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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

LEISURE PIANO LESSONS:

A CASE STUDY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

PAMELA DAWN PIKE

Norman, Oklahoma

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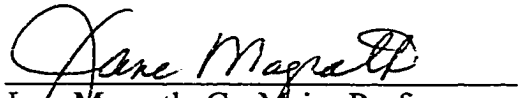
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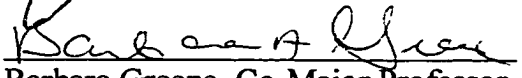
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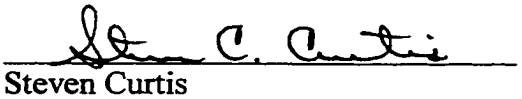
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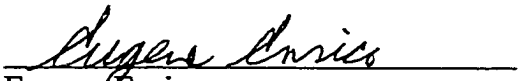
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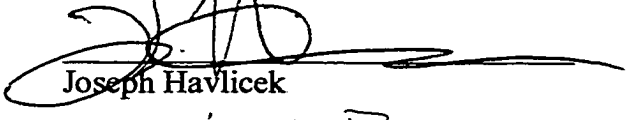
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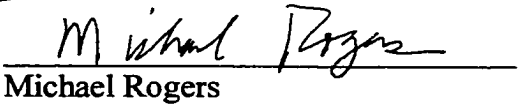

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ABSTRACT

The population of North America over the age of 55 is expected to increase dramatically over the next decade. Life expectancy has also increased and North Americans are leaving the workforce earlier than they did just two decades ago. Thus, Americans find themselves retiring earlier and living longer and healthier lives. A trend toward pursuing learning throughout one's life, defined as lifelong learning, has also been noted. The pursuit of leisure activities upon departure from the professional arena is critical for maintaining health throughout the latter part of one's life. Musicians and piano pedagogues have begun to recognize the important role that engaging in musical activities at an older age can play in one's overall health.

Many students over the age of 55 are engaging in piano lessons as a way of maintaining mental health, of actively participating in musical activities, and in experiencing some social benefits. If piano teachers are to meet the needs of their non-traditional students, they must be aware of and understand the specific needs of that population.

This phenomenological case study explored the experience of piano lessons from the perspective of 12 piano students over the age of 55. Six of the study participants were engaged in piano study through a continuing education program for senior citizens at a community college. The remaining six participants were taking private piano lessons from two teachers in the same geographic location.

The researcher conducted a series of in-depth interviews with each participant, video taped and observed piano lessons with each student, and conducted an interview with each of the teachers to triangulate the data. The researcher explored each case individually, then compared themes across the cases.

While the themes that emerged from this phenomenological study can not be generalized to all students over the age of 55 who study piano, the common trends noted for these participants suggest that there are certain goals, desires, and needs that many piano students may have when they study piano at a later stage in their lives. However, the participants in this study could not clearly articulate those goals or needs. This and other findings refute some of the adult learning theories that have long been accepted by educators.

The importance of the social and emotional benefits of leisure piano study, whether in a private or group setting, should not be underplayed. While all of the participants in this study experienced age-related difficulties while playing the piano, each had found ways to compensate for their problems.

The findings of this study will sensitize teachers to the special needs and goals of their mature piano students and make educators more cognizant of creating a stimulating learning environment for their older piano students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Introduction

It is projected that the percentage of the North American population over the age of 55 will increase dramatically over the next decade. At the beginning of the 21st century, baby boomers approaching retirement age find themselves faced with better health, a longer life expectancy, and more leisure time than retirees from previous generations. Often they possess more disposable income to spend on the pursuit of happiness and leisure or recreational activities.

Because the terms "senior citizen" and "elderly" do not accurately describe the improved physical or mental well-being of this particular population, several large car companies and web-site operators in the United States have begun applying the term "third-age" to products and services geared toward this economically-influential population. Apparently, many of the adults who are beginning to find themselves in this age group and who perceive themselves as neither elderly nor senior citizens, find "third-age" to be a more acceptable alternative to the traditional definitions of people 55 and older. As adults move into this age group, many of them begin to move out of the professional arena so that they may spend more time with family, friends, and in the pursuit of leisure activities. As individuals approach this age, there may be a blending of professional and personal-growth or leisure activities known as a blended life plan

(Cross, 1984). Blended life plans demonstrate how North American society no longer believes that education is solely a privilege of youth.

The current emphasis on lifelong learning may stem, in part, from the fact that the majority of adults in this older age-range have attained at least a high school education (Grassle, 1998). As a result of the increased value that has been placed upon educational endeavors, the leisure-time activities in which the older, non-traditional population engages often include educational pursuits.

Adult education in the Western world has been ongoing for over a century. Extension courses and continuing education classes have been important staples of adult education in Britain, the United States, and Canada. In North America, organizations such as the National Extension Association were founded in the 20th century in order to promote continued educational inquiry throughout one's life. During the 1960s, however, interest in adult education surged. It was during that era that the influential andragogue Malcolm Knowles brought the term "andragogy" into the educational mainstream. Since that time, the field of adult education has flourished.

In the early 1980s, the National Center on the Arts and the Aging (NCAA), funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Council on the Aging (NCOA) increased their efforts to educate the public on arts education and the elderly. These organizations championed the positive physical, mental, and emotional impact that arts participation could have upon the older population. In more recent years, many of the myths and negative assumptions about the abilities of older participants in artistic and educational activities have

been dispelled. A five-year research study known as the "Music and Wellness Project" was undertaken by Tims in the 1990s. The findings offer some impressive empirical evidence regarding the numerous long-term medical and cognitive benefits of arts participation among the elderly who participated in that particular study.

In addition, the extensive research and writings that have proliferated from educational gerontologists (Peterson, 1990; Verduin and McEwen, 1984) and andragogues (Axford, 1969; Cross, 1984; Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982; Houle, 1996; Knowles, 1970, 1984; Sherron and Lumsden, 1990) in the past several decades have helped to promote lifelong learning in a society that seems to be placing a higher value on education throughout one's lifetime. Educators are now more keenly aware of the differences between traditional-aged learners and their non-traditional counterparts. Much of the recent scholarship on andragogy has helped to make teachers more mindful of the potential and of the special attributes that older learners bring to the learning environment.

Recent empirical studies on cognition of the elderly (Itons-Peterson, Rocchi, West, McLellean, and Hackney, 1999; Norman and Schacter, 1997; Parr and Mercier, 1998; Perfect and Dasgupta, 1997; Petros, Beckwith, and Anderson, 1990; Rubin and Schilkind, 1997; Schacter, Israel, and Racine, 1999) also have provided many findings that rebuke old myths about aging. This research underscores the extent to which the older learner is capable of successfully engaging in complex cognitive activities. In addition, the findings suggest that older people can compensate for many of the deficiencies associated with the

normal aging process if a suitable and stimulating learning environment is provided.

Many older people choose musical activities to fill their leisure time (Conda, 1997; Ernst and Emmons, 1992; Meyers, 1992; Rutland, 1986). Learning to play the piano stimulates mental activity, encourages the maintenance and development of fine motor skills, and may fulfill other unmet needs, desires, and goals for some adults. As more semi- and fully-retired people choose to participate in piano lessons and music programs throughout the United States, music educators must draw upon principles from many fields, including music education, piano pedagogy, andragogy, and educational gerontology in order to design suitable curricula. The supposition is that by incorporating crucial concepts from each of these areas, third-age participants in music programs will experience adequate mental stimulation and nourish their musical abilities. Thus, some of their particular needs and educational goals may be met through music study. In order to satisfy the needs and goals of their leisure piano students, however, piano teachers must now look into some of the goals of third-age piano students.

Need for the Study

A large portion of the literature on adult education suggests that educators must be cognizant of the goals and needs of the adult students that they teach. If piano teachers are to incorporate the educational goals, needs, and desires of adult pupils into the curriculum, these needs and goals must be clearly defined and understood from the student's perspective.

In the field of piano pedagogy, however, no research has been conducted to analyze the meaning that the older piano student makes of his or her experiences at the piano. Journals such as *Clavier, American Music Teacher,* and *Keyboard Companion* and piano pedagogy texts such as *The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher* (1995) and *How To Teach Piano Successfully* (1988) have begun to address adult-related issues in recent years. Music educators and piano pedagogues must begin to acknowledge the special needs and desires of third-age music students and must address those issues in our professional journals, at our music workshops, and in our pedagogy classes.

This study offers detailed insights into the perspective of the older adults who participated in this project through an open-ended discussion of their goals, needs, thoughts, feelings, and concerns relating to their piano studies. A synthesis of the recurring themes and categories as they emerged within and across cases is presented at the conclusion of this paper. Londoner (1984) suggested that when designing adult programming, educators should collect information about student goals, needs assessments, demographic variables, and various expressive categories. Data should be gathered from three sources; experts or educators, educational planners, and clients or students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to comprehend more fully the phenomenon of adult piano study from the student's perspective. Twelve students engaged in the study of piano were interviewed in depth so that their personal experience of piano study after the age of 55 could be explored and understood. Issues and

details such as the students' individual goals, needs, thoughts, and other concerns pertaining to their piano study are presented and then analyzed to better understand the meaning that each participant took away from their piano lessons.

Sub-questions that were addressed included: what motivates older learners to begin studying piano and why do they continue with piano lessons; what do older learners perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of piano study at their age; and how does the program and the curriculum meet their needs and goals concerning piano study and lifelong learning? Answers to these questions (and to other questions as they inevitably arise) will be needed if music educators and piano pedagogues are to design a piano curriculum that meets the needs and goals of the aging population.

Research Design

Participant expectations, relationships, reactions, and observations are difficult to measure quantitatively. To explore the meaning that each participant made of their piano study was the only focus of this study. In order to understand more fully the phenomena of adult study from each student's perspective, a phenomenological approach in the form of a case study was employed to gather the data for this dissertation.

Patton (1982) suggested that if the participants' experiences were placed within the context of their lives, data gathered in the field would be more understandable and meaningful. Seidman (1998) advocated finding the meaning of a participant's experience through a series of in-depth phenomenological interviews. The interviewer should establish the context of each participant's

experience, reconstruct the details of his or her experiences (within that context), and encourage the participant to reflect upon the meaning that he or she makes of those experiences (Seidman, 1998). For this study, in-depth data were obtained in the following manner:

1) An initial interview was conducted with each of the 12 adult piano students, aged 55 and over to gather pertinent life history and educational experience information. This interview served to establish the frame of reference (or context) of each participant's life, educational, and musical experiences.
2) An in-depth interview with open-ended questions was held with each of the 12 adult piano students where details were gathered about the student's experience of piano study. Throughout the interview participants were encouraged to reflect upon their individual experiences. Each of the in-depth interviews lasted for approximately 90 minutes.
3) Recordings of the aforementioned interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions of the interviews were reviewed and transcripts were summarized by crafting a participant profile for each student.[1]
4) A final meeting with each participant was anticipated once the profiles were completed. Each participant was given the opportunity to read the summary of his or her interviews. It was hoped that the participants would ensure that the profiles accurately reflected their experiences. This additional step was planned in order to ensure that the participants' feelings and

[1] Seidman (1998) spoke to the power of creating participant profiles in qualitative research when he suggested that profiles are most "consistent with the process of interviewing" (p. 102). Profiles accurately reflect the thoughts and experiences of the participants since they make use of the individual's own words as much as possible. In this dissertation, the profiles were crafted from the interview transcripts.

reactions were not misrepresented in the final analysis of the data. All of the participants declined this final meeting stating that they were confident that the profiles would accurately reflect their comments in for final analysis of the data.[2]

Just as the adult educator must modify constantly his or her plans in order to accommodate the desires and abilities of the student (Houle, 1996), so must the qualitative researcher continually re-evaluate and redefine many of the proposed interview questions. The framework of qualitative research allowed the procedures to be re-evaluated and reshaped as problems were encountered and as the thoughts and concerns of individual participants came into focus. Several questions had been formulated prior to the interviews, as outlined below, in order to give direction to the investigation. The nature of phenomenological research, however, necessitated an ongoing refinement and addition of questions as data were collected in the field. Fettermann (1991) stated:

> Ideally, the qualitative researcher begins with informal interviews to learn the appropriate questions to ask. Later, as the researcher gains a basic working knowledge of the social setting, the questions become more refined, focused, and structured. The practice of asking structured questions prematurely, before gaining adequate grounding in the social system, runs against the methodological grain of qualitative research. This kind of a priori approach is insensitive to the participants' perspective and typically results in systematic but useless information for program personnel and policy makers (p. 2).

[2] While unexpected, it is not believed that the participants declined the final meeting because of time restraints since they were eager to assist with the research in any way possible. Rather, this unanticipated phenomenon probably demonstrated the extent to which both rapport and trust had been developed between the researcher and the participants during the course of the study. Many participants stated that they had articulated their thoughts and feelings to the best of their ability throughout the interview process. Further discussion, they felt, would not increase one's appreciation of their experience.

