the volitional commitment to the song is apparent in the arousal of a particular state of awareness, or in its absence, when teaching a song or disinterested in playing (such as Jordan during music therapy). But there is a meaningful difference between song and community with regard to how we volitionally step into their respective living centers.

Music performs the living mutual relation through presencing the living center in an embodied way. Community conceived through music is not just an identification with
a set of symbolic values that guide communal living. Music, through arousing embodied states of awareness within those who stand in living mutual relation with the living center of song, creates the possibility of community at the level of the body. Song presences the living center in which we stand in mutual relation in such a way as to emphasize first and foremost not a commitment to abstract values but the body’s capacity to achieve the “simultaneous experience of self and other” (Shepherd, 2001). Community conceived musically is a reminder of a shared embodied experience of the world upon which we build our individual perceptions. In this embodiment, music allows for a polyphony (Bakhtin, 1973) of expressions of being in the world with regard to a shared humanity. And with is in mind, I grow curious as to Pete’s relationship with mental illness and how it influenced his writing of “Walk the Walk.”

“Before you get to the song,” I say breaking the silence and my train of thought. “Would you mind sharing with me how you understand mental health? If ‘Walk the Walk’ is a mental health anthem, it would be helpful to know what you mean by that.”

Pete’s eyes light up at the question and he takes a drag off his cigarette before his answering starts, “That is a question I have pondered for years and years and years and umm. You know I think that, you know, there’s that question: What is mental health? Especially in terms of a really important question: What is mental health for me? You know?”

“Yeah” I reply.

“What is it that I want to achieve, overcome, whatever. But then there is a larger social thing too, okay, you know. I think that’s how mental illness was discovered, you know, this person seems to have these characteristics just like this person.”
He pauses.

“And so, ahh, the goal is mental health. Mental health is the goal and I think it’s a very individual thing. I used to be very gung-ho about mental health stuff; and positivity, and being clean and sober, and take your meds, you know sort of, I guess I kinda considered myself sort of a champion of mental health. After awhile, I started looking at my own life. And I think that my, my hopes for my own mental health, whatever community mental health is, I don’t know, they will argue till the end of time, I will let them.”

A smile breaks across his face and he chuckles with this last expression.

“Oh,” I say smiling.

“But my own mental health, I’ve gone from the super pink cloud optimism to you know kinda like hopeful, but realistic, and I should probably say that umm, I think I’m going into the pessimistic outlook these days. I think that’s because I am really seeing and experiencing on both sides of the couch, or whatever, umm that, the experience of a mentally ill person, or so called mentally ill person, is very much dependent on the environment around that person.”

“Oh,” I say, my mind turning to the cross-stitched poem “Well People” authored by Dr. Irvin D. Yalom hanging in the dining room. But also the optimistic feel Pete mentioned he used to have feels apparent as I remember our performance of “Walk the Walk”

Pete continues, “What I’ve seen, and steadily as years go by, as the environment, the situations and circumstances that that person is likely to encounter, and does
encounter, is getting worse and worse and worse.\textsuperscript{31} And things that I was really one time very hopeful about, you know.”

He stops and stares thoughtfully before continuing.

“If we’re in a philosophy class, I think that I would follow that question, ‘What is mental health?’ I would follow that question with for whom? If we come up with some formula or condition of mind, body, whatever, that we can safely call mental health, for whom? For which people is this state actually possible? Is it actually attainable? And for whom is it not? And umm, you know, I think that I am still trying to decide whether it’s even possible or not, too, considering both sides of the argument. As I normally do.”

He grins with this last statement and stares thoughtfully.

“Yeah,” I reply nodding with a smile.

“I remember back when I was sick and stoned, music was the one thing that really carried me through, and I remember the feeling. I didn’t care how loud I was. If I wanted to put on an album and sing, I’d put on an album and sing and barricade the door. And I remember just like, after like, singing along and now one of, one of, my favorite albums singing along, and then like the exhilaration that sort of renewed feeling that I had after it was, it was almost like you know like a sexual afterglow or something. It’s like my endorphins were circulating, my, uhh, you know, I almost felt like I had performed it. And, and, I think even now, with like being able to have, uh unlocked that door, and being able to, umm, figure out how to compose songs, write songs. Uhh some of those, you know, some of those songs, umm, that I didn’t write, that I still like play and sing.

\textsuperscript{31} As noted, The Gathering Place is located in the Appalachian Region of southeastern Ohio, and is a significantly depressed economic area (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2011).
you know they were written by other people, still have as much or more meaning as, as my own stuff, and that’s pretty cool too. Because then it’s like I’m connected, you know.”

Pete pauses.

“So, what does music mean to you?” I probe.

“Oh, gosh. Oh, it’s my madness. But, it’s also my sanity. I was playing, I was playing, ahh, I know you mean, in my earlier years, it was a relationship that was very intense. A lot more so, then that, because that’s what I did. I listened to music. And umm and almost as soon as I started really listening to music, I began singing you know, I began getting interested in playing instruments. By the time I got to college, I was determined to be a sound, sound engineer, so I could hear the whole thing. And uhh, so I mean there were huge, huge influences, influences, from the bands that I liked, and I really that’s what I studied. I didn’t realize, I thought I was just kinda grooving, and listening. And umm, I started really studying and uhh, then I memorized the words, and uhh I’m almost embarrassed to even open my mouth to sing now because I used to sing fairly decently. That’s the thing. It’s been a thing that has sort of grown inside of me, and I think has enabled me to think abstractly, philosophically. Uhh, you know uhh, there’s all these people that are studying it now, you know, and it helps cognition and things like that. And uhh, and uhh, you know, it’s just the ability, I think it even helps with memory. I think I’ve always, I’ve always been inclined towards artistic things, creative things, and, if I look at the whole, I’m getting into other visual arts and things now, but if I look at the whole span of my life, music is the king.”
“And when you say music, do you mean the sounds or the lyrics?” I ask for clarification.

“Well, I’m just as much into the words as to music. And, having to finally sort of learned how to begin to express through both, uhh is, I don’t think it ever was really this natural inclination for more me, but uhh but I’ve worked on it over the years and I’ve gotten better, so it’s, it’s kind of a sense of, kind of a sense of accomplishment. You know? Maybe even pride. You know? But, uhh, now to the point. It’s not me that’s the king. It’s the music that’s the king. I’ve got the key to the council chambers.”

“I like that,” I say in response to his belief that music as the key to the council chambers.

Thus far, I have clarified how music fosters community through presencing an embodied experience of the living center by entering into living mutual relation with song. But what we begin to see with regard to Pete’s relationship with music is the heart of the interconnection between music and community – or the key to the council chambers. Specifically, what we begin to see, is the role of imagination with regard to music as an aesthetic expression and our understanding of song as community.

To begin, Dewey (1934) described all aesthetic experience as imaginative, a quality he understands as “what happens when varied materials of sense quality, emotion, and meaning come together in a union that marks a new birth in the world” (p. 279). This new birth is the aesthetic object, whether it be a sculpture, painting, building, poem, or song (among others) – an outward, meaningful rendering of experience that may be perceived by and move others. But to focus on the product of imagination is to overlook the significance of imagination as a process. Dewey wrote, “Imaginative experience
exemplifies more fully than any other kind of experience what experience itself is in its very movement and structure” (p. 293). In other words, imagination is the substance of meaning-making experience.

When understanding music as an imaginative act, we are afforded a privileged look into human experience as it unfolds in relation with others. Whereas music provides us with a general sense of how persons establish corporeal relations with one another, song provides with an opportunity to explore how persons enter into living centers, or communities, of song. I have performed at several points throughout this dissertation how song is a structured experience of music capable of arousing states of awareness. The right chords must be played in a particular rhythm and should any fall out of line, the song ceases to exist and becomes mere sounds struggling to find organization. In many ways, relationships in song share the same fragility (Adelman & Frey, 1997) as community. Though I have erred on the side of privileging the sounds of music as opposed to the lyrical content throughout this dissertation, this is a point where the inclusion of lyrics provides our discussion with the necessary precision to cut the depths to which song and community are intertwined.

“But what about this song ‘Walk the Walk?’” I probe.

“Well,” he starts. “Some brief background there first. Walk the Walk is our [The Gathering Place] annual community event to raise awareness of mental health issues and generate some funds for the house by leading those who come out in a walk around The Ridges.” He finishes the last bit of this sentence with a squint as if trying to see what he is trying to say from a long ways off, then continues, “We’ll be holding, uh, I think our 12th walk this year.”
“Oh wow,” I say.

“Yeah,” Pete says. “I know. It started out with some people walking the bike path between Nelsonville and Athens, and now it has turned into this big thing. NAMI [National Alliance on Mental Illness] has joined in, and they lend their support.”

“Very cool,” I say.

“Anyway, somebody asked me at The Gathering Place, probably, I think, uhh, are you going to write a song, Walk the Walk? And it was like by then it was like we were on our 9th uh walk or something like that. And I was like, yeah. It’s time to make it into a song. And so I really I thought more about songwriting. But I did, you know, make the words rhyme and still have some kind of meaning. But that is a song that I look at, like the meaning I put in that when I was writing it was like, umm, okay here we are in this group of people you know, like it or not, and uhh, not put in a box, but we’ve been uh, umm, separated somewhat from the community. And umm so what is it, what is it our group wants to say, you know? And I imagine myself actually, and I do this sometime, writing songs, and I imagine the audience and in this case, I imagined the rally, and what it is that I want to say to all those people. You know?”

I nod in response.

“I’m going to represent a group of us, what is it we need to do, and I think it was, uh, when I actually started thinking about the lyrics for that, I think the overall theme is we just gotta press on.”

Pete pauses for a moment.
“To me, you know, I’ve even written out definitions. What is recovery? And what is mental health? And the thing that I come up with that is really strongest for me, is, is different ways of wording it, but basically, forward progress. You know?”

Again, I nod.

“Umm, that my life now is a little better than it was five years ago. And maybe even somewhat better than it was a year ago. You know, umm, and then there’s the part of it, yeah, I’ve got this condition, wherever it’s from, whether its my brain, or the environment around my brain, that is, that is, a challenge for what normal people is easy. Whoever the normal people are for me and my peers. It’s more of a challenge, so, uhh, you know, uhh, I don’t know. I mean, it’s just, it’s also kinda a question in order to progress forward, I have to continue in time, and so, you know, I don’t know very well, can’t predict, you know, certainly can’t create my future. I can make efforts towards this or taking this path here, this little diversion there, but uhh, you know, and I think in the final analysis, I don’t know what my future is. What’s gonna happen, and how, and how whatever happens to me is gonna affect me. So umm, you know, I can put a lot of energy into, ‘I sure hope it’s going to be better tomorrow,’ but at the same time, I don’t know. It might not.”

Pete chuckles with the close of this statement before finishing. “Whatever happens, we’ve gotta keep doing what we do and, and even if it doesn’t even it’s not forward progress, even if it is backward progress, we still gotta pick ourselves up.”

I nod at Pete and take a final draw off my cigarette.

“Yeah, it did,” Pete follows returning my grin. “I wonder if Jordan is off the phone yet.”

“Let’s go find out,” I say. And as we stand up to go inside, I revisit our conversation in my mind. At this point, I encourage reviewing the lyrics to “Walk the Walk” or giving the song another listen in order to get the message in our heads with regard to pressing on amidst the adversity faced when living with mental illness.

When considering “Walk the Walk”, we should remember that Pete is the composer. He imagined both the chord progression and the lyrics; so to be fair, “Walk the Walk” is more a reflection of Pete’s experience of living with mental illness than of the organization as a whole. However, Pete also employed a keen ear for listening for common themes of experience with regard to the members of The Gathering Place in imagining the lyrics. As such, there is a double-voicedness (Bakhtin, 1981) taking place in this message in that incorporated into Pete’s lyrics are the voices of the community of members who helped inspire the song. Though the double-voicedness in “Walk the Walk” does not perform the polyphony (Bakhtin, 1973) that is community in its multiplicity of voices (as expressed most poignantly regarding the split views on consumer empowerment) – that does not foreclose upon the capacity of the song to invite multiple perspectives to bear upon a single experience – which is, in a sense, the essence of polyphony. But we’ll get to that momentarily.

Up to this point, I have made connections between community and music through stressing the embodied experience of standing in living mutual relation in the living center of song. Further, I have shared the interconnections between the living center of song and corporeal states of awareness as aroused through musical expression that I have
been describing as a “simultaneous experience of self and other” (Shepherd, 2001). What we have learned thus far is that when considering community through a musical perspective, song has the capacity to presence an embodied living center in which diverse selves and others stand in living mutual relation. Although there is value in this musical aspect of community in that it presences a shared embodiment – or rather a shared humanity – from which our diverse experiences of our selves and others emerge, we have not exhausted music’s potential to provide meaningful insight into the experience of community. Up until now, I have only addressed the lyrics of song when absolutely necessary in order to put my energies into performing the lived experiences of the musical relation. But when considering the idea of community in relation to music, we require a little more precision with regard to how music is invoked as a means of communal expression, in this case, for a group of persons who share the experience of living with mental illness.

Taking a musical approach to community is to acknowledge that meanings are never solely abstract but always, to some degree, implicate the body. Lyrics, like music, are imaginative renderings that birth new experiences of the world. Yet in conjunction with music, they acquire the capacity to perform what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) refer to as the “illusion of life” – the arousal of emotional experiences in the service of a rhetorical message. Meanwhile, if we take Dewey (1934) seriously, music is not merely an illusion but rather an expression of life that may transpire only in this one language (see also Buber, 1965). And when paired with lyrics, music is able to establish a relation between self and other at both the corporeal and symbolic levels that allows for a more robust expression of lived experience.
When considered *musically*, “Walk the Walk” has in a major key and thus arouses a hopeful, optimistic feeling (at least that is the case in Western music). Accepting the invitation to stand in mutual relation to the lived center of “Walk the Walk” is to step into a corporeal state of awareness that is inspired by the feeling of this progression. As we turn to consider the lyrics, the corporeal feel of the song is important to arriving at a more complete understanding of music as an expression of community.

When we consider the lyrics that accompany “Walk the Walk,” we get a glimpse into the lived experience of mental illness and the significance of such places as The Gathering Place. We hear in the lyrics a story of small steps forward and sometimes even bigger steps back when living a life of recovery with regard to mental illness. Hearing these lyrics through the experiences Pete shared with regard to schizophrenia and substance abuse, there are echoes of a stigmatized existence through such phrases as “leave your fear behind.” There also is an experience marked by continual setbacks suggested in such phrases as “It may seem that we’ve been here before.” It is difficult not to think of the experiences of ex-patients living in the community.