This study evolved so that as much data as possible could be gleaned from the participants' comments. Coding and isolating themes using the constant comparative method concluded when a saturation of the data had been reached. Once summaries of the interviews were read and re-read so that no more categories of information could be found, then the data was considered to be saturated (Creswell, 1998). Once the saturation point had been reached, analysis of the themes that had emerged began.

Study Participants

The participants in this study were 12 adults who were enrolled in piano lessons. While all of the students were taking lessons concurrent with the interviews conducted during this study, the lessons were not initiated in conjunction with this research.

Six of the participants were taking private piano lessons with teachers in a large metropolitan area in central Oklahoma. The private participants were over the age of 55. The average age of the private students was 67.3 years. The ages of the private participants ranged from 58 to 83 years. (See figure 1)

The remaining six participants were enrolled in an eight-week continuing education piano class for students aged 50 and older at a community college in Oklahoma. The college was located in the same geographic location from which the private participants were drawn. Each of the class participants interviewed for this dissertation was aged 55 or older. The group participants ranged in age from 63 to 80 years. (See figure 2) The average of this group was 71.6 years.

Figure 1. Participant Ages (Private)

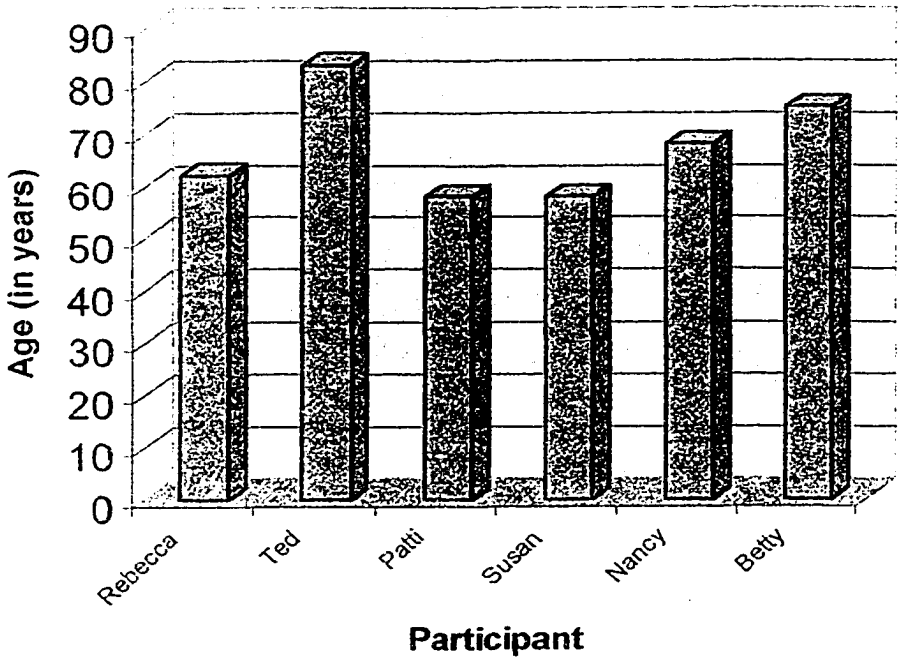
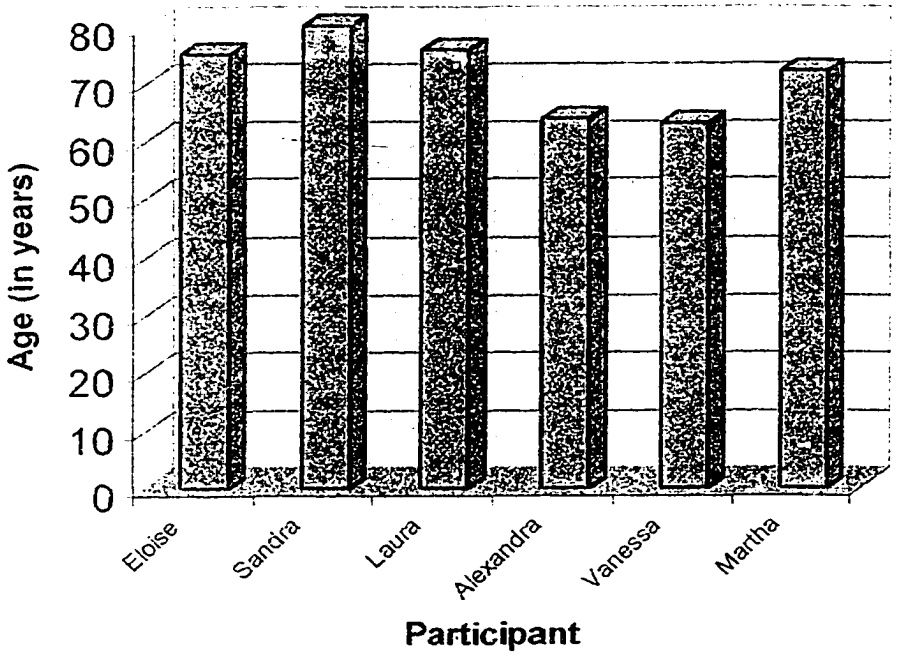


Figure 2. Participant Ages (Group)



The students who participated in this study were playing repertoire at approximately the same level of difficulty.[3] Each participant attended either a private or a group lesson on a weekly basis. Each of the participants had taken piano lessons prior to the semester during which this research study was conducted and each student had the opportunity to continue with piano lessons beyond that particular semester if they chose to do so.

These students were selected to participate in this study because they expressed a willingness to participate in this research. Their willingness to participate suggested that they were eager to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions about their experiences during piano lessons. All of the participants in this study were either retired or semi-retired and were considered to be in their "third age."

Research Questions

In order to gain the most insight into each participant's experience during his or her piano studies, the students were prompted to discuss their goals, needs, and thoughts. During the in-depth interviews with the older piano students the researcher hoped to discover:

What Leads Students to Pursue Piano Instruction?

1) Why do they continue, in their retirement years, to pursue making music at the piano, despite the high cognitive load and technical skills which are demanded of them?

[3] The repertoire that each student has been assigned is at a degree of difficulty around level 5 or 6 as defined in *The Pianist's Guide to the Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* (Magrath, 1995).

2) Why were piano lessons chosen by the participants over another instrument or artistic endeavor?
3) What benefits (including musical, social, physical, and educational) do the participants identify as a result of their participation in piano lessons?
4) Why have the participants chosen to continue with piano lessons?
5) How has the study of piano affected their lives in general?

What Problems Are Associated With Piano Study at an Older Age?

1) What special struggles do the participants perceive as they pursue piano lessons?
2) Do the participants notice any technical struggles that persist despite proper practice?

What Are Some Effective Instructional Tools and Techniques Employed During Piano Lessons?

1) Which activities and repertoire choices do the music participants enjoy and find most rewarding or engaging during each lesson?
2) What qualities does the instructor bring to the lesson that participants find most engaging and helpful for their musical experience?
3) Why do the participants feel that certain materials and musical activities are effective for them?
4) Do the life experiences that the participants bring to their piano lessons affect their interpretation of the music? If so, how?

In keeping with the nature of qualitative research, additional questions and issues emerged as the study was undertaken and the interviews were underway.

Limitations

One of the reasons often cited for the lack of learning theory in the field of andragogy deals with the diversity and variety found among adult learning situations. In fact, the multifarious nature of the learning environment, the material or subject matter, and individual experiences of the learners themselves, makes finding definitive answers in a study of older piano students problematic. Because a thorough understanding of the students' perspective was sought in this dissertation, a combination of the phenomenological research approach and the case study were employed.

As with much qualitative research, particularly research which is phenomenological in nature, this study focused on a concept or phenomenon, and sought "to understand the meaning of experiences of individuals about this phenomenon." (Creswell, 1998, p. 19) In addition, the incorporation of a case study also implied exploration of a specific case, with clear boundaries (Creswell, 1998). The combination of these two methodologies suggests that the current findings are not generalizations, applicable to all situations in which there is music education of the elderly population. Rather, it is hoped that the conclusions about the particular participants and phenomena studied here will make piano teachers more mindful of the needs of older students who enroll in leisure piano lessons.

Because six of the participants in this study were in the same piano class, similar perspectives arising from the homogeneous nature of that group were noted. While this phenomenon could have lead to the inclusion of recurrent

themes which otherwise would not have resulted, care was taken to avoid this problem from the outset. Thus, comparing common themes that had been noted between students studying piano in the group setting with themes common among participants who were taking private lessons was an important component of the analysis.

The fact that the participants might have attempted to make statements that they believed the researcher would want to hear in order to please her had to be taken into consideration. There was a potential that the participants' deepest thoughts and feelings about their own piano studies would not be fully ascertained if they were attempting to give what they perceived as the correct answers. This problem was alleviated by constantly reminding the participants that the purpose of the study was to understand piano study from their perspective. The researcher reiterated that it was a privilege to explore their musical endeavors through their eyes. Caution was exhibited about how questions were framed during the interviews. Every effort was made to avoid asking questions that might have lead participants to believe that specific answers were being sought (Seidman, 1998).

Finally, as an outsider it was necessary for the researcher to gain the trust and confidence of each participant so that they felt comfortable enough to provide honest and insightful answers during the interviews. Rapport, established from the outset, was fostered throughout the entirety of the study. The 20-year age

difference between the researcher and the participants did not surface as an issue either.[4]

Outline of the Dissertation

This study is organized into seven chapters, a bibliography, and appendixes. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the study. The second chapter presents an extensive review of the literature related to this study, encompassing the fields of music education, andragogy, and educational gerontology.

Chapter three describes the research procedure and chapter four presents the profiles of each participant. Each participant's thoughts have been summarized and synthesized in the participant profiles presented in chapter four. By employing the constant comparative method of analysis, themes and trends that appeared, both within and across the cases were identified.[5] The themes that emerged from the data are presented in chapter five. Those themes are interpreted and synthesized in the sixth chapter.

The related literature chapter represents data from the experts. Londoner (1984) advocated that data from educators, educational planners, and students be taken into consideration when designing educational programs. The latter source of information that Londoner advocated can be gleaned from the raw data from

[4] This fear about being treated as less than an equal grew out of a conversation with one of the teachers involved with this study. She had noted on April 15, 2000 that many of her students liked to look out and care for her because such a deep bond had formed between them over the course of their piano studies.
[5] While each participant was interviewed individually and treated as a separate case, the students could clearly be divided into two groups; those studying piano privately and those studying piano in a group setting. Therefore, it was also helpful to compare data obtained from each of these larger subdivisions.

this study. This data includes the interview transcripts and participant profiles which present the students' perspectives about their own piano studies.

The interpretation of the data in chapter 6 presents the common experiences, concerns, and needs that were identified in this study. Found here is an educator's effort to draw conclusions and formulate educational insights about this specific population of piano students based upon their comments and based on how these trends relate to the literature. If common goals and needs of older piano students can be met by their teachers, more meaningful educational experiences are likely to occur during their piano lessons.

A summary, conclusions, and suggestions for further research are offered in chapter seven. The appendixes, which follow the bibliography, include the informed consent form, the initial interview questionnaire, the in-depth interview questions, the teacher interview questions, transcripts of the teacher interviews, and additional data such as participant journal entries and practice logs.[6]

The findings resulting from this study should give piano teachers a detailed description of the meaningful aspects of piano study from the perspective of the 12 participants interviewed for this project. Teachers might use this information to balance the learning-theory-centered ideas that form the core of their piano curriculum with the student expectations noted below.

[6] Although the journal entries and practice log were not requested of the participants, such documents help to illustrate what was discussed during the interviews. These documents were useful when triangulating the data gathered from the particular individuals who volunteered to share this extra information with the researcher. Thus, the journal entries and the practice log were included in this research and may be found in Appendixes E and F respectively.

Definition of Terms

Adult education – Any educational endeavor undertaken by people from the age of 18 onward. Knowles has identified three stages of adulthood: early adulthood from ages 18 to 30; middle age from ages 30 to 55; and later maturity (the crux of this study) from ages 55 and over (Knowles, 1970).

Andragogy – A term first used in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, but popularized in the United States during the 1960s by influential adult educator, Malcolm Knowles. Knowles (1984) refers to andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 6).

Blended life plan – A phrase coined by Patricia Cross (1984) which emphasizes that education, work, and leisure should be pursued concurrently throughout one's lifetime, rather than one after the other.

Characteristics of adults as learners (or CAL) – A theory developed by Patricia Cross (1984) that exemplifies andragogical theory. She developed it "to elucidate the difference between adults and children as learners and ultimately to suggest how teaching adults should differ from teaching children" (p. 234). This theory highlights both personal and situational characteristics of the adult learner.

Chain of responses (or COR) – A term developed by Patricia Cross (1984) to explain who participates, and why, in adult learning activities.

Crystallized intelligence – The factor in intelligence that depends on acquired knowledge (Anderson, 1995, p. 452).

Data saturation – That point in the analysis of the data when certain themes or points become redundant.

Educational gerontology – "The study and practice of instructional endeavors for and about the aged and aging" (Peterson, 1990, p. 1).

Facilitator of learning – A contemporary, or post-modern, synonym for teacher. This term implies that the traditional role of teacher as authoritative figure and holder of all knowledge is not appropriate for the learning situation. Facilitator of learning, often used when discussing the education of adults, implies that the learner brings a great deal of knowledge to the educational setting.

Fluid intelligence – The factor in intelligence that reflects the ability to reason or problem solve (Anderson, 1995, p. 454).

Learning society – A phenomenon (identified by Patricia Cross) in the post-modern society where, from the earliest childhood experiences, the pursuit of and taste for lifelong learning, in a variety of environments, is nurtured.

Leisure – Defined by John Verduin and Douglas McEwen (1984) as a block of time, an activity, or a feeling of well-being, and happiness. In general, leisure time is differentiated as time that is spent away from the essential activities of existence. Adults may use leisure time at their own discretion and how they avail of their leisure time may give meaning and direction to their life.

Leisure education – This type of education holds as its ultimate goal, "to enable the individual to enhance the quality of his or her life in the free-time domain" (Verduin and McEwen, 1984, p. 85).

Lifelong learning (lifelong education) – The post-modern notion that adults "need more formal and informal educational experiences to help them live fuller and more productive lives" (Verduin and McEwen, 1984, p. 3). Many andragogues

believe that at least some of these educational experiences should fall into the pursuit of leisure activities, self-enhancement, self-enrichment, and/or recreational activities. This term implies that there is a continuum of learning that spans from childhood, throughout the life, into old age.

Non-traditional education – Any educational pursuit that does not fit into the traditional college or formal educational experience.

Non-traditional student – Any student who does not conform to the traditional college student mold. The non-traditional student may be older than the traditional post-secondary student, or may have other family or professional obligations that require part-time study or a non-conventional study plan.

Recreation – This term implies an uplifting of the spirit (or a re-creation) and is not restricted in this paper to simple physical activity (Verduin and McEwen, 1984).

Recurrent education – Can be substituted for the term "lifelong learning."

Third Age – Senior citizens who have retired and moved on from the professional years to the next stage of their lives.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

As the aging population seeks out piano instruction, piano teachers have been incorporating critical elements from the fields of music education, andragogy, lifelong learning, and educational gerontology into their curriculum and lesson activities. It is important to establish the context or provide a frame of reference from which the average individual aged 55 and older is operating. Even though this study explored the unique musical experiences of each participant who was interviewed, it is important to address the common issues and concerns of the majority of the aging population before embarking upon a discussion of the research findings. Piano teachers must also be aware of some of the events that caused society to place a higher value on lifelong learning and the pursuit of leisure activities during the golden years.

The Mature Population and The Learning Society

Demographics

The demographics of American society have changed drastically over the past 40 years. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (1999) estimates that the number of Americans over the age of 65 will more than double in the next half century. By 2020, the 55-plus population is projected to increase by 76 percent ("Aging America," 1997).

In addition, the average age of Americans who are working full time has decreased (Wise, 1997). This trend suggests that people are either leaving the workforce at a younger age or continuing to work only part-time at an older age. Statistics also show that people are living longer (Wise, 1997). Lawmakers and activists wrestle with implementing legislation that can sustain Social Security and health care programs in the wake of the trend toward early retirement of a population that is living longer (Wise 1997). Meanwhile, educators have become increasingly aware of the role that lifelong learning now plays in our aging post-modern society. In fact, andragogues, such as Patricia Cross, (1984) have gone so far as to redefine our culture and the educational trends that have been noted by andragogues by defining to the aforementioned cultural phenomenon as a "learning society" (p. 2).

Increased Leisure Time

It has been well documented that an increasing number of older Americans have a larger amount of time to devote to the pursuit of leisure and educational activities than ever before (Cross, 1984; Sherron and Lumsden, 1990; Verduin and McEwen, 1984). The reasons for this phenomenon are twofold. First, a greater proportion of the population is older and the aged population is living longer. In the 30 years after 1960, the life expectancy of 55-year old men increased more than 16 %, while 65-year old men's life expectancy increased about 18 % (Wise, 1997). The numbers are even more promising for 65-year old women whose life expectancy has increased by 20 % during the same 30-year

period (Wise 1997). Also encouraging is the fact that people can expect to be healthier and more viable in their latter years than ever before.

The second reason for the pursuit of an increased number of leisure activities into their third age has to do with the fact that people are retiring earlier than ever due to increased personal savings, Social Security, and employer-provided pension plans (Wise, 1997). Statistics from 1960 to 1993 indicate that there has been a 52 % decrease in males, aged 65 and over, and a 35 % decline in men between the ages of 60 and 64, who were employed in the labour force (Wise 1997). Wise also noted a decline in the percentage of 50-year old men who are still employed full time.

Changing Attitudes

An influential shift in the attitudes of society toward aging has taken place in North America over the past 40 years. As Americans live longer, healthier, and more productive lives during their third age, old age and retirement no longer need to be associated with physical decline and mental deterioration. In addition, education is no longer viewed as a privilege reserved solely for the young. Cross (1984) pointed out that "...on the surface at least, the fact that education participation is growing faster than the adult population suggests that more factors than 'mere' demographics are at work" (p. 2). Proof of this shift was exhibited in the 1960s when Knowles found it necessary to introduce Americans to the term "andragogy," in order to "...adapt traditional learning theories [and practices] to suit the specific needs of the [emerging] non-traditional student" (Pike, 1999). As the field of andragogy has moved into the mainstream, educators such as

Schlossberg and Cross have synthesized, expanded upon, and integrated much of what Knowles astutely identified as significant to adult learners.

Andragogy

Origins of Adult Education

Authors, including Axford (1969) in his book *Adult Education: The Open Door*, have traced the origins of adult education to mechanics' institutes, people's colleges, and university extension lectures as far back as the British Industrial Revolution. Axford also pointed out that adult education programs have been remarkably similar in all countries throughout the Western world. In the United States, however, adult education has been attributed to a 16th-century Protestant revolt (Axford, 1969). The lyceum movement, the Philadelphia Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and the Chautauqua Institute (which, from its inception, included a summer music recital and lecture series) figure prominently in the history of adult education in the United States.

In the 20th century, the founding of influential organizations which promoted adult education and served as clearinghouses for ideas surrounding this movement, became more prominent. These organizations, such as the National Extension Association, the Association of University Evening Colleges, and the Adult Education Association, U.S.A. are still performing these duties today. Axford (1969) also pointed to monetary support from the Ford, Kellogg, and Mott Foundations as being critical to many adult educational endeavors in the United States. However, several andragogues (Cross, 1984; Sherron and Lumsden, 1990) have argued that despite the recent interest in promoting adult education, often the

taste for lifelong learning is developed during the years of traditional-aged formal education.

Andragogy and the Adult Piano Student

Andragogues are cognizant of the fact that adults have very different reasons for the pursuit of educational endeavors from their traditional-age counterparts. As a theory, andragogy addresses serious issues which seem to be more relevant to the teacher than to the learner. Cross (1984) suggested that if we accept Gage's (1972) definition of teaching as "the process of providing for the learner what a given learning theory regards as essential," then andragogy is really a theory of teaching rather than a theory of learning (p. 227). Since its inception as an accepted term amongst adult educators in the 1960s, andragogy has focused the educator's attention toward the unique characteristics of adult learners. As adult educators, we must remember that "the curriculum is built around the student's needs and interests" (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982, p. 19).

Piano magazines (*Clavier*, *Keyboard Companion*) and music journals (*The American Music Teacher*, *Music Educators Journal*) have been regularly addressing issues pertinent to adult music study for the past decade. Simpson (1986) noted that adult piano students often have specific goals about repertoire that they want to learn. If the level of difficulty is beyond the technical or musical abilities of the student, Simpson suggested that teachers assign repertoire that is in a similar style or by the same composer as the piece that is of interest to the student. The author also referred to the category of leisure piano students as "a support group for continuing education in music" (p. 35).

Rutland (1986) stated that older adult students often need more substantial justification for pursuing piano lessons than searching for personal growth and development. This view has not been widely supported in the literature. The majority of music educators (Achilles 1992; Meyers, 1992; Darrough, 1992) listed self-satisfaction and the fulfillment of personal musical goals as important reasons for many older adults to undertake piano and musical activities during their third age. Ernst and Emmons (1992) insisted that it was the intrinsic value placed on music making that was at the heart of older students' motivation to study music. Meyers (1992) concluded that adults recognize, acknowledge, and pursue their need for learning more readily than children. Meyers (1992) also noted that "adults tend to have more clearly established learning goals [than their younger counterparts]" (p. 24). He stressed that teachers need to find a way to satisfy their older students' musical goals through their comprehensive music curriculum. He advocated constant observation of students and careful listening to the questions that mature students pose, so that piano teachers can build upon the knowledge and experience that older pupils have already acquired and brought into the learning environment. Some of these experiences may be outside of the realm of music, but still can be applied to piano study. Darrough (1992) noted that:

> today's older adults come from an era where music education was fundamental, and the influence of music in the home, community, and church was more widespread than today...This current population of older adults is musically literate, enthusiastic, sensitive, and able (p. 29).

Ernst and Emmons (1992) stated that after retirement activities such as learning to play an instrument can be used to fill leisure time and bring about pleasure.

While Orlofsky and Smith (1997) did not offer data specifically from the perspective of the older student, they suggested some positive attributes of working with older learners. An eagerness to learn, orientation toward and completion of specific goals, physical coordination, and mature intellectual abilities were cited as positive abilities of mature piano students. Lack of finger dexterity and excess emotional baggage were noted as problems that piano teachers of adults need to take into consideration.

They suggested that adults could be taught with an equal degree of success, either in a group environment or in a private lesson setting. They found that either electronic piano labs or acoustic pianos may be used successfully for teaching piano to older students. Piano teachers must remember that senior citizens may not be able to develop their technical skills to as high a level as they might have in their younger years. The life experience that they bring to the learning environment, however, might result in bringing a deeper level of meaning to the musical interpretation of a piece (Ernst and Emmons, 1992).

The literature is lacking in studies that document how older students value their interpretive abilities in relation to their technical skills. Articles on the Elderhostel program have provided anecdotal information about participants' thoughts, though the number of references in the literature detailing older piano students' perspectives on their piano lessons has been negligible. McCullough-Brabson (1995) noted that "older students respond[ed] richly to aesthetic experiences" (p. 43) and that many of the participants identified themselves as lifelong learners. Another educator (Charboneau, 1993) has suggested that

programs such as Elderhostel allow participants to pursue music education throughout their lives.

Motivation for the Pursuit of Adult Education and Piano Study

An autocratic presentation of the subject matter, where the teacher disseminates information without regard for the individual students' needs or abilities, is not appropriate when teaching adult piano lessons. Piano pedagogue Johnson (1996) argued that even though adults prefer to have more control than the traditional-aged student over what they are learning, adult students benefit from the guidance and structure that an experienced piano teacher brings to the learning environment. Teachers of adult piano students must realize that the subject matter must be presented in a way that is conducive to fulfilling the needs and expectations of the mature pupil. Wlodkowski (1985) argued that adults "strive for understanding and mastery, and tend to be motivated when they are effectively learning something they value" (p. 5). Graessle (1998) found that participants in a survey of adults enrolled in continuing music education programs in the United States responded that private music lessons were considered to be successful if the students' individual needs were met (p. 60). Darrough (1992) advocated choosing a wide variety of repertoire for older students to study, since their listening interests seem to quite diverse. This phenomenon may not be unique to the older population. While the presentation and acquisition of the subject matter is important (and presumably why the student has chosen to study piano with a teacher), the curriculum must be structured in a fashion that will be most advantageous in meeting the student's desired educational goals. Conda

(1997) identified five factors that motivated adults to study piano: childhood events, purchasing a piano, life-changing events, hobby replacement, and joining a piano performance group. Indeed, the andragogue is also a lifelong learner in this situation. The experience that the learner brings to the educational setting will have a tremendous impact upon the teaching scenario and educational possibilities that may present themselves as the lessons unfold. Orlofsky and Smith (1997) insisted that one of the most important factors in motivating older adult piano students was to provide them with ample opportunities to experience a sense of accomplishment at the keyboard.

Thus, any discussion about andragogy tends to focus on motivational issues and on the most appropriate educational environments in which adults learn. Many adult students will choose to begin piano lessons as a way of exerting control over their lives after a life-changing catalyst has occurred (Conda, 1997). If their musical and educational needs are not satisfactorily met however, the third age student may not view the activity as successful (Graessle, 1998).