But we also must be mindful to hear these lyrics in relation to the optimistic feel of the song. Throughout the song is a shared responsibility that people living with mental illness have to one another for living a life in recovery. Pete’s invocation of the word “We” in the chorus, “We’ve gotta / Walk the Walk,” speaks to this shared responsibility members have to one another. And this responsibility is further tempered through such appeals to “love and respect” to “keep us on track.” Moreover, the major progression of “Walk the Walk” cushions the lyrics in fashion that is neither entirely *congruent* or *incongruent* as Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would describe – semi-hopeful lyrics
bolstered by hopeful music. Phrases such as “Sometimes it may seem like / We’re surrounded by those walls” or “We may we nasty weather / And the sky may blacken” do not necessarily create a hopeful imagine. However, the uplifting quality of the music takes the edge off the setbacks associated with mental illness serving as a reminder to keep pushing forward – it gets better day by day.

Taken together and housed within the optimistic music, these lyrics speak to a living center in which members of the GP enter into living mutual relation. “Walk the Walk” is an invitation not only to hear but to feel the experience of living with the trying experience of mental illness. And when accepting a musical invitation, we enter the experience of a community body first in a fashion that emphasizes the shared humanity behind the lyrical message (should there be present a lyrical message). Harter and Rawlins (2011) speak with reverence to the capacities of aesthetic rationalities to help persons imagine alternative modalities of being in relation with others to meaningfully answer rather than to ignore difference in our lived environments. They wrote, “The aesthetic worlding of possibilities is a first step in acting on a belief that conditions can be changed. Through artful activities, we can articulate common imaginings and demystify differences that separate us” (p. 287). Music as an artful approach one may take to community encourages us to consider how person relate in embodied ways. Though we may come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, we share a common humanity that sometimes gets lost in the ideological differences that guide our symbolic lives. Music, as a communal expression, provides an opportunity to presence that shared humanity.
Bridge

Before sharing the final vignette, there are a few details that need sharing regarding the development of my relationship with The Gathering Place and their mission to include mental illness within the community. Over the course of my time with the organization, I began showing up at the house to spend time with the members in non-musical capacities. During these times, I would catch wind of public events hosted by or for The Gathering Place, such as Walk the Walk as mentioned by Pete, as well as church functions, NAMI-sponsored community picnics, house board meetings to discuss The GP’s operations, and Memorial Day services at The Ridges. These experiences were rich in and of themselves, but their full telling is not warranted within the context of this dissertation. So their brief telling, as opposed to their showing, will have to suffice.

At these events, I came into contact with several influential people in the mental health community, notably local and state representatives of NAMI with whom I exchanged contact information should they need volunteer assistance in their mission to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. In the late summer of 2012, I was contacted via e-mail by the Athens NAMI representative and solicited for help in the planning and execution of the 12th walk of “Walk the Walk.” The following is my experience helping stage Walk the Walk.

Walk the Walk

I pull into the parking lot of Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare (ABH) to meet Morgan, the Athens representative of Ohio’s chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). She had contacted me in her recruitment of volunteer help for his year’s “Walk the Walk” for mental illness, having gotten my name through interactions with
members and staff from The Gathering Place. As Pete had mentioned, NAMI co-sponsors the event both to help raise money for The GP and to seize an opportunity to inform citizens about legislation impacting mental health care in the at federal and state levels, as well as to inform them about the resources they offer to help those people who live with the experience of mental illness learn and develop skills to lead a functional and meaningful life.

The Athens Mental Center closed in 1993, and the psychiatrists and significantly decreased patient population were relocated to ABH located below the hill and across the river – within visible site of the former hospital. Compared to the Kirkbride-style architecture of The Ridges, ABH is in a rather unadorned, two-story concrete structure. However, spaced evenly in the walls near the roof are square ornamentations that bear the appearance of steel-wrought window bars. These bars are not black and vertical, but create a circular design that is Celtic-like in appearance. Katherine Ziff (2012) pointed out that this ornamentation is in honor of the window grates from the former Athens Mental Health Center – an imprint of Athens’s mental health history.

Two things jump out at me immediately as I enter ABH. First, the reception desk directly in front of me is surrounded by a fishbowl-like encasement – the kind with the circular speakers installed to allow for communication through the thick glass. And second is a satellite branch of the Athens Police Department immediately to my left. The air has a similar scent of sanitization that one might experience in a hospital. The Gathering Place comes to mind as I walk to the reception desk to inquire about the presence of Morgan’s office. Suddenly, I develop a sober understanding of why those who played a role in the emergence of the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation
felt it necessary to purge the environment of any institutional artifacts (see Goertzel, Beard, & Malamud, 1982; Robbins, 1954). The separation between the patients and the psychiatric staff, as well as the presumption of violent behavior cast those living with mental illness who enter as simultaneously subordinate and potentially dangerous.

I arrive at the fishbowl and one attendant dressed in white scrubs and a flowery top turns her attention towards me.

“How can I help?” she asks through the speaker.

“Can you tell me where the NAMI office is?” I reply.

“Right over there,” she says pointing to an open door about forty feet away from the booth to her right.

“Thanks,” I reply.

“Yep.”

I walk over to the open door and find whom I presume to be Morgan sitting at a computer with her back turned away from me within a rather cluttered office. Stacks of boxes, three-ring binders, and papers rest in random piles on the floor and desks in the office. There are several bookcases against the walls holding more piles of paper and binders, as well as books on various mental illnesses. I knock on the door, and she turns her attention away from the computer towards me.

“Hey,” I say extending my hand. “I’m Steve.”

“Morgan,” she replies confirming my assumption. “Nice to meet you.” She catches sight of my wedding band on the ring finger of my left hand, and asks, “When did you get married?”
The first forty minutes of our interaction is spent in conversation about our relational lives. For the most part, I sat and listened to her experiences while waiting for her to get to The Walk.


“Yeah,” I say relieved to get to the point. “What do you need help with? And if it can involve writing in any way, that would be ideal.”

“Well, we need a lot more help than we usually get,” she says with a slight tone of defeat in her voice. “Anyway, we will need some press releases for various newspapers to push the event. And potentially, if you could write a letter to the editor, as well, to support the cause.”

“Sounds good,” I say. (See Appendix D; only snippets of my press release made it to print in the local newspapers).

“Good,” she says. “We need this event to work. Unlike other organizations in this town, New Promise,32 we do not have a strong base of donations. Mental health just does not get same attention as some of the other organizations in town.” I think how Jillian Pillar expressed a similar sentiment with regard to pursing grant funding for The GP.

“But anyway,” she continues. “Just email those to me when you are done.”

“Will do,” I reply. “Nice meeting you.”

“Yep,” she says and turns back to her computer. As I walk back to my car, I look at the time on the phone. Nearly an hour has passed for a request that took mere minutes to articulate.

32 This is not the actual name of the social work organization to which Morgan refers.
The day before the walk several weeks later, I offered to help Morgan prepare for the event. Hundreds of t-shirts need folding and signage needs to be both assembled and hung in ABH’s gymnasium where the walk will conclude with lunch tomorrow around noon (or whenever the walkers arrive).

“Hey,” Morgan says to me as I enter her small and still crowded office.

“So,” I say. “How can I be of help today?”

“Well,” she says looking around her office. She does not look as if she has thought about how she is going to coordinate the other folks coming in today to help her with the work needed to stage the event. Her eyes fall on a tri-fold display that appears to promote NAMI. “This thing here needs some work.”

She grabs a stick of glue and some scissors off her desks and hands them to me.

“Could you trim the frayed edges of the ribbon bordering the pictures and glue down the spots where the ribbon is falling off the board.”

“Uhh, yeah.” I say trying to mask my lack of experience working with ribbons and glue.

“It’s in sorry shape,” she says looking at the display. “We need a new one, but we don’t have enough money to make that happen.”

“Sad day,” I say disappointedly looking at the display. There are low-resolution photographs of The Ridges, a group of NAMI volunteers, and several people (presumably living with mental illness) sitting around a picnic table smiling that appear to have been produced using an ink-jet printer. Some of the pictures are slightly discolored from the glue previous applied to fix them to the display. In addition, there are blocks of text describing services NAMI offers for people who are in a position to care for people living
with mental illness, as well as community talks on the subject of mental illness that are scheduled to take place at the public library.

“Well,” she says and then follows in an enthusiastically sarcastic tone, “Have fun!”

“Will do,” I say taking a seat in front of the display and begin trimming the frayed edges of the border around the picture of The Ridges. For approximately forty-five minutes, I sat on the floor trying to trim the already frayed ribbon borders surrounding the pictures and text. My fingers, covered in glue, eventually proved too difficult to work with. I pick up the clippings of ribbon off the floor and examine the display. Though more tidy than when I first started, the display remains in dire shape.

“They need a new display altogether,” I think regretting the time wasted. I exit the room and find Morgan with two other volunteers in front of boxes filled with blue t-shirts with “Walk the Walk” screen-printed on the front in white.

“I’ve been fighting with that display.” I tell Morgan. “And I can’t say I made it much better. But I tried.”

“Don’t worry about it,” she replies. “No point in fighting a losing battle.”

“Yeah,” I say with a chuckle. “Well, I’ll see you tomorrow, I’ve gotta get going.”

“Yeah,” Morgan says. “But before you go, take one of these with you. It’s your volunteer shirt so people will recognize you,” she follows while reaching into one of the boxes before handing me a t-shirt.

“Thanks,” I say and wave as I turn to leave ABH with the shirt draped over my forearm.
The sky is overcast on the morning of the walk as I step out of my car that I have parked down the street from the courthouse in the heart of downtown Athens. Across the street from me is a large bus occupying almost three complete parking spaces. Three horizontal stripes of color run along the length of the vehicle, that from the bottom, are blue, white, and yellow and give the bus a spring feel. “National Alliance on Mental Illness” is printed in the yellow stripe near the roof of the bus in blue ink, as well as their organization’s website and phone number. On the blue strip is a photograph of a multicultural group of people smiling, as well as phrases written in large white and yellow letters including, “Mental illness affects 1 in 5 families,” “Words hurt – see the person, not the label,” and “Mental illness is a disorder of the brain.” After examining the bus, I turn my attention to the courthouse where I see some people milling around and recognize one of them as Morgan.

“What can I do?” I inquire coming to a stop in front of her.

“Well,” she says taking a breath before pointing to a stack of folding tables resting on the brick plaza near several boxes I recognize from the night before. “You can set up some tables, so we have something to put our shirts on.”

“Sounds good,” I say walking over to the tables. After setting them up, I begin arranging the shirts in neat stacks. While I doing this I notice more people gathering on the sidewalk. Guessing from their young appearance, they may be students from the university. I keep an eye on them as I continue folding shirts. They grow in number. They look at each other, and I can almost hear them silently asking, “Do you know what is going on?”
Morgan appears suddenly and recruits a small cadre of bodies from the whole and directs them to a tent that needs to be set up in front of the courthouse. Then she returns with several poster board signs, hands them out to a few of the volunteers, and encourages the group to spread out along the sidewalk. The signs Morgan handed out bear expressions such as: “Mental Health Matters;” “Mental Health is Not a Joke,” and “Depression is for Real” among others. Those volunteers chosen to hold signs ask those without if they desired to take their jobs instead. However, their inquiries were met with disinterest. Morgan then pulls a few of the volunteers from the sidewalk and brings them over to my table.

“Your job,” she begins with a friendly tone looking at the two volunteers, “Will be to collect donations from passersby. The shirts are free, but we are suggesting a $5.00 donation. There should be some buckets around here for collecting money.”

“Okay,” one of the volunteers replies.

Morgan disappears, and with the two volunteers standing at the table, I decide to take the opportunity to look around.

There are approximately sixty bodies around the court house. A significant portion of the people appears to be students from the university. However, intermingled in the crowd are persons whom I recognize from The GP. There are also persons from the community with an active interest in mental health that I have seen at community functions or who have stopped by the house on occasion. The tent that Morgan had instructed volunteers to raise now houses a microphone stand, as well as a man and woman in suits. The man I recognize as the mayor. Several unused signs rest on a table
near the tent by a couple volunteers in blue shirts like my own conversing among themselves, and I walk over to put one of them to use.

The sign on top of the pile read, “Depression is Real.” I wondered if the volunteer to whom this was assigned was unable to find another person. As I grab the sign on top, I begin thinking it is a shame that these other signs have to sit here, and so I interrupt the conversation taking place beside me.

“Ya'll are volunteers, right?” I ask in a tone that is more a statement.

“Yeah,” one of them says.

“Would you be willing to hold these signs and stand out on the sidewalk?” I ask. This time it is a question.

“No,” the volunteer responds in a scowl of disbelief that dissipates as this person casually returns to the conversation in progress. For a few seconds I stare dumbfounded (they didn't notice) before turning and walking out to the sidewalk with the sign in front of my chest facing toward the increasing downtown traffic.

The courthouse sits on the corner of an intersection monitored by a stoplight, and as cars drive by and bear witness to our collective gathering, some drivers honk their horns in support. When the light turns red, the people awaiting the signal in the cars look over at us, and I see some eyes move as if reading the signs. Some give a thumbs-up through their closed windows. And, of course, others drive by as if the mob of people in front of the court house do not exist. I turn my attention to the crowd to take in the sight that has continued to develop through the morning. A few more bodies have woven their way into the crowd, and despite stumbling upon the discarded signs and apathetic volunteer earlier, there seem to be some who have shouldered the responsibility to hold
them high. As I look around at the various faces in the crowd, I notice Wicked Wiccan standing near a trash can smoking a cigarette. Adam walks around the plaza in a Socratic fashion staring contemplatively at the ground with his hands in his pockets. Derrick stands near the tent looking out over the crowd. Our eyes find each other – I nod and a smile cracks his face as he returns my acknowledgment in kind. Paul stands alongside the street smoking a cigarette looking out over the crowd as well. Jordan is not here, but that is not surprising. I cannot see him enjoying a highly public event that would draw attention to the fact that he lives with mental illness. He was barely present during the performance on the front porch at the end of the music therapy session.

“Excuse me,” says a familiar, albeit amplified, voice from near the courthouse.