Benefits of Piano Study for Older Students

The physical benefits of playing an instrument had not been documented in the early 1990s when a great deal was being written about the New Horizons Senior Citizen Band. Ernst and Emmons (1992) noted that even though the musical benefits were most significant, after participating in the New Horizons Band there was also likely an improvement in the participants' social, mental, and physical health. Since that time, empirical research has shown that physical and mental benefits do result from playing a musical instrument.

Tims (1999) lead two research studies in Florida and Michigan that measured levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness in senior citizens. Those older adults who were regularly engaged in a keyboard class were less anxious, depressed, and lonely than their counterparts who were not taking keyboard lessons (Tims, 1999). In addition, the author found that there was an increase in the levels of human growth hormone in the bloodstream of those seniors who were engaged in music lessons. "Human growth hormone positively affects such aging phenomena as energy levels, wrinkling, osteoporosis, sexual function, muscle mass, as well as aches and pains" (Tims, 1999, p. 11).

Assumptions and Principles of Andragogy

In his book, *Andragogy in Action*, Knowles (1984) explained that andragogy is an attempt "to organize...[the substantial body of knowledge about adult learners and their learning] into a systematic framework of assumptions, principles, and strategies" (p. 7). There has been much discussion and debate in the literature (perhaps perpetuated by Knowles' 1970 book originally subtitled *Andragogy Versus Pedagogy*) about whether or not andragogy is, like pedagogy, a theory. Knowles (1984) later points out that he felt "more comfortable thinking of it [andragogy] as a system of concepts that, in fact, incorporates pedagogy rather than opposing it" (pp.7-8). Among Knowles' major contributions to the field of andragogy, he identified four assumptions which are still considered to be crucial to the andragogical model today. These assumptions take into account the unique qualities of the adult learner. The four assumptions (Knowles, 1984) were:

1. The concept of self – The self-concept of the learner is generally one of a self-directing individual who does not wish for the teacher to take full responsibility for making all of the decisions about what should be learned.
2. The learner's experience – The adult has accumulated a store of experience which can (and should) serve as a resource for learning.
3. Learning readiness – An adult's readiness to learn is oriented toward the development of tasks or social roles. Adults have a need to learn if they place themselves in a learning environment.
4. Learning orientation – Adults have a problem-centered (or life-centered) orientation toward learning, due to their learning readiness perspective (p. 8).

Due to the unique characteristics of the adult learner, Knowles (1984) stressed that the adult educator (or facilitator of learning) serves two functions. An andragogue's most important goal should be to design an educational program that will "facilitate the acquisition of content by the learner" (p. 14). Of secondary importance is for the facilitator of learning to serve as (and to supply) the content resource(s). Knowles (1984) underscored the fact that in designing an appropriate program, the andragogue must keep seven elements in mind:

1. Consider physical environment and psychological atmosphere (climate setting). The environment should be one of mutual respect, collaboration, mutual trust, supportiveness, openness and authenticity, pleasure, and humanness.

2. Involve the learners in mutual planning.
3. Involve the learners in diagnosing their own needs.
4. Involve the learners in formulating their learning objectives. This often includes making up learning contracts between the facilitator and the student.
5. Involve the learners in designing their own learning plans.
6. Facilitate or help the learners to carry out their learning plans.
7. Involve the learners in evaluating their own learning – this implies a move away from quantitative to qualitative evaluation procedures (pp. 15-18).

Andragogy Related to Learning Theory

The learning environment of the adult learner is defined in terms of humanist theories. Humanists operate under the assumption that all people have a natural propensity for learning. Humanist theory also purports that, provided with nourishing and encouraging environments, a student's learning will thrive (Cross, 1984). Cross pointed to several influential andragogues, such as Tough, who were proponents of applying humanist philosophies to andragogy. Cross even offered impressive evidence from a 1972 UNESCO report on learning which stated that "educational activities should be centered on the learner in order to allow him greater and greater freedom as he matures, to decide for himself what he wants to learn and how and where he wants to learn it" (p. 229).

Support exists for using developmental theories when dealing with the mature learner. It is that branch of developmental theory, also known as

interactionism, that supports lifelong learning. Cross (1984) stated that interactionists operate under the basic assumption that "education can play a critical role in 'pulling' the individual into even higher levels of development" (p. 229). If, the developmental theorists presume, one is not engaged in a sufficiently stimulating environment, that individual may remain inert at more basic levels of development. The aspect of andragological theory which suggests that adults are spurred on to participate in educational activities during transitional periods in their lives, such as retirement, relies heavily on interactionist theory. In this case, Cross (1984) stated that the role of the facilitator is to "help the individual advance to the next level of cognitive development through designing educational experiences that will challenge the learner to "reach" for growth-enhancing cognitive experiences" (p. 229).

While substantial discussion and application of behaviorist theory in the adult learning literature exists, it will not be reviewed here. Behaviorism tends to apply more readily to the job and skills training segment of andragogy. Since this present research deals only with the category of leisure, recreational, or life-enhancing adult education, behaviorist theory will not be considered at this time.

Contemporary Perspective on Andragogy

More recently, Houle (1996), in his text *The Design of Education*, suggested that the dichotomous nature implied by the learner-centered term andragogy, has been outdated. Houle outlined some assumptions that recurrent or lifelong educators must keep in mind. These assumptions appear to represent a natural evolution from the early theories of andragogy to the post-modern

educational philosophies of lifelong learning, as they apply to adults. Houle's assumptions were as follows:

1. Any episode of learning occurs in a specific situation and is profoundly influenced by that fact.
2. The analysis or planning of educational activities must be based on the realities of human experience and upon their constant change.
3. Education is a practical art.
4. Education is a cooperative, rather than an operative art.
5. The planning or analysis of an educational activity is usually undertaken in terms of some period which the mind abstracts for analytical purposes from complicated reality.
6. The planning or analysis of an educational activity may be undertaken by an educator, a learner, an independent analyst, or some combination of the three.
7. Any design of education can best be understood as a complex of interacting elements, not as a sequence of events (pp. 42-50).

Although Houle attempted to disassociate himself from the influential modernist theories of Knowles, one can not help but perceive that the more recent writings of Houle (1996), especially the seven points illustrated above, are but a post-modern outgrowth of the groundwork laid in place by Houle's predecessors. In fact, the following statements, typical of those made by Houle, only serve to reinforce the notions established by Knowles and others:

> The educator does not put ideas into the minds of learners nor does he give them skills or sensitiveness. Instead he helps them learn

> these things for themselves and, by the use of his art, facilitates the accomplishment of desired goals (Houle, 1996, p. 45).

Although Houle's ideas suggest that he is perhaps trying to give the subject matter a place of higher prominence in instructional activities, those impressions are still based on student-centered learning philosophies.

Leisure Learning

Verduin and McEwen (1984) focused on how adults availed of their leisure time and recreational activities and identified three types of lifelong learners: (1) the undereducated adult (this category includes adults engaged in literacy education); (2) training, retraining, and continuing professional education; and (3) leisure, self-enhancement, and recreational learners (pp.3-4). Learners who fall into this third category will be considered in this study. Verduin and McEwen stated that as adults retire earlier, live longer, and experience life-changing transitions they need to engage in leisure activities. They argued that while adults may not be in control of the circumstances that surround their life-changing need for recreation, they do carefully select the leisure activities that suit their personal needs and goals.

Verduin and McEwen (1984) suggested that social activities may become important to the elderly. They also pointed out that most recreational activities make mental and cognitive demands on the older participant. The authors even highlighted music as an example of a recreational experience that provides the opportunity for mental activity. Verduin and McEwen asserted that choirs, instrumental ensembles, rhythm bands, solo instruments, and piano classes are activities that have been popular with third age students of all ability levels.

Curran (1982) stated that group instruction, on instruments such as the piano, is a suitable medium for musical activity for people aged 50 and older. All of these musical activities may serve to fulfill the leisure learner's need for mentally-stimulating recreational activities.

Educational Gerontology

The Cultivation of Educational Gerontology

Adult educators agree that major life changes, such as change in marital status, job modification, children, among other things, often encourage adults to seek out new learning activities. As adults retire and move into the third age, many will seek out leisure activities. As we enter the 21st century, a rapidly growing and mature population is in better physical health than ever before. North Americans seem less willing to accept the mental decline, long associated with the normal aging process, as inevitable. In addition, many of these third age adults were professionally productive as the post-modern, learning society came into fashion. Many of these adults lived a blended life plan (incorporating work, education, and leisure into their lives) even before they reached retirement age.

The Field of Educational Gerontology

It has been out of this societal environment that the field of educational gerontology has flourished. In order to understand what educational gerontologists seek to study and interpret, one must first grasp the true meaning of education. Educational gerontologist, Peterson (1990), explained that:

> Education is different from learning. Although both may result in changed knowledge or behavior, education is distinct in that the change is identified beforehand by the teacher, or the student, or by

> both. Unlike learning, which can occur in an unplanned, spontaneous, serendipitous manner, education is a consciously designed program. It usually involves four components: a... curriculum, a...methodology, a...teacher, and a[n]...objective. (p. 1).

Peterson went on to state that "educational gerontology refers to the study and practice of instructional endeavors for and about the aged and aging" (p. 3). He suggested that "educational gerontology may be a primary mechanism used to prevent physical, psychological, and social decline of the individual" (p. 4). In his discussion, Peterson (1990) pointed out a flaw that is unfortunately still all too common among educators today. He stated that:

> Too often the learning process of the older adult is examined exclusively from the standpoint of losses: memory, perceptual functions, cognitive deficiencies, and so on. What we need to do is, in fact, to recognize the special strengths that older people can bring to the classroom, and, second, to use these strengths to enrich the learning experience. (p. 24)

Contemporary Thoughts on Aging

Educators and andragogues must cast aside negative connotations and presumed deficiencies associated with the learning capabilities of the older segment of the population. In recent years many research studies and articles in adult education journals (*Adult Education*; *Adult Education Quarterly*; *International Journal of Lifelong Learning*) have demonstrated the positive effects of lifelong learning for the older student. There have also been documented cases (Norman and Schacter, 1997; Perfect and Dasgupta, 1997) of how adults in the third age compensate for physical or mental decline associated with the normal aging process. Verduin and McEwen (1954) stated that:

> Generally older adults have the mental abilities to cope with most learning experiences even though it may take longer to complete tasks. It should be kept in mind that almost any adult can learn any subject if given enough time and guidance. Their needs for continued learning, however, are truly insatiable in terms of requests, they want to learn about everything. Adults really are continuous learners in an informal way as they adjust to the many role changes that confront them in life. (p. 14)

In fact, it has been suggested that one's ability to age gracefully and healthfully is directly affected by one's ability to cope with and adapt to the many changes confronted in daily life (*Stealing Time*, June 8, 1999).

Intelligence, Memory, and Cognition in Old Age

Most research points to the fact that both fluid and crystallized intelligence remain stable, at least to the age of 60, especially if the individual is actively involved in intellectual pursuits. Cross (1984) noted that mature adults can even increase their intellectual abilities, particularly if one has spent a lifetime being aculturated to intellectual endeavors. Older people have demonstrated that they can compensate for some loss of memory (Perfect and Dasgupta, 1997). In general, seniors tend to perform best on tasks calling for the use of crystallized intelligence (Cross, 1984). Such observations demonstrate how cognitive functions, such as integration, interpretation, and application of knowledge should be developed and practiced throughout one's life and into the third age.

It also has been noted that problems with memory that older people experience are probably due to poor organization of new information into the appropriate schemata (Schacter, Israel, and Racine, 1999). In addition, if the relevance of new information is not obvious to the learner, or if new information can not be properly encoded within the existing schemata, then the new material

will likely not be properly stored, and for all intensive purposes it will be lost. As noted earlier (Wlodkowski, 1985) the mature adult also must be sufficiently motivated to learn new material. Cross (1984) stated that "the greatest problems with memory for older people occur with meaningless learning, complex learning, and the learning of new things that require reassessment of old learning" (p. 163).

Empirical Research on Cognition and Aging

Since adequate cognitive abilities are crucial for the older piano student, several recent research studies which delve into cognitive functions such as memory, problem-solving strategies, and retrieval will be reviewed here. Each of these cognitive functions is of the utmost importance for the successful participation, enjoyment, and acquisition of piano techniques for the third-age piano student.