I turn my attention towards the sound. A small group of people stand around the microphone underneath the tent erected earlier by the volunteers. Pete stands at the microphone, and I recognize Jillian Pillar standing next to him. Also alongside Pete are the mayor and his professional counterpart whom I had seen earlier.

“My name is Pete Wuscher,” he says capturing the attention of the majority of the persons on the sidewalk. “I would like to, uh, thank everyone for coming out this morning in our attempt to fight the stigma surrounding mental illness.”

Pete then turns and looks at Jillian, the mayor, and the woman in the suit. “I would also like to thank the mayor for stopping down here today to attend the rally before the walk.”

There is a brief applause from the crowd to recognize the mayor as he returns their acknowledgement with a wave.
“I would also like to thank the folks in Columbus from the National Alliance on Mental Illness for stopping down,” he continues, as the woman in the suit near him waves at the crowd as they offer her an applause of recognition.

“And I would like to acknowledge Jillian Pillar, the executive director of The Gathering Place, an organization that has provided a home for many people living with mental illness, including myself.”

Pete looks down at a piece of paper he holds near his chest.

“This is the 12th walk that we have done, and it’s nice to see so many people here. We do this walk to help educate the community about mental illness, which is, uh, a difficult life condition that prevents many of us from living the lives we want to live as members of the community. And this is the case because mental illness is often misunderstood. There is definitely a stigma that affects mentally ill people because we are often identified as criminals, so it becomes a hurdle for some of us who need to get treatment. I remember there were times in my life that I couldn't go outside because of the stigma attached to mental illness.”

Pete pauses for a second.

“But to focus on individuals is to overlook the problems mental illness poses for our community. One in five people suffer from a serious mental illness.33 Whether it's a family member, neighbor, or friend, every community member is impacted by mental illness.”

Again, Pete pauses.

---

33 This statistic regarding how pervasively persons in the United States experience mental illness may be found at the Centers for Disease Control (2011).
“There are many mental health systems in our state and country where patients go and become faceless and nameless -- just another number. But I am happy to say that the system we have in Athens is not like that. Here we recognize faces and remember names. Though we find it difficult to find funds, especially being a small, rural community mental health network, the people are awesome. Perhaps because we have a major university and a history with mental illness because of The Ridges, but Athens has always been a progressive place for social issues. There are many over-qualified professionals in the mental health system here. We are now, and always were, on the cutting edge here. And it is because of the resources and people we have in this town that people like me, who live with mental illness and have a strong drive to work towards recovery, have an opportunity to achieve that goal.”

“But,” Pete says. “The walk isn't just to inform the community about mental illness, it's also to remember those who are locked up in the correctional facilities and hospitals. Many who are inside these institutions don't feel anyone knows they are in there. And it’s difficult when it’s time to leave, to get set up in the community without knowing anyone, but because of places like The Gathering Place, these people have somewhere to go and a community to feel a part of. As we walk, we should remember those people as we look at those nameless graves we walk by at The Ridges. They need to know that when they get out, they haven’t been forgotten.”

Pete steps back from the microphone as the audience offers him warm applause. He then walks from underneath the tent to the sidewalk. As he moves down Court Street, the crowd of about sixty people, myself included, begin falling in line behind him. Those of us with signs in our hands hold them aloft. Together, we walk north down Court Street.
before turning one block to take North Congress Avenue and loop back south towards The Ridges.

We pass by The GP as we crest the hill that is North Congress Avenue. A large sheet hangs from the empty front porch with “Walk the Walk for Mental Illness” painted on it in a rainbow of colors. A few members who either are unable or decided not to walk are visible on the back porch and offer a wave as we pass the house. Tom’s face stands out among the bunch visible on the back porch, and he has a small smile on his face. Many of the persons in the crowd return the members’ waves, and a few of them let their gaze linger over the house.

We continue past The GP down the sidewalk along North Congress and follow it down to the bridge that crosses the small Hocking River. On the opposite side of the river and atop a forested bluff is the former Athens Mental Health Center. As a group, we cross the bridge and gather in the park at the bottom of the hill before walking up to the building via an old, brick road with moss growing between the blocks.

Eventually we find ourselves before the entrance to the four-story building with the two towers rising from either side of the entryway. It is an imposing sight to behold. I try to imagine the thousands of persons who have occupied these walls as patients. Though the rolling green lawns and forests today have been converted into nature trails and recreational facilities, I can almost imagine patients milling around on the grounds tending to the landscape as part of their daily chores. The founding members Alan Stein and Gary Meyer, who had spent time within these walls, surface in my mind. Then Rita Gillick followed with her accomplishments as a mental health activist after she walked out the doors of this building for the final time. And finally, I wonder how many patients,
after leaving this hospital, benefited from Rita’s efforts through AMHI, Help Mate, and The Gathering Place to alleviate the loneliness arising from being marked as different within a world where one has few, if any, social connections beyond the home.

As we continue our walk around the grounds, we come upon a cemetery. I walk with the group through the rows of head stones. Many of the markers identify the person laid to rest by his or her patient number only – their names lost in the paperwork generated by the hospital’s bureaucracy. But there are some with markers that reveal the name of the person buried below. Two headstones, those of Israel H. Johnson and Eli Stevens, catch my attention more than the others.

On Memorial Day of 2012, I attended a service announcing the identification of the graves of Israel H. Johnson and Eli Stevens due to the efforts of Doug McCabe with the Robert E. and Jean R. Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections in Alden Library on the Ohio University campus. Israel H. Johnson served with the 27th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Troops in the United States Civil War. And Eli Stevens fought in the confederate army during the Civil War. It is believed that both Johnson and Stevens were admitted to the Athens Mental Health Center for exhibiting post-traumatic stress-like symptoms almost one hundred years before it was recognized as a mental illness. Ada Woodson Adams, president of the Multicultural Center in Chesterhill, Ohio, noted that Israel Johnson, and the other African American troops serving in the military during the Civil War, not only had to worry about the significant stressors of battle, but also the very real and present racism that existed in the United States during the 19th century. As such,

34 This name is not a pseudonym.
African American soldiers as a whole may have been exposed to more potentially traumatic experiences beyond the already significant stressor of battle.

As we continue our walk, the death dates on the headstones grow later and later: the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s. I wonder if Rita had known any of these individuals before they had been laid to their final rest in this cemetery.

We walk along the nature trails that weave through The Ridges property and stumble upon several other graveyards where other patients of the hospital have been laid to rest. I see Pete walking amid the group with a cigarette burningly steadily in his hand. We make eye contact. He nods at me with a small grin breaking across his face before he brings his cigarette up to his mouth, takes a long drag, and begins surveying the crowd of people that have taken time out of their day to walk through a piece of the history of mental health. Eventually, our journey begins to take us down from The Ridges and back across the river. Our next destination is Appalachian Behavior Health Care where we will convene in the gymnasium for lunch.

As I sit in the bustle of the gymnasium next to Adam, Wicked Wiccan, and Derrick, I ponder the time I have spent with The Gathering Place. When I first entered the organization as a volunteer, I did not anticipate my involvement evolving to the point where I would take an activist role in support of mental health issues facing the community. Yet here I am sitting and enjoying lunch with persons who invited me into the life they experience together as members of The Gathering Place. And together, we publicly threw our support behind and identified with the community of people living with mental illness in Athens, Ohio.
This is an adequate stopping place with regard to the story of my experiences making music with the members of The Gathering Place. As of the writing of this dissertation, I still continue my involvement with the music programs sponsored by the organization. And I still continue to keep in contact with the members who I see on occasion walking the streets of Athens on their way to work, or the library, or the house. But with regard to this dissertation I have shared multiple meaningful moments of music making that warrant some sustained engagement in order to highlight the significance of music as a dialogical modality of embodied expression for voicing the ineffable experiences of self and community. We now turn to a summary consideration of the possibilities music opens for how we imagine relationships between diverse selves and others.
CHAPTER 7: MUSIC’S DIALOGIC PROMISE

So, here we are at the conclusion of this dissertation and faced with the question I posed in Chapter 3 – *How is music experienced as a relational modality of self and communal expression?* I grappled with this question throughout the writing of this dissertation. Not because I felt I did not have enough experiences to show the meanings music has in the lives of the members and the organization as a whole. My numerous conversations, both musical and verbal, with the members on the back porch or in the sitting room over the three years of my involvement provided me a wealth of material with which to work. Meanwhile, during my time there I have grown close to the members and have come to treasure my time at the house. To simply talk about my musical experiences without acknowledging the people with whom I have shared this time would be to filter out the substance of what it meant to me to make music with these people who let me into their lives as both a researcher, and in some cases a friend. I also believe I would be doing The Gathering Place a disservice if I did not let readers into my experiences in much the same way they welcome those living with and/or are curious about the experience of living with mental illness. But before I begin unpacking these experiences in detail, I want to provide a brief summary of where we have been and where we are going.

I have shared with you Rita Gillick’s experiences as a patient within the institutionalized spaces of two state mental hospitals, as well as her service to the ex-patient community of Athens, Ohio, as an accomplished mental health activist. Through her story we also came to learn about the era of deinstitutionalization that defines the United State’s current stance on mental health care, as well as the emergence of the
person-centered clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation as a meaningful node within a community mental health network. I then provided a tour of the house at 7 North Congress Avenue out of which The GP operates and where members come to experience a home/family-like environment. Taken together, Chapters One and Two serve as the sociophysical context in which my musical experiences with the members unfolded.

Additionally, I have shared with the reader two significant aspects of what I have described as my being a highly sensitive person (Aron, 1996). Specifically, I related my turbulent past living with mental illness and receiving a criminal conviction, as well as my relationship with music. Across Chapters Three, Four and Five I narrated in detail my experiences making music with the members during our GP Jams and music therapy, as well as the story of folk musician and mental health advocate Pete Wuscher and his community event, Walk the Walk, to raise awareness of mental health issues within the community. Through my experiences I have shown how music establishes a corporeal relation between diverse selves and others that presences the affective and temporal contours of human experience. Presuming your familiarity with both the story of The Gathering Place and my musical experiences there, we are in a position to speak to what I believe is music’s dialogic promise to foster an embodied relation between diverse selves and others that unites them in their difference.

In the following pages I will delineate three of music’s distinctive capacities through which we may realize its dialogic promise. These capacities include: (1) music as embodied acknowledgement, (2) music as an invitation for dwelling, and (3) music as the performance of corporeal community. In discussing each of these qualities of music as a dialogic relation, I unpack the significance of my musical experiences with the
organization in a shift from showing my experiences to indicating what I believe is of conceptual value. After addressing these themes I propose some future avenues of communication inquiry opened through conceiving of music as a dialogic expression. Finally, I provide some closing thoughts on the composition of this dissertation through my reflections upon my experiences during my three years of involvement with The Gathering Place as a researcher, musician, advocate, and friend.

Music as Embodied Acknowledgement

My understanding of music as embodied acknowledgement is a dialogic quality of musical expression that I have experienced **viscerally** since I began making music as a clarinetist in the 5th grade band. As a band, our collective sound awoke something within me that words had never been able to do, and I began to crave the way a song could resonate with my particular mood or fill me with another, sometimes foreign feeling. But it was not just listening to music that fulfilled me, it was **making** that sound in whatever fashion I could that began to possess me. Knowing the sound was coming from my breath blowing across the reed or my fingers working the frets and strings of my bass made me feel powerful in letting me be able to express otherwise ineffable feelings with a visceral intensity. And to rehearse the conversation I had with a close friend during the summer before my formal felony conviction, I shared with him if he wanted to know how I felt that he should listen to what I play.

The significance of this statement from a communication standpoint would not hit me until several years later when I began reading dialogic philosophy while also making music with the members of The Gathering Place. Buber’s (1958) description of the *I-Thou* – pure relation – immediately conjured my experiences playing rock cover songs
with my guitarist and drummer friends while in high school. Of course, we were not in the Thou, in the pure sense, because the reality of music is that it is a means that renders the possibility of relation as one thing among others. However, there were points when I did feel I was inside my fellow players’ experiences, playing off them, anticipating their rhythms and strums, all of us mutually influencing each other’s sound. Ultimately, we were playing in relation with one another. Even so, it was while making music with the members of The GP that I began to realize that there was something more to this relation than just the making of music. Rather, what was happening was an acknowledgement of the personhood within both the musician and his/her audience. Before we discuss music as embodied acknowledgement, we need to get a grasp on what is entailed when I invoke the notion of acknowledgement.

My invocation of the term comes from communication ethicist Michael Hyde (2006) who understands acknowledgement as a rhetorical act that “grants attention to others and thereby makes room for them in our lives” (p. 1). Acts of acknowledgement exist on a continuum in that they may have the quality of a “life-giving gift” or a “life-draining force.”35 Acknowledgement as a life-giving gift/life-draining force does not

---

35 Hyde’s idea is nothing new within dialogic orientations towards human experience. Martin Buber (see Anderson & Cissna, 1997; Friedman, 1976) and R.D. Laing (1963) refer to acts of confirmation in their works that address the capacity of relation to bring a sense of life, as well as meaning. But what I like about Hyde’s rendition is his invocation of Emmanuel Levinas, the specifics of which will become apparent as we continue. Moreover, Hyde’s idea is particularly relevant within the context of this dissertation because he considers the school shootings that have plagued the landscape of the United States, particularly the 1999 Columbine Massacre (see Hyde, 2004), and that have increasingly become associated with mental illness in the wake of Sandy Hook (see Kopel, 2012; Nocera, 2012). He asks in the case of Dylan Harris and Jacob Klebold how their lives (and the lives of others) may have unfolded differently had room been made for their difference. This is not to say that the gravity of their atrocities should be overlooked in order to wonder what could have happened otherwise if their peers had
require elaborate communicative gestures but may take the simple form of nodding an informal hello to strangers who cross our paths (or choosing not to for that matter). What happens in such exchanges is an affirmation that the person who receives such an act does, in fact, exist. Hyde’s (2011) appraisal of the significance of acknowledgement in our lived experience is worth quoting at length:

Those who remain unacknowledged in everyday life are isolated, marginalized, ignored, and forgotten by others. They suffer the disease of ‘social death.’ The suffering that can accompany this state of being is known to bring about fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, and sometimes even death in the form of suicide or retaliation against those who are rightly or wrongly accused of making our lives so lonely, miserable, and unbearable. (p. 38)

It is easy to see connections between Hyde’s words and the experience of mental illness as I have described it thus far in this dissertation. Moreover, we come to see commonalities between acknowledgment as a “life-giving gift” and the clubhouse belief that all persons, regardless of severe and persistent mental illness, have the capacity to live independently and contribute meaningfully to their own communities (Beard, Propst, & Malamud, 1982). In sum, Hyde provides us with an understanding of communication not only as a means for the co-creation and sharing of meaning but as having the capacity to affirm others in their very existence.
Hyde draws extensively from the work of Emmanuel Levinas in his explication of acts of acknowledgement. He emphasizes particularly the significance of otherness in human experience, what Levinas (1981) referred to as *alterity*. Hyde (2006) wrote:

Not the otherness of Being, but rather the otherness of other people is what is most important for Levinas. This ‘human’ dimension of alterity stands as an ever-present rhetorical interruption that calls the self into question as it speaks first and foremost of the goodness of life and how it ought to be respected. (p. 85)

And in this respect for otherness in our lives, Hyde poses his readers a question framed through his understanding of descriptions of acknowledgement as a life-giving gift / life-draining force: Are you being just in all that you say and do? And he encourages us to address this question every day through taking time to ask “to what extent [our] thoughts and actions are ‘repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing’ or otherwise contributing to social and/or biological death” (p. 137). While Hyde’s rehearsal of Levinas’s ethical philosophy in his articulation of acknowledgement is no doubt useful, I do not feel that he utilizes the Levinasian medium to its fullest capacity. After all, as academics the mediums with which we work are ideas, and as Dewey (1934) might say, “The important thing is that a work of art exploit *its* medium to the uttermost” (p. 237).