Effects of the Time of Day Study

Petros, Beckwith, and Anderson (1990) conducted a study that took into account individual differences that the effects of the time of day and prose passage difficulty had on the recall memory of adults. Specifically, the authors observed the adults' free recall of both easy and difficult prose passages at three different times of day. Results of the Petros et al., (1990) study indicated that main effects for the type of person (either morning or evening), prose passage difficulty, and the importance level of the information relayed through the text, were all found to be significant. The authors found that recall for all of the participants increased as the perceived importance level of the idea units increased. Recall declined as the importance level of each idea unit subsided. This

particular finding would seem to be in accordance with the hypothesis that important propositions will be held in working memory longer and will be integrated at the macrostructure level, enabling easier, more efficient recall. The aforementioned finding also suggests the possibility that one might be more cognitively engaged, thus encoding material more effectively, when text is perceived as being important. Effective encoding should lend itself to preparing information so that it might be more easily primed for retrieval at a later time. Results indicated that morning types showed decreased recall across the time of day.

Optimality Time Effects Study

Intons-Peterson, Rocchi, West, McLellean, and Hackney (1999) evaluated the role that age, time of day, and encoding problems played in false recognition. They also looked at the effects that these issues had on semantically-related, but non-studied material. The authors of these studies simply looked at age-related tasks such as recall and recognition in a false memory paradigm. The results and findings indicated that the occurrence of false memories was greatest for the group of non-optimally tested older adults. Cues were more effective in retrieving memory than simple free recall for the elderly participants in this study. Optimality of testing, the idea that people perform better when tested at their preferred times of day, was noted as a crucial factor for each group, specifically for the elderly.

Adult Memory Recall Study

Rubin and Schulkind (1997) measured memory recall of both college-age and older adults. The older adults in this study had a mean-age of 70.34 years.

The authors contended that both groups were healthy, well-educated, and very well matched, in spite of the large age difference. The authors suggested that the younger people recalled more memories because they only had two decades of memories upon which to draw. By contrast, older subjects had to sort through seven decades of stored memories.

The majority of autobiographical memories stemmed from the period of time when an individual was between the ages of ten and twenty years old. A plausible reason, offered by the authors, is that there is a great deal of emotion tied to the encoding and reliving of memories between the ages of ten and twenty, as individuals begin to take on their own individual identity. One should not underestimate the power of emotion and how meaningful memories may be deeply processed and encoded for quick retrieval due to an emotional attachment.

False Recognition Study

Norman and Schacter (1997) compared a group of younger adults with a group of older adults. They observed the differences between the memory structure and recall of the two groups. The authors sought to relate the age difference in false recall and recognition to the age difference in the content of the subjects' memories.

Results of the false-recognition study showed that older subjects were relatively more susceptible than younger adults to the false-recognition effect. Those findings also confirmed the suggestion by Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) which hypothesized that in the long run adults remember the gist level of the macrostructure. It may also be that as participants were hearing and studying

word sets, schemata related to those words were activated. Thus, the critical lures seemed familiar because they were associated with the schemata that had been primed and activated during the exercise. The authors also noted that elderly subjects suffered from poor discrimination between perceptual and spatial information. In addition, the older adults were greatly influenced by thoughts and feelings. These factors might have been responsible for the older subjects' susceptibility to false recall and recognition of critical lures. The authors contended that impaired frontal lobe functioning would make it more difficult for elderly subjects to resist the critical lures.

Frontal Lobe Functioning Study

Perfect and Dasgupta (1997) attempted to find out why adults report fewer incidences of recognition, accompanied by recollection in the original context, as they age. The study was actually designed to test frontal lobe functioning. The researchers compared two groups of adults. The older group had a mean age of 70.7 years.

Frontal tests indicated that the older subjects scored just as well as the younger participants on the cognitive estimates tests. Both age groups scored similarly on the non-frontal tests. The authors focused much of their attention on the differences in the level of recollection between the two age groups. Results revealed that the older adults had fewer, though more false recollective experiences for the non-words. The resultant finding was that age can significantly predict recollection. In addition, the elderly participants tended not to use elaborative encoding strategies for non-words, whereas younger adults often

did. Once encoding differences had been taken into account the authors could not report any other significant age effects that impaired recollection of either words or non-words.

The authors contended that it is plausible that with prefrontal lobe decline, older adults will engage in alternative strategies for encoding. In short, the authors contended that evidence from the study suggested that reduced recollection in old age was not a retrieval problem but rather, was due to encoding deficits, particularly if there was no obvious encoding strategy in place.

Suppressing False Recognition Study

Schacter, Israel, and Racine (1999) found older subjects were better able to discriminate between studied items and unrelated lures after the words were "picture-encoded." Similarly, participants responded correctly more often if tested in a visual and auditory mode, rather than just via the auditory test. If just words were presented at the time of study, the subjects seemed to rely more heavily upon the gist level when formulating their responses at test time. In short, the authors found that older adults, like younger participants, showed reduced recognition of falsely related lures after picture encoding took place. By understanding how the elderly suppress the distinctiveness heuristic, better instructional tools and techniques may be developed to encourage more efficient encoding among the elderly.

Age-Related Differences Between Adults Study

Parr and Mercier (1998) explored the effect of age on problem solving and one's ability to make contingency judgments. The authors found that judgments

were seriously impaired for the elderly group (who had a mean age of 70.64) when stimuli were presented in quick succession. The authors argued that this deterioration in accurate judgment, exhibited by the older group, was likely a result of a slower processing speed in the working memory. Further experiments revealed that contingency judgments decline or decrease with age.

Synthesis and Instructional Implications for the Elderly

While studying the potential implications of the optimal time of day effects on college age students, Petros et al., (1990) discovered that details from the text were recalled more effectively when the relevance level of the text was high. The authors found that important propositions were held over into working memory and integrated into the macrostructure, from the text-based microstructure level of perception (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978). Another reason for the more efficient recall of propositions that were deemed important by the listener, might be that a deeper level of processing took place once the listener became more cognitively engaged due to the perceived critical nature of the information. This finding has critical implications for the instructor of students of all ages. The material must have meaning for the learner, if they are to be expected to encode and properly store the information for future retrieval. The time of day during which cognitively demanding classes are taught is also significant. Teachers should be aware of individual differences in optimal arousal and peak learning times. Even if classes can not cater to every individual in a classroom, teachers might be able to make arrangements for students who are

forced to learn when they are functioning at less than their optimal arousal times. It was noted that morning hours are often optimal for the elderly.

The significance of the proper encoding of information and events into memory was further highlighted by the work of Rubin & Schulkind (1997). Childhood amnesia, the inability to recall memories prior to age three, was demonstrated to be a significant factor for both young and older adults alike. It was speculated that memories before three years of age are not easily accessed due to lack of appropriate schemata in which to place information. A more plausible explanation of childhood amnesia might be that strategies for encoding information are not well developed at such a young age and thus, the memories are randomly scattered instead of placed in a framework from which they may be retrieved at a later date. Therefore, even if the memories have been encoded, they might be essentially lost due to lack of appropriate schemata in which to place, and subsequently retrieve the information. The reason that older subjects in the Rubin & Schulkind (1997) study may have taken longer to retrieve general autobiographical memories might well have been due to the fact that they have a larger storehouse of memories upon which to draw. Thus, the spread of activation would take longer than it would for younger adults who have fewer memories to access for retrieval.

Norman & Schacter (1997) found that false recognition was more common in older adults than in younger adults. This finding may be partly due to the fact that adults remember the gist level of information in the long run, rather than specific details. Further evidence suggesting that older adults tend to retain

the gist level of a text, rather than specific details was demonstrated more recently by Schacter et al., (1999). They found that elderly participants remembered common semantic similarities between words, but not the specific details. If however, participants were cued to encode significant distinct features for future recall, they were quite capable of doing so. Furthermore, if elderly participants were presented with words in a dual-mode format (words and pictures) they were even more likely to resist false recognition. This finding is likely due to an increase in working memory space, made available by some of the information being held in the articulatory loop, while other information can be processed by the visual processors. The importance of utilizing the articulatory – visual loop for freeing up working memory should not be underestimated when instructing and working with the elderly population.

Another explanation offered by Norman & Schacter (1997) for the high proportion of false recognition results on tests was that the elderly participants were much more likely to rely upon their thoughts and feelings, rather than on perceptual or spatial information. Many subjects stated that they were guided by strong, non-specific feelings of familiarity. Perhaps these elderly participants found that the appropriate schemata were activated when they were presented with the semantic word lists. The activation of schemata, likely activated other familiar words related to the aural lists that participants studied, which might explain why the critical lures seemed so familiar to the elderly subjects, in particular. Norman & Schacter (1997) also alluded to the effects of age-related pre-frontal decay. The authors suggested that poor monitoring skills exhibited by

the elderly subjects, making it difficult to resist the critical lures, were due to the pre-frontal deficits associated with aging.

Perfect & Dasgupta (1997) found that age was a significant predictor of correct recollection. They contended that reduced recollection ability in the elderly is not a retrieval problem; rather, it is an encoding problem. They also reiterating findings by Petros et al., (1990) and Norman & Schacter (1997) which indicated that older subjects tended not to use elaborate encoding strategies. The deficiencies and problems related with the encoding of information were attributed, by Perfect & Dasgupta (1997), to prefrontal deficiencies. This finding also seems plausible if one considers that because of the reduced ability of the prefrontal lobe to encode information, an elderly person will likely seek to find other methods for encoding important knowledge. People with significant prefrontal decay may possibly even choose not to attend to information that is perceived as trivial because of decreased cognitive functions.

Intons-Peterson et al., (1999) concluded that environmental cues can be used to help the elderly remember more than they would through free recall alone. Instructors can make use of this knowledge in the classroom so that elderly students can recall encoded information with less sense of frustration. The optimality testing effects were also studied by Introns-Peterson et al., (1999) and the results cannot be stressed enough. Especially when dealing with elderly people, instructors and care givers should be aware of the best times during the day when individuals will be able to perform cognitive tasks most efficiently.

Parr & Mercier (1998) found that contingency judgments or assessments of relations among events in the environment, were significantly impaired when elderly subjects were not given enough time to assess the situation and activate appropriate problem-solving strategies. Like many of the aforementioned age-related cognitive deficits, appropriate contingency judgments decline with age. Instructors, caregivers, and anyone who deals with elderly people on a daily basis needs to be sure that older people are provided with ample time to make decisions and engage in problem solving strategies. Providing our elderly with enough time to make decisions will also empower them to continue engaging in appropriate problem-solving strategies in the future. Schacter et al., (1999) stressed that problems that elderly people have understanding everyday language, are not generally related to problems with the ear itself, rather the problems are related to slower cognitive processes, all of which are not properly understood yet.

Studies Related by Design

Several studies, conducted in recent years, must be considered since the design relates to the proposed research project. Tseng (1996) conducted a case study in order to "investigate the process by which flute students learn music through interaction with the computer-controlled *Vivace* music accompanying system" (p. 5). Tseng chose to employ a case study for her research so that she could "see [the experience of working with the computer program] through the lenses of the participants" (p. 75). During the course of the study, Tseng observed 10 flute students during their practice sessions where the *Vivace* program was employed. She also conducted three interviews with each participant and held an

interview with the flute professor. In her analysis, Tseng noted improvements that she and the teacher perceived as a result of practicing with the computer program. The students in the study did not necessarily share those same ideas about improved performances, though these discrepancies were not taken into account. Additionally, the computer screen, not the students, was videotaped during each practice session, suggesting that the students' reactions were not important to the researcher. Tseng noted in her observations that she served as a resource for the students while observing the practice sessions, as the computer software was unfamiliar to the participants. It is not clear if Tseng had intended to conduct such invasive observations when she began the research project. Tseng shared the transcripts of the interviews with each participant "to clarify [the] meaning [of each participant's statements] (p. 74). There was some cross-referencing of the data in the analysis portion of the study.

Holmquist (1995) also conducted phenomenological research to understand how school-related experiences affected an adult's participation in community choir programs. Holmquist surveyed a large population of community choir participants in Oregon to collect her initial data. However, she subsequently conducted interviews with 10 members from each of three community choirs to uncover specific experiences that these individuals perceived as influential in their participation in adult choirs. Once the interviews had been completed, Holmquist was able to identify differences and unifying themes among and between the cases.

Kritzmire (1987) conducted a case study to characterize the principles and the practices of the pedagogy of Charles Leonhard. Three 90-minute interviews with the subject were the main source of research data. During the interviews. Kritzmire uncovered biographical details, the subject's musical and educational history, and information pertaining to the development and implementation of the graduate course that exemplified Leonhard's music education philosophy. For the analysis, the researcher triangulated data from interviews with Leonard, interviews with 10 students who were enrolled in the aforementioned graduate music course, personal observations of two lectures, published documents, and class materials. Kritzmire noted that case studies allow the researcher "to examine and describe action events of significance" (p. 28).

Another case study (Carol, 1988) studied the phenomena of Ruth Slenczynska's professional transition from the role of a concert pianist to a successful college piano teacher. While some data was gathered from interviews with secondary sources such as Slenczynska's colleagues, published and unpublished documents, and a videotape of the subject performing, the majority of the data was drawn from five hour-long interviews with Slenczynska herself. Carol described the process of professional transition that Slenczynska experienced, primarily based on the interviews that she conducted with the subject.