In Chapter Three, I mentioned Levinas in relation to someone being a highly sensitive person because of the attention he pays to the body through his notion of sensibility. There I described sensibility as the passive vulnerability of persons in relation to their sociophysical environment. To hone this idea for our current purpose, consider Levinas’s rendering: “Vulnerability, exposure to outrage, to wounding, passivity more passive than all patience, passivity of the accusative form . . . and this, pushed to the
limit, is sensibility” (p. 15). When we enter into relation, we are not simply consciousnesses in communion but embodied selves vulnerable before others – others, as Levinas says, who “affect us despite ourselves.” And this is no mere vulnerability to the labels that others may bestow upon us according to social or institutional standards with the potential for marginalization. This is a vulnerability of the flesh “in the duty to give to the other even the bread out of one’s own mouth and the coat from one’s shoulders” (p. 55). Levinasian Megan Craig (2010), who also pays respect to his notion of sensibility, observed that his experiences as Jewish and as an inmate of a Nazi prisoner of war camp as a captured soldier of the French army significantly shaped this notion. And Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (1959/2006) described in vivid detail the psychological and physical violence that Jewish people suffered at the hands of the Nazis. I share this not to paint a bleak picture of humanity but to emphasize the vulnerability of the body at the hands of others. And when we revisit acts of acknowledgement with this aspect of Levinas's philosophy in mind, we find our warrant to explore music’s capacity to act as an embodied acknowledgement.

To ensure that we are on the same page with regard to the meaningful contours of musical expression, we would do well to remember that music has the capacity to arouse what Shepherd and Wicke (1998) referred to as states of awareness. These states of awareness arise not through a referential relation with the objective world but, as Susan Langer (1942) described, non-discursively – keeping true to the “life of feeling” (p. 243). Throughout this dissertation, I performed these states of awareness by sharing my experiences of falling into what Schutz (1971; 1976) described as the durée, the inner experience of time as presenced and evoked within others by the performer. I also
highlighted the affective contours of musical sounds as aroused through the somber and uplifting feel of the minor and major chords respectively (among other feelings). Moreover, borrowing from Buber (1958), music presents a *living mutual relation* in performer and audience who may stand in the *living center* of song. Even so, presencing states of awareness while experiencing the living center of song is only a part of the equation.

There is an intimate relation between musical expressions and lived experience. Dewey (1934) reminds us that aesthetic mediums provide opportunities for persons to express those experiences that arise from their relation to their sociophysical environments in a fashion that may not be uttered in any other language (see also Buber, 1965). As such, what we perceive in those expressions we understand as aesthetic are not simply art, but lived expressions of *personhood*. Moreover, the meanings that we derive from aesthetic experience arise in what Bakhtin (1990) described as the *unity of answerability*—answering the aesthetic address with our own situated lives.

I felt this theme of embodied acknowledgement emerging as I heard various members describe music as a means of sharing themselves when words fail. To begin, consider the following from Dewey (1934), “Many a person is unhappy, tortured within, because he [sic] has at command no art of expressive action” (p. 68). Remember that Jordan shared with me during a GP Jams session that he often uses music to articulate otherwise hard to express emotions, as he says, “It seems like a lot of times what I am trying to say doesn’t come out the right way.” In these instances he would use songs to convey to his girlfriend a particular feeling that eluded him linguistically. To bolster Jordan’s description of his relationship with music, recall Tom Sepeck’s testimony during
the music therapy session that he uses music to supplement what he perceives as his limited vocabulary. When words fail him, and in nearly identical fashion to Jordan, Tom remarked, “I can put a recording on to communicate a feeling.” Moreover, in a chapter entitled “Music Lessons” that did not make the final cut of this dissertation (more will be shared about that in a moment), I depicted a conversation with a member, let’s call him John, who found out I played guitar and wanted to know if I could give him lessons. I said yes, but sadly, he never committed to our first meeting. Even so, I’ll never forget what he shared with me in his asking, “I’m just looking for another way to express myself.” Each of these thoughts – by Jordan, Tom, and John – speaks to the presence of feelings within our bodies demanding expression but unable to find a way out. When words are no longer able to articulate the complex emotions that arise in our lived experience, we must turn to other expressive modalities in order to render otherwise elusive meanings. Music fills this role by allowing persons an opportunity to show their feelings in order to make an appeal to their emotions, rather than articulating their thoughts as when faced with the telling of an experience. These testimonies allow us to take seriously music as an expressive act, but now we need to explore how it is experienced as a corporeal expression.

During a music therapy session, Wicked Wiccan spoke directly to the corporeal experience of musical expression. He shared that he lives with bi-polar disorder and his mood has a significant influence upon the music he chooses to listen to. Particularly he would use music to (de)intensify his anxiety through listening either to quieter music or to something heavy such as punk or metal. He noted specifically that he experiences music as a particular vibe that one feels, which he believes is like an electrical shock,
with the capacity to influence how one experiences him or her self. We perceive in his statement that music is not so much what one hears and makes sense of cognitively but what is felt with corporeal consequences. The experience of drumming with Wicked Wiccan when our eyes became locked and our breathing synchronized speaks in an embodied way to his understanding of how he experiences music’s corporeal influence. I also find it hard not to recall Paul’s performances of air guitar and his outward expression of an internal emotional state as rendered through what Auslander (2006) referred to as “guitar face.” Though Paul vocalized the sound of the screeching and soloing guitar, we glean from the pained grimace on his face that his screeches were not superficial utterances, but heart-felt expressions of the body. But it was Tony Malone who helped me see that music is more than expressive but acknowledges the significance of the body in human experience.

Tony’s impassioned testimony after performing “More than a Feeling” during music therapy described the music’s capacity to help soldiers and police presence those intense emotions they have suppressed in order carry out their responsibilities (see also, Austin-Ketch et al., 2012). We see in Tony’s offering a lived understanding that music does more than just arouse a state of awareness; what is happening is that music animates otherwise unexpressed aspects of ourselves. And Jordan, bolstering Tony’s comment, notes how those emotions do not go away and therefore cause people to “snap.” They clamor for release, for acknowledgment; and sometimes their desire to escape the body brings people to commit acts of violence against loved ones (see Resick, Monson, & Rizvi, 2009). To speak through Hyde’s (2006) understanding of acknowledgement, music grants attention to our bodies and makes room for their expressions in our lives.
To summarize the first aspect of music’s dialogic promise – music as embodied acknowledgement – music serves as a meaningful modality of expression to help us voice and recognize the ineffable when words fail us. Understood as a meaningful modality, we see music as a reflection of one’s embodied experience of self. Significant here is the body’s need to express and be acknowledged in one’s lived experiences with others. And the capacity of music to presence those otherwise ineffable contours of life allows us to approach music not just as a pleasurable experience. Rather, it is one that, as Hyde (2006) described, grants attention to one’s embodied experiences and makes room for both their expression and reception in a particular modality of social intercourse.

Hyde speaks from a rhetorical perspective, an area of communication inquiry that understands music as an appeal to pathos that exists in relation to the lyrical content of song (see Booth, 1976; Irvine & Kirkpatrick, 1972; Le Coat, 1976; Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) wrote with regard to lyrical expressions, “This is not to say the symphony does not ‘communicate’ differently to other listeners. However, we contend that it does not function as a rhetorical artifact communicating an identifiable worldview to those listeners” (p. 401). But this is not to say that there is not a deep reverence for the music accompanying the lyrics held by rhetoricians. For as Booth (1976) argued, “A song is music and words, and music may be the better half, or even all that matters, in a song with relatively uninteresting words” (p. 242). And nor is it to disparage rhetorical approaches to music that have demonstrated how military boot camp songs, jodies, function as “equipment for killing” (Knight, 1990). Yet, by and large there is a tendency in these rhetorical works to approach the symbolic and lyrical functions as opposed to the embodied experience of making music.
Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) have described musical meaning as “virtual” in their
*illusion of life* framework for analyzing music’s rhetorical capacities. In light of this
theme of embodied acknowledgement, I beg to differ that music evokes solely illusory
experiences. Being present with others in the musical relation is just as real as any other
body state we experience, and to describe music as an *illusion* is to imply the presence of
a *non-illusory* world. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) reminded us that our bodies are not
capable of disclosing neutral, sensorial perceptions of experience to our consciousness.
Rather, our perceptual equipment, our bodies, are implicated in the same cultural
discourses that constitute us as selves who live in relation to others. I do not suppose that
there is no reality, only that our understanding of what know as reality is not as objective,
or as stable as one might think. Moreover, this notion of illusion suggests that the *visceral*
response to music is somehow fake. Consider the following from Shepherd and Wicke in
light of Tony’s impassioned description of music’s virtue, “[T]he sounds of music *grip*
the body with an instantaneous firmness whose character and significance nonetheless
remain negotiable from person to person and from moment to moment” (p. 175, original
emphasis). Though music is certainly capable of arousing virtual experiences when put in
the service of lyrics or through the arousal of memories from past experiences (see also
DeChaine, 2002; Levitin, 2006), there is nothing *virtual* about the physical experience of
music. Music creates and expresses meanings in the body – it is *felt* in the body – just as
much as it means through the arousal of virtual experiences or associations.

In offering this rendering of music as embodied acknowledgement, I want to be
very careful to note that I am not framing embodied acknowledgement necessarily as a
therapeutic act (nor am I saying that it is not). From my communicative standpoint I
focus first and foremost on music as a relational capacity. I share this detail because recently I gave a talk at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry about the possibilities of music as a relational means of knowing, and a music therapist who was in the audience approached me after the panel. This person, while finding my talk interesting, provided a word of caution that I do not try to come across as a “practitioner” (of what I presumed to be music therapy). I accepted the suggestion graciously while gently emphasizing that I never made such a claim. In fact, noting the interdisciplinary nature of the conference, I made a point to share my background as a communication scholar interested in the relational significance of making music with others. Despite my clarification, I continued to be answered with words of a gentle caution, almost as if to say, “Stay away. This is our territory.”

I share this story to differentiate my relational approach to making music with others from that of music therapy. My goal during my experiences making music with the members at The GP was not to heal them by focusing on the therapeutic values of music as they relate to alleviating suffering (see Garred, 2006) but simply to make music with them. And it just so happened that how I got to know the members and make sense of my experiences at The GP was through the music we played together. Consider the following from my field notes early in my experiences of making music with Jordan:

We jammed today. [Jordan] is a nice guy. My initial thoughts on him being stand-offish were ill gotten. He played a few riffs of songs that he had written. We have a way of falling into each other in a complementary way. We may be of few words, but our musical conversations are rich experiences.
And though our musical conversations were rich and helped me presence this theme of embodied acknowledgement, music’s significance does not stop there. A virtue of aesthetic expression in general and music in particular is that they open the possibility for conversation without placing the demand upon the persons in the musical relation to verbally disclose oneself to others (see also Harter, Quinlan, & Ruhl, 2013). And in this shared presence we find the second theme I wish to address that that speaks to music’s dialogic promise – *music as an invitation to dwelling.*

**Music as an Invitation to Dwelling**

Making music with Jordan and Paul during GP Jams was no doubt meaningful, but the music therapy sessions afford us a deeper look into the dialogic promise of music. With the presence of the music therapists came an *other* orientation towards music than the informal style performed during the GP Jam sessions. I described the musical expressions of the music therapists through the notion of *intonation* (Bakhtin, 1986; Voloshinov, 1973) to describe the *learned* quality of their sound in contrast to the lay sound of the members – a manifestation of what Bakhtin (1981) referred to as the *professional stratification* that exists within language though expressed musically. But in this intonation we begin to feel music’s capacity to establish a relationship between diverse selves and others that meaningfully incorporates and places their difference in conversation with one another. Bakhtin (1973) described such events as *polyphony* – the presencing of distinct voices within the simultaneity of the encounter between diverse selves and others in what Buber (1958) might refer to as the *living center* of song. And remember I shared the notion of *timbre* to perform the unique ways that various instruments voice a particular sound. But what we also feel playing out in the music
therapy sessions is the creation of a space for the expression of one’s relationship with others through music. Specifically, making music with others is an invitation to dwell with others.