Conda's (1997) case study of an adult piano performance club employed non-invasive observations and focused interviews with the individual members and the leader of the group in order to explore the motivation underlying

participation in that particular piano performance club. Conda triangulated data obtained from the interviews, personal observations of the group, and from journal entries that some participants shared with her. The participants were forthcoming with information and details about their experiences in the performance group, especially in light of the fact that the researcher was an outsider.

Summary

In short, as the average age of the general population increases substantially over the next several years, it must be remembered that people are living healthy, productive lives well into their 80s and 90s. In addition to an increased life expectancy, early retirement and personal savings permit more people over the age of 55 to participate in leisure activities.

Since the 1960s, educators (Knowles, 1984; Cross, 1984; Houle, 1996) have focused on issues that relate specifically to the education of adults. In the field of music, since the 1990s an increasing number of journals (*Clavier, Keyboard Companion, Music Educators Journal, The American Music Teacher*) have devoted more space to articles relating to andragogical issues. As the elderly population in the contemporary learning society seeks out more activities in which to partake as they age gracefully, many people will participate in cognitively engaging activities, such as piano lessons.

Instructors of the elderly must be aware of learning theory as it relates to andragogy, educational gerontology, and cognition. Teachers must seek to provide our older population with appropriate learning environments and relevant

stimulating information that they can successfully encode. Educators must try to teach the elderly at times of the day, particularly during the morning for most older people, when they will be capable of working at their optimal arousal levels. In addition, dual modes of instruction should be used wherever possible to reduce load on the working memory, thus freeing up room for proper and efficient encoding that will allow for subsequent retrieval of information. Working memory should not be overtaxed with trivial or novel pictorial stimuli though. Information presented to the elderly should be pertinent and opportunities for deep-level processing should be both provided and encouraged.

While prefrontal cortical deficiencies may appear as one ages (Perfect and Dasgupta, 1997), other methods of encoding information and retrieving schemata should be explored. Since the elderly tend to be guided by feelings of familiarity and vague thoughts or feelings (Norman and Schacter, 1997), instructors should not underestimate.the influence of emotion that one is experiencing during the encoding and retrieval processes. Finally, instructors, caregivers, and friends of the elderly should understand that the elderly population is often aware of their declining cognitive function which is often exhibited by an inability to recall memories, information, or to effectively solve problems or make appropriate decisions. Instead of making decisions for those people, the elderly should be encouraged to engage in a variety of cognitive activities that will help them to develop new strategies to compensate for frontal lobe loss (Schacter et al., 1999). By fostering cognitive activities such as playing the piano, the elderly will remain healthy and active members of the community for many years to come. The

numerous opinions expressed in the literature related to andragogy (Knowles, 1984; Cross, 1984; Houle, 1996), leisure learning (Verduin and McEwen, 1984), educational gerontology (Sherron and Lumsden, 1990), and piano pedagogy (Curran, 1982; Conda, 1997; Graessle, 1998) suggests that there are no simple answers when teaching older adults. Empirical research suggests that elderly people are capable of engaging in cognitively demanding leisure activities, such as piano lessons, if they choose to do so.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

The design of this study centered on in-depth phenomenological interviews for case studies of 12 participants over the age of 55 who were enrolled in piano lessons when the study was taking place. All references to the participants in this dissertation are by pseudonym. Each participant was interviewed twice. The initial interview served to establish each participant's life, educational, and musical history. Once each student's context was established, a 90-minute in-depth interview occurred. The purpose of the in-depth interview was to uncover details of each student's experience of piano study. The interview questions were formulated so that the students would be encouraged to articulate the meaning that they derived from their piano activities.

Once the researcher had transcribed and summarized the interviews, the participants were given an opportunity to read the summary of their interviews. Participants were allowed to review the summary to provide them with an opportunity to clarify any thoughts or ideas that they may not have clearly articulated during the interviews. All participants turned down the opportunity to read their summaries stating that they had answered all of the questions as clearly as they could. They also expressed confidence that the essence of their thoughts would be captured in each profile.

The constant comparison method was employed to evaluate and to analyze the summaries. In keeping with the constant comparison method of evaluation and analysis, recurring themes or ideas that seemed to emerge within each case were sought. Some trends seemed to present themselves across the cases. Themes were documented on a chart as they began to emerge at the outset of the analysis. Later these themes were clustered and combined into similar groups and categories. When no more new themes occurred, due to a saturation of the data, the initial analysis of the data was complete. Common themes and trends noted in chapter five represent ideas, thoughts, goals, and issues that were meaningful for the piano students that participated in this particular research study.

In chapter six, the themes are analyzed in terms of the implications that they might have for piano teachers who work with the older segment of the population. Reasons why certain trends arose with those students who were taking private piano lessons were explored. Discussion about why those themes may have been absent in the case of the group piano participants follows. Chapter six goes beyond a mere presentation of the data and delves into the meaning of the resulting themes from a music educator's point of view.

Sample

Twelve volunteers, aged 55 and older, were interviewed for this study. Their willingness to participate suggested that they were open to sharing their ideas, insights, and perspectives on their piano studies. All of the participants had studied piano as adults prior to the semester in which the research was conducted. The students were also all at the same approximate grade level in piano, working

on intermediate literature that is approximately at level five or six.[7] Their attainment of this level of proficiency on the piano suggests that students have attained a similar degree of musical expertise and mastery of technique. Additionally, each of the teachers of these students held at least a Master of Music degree in piano and had taught piano for at least ten years. As experienced teachers who actively participated in professional activities on a regional and national level, the researcher was confident that these teachers would have assigned repertoire at an appropriate level for each of their students. Thus, the participants in this study were peers in terms of their similar technical abilities at the piano. Each student also had the opportunity to continue with piano lessons beyond the semester in which the research was conducted, suggesting that they were engaged in an ongoing journey of piano study.

Six of the participants were enrolled in an advanced piano class at a community college in Oklahoma. The class was part of the continuing education program at that school and all of the students in the class were at least 55 years of age. These students chose to participate in group piano study even though opportunities existed in their geographical area for private study. The remaining six participants in the study were taking private piano lessons in the same region in Oklahoma. These students were also aged 55 or older and had opportunities for either group or private piano study within the greater city area.

[7] The students will be performing literature such as "Hunting Song" or "Little Romance" from Schumann's *Album for the Young, Op. 68*. Magrath (1995) placed these pieces at levels five and six. Alexander and Albergo (2000) indicated that these pieces are at the early-intermediate level.

Instruments and Data Sources

The interviews comprised the main source of data in this study; the experiences of each participant were of value in understanding the older student's perspective on his or her piano lessons. Seidman (1998) stated that "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning that they make of that experience (p.3). Data was gathered for this case study with full knowledge that the amount and quality of the information that participants relayed during the interviews would reflect the level of trust that they had in the researcher and the rapport that was able to be established with each participant (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Concerns included potential perception of the researcher as an outsider to the participants of the group since the researcher was not a member of their piano class, or a student, or their private teacher. It was also possible that the researcher could have been perceived as an authority figure or an expert that they needed to please, by providing the "right" answers. Neither of these concerns proved to be a problem during the interview and observation processes.

The raw data was collected from two interviews with each participant. The first interview served to establish the context, including but not limited to issues such as life history, educational history, musical background, and life-changing events which lead the individual to choose to study piano during their leisure time. About a week later the researcher met with each of the participants again, for a 90-minute in-depth interview where they were encouraged to discuss details about their piano study and the meaning that they derived from the experience.

Once the interviews had been transcribed, summaries of each individual case were formulated. These summaries are presented in Chapter four of this dissertation as participant profiles. Each participant's own words are used as much as possible so that the flavour of each individual's experience and ideas would be captured most accurately. Thus, the data that was analyzed and synthesized accurately reflected each individual's experience.

Procedures

Permission and Consent

Due to the use of human subjects, the appropriate paper work was submitted to the Institutional Review Board in the Office of Research Administration at the University of Oklahoma. Half of the 12 study participants were participating in an eight-week session of piano study at a community college in Oklahoma from March 20, 2000 to May 12, 2000. Permission was also obtained from the administration and the instructor at that college to undertake the research study. The other six participants were enrolled in piano lessons with independent piano teachers in Oklahoma for the Spring 2000 semester. Data was collected during the month May 2000.[8]

The researcher met with the 12 study participants and their instructors. At each initial meeting, the purpose of the study was outlined and the manner in which the study was expected to unfold was highlighted. The subjects were also told how the findings of the study would be used. Participants were given ample

[8] It should be noted that the eight-week piano session was not organized to accommodate the present research, nor did the piano students enroll for the lessons so that they could specifically take part in this project.

opportunity to ask questions about the study or about the researcher at that time. The *Individual Informed Consent Form* was signed by both participants and instructors at the beginning of the initial interview (see appendix A).

Initial Interviews

Once the consent forms were signed, the initial interview began with each participant.[9] The initial interview served to identify the educational, social, and musical background of each participant. Individual reasons for undertaking the study of piano were also identified during the intake interview. The purpose of the initial interview was to establish the context out of which the need to study piano at a non-traditional age arose. It also helped in the formulation of meaningful individualized questions for the more revealing in-depth interview.

An audio taped intake interview was used, rather than a questionnaire. Literature on gerontology (Verduin and McEwen, 1984) suggested that older participants would be more forthcoming, and offer more insightful observations if speaking with the researcher in person, rather than filling out what they may perceive as a cumbersome questionnaire. Since in-depth interviews were to be conducted at a later date, it was crucial to establish a rapport with the subjects as quickly as possible. The initial interview also provided an opportunity to get to know the participants better.

It was suspected that the piano students would provide more generous information during the interviews if a rapport between the researcher and each participant was established from the outset. That theory proved to be the case and

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[9] See appendix B for an outline of the questions that were posed during the initial interview.

a relationship with each participant continued to develop over the course of the three-week study.

It has been well documented that participants are likely to change some of their behaviors due to the presence of the researcher (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Bogdan and Biklen pointed out that subjects may not view the interviewer as just a researcher. The interviewer could be viewed as an outsider or an expert in the field of study, which might prompt changes in behaviour. The teachers did not note any noticeable changes in behaviour when the researcher observed and video taped the piano lessons. In fact, each of the participants seemed very comfortable throughout the entire interview process. Their answers to questions were perceived to be very honest and forthcoming during the interviews.

In-depth Interviews

The 12 participating piano students were then interviewed at length.[10] An open-ended, semi-structured interview technique (Seidman, 1998) was employed so that the students felt free to embellish and expand upon what had been asked of them. The purpose of the questions was to understand more fully the phenomena of adult piano study from each student's perspective. Thus, questions prompted them to reflect upon certain aspects of their studies. It was also important for the meaning that each student made of their experiences at the keyboard to be understood.

[10] Questions that were addressed may be found in appendix C.

Transcription of the Data

Both the initial and the in-depth interviews were transcribed by the researcher. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the themes and categories that eventually emerged early in the study. Summaries of the interviews were prepared for each participant. Each summary was crafted into a participant profile that may be found in chapter four.

Teacher Interviews

An interview with each piano teacher was conducted once interviews with the participants were completed.[11] The teachers were encouraged to discuss their perceptions about the participants and about leisure piano study in general. Student perceptions and teacher perceptions were compared during analysis of the data.[12]

Lesson Observation

One lesson of each private piano student and one group lesson was observed and videotaped for reference. Observation of the instructional environment allowed more pertinent questions to be posed during the interviews. Comparisons were made between comments made during the interviews with what had been observed during the lesson. The video tapes, researcher observations, teacher interviews, and participant interviews permitted cross referencing or triangulation of the data which is critical in qualitative research.

[11] The interview questions may be found in Appendix D.
[12] Transcripts of the teacher interviews are located in Appendix F.

Data Analysis

Once all of the data was gathered, analysis of the data began by using the constant comparison method. Some common themes and categories were extracted during the transcription of the interviews. Once the summaries of the transcriptions were completed, however, the summaries were read and re-read to locate more common ideas, themes, trends, or categories that occurred. Initially these themes where addressed on a case by case basis. As analysis of the data continued, however, it became clear that comparison of themes across the cases was required to see if there were any common trends between the participants interviewed in this study. Themes identified in the group-piano participants were also compared with themes uncovered from interviews with those students who were studying piano privately.

Glesne (1999) suggested that there must be multiple sources of data and multiple kinds of data collection if the findings of a study are to be valid. Glesne offered interviews, observation, and open-ended surveys as three possible sources of data collection. For the purpose of the current study, information was gathered from interviews with the participants, interviews with the teachers, and through videotaped and non-invasive observations of piano lessons by the researcher. Triangulation of the data gathered from these three sources increased the validity of the findings of this study.