In the previous aspect of music’s dialogic promise, we learned of music’s capacity to voice and acknowledge expressions of the body that are otherwise difficult to render through linguistic modalities of expression. By comparison, music therapy provides us an opportunity to examine the shared space that music carves out in experience for the being together of persons. Dialogically speaking, dwelling is a significant notion with regard to exploring possibilities for experiencing ourselves in relation to spaces and others. Heidegger (1971) described places of dwelling as the transformation of space through the act of building an ontologically nourishing environment that fosters possibilities for self-expression, or what Gaston Bachelard (1969) described as creating spaces for the self to *daydream*. To clarify further this notion of dwelling, consider the following from Hyde (2006) with regard to acknowledgement’s capacity to carve out dwelling spaces in human experience:

> Acknowledgment is an act oriented toward what is other than the person performing the act: it works to clear a 'dwelling place' (*ethos*) in space and time where other people and things can be carefully observed and listened to for the purpose of allowing them a say about the truth of their existence. (p. 60)

Accordingly, music carves out a dwelling space in which we may experience ourselves *otherwise* and that creates possibilities for meaningful conversations about the *embodied* existence of our being. And it was during the music therapy sessions where I came to a deeper understanding of the significance of music in the lives of the members.
When entering into a musical relation the arousal of states of awareness creates the possibility for such simultaneous, embodied experiences of self and other. Even though musical expressions must be voiced in some way for an audience to experience the particular arrangement of notes, music’s personal significance does not demand verbal expression. This is not to say that moving linguistic expressions only have their power through a verbalized response. Consistent with our first dialogic aspect, music comes to the mind by way of the feeling body while language comes to the body by way of the rational mind. In my opinion, this inversion is, as I have noted before, a difference that makes a difference (Bateson, 1972). In this embodied suggestion of meaning we find the invitation for a shared dwelling where truths of our existence may be expressed.

I began to experience this theme of music as an invitation to shared experience after Jordan told me that he would listen to and write music while depressed. We need to keep the idea of intonation in mind, the notion that our voices are inflected not simply in superficial ways or through happenstance as with an accent. Rather, Bakhtin (1993) describes intonation as an emotional-volitional tone that expresses our embodied and ideologically situated subjectivity. To reiterate, musical expression is an expression of experience as lived by persons (Dewey, 1934), and music means non-discursively (Langer, 1942) in that the tones that comprise musical expression do not share a fixed relationship to a signifier – in contrast to linguistic expressions that reference an object world. This is not to say that music necessarily is able to express pure relation such as Buber’s (1958) Thou. Music is, after all, an abstraction of experience (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997) however distinct from linguistic expression. But the musical relation is not
one that dictates meanings but rather suggests them through an offering of embodied personess on behalf of those who make the music.

When making music with Jordan after hearing him describe his relationship with music, I began to hear the minor keys of his songs as a tacit invitation to share in his experiences of living with depression and substance abuse. I think particularly of the time after we had finished playing “Sober” by Tool, and he shared with me the connections between that song and substance abuse. And though the lyrical message evokes the particular experience of addiction, one also is invited to experience the nearly unvarying cardiac rhythm of the song that presences the visceral awareness of one’s body in need of a fix – an experience that I was able to identify with – despite differences - through my experience of nicotine addiction. Ultimately, our performance together of the song was an invitation to a shared dwelling, a speaking of a truth of our existence, by creating not only an opportunity to voice the experience of addiction but to show the embodied and persistent craving associated with the experience.

We also experienced through Pete’s offering of “Walk the Walk” a similar invitation to experience otherwise -- only this time through the experience of mental illness writ large. Pete offers a depiction of living with mental illness through emphasizing the importance of making “forward progress” despite the tough circumstances in which one may find him/herself. And though Pete’s optimism with regard to living with mental illness is waning, there is an uplifting feel to his song that reflects his former hopefulness. Further, the general phrasing of the lyrics only suggests the experience of mental illness. Such phrases as “Some will say that you’re somehow lost” and “We’re surrounded by those walls” serve to invite persons to enter into the song
with his or her own experiences of hardship and resultant growth. This is not solely an invitation to recall a particular memory but to experience the particular feelings associated with this remembered experience. And keeping in mind the reflection of self in music as shared through making music with Jordan, we come to see “Walk the Walk” as an invitation to experience and feel Pete’s life as expressed in song. Taken together through the notion of dwelling, we see how Jordan and Pete invoke song to share, as Hyde (2006) might say, a truth about their existence. And this embodied aspect of the invitation to dwelling becomes more pronounced when we turn to the music therapy sessions.

It was common for the music therapists to create space for conversation during our session after we had finished performing a song. Taking time to verbalize one’s experiences is felt to be an important, though debated, component of music therapy (Garred, 2006). During one session in particular, Pete compellingly shared with us how music literally provided him an opportunity to dwell elsewhere from his lived experience in order to help him with cope with panic disorder – which Pete clarified is the fear of panic as opposed to a fear of panicking about something external (see also, Arch & Craske, 2008). However, he shared with us that he would enter into musical worlds of experience in order to occupy an other space to distract him from his panic. We may perceive this as an invitation to dwelling in two ways in that Pete used the space created in the wake of our performance of “More than a Feeling” to share a truth about his experiences of panic in his life. But we also see in his testimony how musical expression

---

36 The difference between the two is that a panicked feeling as a response to losing a significant person in our life, or receiving a bad performance evaluation are perfectly normal experiences. The problem lies in the fear that one may go into a panic for no reason and beyond one’s control.
itself extended an invitation to Pete to enter into an entirely different state of awareness, an invitation to dwell within a different space. Keeping in mind that dwelling is an experience that is expressed in part through the act of building (Heidegger, 1971), song carves out an affectively and temporally contoured sonic space into which he corporeally entered and allowed him to feel differently or otherwise to escape his fear of panic – or as Bachelard (1969) observes to daydream in an other experience of self.

Even though music invites an opportunity to share oneself, music’s significance as a meaningful modality is not dependent upon a verbal articulation. As Shepherd and Wicke (1997) noted, “Individuals can . . . experience states of awareness without rendering them public and therefore giving them material existence in the external world” (p. 171). It is an invitation to experience that, like The Gathering Place, creates a space for people to dwell of their own accord. Harter, Quinlan, and Ruhl (2013) argued that “[a]rt-making can open up dialogue that otherwise might remain dormant” (p. 38) by enabling opportunities for conversation without making an explicit demand for conversation. When thinking of this lack of demand, Billy, the member who performed with trombone comes to mind. He was present at most music therapy sessions and entered into our musical performances willingly and with enthusiasm. But otherwise he rarely spoke, not even a hello or a good-bye when it came time for us to convene and then depart. In this context we should consider the words of Maurice Friedman (1976), “Genuine dialogue can thus be either spoken or silent . . . The essential element of genuine dialogue, therefore, is ‘seeing the other’ or ‘experiencing the other side’” (p. 87). So, even though I cannot speak directly to Billy’s experience of performing in the music
therapy sessions, we should remember the possibilities for seeing/experiencing the other created simply through sharing each other’s presence.

Sometimes music’s invitation to dwelling may be outright rejected. We have experienced several times the refusal to accept the invitation to enter into the musical experience through Jordan’s distanced presence during the music therapy sessions. I had noticed during the music therapy sessions that Jordan’s playing became remarkably reserved and at times almost inaudible. One could see looking at him both during the weekly meetings and the final concert on the front porch that he was not standing in the living center of song. And this absence is not without cause. Remember if you will the basic rhythm sheets he and I were encouraged to play when we first met the music therapists together. Jordan felt that the music therapists did not see him as an intelligent and capable musician as evidenced by his exclamation, “I’m mentally ill, not fucking retarded.”

To summarize, we have felt how music extends an invitation to dwelling to those who enter into the living center of song. As noted, dwelling spaces provide persons with an opportunity to express the truth about their existence. Remember musical expressions are a reflection of lived experience (Dewey, 1934). During the music therapy talk sessions we learned of a common affinity for music possessed by the members and their relation to it, but we also saw an opportunity for the expression of selves. And we learned that one does not necessarily have to participate actively in the conversation as well. As noted, music invites the possibility of conversation, yet in the same breath music may be entered into meaningfully without necessarily disclosing oneself. In this notion of invitation with regard to experiencing the meaningful capacities of music in the lives of
the members, we come to a deeper understanding of the dialogic significance of music as it relates to the unification of diverse selves in the living center of song.

A reader familiar with communication studies scholarship may be thinking in the back of his or her mind that it sounds as if I am describing invitational rhetoric (see Bone, Griffin, & Scholz, 2008; Foss & Griffin, 1995). As Foss and Griffin noted, invitational rhetoric “offers an invitation to understanding – to enter another’s world to better understand an issue and the individual who holds a particular perspective on it” (p. 13). Invitational rhetoric understood in this way is almost synonymous with music as I have rendered it thus far in this dissertation. However, the difference between invitational rhetoric and music as invitation to dwelling is that the former is conceived within and operates through a linguistic medium that speaks from and addresses the rational mind (and then, possibly, the body) with a particular emphasis on sharing and listening to another without the need for persuasion. When considering music (allyrical) as an invitation to dwelling and its capacity to arouse meanings beginning with the body, we see not only an invitation to listen and to hear someone’s message as an embodied expression of their person (hear their humanness if you will). We also are invited to join the meanings musically aroused with our own experiences in the unity of answerability (Bakhtin, 1990). Music is not just an invitation to listen for understanding, but an invitation to listen, experience, and provide our own meaning as the aesthetic expression speaks to our own lives.

It was with this understanding of music’s offering us an invitation to dwelling that we come to the third aspect of music’s dialogic promise that I share in this concluding chapter – music as the performance of corporeal community.
Music as the Performance of Corporeal Community

During the music therapy chapter, I used the notion of *timbre* (Levitin, 2006) to identify the unique vocal qualities of instruments (as well as the unique vocal qualities of individual persons that help us to distinguish one voice from another). Further, I also put this idea in conversation with notions of *polyphony* (Bakhtin, 1986) and *intonation* (Bakhtin, 1973; Voloshinov, 1973) to describe music’s capacities to meaningfully foster relation across difference that promotes the expression of unique and ideologically situated persons (Bakhtin, 1981). But what is important to remember here is that songs do not descend upon us from someplace outside human experience but in the relationship between musicians and their audiences. As Shepherd and Wicke (1997) wrote with regard to musicology’s tendency to reduce music to its sounds, “without sounds – no music; without people – no music” (p. 175). And it is in this social quality of music that we are able to see the relationship between musical expression and community.

In Chapter 6, I focused on one member/musician, Pete Wuscher, in order to speak directly to the significance of music as a lived expression of community. Through “Walk the Walk,” both the song and the event, we delved deeper into the notion of song as the *living center* (Buber, 1958) of relation in which diverse persons may stand in living mutual relation. We also came to learn that community is not solely a designation of a group of people, but a particular quality of communication that we share with others. Continuing with the understanding of music as an invitation to dwelling, this *community* quality of communication is what Shepherd (2001) referred to as a *gift* – an act of communion where we give ourselves volitionally in our relations with others with faith they will do the same. Adopting an orientation towards communication conceived as *gift*
creates the possibility for what Shepherd described as the ideal of communication, “the simultaneous experience of self and other” (p. 32). From the standpoint of linguistic communication, this ideal may seem beyond the grasp of persons without the capacity to engage in telepathy, but from the standpoint of music this ideal comes within reach.

Throughout this dissertation I have performed repeatedly music’s capacities to arouse embodied state of awareness within those who enter into the musical relation. Though these states of awareness are felt viscerally, they do not possess inherent meaning – only when we answer the musical address with the unity of answerability (Bakhtin, 1990) do meanings emerge from musical experiences. Although music may be seductive in its sounds, it has no influence over persons who do not enter into and take a stand within the living center of song (Buber, 1958). With regard to those who make the choice to enter into the living center of song, there is that previously mentioned invitation or opportunity to experience, in an embodied way, Shepherd’s (2001) ideal of communication understood as the simultaneous experience of self and other. With such a conception in mind, it is easy to draw connections between Shepherd’s rendering of communication as a gift we give volitionally unto others when entering into relation and the experience of making music with others. But that does not mean we should take such connections as self-evident.

Music’s capacity to perform community begins at the interpersonal level – in the relation between a musician and his/her audience. Maurice Friedman (1976), drawing upon the work of Martin Buber, understood the possibility of community only when persons meet and give to each other openly with a reverence for the between of human interaction. It is in that between that one finds the ephemeral presence of the Thou and
the ever-present possibility of our being with others (Buber, 1958). In the song “Unfolding” performed by Jordan and myself, we see the emergence of music’s capacity to invoke corporeal community as expressed interpersonally. Together, we stand in the living center of song, his guitar and my bass, each of us intoned distinctly both in our instruments and as ideologically situated persons. Together we arouse a contemplative state of awareness within those who accept our music’s invitation to dwell and experience the truth, in part, of another’s existence, as well as to share, or at least become aware of, a particular truth of our own. But in this song we also see an invitation extended to those who enter into a living mutual relation with the living center of song to experience music not as an individual but as a part of a corporeal community.

To present one example of music’s capacity to unite persons in a common state of awareness while also appreciating the significance of their diversity, recall the song I shared entitled “Presencing the Jam.” Through this performance the reader has the opportunity to experience directly a once-occurrent (Bakhtin, 1993) musical conversation between the members, music therapists, and myself – an expression of polyphony (Bakhtin, 1986) – incorporating diverse people. Approaching this performance superficially we may identify the timbres, or voices, of the instruments that give rise to this particular song. Meanwhile, the piano, bells, guitar, and drums coalesce together in a manner that unites their diversity within the living center of relation (Buber, 1958) – a harmonic expression of the dialogic ideal. This said, I want to take a deeper look and share how the persons were involved in the scenario.

I drew upon Eisenberg’s (1990) notion of “jamming” when I initially shared this experience, particularly his belief that these experiences are possible within non-
disclosive relationships. Within our circle were several different worlds of lived experience, and each of us had an instrument. I cannot speak for everyone, but there were a few people within the circle with whom I shared a relationship that I would describe as friendship, namely Jordan, Pete, Adam, and Paul. However, Derrick, the music therapists, and Billy were each a mystery to me. Even so, this lack of familiarity did not prevent the unfolding of an encounter that promoted what Goodall and Kellet (2004) understand as *peak experience* that fosters a “deeper sense of connection between oneself and others” (p. 167). One may experience directly the point in “Presencing the Jam” when this deeper sense of connection became apparent in our musical relation at the 1:38 mark of the recording when the drums become synchronized and presence fully the living center of relation as it emerges between us. And it is important to note that this deep connection between self and other as presenced through music is not solely one of meaning, but a tactile presence felt through the corporeal experience of music (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997). And in this tactile quality of sound we feel the ephemeral presence of music’s promise as a performance of corporeal community.

In this ephemeral flash of corporeal community we also feel its *fragility* (Adelman & Frey, 1999). The corporeal experience of community is particularly vulnerable to monologic expressions emphasizing one’s individuality at the expense of losing sight of the significance of others. As Buber (1958) argued with regard to monologic conversations that emphasize the self, “The more a man [sic], is mastered by individuality, the deeper does the I sink into unreality” (p. 65). And the same holds true with song.
There are two examples that come readily to mind that illustrate dialogic contours of song and their susceptibility to monologic influence. During GP Jams, particularly our performances of “Free Bird,” Paul had the tendency to assert his understanding of the song as opposed to the song as it was being performed by him, Jordan, and me. He would interrupt Jordan and me when the song did not go according to his understanding of how the song should flow, for example when we would ask Jordan about a guitar solo that was not performed. This is not to critique Paul’s insistence on a read of the song true to his experience, but rather to show the fragility of the musical relationship. In his insistence to hear the guitar solo performed during “Free Bird,” the living center of the song was jeopardized and in these instances disappeared along with the song. We also experience another case of the fragility of the musical relation through the minor conflict that arose when the role of singing “Suzy Q” was passed from Derrick to Adam. Though Derrick’s absence did not bring the musical relation established between the rest of the music therapy participants to a halt, as Paul’s interjections had the tendency to do during Jordan’s and my performance, our sound was clearly missing the piano flair that he uniquely brought to the music making experience. Though music carries with it the promise to unite diverse selves and others in a corporeal relation, there is no guarantee of a lasting and embodied relation between self and other even while in the musical relation. And here we may turn to the song “Walk the Walk” to further explore music’s capacities as an expression of corporeal community.

As a song “Walk the Walk” highlights both the promise and fragility of music’s capacity to foster a sense of corporeal community. First, we may see this song as an expression of a particular community through the embodied modality of music. As a
musical expression, “Walk the Walk” is an invitation to those who enter into the living center of its song to hear/feel a truth about the experience of living with mental illness. In doing so, we experience a life of struggle generally phrased lyrically so that we may be able hear the song through our own personal experiences in the unity of answerability (Bakhtin, 1990). But to go deeper, the lyrics of “Walk the Walk” do not solely belong to Pete – they have a quality that Bakhtin (1981) would refer to as double-voicedness in that reflected in his words also are the experiences of the members who have shared their lives with him. He speaks with and through these members as much as he speaks from himself. As such, when hearing “Walk the Walk,” we may accept the invitation to enter the living center of song and experience the corporeal relation that manifests between the musician and his/her audience.

And “Walk the Walk” as a community event functioned in ways similar to the song. In the performance of song persons are invited to enter volitionally into an experience. The rally in front of the courthouse before the walk through The Ridges also was an invitation to listen to the experience of living with mental illness. However, though there were many people of various ages present at the event, the encounter I had with the volunteers who engaged in small talk and refused to hold signs shows that the invitation to experience otherness is not always accepted.

Dialogic thinkers tend to think that there is a general absence of feelings of community. The significance of the individual in the West has a tendency to foster monologic expression over dialogue relations that recognize and respect difference with which we share our lives. As such, communication ethicists such as Ron Arnett (1994) believe in “a loss of trust in existence, initiated by the uncertainty and mistrust that
surrounds us” (p. 230). What has a resulted is an existential homelessness in that what has been lost are common stories upon which to build communal relations between diverse selves and others. Arnett believed that this existential homelessness is the result of a collective loss of trust in dialogue and the absence of courage to stand faithfully in living mutual relation with others.

However, I believe there is hope to be found in music. Consider the words of cultural studies scholar and democratic advocate Jaylynne Hutchinson (2004) with regard to rediscovering our trust in the dialogic relation:

We know we live among strangers, and it is when individuals or groups of individuals begin to hate, discriminate, create obstacles, and endorse or participate in violence that we must act. But rather than asking the simplistic question ‘Why can’t we all just get along?’ we need to create a sense of acceptance, trust, and deep respect for the stranger or for those with whom we are not in contact” (p. 86)

And in light of what we know about music’s capacity to arouse a common embodied experience, I believe music is a meaningful modality to begin building that sense of trust.

Those people living with mental illness are some of those strangers who walk among us, and remember, we are strangers as well to those members of our communities with whom we do not enter into daily intercourse. Meanings as we experience them cognitively may have been decentered to the point of all certainty diminishing in the wake of postmodern thought (Shepherd, 2001). But that does not mean that we have to lose a common humanity, and music and its capacity to address the body may help us achieve such a common sense of relation. Though we may not agree on various issues, that does not preclude the possibility that we may feel together in our difference.
To bring this section to a close, I have shared with the reader three aspects of music’s dialogic promise to those who enter into the musical relation: *music as embodied acknowledgement, music as an invitation to dwelling, and music as an expression of corporeal community*. Music is not solely an expression of organized sound but offers to those whose who accept the invitation to enter into the living center of song an opportunity to express and have oneself affirmed in our corporeal being. Moreover, we may hear in those expressions we understand as musical an expression of the truth of one’s existence in relation to others. And finally, music creates an opportunity to foster a sense of community based on a shared, embodied relation at the level of our humanity. But music’s dialogic promises do not have to be relegated solely to the realm of music. As lyrics influence the shape of a song, so too do our communicative acts bear with them corporeal consequences.

**Rita Reprised**

Rita Gillick’s life provides an opportunity to show music’s capacity to serve as a meaningful lens through which we may view social intercourse as an embodied interaction that provides lived depth to our corporeal experiences. During the writing of this dissertation, I often reflected upon Rita and her experiences as an ex-patient and mental health activist, The Gathering Place being one among her many notable achievements. In this reflection I observe a resonance between her life and music’s dialogic promises as I have described them above. Music’s dialogic promises need not be confined to those experiences we understand as music, but also may help us interpret and make sense of meaning through non-musical modalities. Rita’s life provides us an
opportunity to explore the three promises I have identified – embodied acknowledgement, invitation to dwelling, and performance of corporeal community – within non-musical settings in order to see how musical orientations towards relations may inform the non-musical relations we have with others. In other words, music gives us an opportunity to explore the ways in which our everyday communication is an act with corporeal consequences. In this section I will share how each of music’s dialogic promises are presenced within non-musical relations.

First, Rita’s devotion to the expatient community may be understood as a performance of music as embodied acknowledgement. Rita’s compassion for her expatient peers stemmed from a visceral, lived understanding of the lonely experience of living with mental illness in a sometimes ignorant and unforgiving community. Knowing loneliness and its tendency to prompt readmission to the hospital (Wechsler, 1960), Rita acknowledged the need for companionship in the lives of the ex-patients by opening her home to those who had nowhere else to go. As Hyde (2006) noted, acts of acknowledgement are those that make room for otherness in our lives, and Rita performed this act genuinely. But hers was not merely a rhetorical act of “welcome,” rather it was an act stemming from an embodied understanding of the experience of the ex-patients. Words create abstract social worlds through linguistic practices, but these abstractions pierce the body directly and in turn are inspired by the body. To communicate music’s promise as embodied acknowledge is to recognize others in their corporeal experience when addressed by and called to answer to, and sometimes answer for, the other. In sum, Rita performed this dialogic promise through her corporeal compassion, understanding the experience of another by hearing and responding to them
with a shared understanding of the visceral experiences that one faces when living with mental illness.

Second, in opening her home we see Rita performing music’s second dialogic promise to offer an invitation to dwell to those who answer its address. Remember, as Hyde noted, to dwell is to exist meaningfully within a space where one has the opportunity to express the truth about his or her experience. To enter into the living center of song is to enter into another experience of reality. Alfred Schutz (1971, 1976) spoke to the alternative experience of time when we enter into the durée, and Shepherd and Wicke (1997) clued us into the affective contours of experience that music is able to arouse through particular states of awareness. In sum, music offers us an opportunity to experience ourselves otherwise. By opening her home to the ex-patient community, which was a decision motivated by her visceral understanding of mental illness, Rita provided the ex-patients a meaningful space to be with others – a home. In doing so, Rita gave them a space otherwise not open to the experience of mental illness; she offered them a space where mental illness became the norm and not an other, minority population. She offered them a place to feel significant in an encompassing environment where that feeling was otherwise difficult to achieve. As Pete told me during a conversation one day on the back porch, “Here, I can just be Pete.”

Finally, enacted through the continued resonance of Rita’s devotion to those living with mental illness is music’s promise to perform corporeal community. When addressing this third capacity, it is important to note that Rita has become the living center of the “song” of The Gathering Place. Generated from Rita’s open invitation to the ex-patient community to dwell meaningfully with others has been the emergence of a
community of people within Athens who understand compassionately those living with the experience of mental illness. However, communities are fragile in that they depend upon relational bonds vulnerable to both our ideologically situated beliefs and ever-present mortality (Adelman & Frey, 1999). And like Paul falling out of song when playing Lynyrd Skynyrd in order to pursue his personal agenda, we see that the community fabric of The Gathering Place is susceptible to disintegration when personal interests are pursued to the detriment of the whole or when incompatible world views arrive at seemingly irresolvable differences.

Taken together, we see how the story of Rita’s life creates an opportunity for us to witness how music may be used as a meaningful lens through which to pose edifying questions about lived experience. Music reminds us that communication is an inherently embodied act. Music helps us remember that the words we choose to employ may arouse particular bodily states that both allow us the capacity to acknowledge persons in their difference while creating a space for them to share their experience (embodied acknowledgement and invitation to dwell respectively). But moreover, a musical orientation towards human experience allows us to conceive the ideal of communication and community, which as Shepherd (2001) described, is the simultaneous experience of self and other. Music creates possibilities to share embodied states of awareness that allow for the presencing of a corporeal community, one based not in the abstract morality of the public, but one based in shared lived experience. Future research inspired by the writing of this dissertation will explore further the ways in which music and linguistic modalities of expression mutually influence one another in edifying ways. At this point, I find it necessary to offer some commentary on how I arrived at these three dialogic
promises that music answers when we invoke it as a modality for self and communal expression and as a metaphor for interpreting human communication.

Existential Hermeneutics

In Chapter Three I described for the reader the composition of this dissertation in general terms. We know that I spent three years in the field taking field notes, recording music sessions, and interviewing members regarding their experiences of the organization. Though this information tells you how I went about gathering the lived experiences that gave rise to this project, it says very little about the analytic approaches I undertook to make sense of this information.

In developing the notion of music’s dialogic promise, I analyzed my musical relationships with the members through what Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) describe as an existential hermeneutic approach. An existential hermeneutic approach is one that is grounded within existential phenomenology and shares common affinities with dialogic approaches to human experience in that the subject of such analysis is “individuals in concrete situations of life” (p. 117) enacted with a mind towards care and understanding.

First, there is an element of care involved with existential hermeneutics in that there is an assumption of humanity that goes as follows: “We are placed in the world as the element of possibility in reality” (p. 117). As an element of possibility persons do not have the institutionalized identity of “subject” as if s/he were a homogenous entity. Rather, persons come to experience themselves and be recognized as persons only through the relationships into which they enter within their sociophysical environments. This element of care also resonates well with dialogic orientations towards human
experience that understands personhood as unfolding in relation with others (Buber, 1958).

Second, there is a focus on understanding that takes place within existential hermeneutics. With regard to understanding, “truth constitutes an insight, an intuition” (p. 119) that is arrived at through considering ideas with a mind to their historicity as ideas - for nothing in our social and physical environments exists in a vacuum. Moreover, there is an emphasis on experience as the “fountainhead of all knowledge” (p. 119) that resonates well with the pragmatist orientation of this dissertation. As such, how we come to know is not solely through particular processes that legitimate knowledge, but rather is a consequence of our dynamic interrelationships with our sociophysical environments that we engage with all of our senses.

In performing existential hermeneutic analysis, I also practiced what Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) have described as writing as a method of inquiry. I performed this approach through the writing of detailed field notes that served as the inspirations for the stories that comprise this dissertation. I found myself both inside of and feeling with my experiences through the process of storying my musical relationships at The Gathering Place. As described by St. Pierre directly in their co-authored chapter, “I used writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think; that is, I wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction.” Writing helped me to focus on the experiences as they were experienced as opposed to taking the experience and filtering it first through an external interpretive framework that would prevent me from rendering The Gathering Place’s address in my unity of answerability (Bakhtin, 1990).
While reading through my field notes and interview transcripts, I did make notes in the margins to identify themes similar to iterative coding processes that take place as part of grounded theory (see Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Straus, 1967). However, I would like to acknowledge that invoking grounded theory is to also invoke tacit epistemological assumptions. That is, this method of analysis emerged from a social scientific paradigm with certain presuppositions regarding human experience – namely the assumption that persons exist as independent subjects within an objective world. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) wrote with regard to existential hermeneutics, “We are irrevocably merged with our world, already before any conscious reflection, and the polarization between a thinking subject and an object is therefore a dubious secondary construction” (p. 117).

As such, I tried to presence my experiences of the organization through my writing, allowing the theoretical and practical significance reveal itself to me through the telling. With a mind towards writing as knowing, consider the following from author Stephen King (2000), reading “plot” as “method”:

No matter how good you are, no matter how much experience you have, it’s probably impossible to get the entire fossil out of the ground without a few breaks and losses. To get even *most* of it, the shovel must give way to more delicate tools: air hose, palm-pick, perhaps even a toothbrush. Plot is a far bigger tool, the writer’s jackhammer. You can liberate a fossil from hard ground with a jackhammer, no argument there, but you know as well as I do that the jackhammer is going to break almost as much stuff as it liberates. (p. 164).
Though writing and reviewing my field notes (as well as the interview transcripts) helped me to arrive at my understanding of the three aspects of music’s dialogic promise, it was the act of storying my experience where these capacities began to take on a lived, visceral quality sensitive to these experiences as lived.

Moreover, writing about the musical experiences was a particularly difficult part of this dissertation, because I had to transpose the visceral feelings of my body into the abstractions of language – the traditional medium of the academy. Because I could not write myself into the complete experience of song without the presence of some music, I often found myself either playing guitar or bass in order to arouse particular experiences within my body as they were experienced in the story to promote, borrowing a term from Rita Charon (2006), a stereophonic reading that means in the body as much as the mind. But how does one go about evaluating the insights written with an existential hermeneutic sensibility?