Analysis of the data was considered complete once a saturation of the themes was reached. The saturation point was reached when no new themes or categories were able to be discerned from the data. In addition to merely relaying

unifying themes established by the participants, a synthesis of the themes or findings is presented in chapter six. Common themes and trends noted at the outcome of this study represent ideas, thoughts, goals, and issues that are meaningful for the older piano students who participated in this research study. The findings may not necessarily be generalized to the entire third-age population.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Individual Lesson Participant Profiles

Seidman (1998) suggested that presenting profiles or vignettes are two of the best ways in which qualitative researchers may share their data. A profile should include a beginning, a middle, and an ending to the story of the participant's experience. Ideally the profile is presented in the participant's own words. A vignette may be used if the interviews do not provide detailed information, although they tend to focus on fewer aspects of the participant's overall experience.

The interviews conducted for this study yielded ample data which enabled a profile for each of the 12 participants to be crafted. By presenting the story of each participant's ongoing journey of piano study in their own words, readers will get a more intimate look at each student's personal venture of piano lessons. Seidman (1998) cautioned that even though profiles are presented in the participant's own words, the narrative "is crafted by the interviewer from what the participant has said" (p. 102).

The following profiles have been crafted from the participant's comments as transcribed from the interviews. Great care has been taken to present the statements in each of the following profiles in the spirit in which the students had intended so that each profile accurately represents the experiences that each participant spoke about during the interviews.

Several of the participants made references to one another during the interviews. Many of these references have been included in the following profiles since discussion about the same duet, performance opportunity, or social experience may yield different conclusions or meanings from varying perspectives. Some of the cross-referencing of events that inadvertently occurred during the interviews helped with the triangulation of the data, thus increase the validity of some of the themes that were uncovered.

Rebecca

Rebecca is a high school graduate who is 62 years of age. She was raised in a small town in Southeastern Oklahoma and has lived with her husband in Central Oklahoma for all of her adult life. She is retired from a secretarial position. She could be considered a lifelong learner as she has taken courses for personal enjoyment and professional development throughout her adult life. Rebecca began her adult piano studies at a local community college, taking group piano lessons. She currently studies piano privately with Sarah, an independent teacher in Oklahoma. A description of her musical experiences, in her own words, follows:

"I took piano lessons from a great teacher when I was a child. She entered us in the competitive contests and she had lots of recitals. In fact, the reason that I quit taking piano was because when we were a senior [in high school] we had to give a solo recital. I have always hated performing in public and there was no way that I was going to give a recital all by myself! So, I quit before that came about. For her time she was a wonderful teacher. We did theory and duets and we had

recitals in her home and at church. I was older when I started taking lessons. I was probably about 12 years old and it was just a wonderful experience as an older child. I kept taking lessons until I was a senior in high school. Piano was my only musical activity. I have a terrible voice so I didn't participate in choir even though our very small school did have a chorus. I accompanied some friends who sang though.

When I was a child I was very studious so my activities centered around events at school. If anything was going on at school I wanted to be there. I did a couple of school plays and I entered several scholastic meets in my junior and senior years. I got married a year after high school and worked until our family started. My husband wanted me to go back to college, but I just didn't see the purpose. I took a few courses along the way, but they were mainly for fun. For example, I worked with seniors for a few years so I took some gerontlogy courses and that type of thing. I also took computer courses for work when new programs came out. I did secretarial work for [a multi-national company] right out of high school. I did that for seven years. Then I stayed at home for 21 years with our family and finally went back to work for the same company. They bridged my time so I worked there for about 11 or 12 more years until they offered me early retirement. Since then I've just been enjoying life.

I probably started piano again about five years ago. I guess piano is one of those things, you always say you're going to do when you retire and have time. Plus, I had a piano so that made it easy. I didn't have to go out and spend money on an instrument. And I think the older you get the more you appreciate things of

that nature. I also had a background in piano. The small school that I went to did not even have a band until my junior year so there were no teachers of different instruments in my home town, so I guess it was really not even ever a consideration to play another instrument. I just didn't feel like I had any natural talent in painting or drawing and that really wasn't that available either when I was young. We had maybe a small amount of art in school but nothing very much.

First when I went back to piano I took group lessons at a local community college.[13] I did that for a couple of years then I heard about Sarah. In fact, I had heard about her for a long time. She was the neighbour of a friend of mine and so finally I decided to switch to private lessons with Sarah. It was getting kind of involved at the community college because it was so structured and if I missed a lesson I couldn't make it up. Since it was a course for college credit there were too many rules and regulations too. I travel quite a bit so I decided to study with a private teacher. I take piano lessons year round. But I'm gone a lot and so my lessons are not real rigidly scheduled. I probably miss maybe two months out of the year just by being gone or having other things to do, but I do take all through the year. My lessons are usually every other week for 45 minutes. I began taking lessons every week for 30 minutes but I asked Sarah if I could try this schedule because it gives me more practice time. Plus, we get more into a lesson and it seems like we can get more done.

[13] The community college were Rebecca took her initial piano classes as an adult is not the same college from which the group participants in this study were drawn.

My favorite time to practice is in the morning. I go walking or exercising in the morning and then I come home and straighten up the house and then I play the piano. So that is probably about 9am or 9:30. If I don't do things in the morning, they usually don't get done. So I try to practice in the morning. Then, after we eat dinner my husband gets on the computer and I get back on the piano. I think Sarah realized that I preferred lessons on the mornings because she said that she liked mornings too.

I do have arthritis and sometimes my hands hurt but playing the piano doesn't seem to bother them. Now when I'm real fatigued, I don't do well at playing. In fact, I don't even attempt it and that's another reason I like to play early in the day because usually by 3 o'clock my body is just pooped out. And my mind doesn't seem to work as well later in the day. To me playing the piano is very tiring physically and mentally. I don't know how people play consistently for a couple of hours, because your back hurts, your neck hurts, and some of the pieces are so explosive and fast. But I can probably sit comfortably at the piano between 30 and 45 minutes.

I guess piano is just a challenge and I think I need something to stimulate my brain because I don't actually do that much anymore. I read a lot and I play bridge which keeps my mind active. Piano is just a way to stay active. I also had time after I retired. Also, my mother had given me my childhood piano. We had moved it four or five times and my husband said, "this is so heavy, we are not moving it again." I really hadn't touched it much in 35 years so I decided to do something with it or else get rid of it. It had been my mother's idea for me to take

lessons [when I was young] and it was a sacrifice on her part to get the piano. I thought that Mother would have been pleased to know that I had started again. She would occasionally mention about the money that she had spent on lessons and how I hadn't done anything with the piano. So I guess I started piano again for a multitude of reasons.

The lessons at the community college just revived what I had learned in childhood. I liked my teacher up there but I felt that I needed something a little more advanced. I'm not really musical. I don't have a natural ability for the piano. I have to work really hard at it. I can only read music, I can't improvise or anything. I enjoy my private lessons though. You know during lessons it's amazing. Every once in a while I'll be hitting a wrong note. I thought I had gotten pretty good at reading music, but it's amazing every once in a while I'll find that I've been hitting a wrong note. And I guess I like the critique that Sarah gives me. Sometimes it just seems like what she suggests is not the way that it should be, but then after I do it I can see that what she was telling me does add to the piece. And then a lot of times my tempo is off. I can go through the piece myself, but I don't really get it mastered until I go to my lessons.

When I get a new piece Sarah usually goes over anything that might be new. Then I take it and work it out. At the next lesson I'll play it and she'll tell me what I'm doing wrong or need to work on. And there are some areas that I just have trouble with, like grace notes. I just never get them fast enough and then I loose my place in fast pieces. [laughter] There are just some things that are

problems for me. Sarah's not real critical. It's not like we're working to compete in a contest or anything.

I play in the get togethers because I think it's good for me to learn to play in front of other people because I freeze you know. And even though I tell myself, "look, these are all piano students too," I still get butterflies in my stomach and my fingers shake. It is just impossible to control that. Even though I'll say, "ok, now why can't you just think like you are just playing at home by yourself," I still can't overcome that nervousness. [laughter]

It is a supportive group. We probably get together about twice a year. I guess the biggest benefit for me is just a sense of accomplishment. And I find some of the older students who play, like Ted, to be a real inspiration to me! He must be in his 80s and he is just amazing!

I also work with the Alfred's *All-in-One Theory Book.* I am on the third book, which is the final one. I started with it at the community college and when I went to Sarah she had me continue with it. I think that the theory transfers into popular and classical tunes. So it's kind of interesting because I'm not real big on theory. I know that I need it and I understand it at the time, but then the next day if you ask me how many flats does a certain key have I'm just a total blank. I can't retain all that, so it's kind of good to see how it applies in different pieces. For me theory is something that Sarah just constantly needs to bring out in my pieces by asking me chord names and such.

I enjoy playing waltzes, show tunes, and older music, like 30s, 40s, and 50s. Familiar things I guess. I'm not real big on classical tunes unless they are

familiar. In fact, I told Sarah that somewhere deep in my mind it seems like we used to wind the maypole to the *Rustic Dance* that I am playing. I would have been in the first grade, but there is something very familiar about that piece. It may be that I played it when I was younger, but for some reason this reminds me of the maypole. You probably don't even know what winding the maypole is, but as a kid that was a big deal.

Both of Sarah and I choose my music. In fact, I go to estate sales and antique stores and if I find old music I'll buy it. Sarah lets me play it. Her mother recently died and so she has all of her old music, so we've gone through some of that and I've picked out some pieces that I wanted to learn.

There's one piece that I have and I asked for it. It is *Morning Has Broken.* Our two children were killed in a car wreck about 15 years ago. When our daughter was in middle school her choir sang that song. I guess it was the first time that I had ever heard it. That piece always brings back memories of her. At first it was kind of hard to tackle some songs that reminded me of my children. We played *Amazing Grace* at both of their funerals and we have always said that we wanted that played at ours. And I play it. [emotional pause] Certain songs remind me of certain people and I enjoy playing those pieces.

At the college you were working for college credit and you had to adhere to a schedule. So, I like this system better. Plus for some reason, to me Sarah is a better teacher. It might be because she has more flexibility. But I can't really think of anything else that I would want in a teacher that I don't have now. I guess that I also like the low-key atmosphere and the fact that she only teaches adults. Her

mentality is geared to adults. Plus, she's a mother and a wife so she understands that we have other time restrictions and stuff.

For me, piano is very frustrating because I'll think I have a piece mastered and then if I don't play it for a week it's gone. Maybe I didn't have it mastered after all. I think when you get to my age your mind just does not retain things like it used to. You know it's just constant practice. If I don't practice a little bit every day I loose a lot and that's frustrating. Once I get a piece mastered I would like to be able to pick it up and just play it every two or three weeks and play it just like the last time I played it, but it just doesn't work that way. [pause] But it is kind of like riding a bicycle or typing or something. When I haven't done it in a while I'm a little rusty, but then after I play it over a couple of times, it comes back.

This idea of "use it or lose it" [consistent practice to keep a piece up] is so frustrating. I mean when you have worked so hard you feel like you ought to be able to just sit down and whip that out. Classical music is the most challenging to play. I just can't imagine how intelligent those old master musicians were to compose that stuff.

Memorizing is terrible for me now. I don't ever remember having trouble when I was younger because we always had to memorize. My teacher had recitals pretty often and I don't ever recall having any trouble memorizing for those. Sarah has never required us to memorize our music. I had to memorize a piece at the college, but Sarah never requires us to memorize. I memorize only when I'm required to do so by my teacher! I've noticed that in that *Rustic Dance* that it would be very helpful if I could memorize it because it goes so fast and has so

much detail. I do have some of it memorized. You have to play the same thing but then it has different endings, and so it gets a little confusing as to where you are. But memorizing is not a priority! [laughter] I wish it came easier.

Now I learned to read by memorizing. We did lots of memorizing in school you know. We would memorize poetry and have to get up in front of the class and recite it by memory. Basically everything that I learned was by memorizing and that's the reason it seems so strange that it's so hard now. I think there is just so much more information out there now though. And our computer brain just can't hold it all or remember it all. I'll remember little vague things and I can't remember if I've read it somewhere, if I've seen it on television, or if someone has told me.

In terms of my technique, I think that I can play just as quickly as I used to when I was younger and I think that my reach has actually improved. I think my problems are mainly mental rather than physical. I appreciate the piano more now than I did when I was younger. I'm more apt to take it seriously and practice now. I'm much more motivated now. The hardest thing for me is probably just keeping a piece to where I can just pick it up and play it and make it sound the way I want it to.

I really don't know if I have experienced that many benefits from taking piano except that a lot of people just seem to be real awed by the fact that I'm taking lessons. And they'll say, "oh, why I always wanted to do that!" And I'll say, "well, just get started." I think that having the goal of playing for a lesson every two weeks is helpful because otherwise I'd probably be kind of lax about

practicing. When I first started taking lessons I thought maybe I'd take just long enough to get to where I could pick up a piece and play it by myself. But after taking lessons, I can see that I need that every other week routine. Otherwise I'd probably find something else that I needed to do and not practice. It's kind of like people going to therapy or going to church. You just need that constant little ongoing thing.