William Rawlins, the advisor of this dissertation, shared with me the notion of existential validity when I shared with him my experience of writing this story. I continued to play a role in the GP Jams and music therapy sessions during the writing of this dissertation. But while present with the members in our musical relation, I found myself highly aware of the social interaction unfolding in these meetings, the individual personalities of the members with whom I played, as well as the corporeal experience of our musical expression. And in this awareness there were moments when I almost could predict what members were going to say or how they would react after a particular song to the point where I felt as if I had scripted their actions.
One might say that existential validity borders on solipsism if regarded primarily as an individually accomplished standard (which is not how Rawlins describes it). As long as the researcher makes a claim that his/her rendering of his/her subjects speaks to his/her experience, then we may take its existential validity as ensured. But, dialogically speaking and informed by the understanding of communicative existential life as being-and-becoming-with-others as Rawlins (2009) does, what we understand as knowledge is held accountable by others with whom we share our lives. With this in mind, I wish to offer the reader a statement from cultural critic Dave Hickey (1997) that will serve as a guide for how to evaluate the ideas that I have shared in this dissertation, “I have never taken anything printed in a book to heart that was not somehow confirmed in my ordinary experience – and that did not, to some extent, reform and redeem that experience” (p. 10). So, I ask the reader, have you felt before what I have conveyed through my experiences at The Gathering Place, and has it influenced how you may see and experience yourself and your relationships with others? And if I may make an argument for the significance of these ideas, I also ask that the integrity of this project be held to the pragmatist question posed us by William James (1991), “What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true?” (p. 23).

The stories that comprise this dissertation do not tell the whole story of either my experiences being present with the members or the dialogic capacities of music as a meaningful modality of expression. For example, I drafted one almost complete chapter detailing how I spent close to one year providing guitar lessons to Paul, a significant figure within this dissertation, as well as two significant substantial vignettes involving the use of karaoke by the members during their holiday celebrations. However, I found
putting them in conversation with the other chapters of this dissertation to be a difficult task that I felt at times pulled away from the story I was trying to tell about the dialogic significance of music. Does this mean these experiences were any less meaningful? Absolutely not. They were just as meaningful as what was included in this dissertation, and my experiences teaching Paul, were personally edifying in ways that do not translate well into this text. However, in narrating events choices must be made in order to effectively convey the messages and moments that compose the primary story being told. And that is what I did in rendering this narrative of my experiences making music with persons at The GP. Now I will explore some future areas of inquiry to ask what possibilities may be fostered when we take a musical orientation toward communication inquiry?

Musical Possibilities

There is an aesthetic turn afoot within communication studies. In the wake of postmodernism persons have been faced with the task of crafting lives and meanings within a sociophysical environment devoid of grand narratives of being in the world. In response, communication scholars are beginning to broaden our scope concerning how persons mean in the world. Recently, Brenton Malin (2011) published a piece in Communication Theory that shared the musical experiments of Carl Seashore as an unspoken thread within the history of communication studies. The significance I gleaned from this article is that music is not only meaningful, but has a special place in the lives of persons who express themselves musically. Understanding music as a meaningful modality of relation provides communication scholars with a warrant to explore how
Music allows for an expression self and reception of others distinct from linguistic means of communication primarily through taking the body as the focus of musical meaning.

Music as a relational modality of self and communal expression has largely been underdeveloped within communication studies. William Rawlins (1996) noted that if one wants to get a grasp of what a discipline knows about the phenomenon they take as a collective focus s/he need only turn to how these individuals teach their subject. Within interpersonal communication textbooks music is addressed briefly as an act of appreciative listening, a subset of empathic listening, with the caveat of “for pure enjoyment” (see Floyd, 2009, p. 268) or listed in relation to listening as an experience of “play” or entertainment (see DeVito, 2009, p. 80). But I have also simultaneously invoked dialogic sensibilities in order to presence the relational possibilities inherent within the musical relation. I now want to discuss how taking a musical conception of communication, both as an embodied activity and as a metaphor, may influence how we study relationships as they unfold between persons, beginning first with the classroom and then moving on to other areas of inquiry.

Musical Pedagogy

Music as a metaphor allows us to conceive of communication with a particular sensitivity towards the ineffable contours of human experience that we feel viscerally but are unable to speak to in a direct fashion. Let’s explore briefly how music’s dialogic promise may be applied to the classroom with consequential effect. William James (1899/2010) argued, “Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art . . . To know psychology, therefore, is absolutely no guarantee that we shall be good teachers” (p. 4-5). And in light of this quote, consider the testimony of Bill Rawlins with regard to how his
relationship with music has influenced his approach to engaging students in his classrooms, particularly with regard to jamming with them:

> When you design sets as a musician, you can go about things various ways. You can start off really slow and kinda build a set to a sort of climax, or you can start off with a “Bam!” and get everybody psyched, and then gradually taper off and then build back up to a “Bam!” or some kind of climax. And I actually think about the course of a period, a lot of times, in those sorts of terms. I mean the dynamics that come from music have influenced how I teach. . . . I like to listen to students, and I’m devoted to that, and that’s at the heart of jamming. People who jam, who can improvise together, are very, very aware of what each other is doing, so you can kinda add to it, and so you can kinda be affected by it. So, that improvisational element is a really important part of my teaching. And it is very closely related to listening, and it’s also very closely related to surrender. You have to give yourself to those moments in the classroom. (Anderson & Petokubi, 2010)

It is clear from Rawlins’s testimony that music plays a significant role with regard to shaping how he conceives of the contours of his courses and how he encounters students in the classroom. Though he speaks clearly to how music influences his pedagogy, what more may we learn when exploring music as a dialogic promise as I have rendered it thus far in this dissertation?

Music as a dialogic promise lends itself well to elaboration as a dialogic ethic with regard to engaging students in the classroom. Consider the following from Martin
Buber (1965), who spoke at length about the dialogic responsibility of educators, that is, the education of character:

Only in his whole being, in all his spontaneity can the educator truly affect the whole being of his pupil. For educating characters you do not need a moral genius, but you do need a man who is wholly alive and able to communicate himself directly to this fellow beings. His aliveness streams out to them and affects them most strongly and purely when he has no thought of affecting them.

(p. 105)

Music as a dialogic promise encourages us to foster communicative environments that are sensitive to the passive vulnerability of our students to our “educated” otherness in the classroom. Understanding our words as not only denoting concepts in their abstraction and illustrative explanations – but also as conjuring within our students particular memories and arousing particular embodied experiences of themselves – we are able to engage our students in more robust ways. Consider recent research within instructional communication that has demonstrated that teachers’ communicative behaviors influence students’ emotional experiences of the class as well as their motivation, affective, and cognitive learning (see Titsworth, Quinlan, & Mazer, 2010), as well as their perceptions of enjoyment, pride, and hope (Titsworth, McKenna, Mazer, & Quinlan, 2013). Music as a corporeal means of communion that fosters an embodied relation between self and other may prove promising with regard to engaging students emotionally in the classroom in order to promotes higher orders of thinking. Meanwhile, what may we learn further about communication pedagogy when we take music as a meaningful metaphor for the relation that is established between learners within the classroom?
Another issue concerning the pedagogical potential of music stems from my experiences providing guitar lessons to Paul over the course of a year. When I started teaching guitar to Paul, I had only a rudimentary understanding of the instrument – in fact, I only knew a few chords. So in teaching him how to play, I had to teach myself how to play. This chapter obviously did not make the final cut of this dissertation. However, this was not because the chapter had little value. Quite the contrary. Rather, the story I focused upon throughout this dissertation involved music’s dialogic capacities as a modality of relation. And though these sessions certainly had dialogic significance, I found their relevance more fitting for concentrated discussions of pedagogy – which is not the primary concern of this dissertation. Even so, what I learned in writing the story of this removed chapter is the importance of being vulnerable to others in the pedagogical relation, as well as feeling confident in uncertainty. Educators do not know it all, nor will we ever know it all, but what pedagogical opportunities do we create for our students and ourselves when we surrender to our shortcomings?

_Dwelling and Organizational Resonance_

The second possibility that I feel music’s dialogic promise offers communication theory, particularly organizational communication, stems from music’s capacity for performing _corporeal community_. During our interviews several members from the organization revealed to me that The GP created for them a sense of freedom. And though the house has a layout that facilitates relaxing, it is not so much the space that is important but the relationships developed within that give this space its special feel. But this quality was not just experienced by the members; as my volunteer experience pressed
on, I grew more and more attached to the organization as well. Consider the following from my field notes:

I wasn’t able to get to the GP last week, because I had an assignment due . . . But over the past couple weeks, I have begun to realize how much I miss hanging out at GP. Not having my weekly contact made me kinda lonesome for the crew there. And I haven’t had an opportunity to make music with people, specifically Pete and [Jordan], two people that I make music well with together. GP isn’t just a dissertation site, it’s a place that I am looking incredibly forward to visiting. It is an important part of my life, and I wish I could spend more time there than I already do. It is a needed escape from the pressures of being a Ph.D. student. When I am there, I am able to be there and nowhere else.

And to this day I believe that the back porch at The Gathering Place is one of Athens’s best kept relaxation spots.

But where this idea develops its significance is in relation the notion of dwelling. As Heidegger (1971) described, places of dwelling involve the transformation of space through the act of building into an ontologically nourishing space that fosters possibilities for the self to expression, or what Gaston Bachelard (1969) described as creating spaces for the self to *daydream*. The house out of which The Gathering Place operates serves as the stage for the musical relationships that unfolded between myself and the members. But it also provides abundant opportunity for insight not only into how persons create meaningful spaces, but the significance of such spaces for persons who do not otherwise have a home in which to dwell. The experience of living with mental illness is a particularly relevant experience for exploring this idea because of the lack of welcoming
places for persons with such marginalized identities to dwell and to experience themselves as meaningful beings in the world. During my interviews with members, countless times they reference feeling a sense of freedom while at The GP – especially those founding members who had spent time previously at the Athens Mental Hospital. Moreover, this welcoming quality is not a taken for granted experience of the house, but one that is continually (re)created in social interaction. And this productive activity is a particularly compelling experience when explored musically.

Music as a metaphor for communication reminds us that our bodies are implicated in the relations that we enter into with others. As hinted at by the members of The Gathering Place, there is a particular feel to the organization that fosters an experience of what we have referred to as dwelling. Organizationally speaking, music allows us to form an understanding of communication that provides us access to explore the body as well as the symbolic meanings. McPhee and Zaug (2009), for example, write of organization as constituted within communicative flows (membership, self-structuring, institutional positioning, and activity coordination). However, when focusing upon linguistically mediated activities, one primarily achieves cognitive understandings of an organization. But when conceived musically we incorporate the body more fully into the experience of organization, which allows us to ask what the particular resonance is of these communication flows and minimally discursive activities that give rise to a particular experience of organizational climate. In the case of The GP, this experience would be a resonance of home. As such, how may music serve as a metaphor of communion to help us make sense of the otherwise ineffable expressions of community involvement conveyed aesthetically through organizational artifacts with corporeal consequences?
Writing Musically

As I bring this dissertation to close, I wish to thank the reader for sharing in these experiences making music with the members of The Gathering Place. Throughout this experience I have found that writing interpretive inquiry is rather similar to making music. Recently, I was at The Gathering Place playing guitar with Jordan on the back porch in front of an audience of about five. Jordan and I were playing our acoustic instruments, so our sound was not impeding the conversation taking place among the folks with whom we were sharing the space. Playing with Jordan that day had a rather relaxed feel. He would start a progression on his guitar, and I would watch his fingers for the appropriate changes before joining in. At first our playing was a little rough as we negotiated our individual understandings of the progression. However, he and I would then find our groove and play through the progression to see where the music would take us in that particular moment. It was in those moments after we turned our attention away from the mechanics of doing to the actual playing of the song that the music really began to spark between us. After awhile our playing would fizzle out and we would sit in brief silence or share a few words before starting into another progression.

Why I experience this activity as a metaphor for interpretive inquiry is that meaningful writing and meaningful music-making both take place only when researchers/artists give themselves over to the process of shaping their medium. Not only does this mean knowing what their respective medium can do – such as evoke vivid imagines or arouse powerful emotions – but also what that medium cannot do. With respect to writing, this means knowing the limits of the medium with regard to rendering experience and being honest with the reader when that is the case to invite another
interpretation. With respect to music, this involves realizing the significance of one’s instrument in relation to the others such as the bass and treble interplay of Jordan’s and my guitars that simultaneously incorporates difference while letting each instrument sound in its uniqueness. Taken together, musical writing with regard to interpretive inquiry should strive to make space for the interpretations of others as opposed to announcing conclusions before their time. My inspiration for writing this ethnography came mostly from Bud Goodall’s (2000) description of new ethnography. After Goodall, I believe that writing inquiry musically should be “constructed out of a writer’s ability to hold an interesting conversation with readers” (p. 14).

Moreover, to write musically is to write with an eye towards being open to the present, for one may not know what one is listening/looking for until s/he has found it. In my experiences making music with Jordan, I found that we had a tendency to discover what were playing in our making of music together. When I began this project, I had one simple question: How is music used by the members of The Gathering Place as a modality of self and communal expression? This question somewhat resembles a simple chord progression that provides guidance for a musical interaction. It directed my attention towards the musical relationships I had with the members while leaving my actual engagement open to the ways in which it was invoked and enacted. Meanwhile, I found that the question began to take on edifying implications as I began to make music with members and not only see firsthand how they invoked music in their lives and as an organization, but realize again the significant role that music had played in my own life.

Writing musically is to keep one’s mind open to the ineffable contours of human experience, those contours that do not lend themselves readily to linguistic expression but
are no less meaningful – and perhaps in some cases more meaningful – than the linguistic expressions that we receive from others. From my experiences making music with Broken Ring, our drummer William Rawlins described the relation he, our guitarist, and I share as a rhythm section in our band as one of “really listening to each other.” Countless times during my experiences making music with Broken Ring I have found myself astounded at how sensitive our band was to the present experience of playing. I recall one time playing at a gig in West Virginia at a local café called The Purple Fiddle. We were halfway through our song “Midnight Stroll” when our singer sang a note that I was not anticipating heralding a continuation of the chorus sooner than anticipated. Without conscious thought, my hand made the necessary adjustment. But what moved me with regard to this experience was that the drums and guitar had also made the necessary, unplanned switch. There was no premeditated conversation; there was no forewarning; we all, within a fraction of a second, went together with the change in the song. The key here is that interpretive researchers, while in the field, should open their senses and be mindful of those contours of experience that do not lend themselves easily to language but emerge palpably nevertheless. Though these meanings may be ineffable, when considered in relation to the unspoken relations established within the band, we see how an unspoken understanding was central to maintaining the living center of song.

To continue with the ineffable contours of human experience, one must try to find ways to render experiences that involve the reader. One way to accomplish this is to take a page from the book of music as invitation, and bring readers into the story by providing them with opportunities to bring their own understandings to bear on the experience. I employed this sensibility in writing this dissertation, for example, when writing the
description of the house. Though I could have used photographs to invite the reader into the house, I elected not to in order to encourage the reader to draw upon his or her own experiences of home to fill in the ineffable contours of what home means to them. For at The Gathering Place, the idea of home is one that has been made by scores of persons living with mental illness who came to The GP because they had nowhere else to go.

Closing Remarks

My involvement with The GP organization was pursued with a desire, as Harter, Norander, and Quinlan (2007) note, to “make theory answerable to life” (p. 109). And in making theory answerable to life, I found myself at points becoming rather intensely involved in the lives of the members. Doing social work, particularly within the non-profit setting (Eschenfelder, 2012) is an emotionally demanding job. As noted by staff members Jason Brust and Charlotte Lundic in Chapter Two, working with the members may at times become straining and necessitates time away from the bustle of the house. Like Charlotte Lundic, their ups and downs would become my ups and downs. Moreover, from time to time I felt the limits of my generosity tested.

Providing Jordan with rides every week for well over a year despite his insistence that it would only be a couple weeks grew incredibly taxing. But this assistance was not simply a matter of giving him a ride into town. Instead, if he did not get a ride into town, he would not be able to pick up his paycheck from The Gathering Place allocated him from the money provided by a health and wellness grant secured by The GP’s Executive Director from the Little Sisters of St. Joseph Church charitable fund. Further, knowing that he had a girlfriend and young child that depended upon that money, I had a hard time
saying no. Weeks turned into months, and those months turned into well over a year.

Consider the following from my field notes written from a place of palpable distress:

This is an instance where it is hard to be a researcher in the field, especially with a group of people who are in need of material and financial and emotional support. They do not have cars, so the people with cars, myself, and I find myself in a situation where I want to help, but I do not necessarily want to help. I do not have the time, and my own stresses with the doctoral program are wearing on me and I don't have emotional capacity to help everyone at the same time. My self is suffering, and I feel that I need to focus on me for a rejuvenation of sorts. I need to get myself back on track before I think I can help anyone. Between J and S needing rides, the occasional call from Pete, and people asking at The GP on a whim if I can help them out. It's a lot, PLUS all of my freaking students.

I mean come on now.

Will this experience turn me away from conducting such fieldwork in the future? Absolutely not! For in addition to these moments of stress were also significant moments of delight. But it is certainly a reminder for researchers who work with underprivileged and underserviced persons that what is taken for granted in our lived experience others, more often than not, have to go without.

So, as I bring this dissertation to a close, I also am finding myself in the situation of having one final summer to spend with the members of The Gathering Place before my life circumstances are calling me elsewhere. I have come to experience the serendipity that is life – those days where an opportunity comes out nowhere – in such a way so as to make no guarantees as to what is in store for my future. I may find myself never returning
to this small community and this special house in southeastern Ohio, or I may find myself back sooner than expected or later on in life. The answers to those questions will reveal themselves at their appropriate times. But as I leave my experiences with the members behind, I am reminded of a statement provided by one member, Gary Meyer, “And remember, you’ll always be a part of The GP no matter where life my take you.”
REFERENCES


Biggs, D., Hovey, N., Tyson, P. J., & MacDonald, S. (2010). Employer and employment agency attitudes towards employing individuals with mental health needs. *Journal of Mental Health, 19*(6), 509-516.


Goodall, H. L. (2000). Writing the new ethnography. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.


James, W. (1899/2010). *Talks to teachers on psychology; And to students on some of life's ideals*. Memphis, TN: General Books.


APPENDIX A: FLOOR PLAN OF THE HOUSE
APPENDIX B: MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Description of Membership Responsibilities

Membership in The Gathering Place is open to all persons regardless of race, sex, religion, national origin or personal belief. Members of The Gathering Place have equal rights in the use of the facilities and participation in the programs of The Gathering Place. Members also share equally the obligation to recognize the rights of fellow members. Disruptive and insulting behavior will not be tolerated, and person engaging in such behavior will be asked to leave. Members have the right of counsel with the staff and other members. The staff is to recognize the right of confidentiality of all members at all times.

Etiquette at The Gathering Place

Members shall arrive at The Gathering Place well groomed, clean, clean clothes, clean hair, shaved (if unbearded male), deodorant, etc.

   Leave coats, hats, etc., on the coat rack by the door.

   Sign in when arriving and sign out when leaving.

   Wear shirts and shoes.

   Do not leave personal items in the house.

Members are allowed to help themselves to food limited to toast, peanut butter, coffee, tea, cheese, and daily leftovers; clean up after themselves after preparing their snack.

   When drinking coffee or tea, use sauces and wash your own cups when finished.

   Beverages to be consumed only in the TV room, living room, and dining room.

TV policy during preplanned meals: TV should be left off.

   In consideration of others less fortunate than yourself, if you bring personal food items into the house, you should either share them or eat in the kitchen. Drink personal beverages in a cup. No cooking personal food items.

   See that kitchen is kept in a clean and orderly manner with dishes and utensils washed and put away.

Treat each other (members and staff) with due respect.
Check with each other before changing channels on the television or radio or playing music on the record player.

Don't monopolize the lazy boy chair.

Don't tear down others behind their back.

Don't act in an abusive manner to members or staff.

Smoking allowed outside only.

The Gathering Place is to be viewed as one of a number of support networks in the community and not as a substitute for others.

Members are obligated to work to improve their mental health.

If a member has been drinking on that day, they must leave until the next day. No drugs or alcohol allowed at The Gathering Place.

No long distance telephone calls unless approved by staff member.

Try to keep all outgoing telephone calls limited to five minutes if possible.

Each do their share of cleaning, ashtrays (smokers), trash, etc.

If significant problems develop with a member, he or she is obligated to seek professional help from a qualified mental agency

**Those who are not eligible** are persons who do not cooperate in improving their own health by:

Not keeping counseling appointments, **NOT** taking medications, and/or **NOT** working on goals.

Persons who continuously lose control and disrupt the social atmosphere of The Gathering Place

Persons who are dependent on alcohol or drugs.

**To participate** in the house activities it was agreed by the members, staff and volunteers alike that each of us will:

Be concerned and helpful to one another.
Strive to maintain and improve our own mental and physical health by continuing or seeking treatment for our health problems.

Do our part in keeping the house and yard clean by contributing a minimum of one hour of work to The Gathering Place each month and will empty our own ash trays and rinse off our own dishes in the kitchen.

Help our committees plan, carry out, and participate in activities
Purpose
The purpose of volunteer service at the "Gathering Place" is to enhance and enrich the lives and experiences of members as they strive to make the transition from life in a mental hospital to life as a full-fledged productive member of the community. Volunteers have a unique opportunity to form relationships with members, help them regain lost skills and assist them in the difficult process of gaining the self-confidence necessary to live successfully in today's complex society.

Volunteer service at the "Gathering Place" also provides the opportunity to perform a useful service, learn new skills, test out career choices and do something worthwhile for the community-and for yourself.

QUALIFICATIONS
A volunteer must
1. have a genuine interest in and concern for people.
2. be open, empathetic, understanding and warm.
3. be accepting of all cultures, races and religious backgrounds.
4. be committed and dependable.

GUIDELINES
1. Important functions of volunteers:
   a. role modeling
   b. being a friend
2. Communication is an important "glue" to our program--the transferring of "little things" as well as big problems to staff members provides consistency.
3. Realistic in expectations--don't disappoint yourself or members by expecting too much or too high of a goal.
4. People's wishes are important--even a small wish; when a person realizes she/she can fulfill a simple wish, bigger steps may become easier.
5. If sick stay home! Many of our folks aren't in the best of health and are easily susceptible to germs-don't make it easier.
6. Give no medication-aspirin is usually available, but staff or volunteers are not to present it to members.
The Gathering Place has a number of sincere members who donate their time and energy for various individual reasons. Their functions are not structured or limited. Most are people who have experienced emotional pain and hospitalization. Many are students or caring members of the community. The following is a list of responsibilities everyone should be aware of.

1. Read the grant to be familiar with the goals of the project.

2. Try to build positive relationships where everyone can feel comfortable and there isn't a threatening possibility of failure in anyone's expectations.

3. Be realistic in expectations of members abilities and encourage and support their efforts toward improvement of community living and social skills. For example, be on time, organize activities, plan budgets and spending, improve health, and feel good about themselves.

4. Don't underestimate your affect on the group. Sharing yourself and your time to just be with even one person in a friendly manner may be all that is needed at times. Sharing talents may develop after you get to know each other and needs and interests become apparent.

5. Protect your privacy, don't give out your phone number or address if you don't want to.

6. Don't get into planning an activity until we make sure it is a possibility.

7. Inform yourself and have some responsibility for--talk of suicide, going back to the hospital, going off medication, unsatisfied with doctor or therapist.

8. Apathy towards involvement lessens as people become more sure of themselves. It took time to get there-it takes time to overcome it. Changing hospital and past habits is a challenge, and rediscovering or developing new ones come slowly.

9. Responsibility for being on time and keeping your promises role models responsible behavior to everyone.

10. Respect for privacy and confidentiality is important no matter how free anyone seems to be about telling their story.

11. Through each other, many doors to the community can be opened. Encourage and support a member by going with him or her the first time s/he tries something new-like a play, concern, sports event, etc. This will make the community less frightening and the member more aware of opportunities for a wider experience.

12. Don't be afraid to be assertive about your personal rights. Community acceptance is important and it must be won by respecting everyone's personal rights.
13. May you participate in our program and leave with a better attitude towards the problems ex-mental patients have in the community and the rewards of new friendships. Though giving yourself and your time may you have the ability to better educate others to a greater acceptance and understanding of those who have suffered mental illness.
Walk the Walk for Mental Health Awareness

On Saturday, October 20th, 2012, at 10:00 a.m., The Athens branch of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and The Gathering Place invite people from within and around the Athens community to participate in the 12th annual Walk the Walk to raise awareness for mental illness. The purpose of this walk is to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness as well as raise funds for both NAMI and The Gathering Place to continue to advocate and provide services for people living with mental illness in and around the Athens community.

Mental illness is a significant health issue within the United States. According to a study by the National Institute of Mental Health, one in four adults experiences a mental health disorder in a given year, one in 17 individuals live with a serious mental illness including schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder, and about one in 10 children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder. The 2004 World Health Report noted that depression is a leading cause of disability in the United States between the ages of 15-44.

The walk will begin in front of the Athens County Courthouse, weave through downtown before stopping at The Gathering Place for a snack, and then proceed to the oldest cemetery at The Ridges. The walk culminates at the Appalachian Behavior Health Care Center for a celebration feast. T-shirts will be available, and there will be a silent auction with arts and crafts created by patients at Appalachian Behavioral Health.

NAMI Athens (National Alliance on Mental Illness), organized in 1987, is a non-profit family based organization with two primary purposes: 1) to advocate for and promote the recovery of people with mental illness and 2) to provide information and support to their families. The Gathering Place is a community-based, non-profit drop-in center for people living with mental illness. Since 1976, the organization has provided a supportive atmosphere, home-like environment, and material resources to help people living with mental illness pursue independent lives in and contribute meaningfully to the Athens community.
Walk the Walk to Raise Awareness for Mental Illness (un-published letter to the editor)

At 9:00 a.m. on October 20th, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and The Gathering Place will host their 12th annual Walk the Walk beginning on the steps of the Athens County Courthouse to raise awareness for mental illness and fight the stigma surrounding this misunderstand affliction that effects millions of people each year. The purpose of this walk is to bring members of the Athens and Ohio University communities together with the hope that through conversation and camaraderie we may come to a deeper understanding of this illness and the impact it has on our community.

When viewed up close, mental illness is not as scary as the media or our imaginations would have us believe. Though mental illness is often the substance of horror films, I would like to offer a different representation based upon direct experience. For the past two and a half years, I have been an active volunteer at The Gathering Place sharing a couple hours each week with people whom have given me reason to take pause and reconsider my own preconceptions of mental illness. I have heard first-hand accounts of the debilitating accounts of depression and the emotional highs and lows of bi-polar disorder. But just as frequently as I have heard accounts of the struggles people with mental illness face, if not more, I have also witnessed first-hand how mental illness does not foreclose upon an individual’s chances to contribute meaningfully to the community to which s/he belongs and live a fulfilling life. Just as much as I have heard testimony to the debilitating aspects of the disease, I have witnessed the impressive capacity of people living with mental illness to write poetry, create beautiful music, produce stunning photography through the Athens Photography Project, and most importantly, work together to create a supportive, home-like environment for those who do not have one, as is the case at The Gathering Place. However, the most powerful lesson I have learned at The Gathering Place is that mental illness does not an individual burden, but something that we, as a society, bear together.

The Centers for Disease Control predict that depression will become the second leading cause of disability by 2020, and the agency also notes that mental illness is related to the occurrence of diabetes, cancer, obesity, and risk behaviors such as smoking and physical activity. Some of us may have personal knowledge of or know someone who has experienced the effects of depression, maybe as a result of a divorce, a death in the family, or another unfortunate event that unexpectedly announces itself in our lives. We know that mental illness is not something to be taken lightly. If we do not personally know of someone with an experience of the illness, chances are we know someone who does. Like people who receive a diagnosis of cancer, diabetes, or Alzheimer’s (and the myriad of other diseases we associate with the body), nobody makes the choice to live with mental illness.

Rosalyn Carter wrote in *Within Our Reach* that the only way we can get over the most significant barrier to mental health treatment, the stigma, is to talk to that friend who has depression or that neighbor how has bi-polar. The point behind this idea is that the people who live with mental illness are not disembodied abstractions floating in the
world of the scary and dangerous. They are the people we meet in our day-to-day realities and most likely people with whom we share daily intercourse. So, on October 20th, NAMI, The Gathering Place, and myself invite you to meet in front of the steps of the Athens Courthouse at 9:00 a.m. to find that friend who lives with depression and that neighbor who lives with bi-polar so that we may come together and make good on Rosalyn Carter’s call. By reducing the distance between ourselves and the experience of mental illness, we can present a unified front to lessen the burden it creates for our community.

Thank you,

Steve Phalen
Doctoral Candidate
Scripps School of Communication Studies
Ohio University