Most of the time I feel good after my piano lessons. Even if I've been doing something completely wrong, I never feel like I've been chewed up and spit out. I never feel that way. I think that now I know about all of the hard work that goes in to playing music, so I appreciate it more. When I listen to music I'll say, "oh, I've got that piece," or "oh, I think maybe I'd like to learn to play that. That sounds like a good one." But, it's just like people that don't sew have no idea what goes into making a garment. I don't paint so I don't know what goes into that. I think piano has just made me appreciate anything that people do with their hands more. I've also found out that even though I can pick a piece out, that is in no way the way that it should be played in the end. There are so many little details that go into polishing it.

I enjoy my lessons and the positive feedback that I get. I plan on staying with Sarah and continuing with our current flexible schedule. I enjoy the lesson routine but I also think that piano helps with my arthritis and it keeps my mind active. And I certainly have a greater appreciation for piano and for music now that I am older."

Ted

Ted is 83 years old and has been retired from his engineering position with the federal government for 28 years. He worked in the same position for 30 years and is extremely articulate and determined to do things "properly" as he put it. He spent most of his life living in a large metropolitan area on the coast of the United States. Upon retirement he began piano lessons, actually enrolling as a freshman fine arts major at a local university because he said that he "love[s] serious music. I have always cared a great deal about serious music." After struggling to fulfill university course requirements that weren't terribly meaningful for him, Ted began lessons with Sarah. He has continued taking private piano lessons with her for 20 years. His story follows:

"I think I chose to study piano mainly because I just enjoy it so much. It's hard for me to work it in. I play golf a lot and that takes time to play golf. You leave here at 9 o'clock in the morning and you get back and the afternoon's gone, you know. I don't play nine holes because that's not finishing the game. Maybe I thought about learning to play the violin a little bit after I was taking piano, but I never did. There is a beauty to the violin if it's properly played. There is a gentleman at the university that teaches 'cello. He can sure make some beautiful sounds come out of his instrument. We've been to some presentations at the music school where he has played 'cello with piano accompaniment. We sit right up front and I just think it's great.

I also practice the organ once a week down at my church. About five years ago our organist and choir director asked me if I'd like to learn a little bit about

the organ. She helped me once on the stops and pedals but no one has helped me since. I'm still playing the same pieces that she gave me out of a little Bach book. I go down there once a week for about an hour, but I don't really get an hour [because I visit with everyone]. With that little amount of time it's hard for me to keep up on the three Bach pieces that I'm playing. But I do love the sound of the organ and I have kept that up but I have had no instruction on it. I shouldn't say that I play the organ but I do practice on it.

One of the courses that I could have taken at the University when I enrolled in 1970 was a course that covered all of the arts. You had to do something musical and you had to do something on the stage so I never did enroll on that class. I don't do well in front of a crowd or a camera.

I think the desire to play the pieces properly keeps bringing me back to piano lessons. I don't think I'll ever be able to reach that goal because I can't prove to anyone that I can do it. I suppose I could record it and play it, but it doesn't sound very good recorded either. I have a Bach Prelude that I've been working on for 15 years and I can play that dude. I can play the first part, can't play the second part, and I'd just love ... to be able to do it. And I don't mind practicing at it, but I don't understand why I can't do it for anyone.
I wouldn't keep going to my lessons, it seems, if I didn't enjoy them. But, I do come away with a great feeling of frustration because I wish I had done better, every time.

My teacher writes things down [at the lessons], so I don't have any trouble remembering what she said. We work on things. When I had the lesson you were

at, there was a spot in one of those Brahms *Intermezzos* where she said the phrase ended and I was not ending the phrase. I've been working on that all week and I don't know if I can do it any better or not but I see Sarah this afternoon and we'll work on that. And in the other one she wants me to do down – up, down – up with my wrist, and I've been working on that. If I try two or three times in front of Sarah I'll probably get it ok. Under the circumstances, there are times when I do feel like I have done something as well as I could during the lesson.

I do participate in things at the Mall and at her house. (laughter) Maybe it's to prove to myself that some day I'm going to play well in front of people. That may be the reason. It's a challenge. I think I played at the mall about three times. Twice it was Sarah and me playing a duet. Once I played one of those Brahms pieces and I could no more get started on that, I just couldn't play the first part. So, I played something else. I played a Scarlatti [piece] and after it was over a fellow that runs the eating place out at the lake came up to me and said, "You did well to hang in there and play something." And I didn't know him, but he introduced himself. He thought it was great. And I had another experience where I played in a piano competition up at [a] university [north of the city]. This was 15 years ago. It was mostly for high school kids but I played, or I tried to play. I played the Scarlatti piece that I played at the mall. This was before the mall experience and I did very badly. But the judge wrote how great it was for me, at my age, to be working on Scarlatti. There are so many terrible things that he could have said about how I played, but he didn't mention any of those. I'd like to run

into him again sometime to see if he's still a judge and still writing nice things about people.

Maybe three times a year we get together at Sarah's house. It is mostly the same people each time. There are two or three people that have been there for a long time and everybody gets extremely nervous before it starts. Everybody wishes that he had done better when he gets through and I'm one of those that's for sure. Everybody wants the players to play well. None of them wishes them harm, you know. I remember going through juries when I was taking piano from at the University. That was a bad experience. But I talked to the students backstage before they'd go on. Some of their hands would shake so badly, some of their hands were ice cold, some of their hands were hot, everybody has the problem, yeah.

Sarah and I work in a little theory quite often. She'll play chords and ask me to identify them. That's an interest to me. I like it and I enjoy it. I can't help but mention that *Piano Lessons* book by Noah Adams. I think that's a great book and I enjoyed reading it. I've bought about six copies of it and given them to friends of mine who say "why I'd sure like to learn to play the piano," you know, but they never do.

I enjoy playing Classical music but I also have some popular stuff. I'll show you some that I have right here [he leafs through his binder]. These are easy arrangements but I just play these for myself. I have some Andrew Lloyd Weber, *I left my Heart in San Francisco*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, Henry Mancini, *What*

a Wonderful World, *Moon River*, *Misty*, *Embraceable You*, *Someone to Watch Over Me*, and the *Theme from Ice Castles*. Aren't they pretty?

Let me show you how I keep track of what I play, just for fun. This is for the month of May. The pieces are listed along the side and there is also theory. We have Mendelssohn, Scarlatti, Beethoven, right on through. And there is practicing at the organ, and this is where I play hymns and ... church music. The dates go down here and the times go in there.[14] So, you can see that I played Bach on those days and I played Beethoven, though it wasn't much ... I've got these [practice logs] back for 10 years. Sarah probably thinks that I do more record keeping than I do practicing. But look, popular has gone by for more than a month and I haven't played those pieces. I last played pop on the second of April. The theory that I had when I instituted this was that I would keep all of the columns coming down and that I would sit down and practice today the one that I had not practiced recently. But, lately I've been concentrating so much on certain pieces that I've neglected the others. I haven't played any Chopin and I haven't played Debussy, and I don't want to forget them. So I've got to have a better system. What I need is 26 hours in a day instead of 24.

Sarah is my ideal teacher. She sight reads marvelously and I think that inspires me to try to do better. She always manages to say something nice about something that I've done, even though there is very little about it that's nice. And I appreciate that. And if I'm playing something and I accidentally leave a note out of a chord, she hears well enough to know that it's not in there. And I think she's a great teacher and I've recommended her to so many of my friends but none of

them have started playing. And as an accompanist she can make a person playing a solo sound great! I remember one time, 10 or 15 years ago, I tried to accompany my granddaughter on flute. The accompanist is extremely important in a recital, I think. And the accompanist can screw up and ruin the thing, but Sarah is great at accompanying. She is very good at all aspects of teaching. She tries to make you feel at home and she does make you feel at home. Sarah, I say "how can you do that so well, how can you sight read that so perfectly when I've been working on it a month and I can't play it at all?" And she said, "well I've been doing it longer than you have." But now she hasn't been doing it longer than I have. [laughter] I think that a teacher of adults needs to be careful to find out what they want to play and work on that, not work on what the piano teacher wants them to play. I would think that adults are probably all the same, apprehensive about not doing it right and so on.

Of course, I have lots of technical challenges too, like Rachmanniniff's chords being all five-note or six-note chords and stuff like that. And I have difficulty playing anything up to tempo if the tempo is fast. I kind of avoid things with 32nd and 16th notes. Although, on the organ there's one piece that ought to go very, very fast, but I just play it as fast as I can. I know it's about half speed and it still sounds pretty good to me. And I don't sight read well at all. For the first 10 or 15 years that I took piano I had to memorize everything. I didn't play it as a recital piece unless it was memorized. Sometimes I blame it on my eye sight. Looking at two staves at once is a problem. I think I have a lot of trouble looking at the music and being aware of what's going on in the treble and the bass clef. I

[14] See appendix F for a graphic of a one-week sample page from Ted's monthly practice log.

don't remember that being a problem when I was younger, but I probably wasn't aware of it. I probably thought that I was doing as well as anybody. I would do much better if I were a better sight reader. But then I get something memorized and I get so excited and I forget it! [laughter] I have trouble counting too. I don't know if I have trouble more than other people or not, but when I was taking piano at the University my teacher said, "here you are an engineer and you can't count four!" [laughter]

I am probably tougher on myself now than I was when I was younger. I would like to invite people over to play for them and I've done it just once. There are a lot of people that I'd like to ask in, but I'd like to be able to play the pieces without breaking down when they are here. You know, to invite them in, and then you can't get through the piece, that's for the birds, I don't like that. Consequently, I very seldom ask anybody to come in. Even my daughter who lives in town, and my sister, I bet they haven't been over here to hear me play in 5 years. We were together at Christmastime and somebody said "come on, play something for us," [I said] "Oh, no, no, I can't do that," but finally I said, "ok, I'll play something." Well, I get in here and I play ah, the first Bach Prelude and I can get through that without breaking down, but it's not the most complex piece in the world, but that was my recital piece. I also asked them to stay in the kitchen and not come in here!

But, I've certainly enjoyed playing. Like last night I practiced a little bit before "West Wing" came on tv, then I watched "West Wing" and practiced some afterward. Maybe I should spend the time doing something else, but I sure enjoy

it. I do discipline myself to try to get in at least an hour a day. I feel good after I've practiced. There is no sense of frustration like after a lesson.

Piano study has certainly made me appreciate the great masters like Mozart, Bach, Beethoven. There's a Bach festival every July a few hours from here, and my wife and I have been out there for the last two years and we have the tickets to go this year. I am just astounded by what we hear out there. I'm astounded by even the simple music that Bach wrote that I can play. How can one person do that? And I've had the same feelings for Beethoven and Brahms. I think I've been affected by piano study in having, by having a greater appreciation for composers and performers that perform well, whew! It's just wonderful.

What I bring to my piano study is probably the determination to see something through. The Minister at our church, pretty near every time he sees me he says, when are you going to give a recital? When are you going to play for us in church? And those experiences are fun, they are nice. I don't think that I have had any life experiences that have hindered my playing much.

If I had unlimited time I probably wouldn't practice after dinner. It would probably be mid-afternoon to late afternoon. Though now I usually do end up practicing after dinner. Sometimes I break up my practicing too. I'm just at the age where my back gets tired. I don't sit up as straight as I should anyway. If I sit up straight it helps, but I stoop over and after half an hour why, it feels awful good to get up and walk around or something like that.

Sitting at the piano for a long period of time is more difficult now than when I was younger and I have to wear my piano glasses. To read the notes

without the glasses I have to get up and look like this [he motions craning his neck to see from the bifocal portion of his glass]. So seeing and sitting up are I think the two physical problems that I experience most often.

[I like to] practice a little bit before my lessons. That's important to me. I have memorized a lot too. (If you'd say that those Brahms pieces that I play are memorized.) If I could play it by reading the music, I'd really rather read it than have to memorize. I have maybe 20 pieces that I can play. Something has to be pretty near memorized before I can play it for somebody. Even for my lessons it's that way. I've been working on Fur Elise. I've looked at it twice for half an hour each, but there's really no point in me trying to play it for Sarah because I'll jimmy it up so badly. I ought to work on it at least a half a dozen times before I play it for her. She certainly doesn't mind if I make mistake after mistake but that's not the point of it."

Patti

Patti is a 58-year old retired educator. She matches all of the criteria for lifelong learning and was only eight hours away from obtaining a Ph.D. in counseling before she decided that her priorities should be with her family rather than dedicating her extra time and energy toward a major research project. She was a dancer as a child but had only one experience with music during childhood. That one experience was with a school band and was cut short because it was a negative musical experience for her. Patti is a cancer survivor and candidly discussed her relationship with the piano, music, and how her lessons are "good therapy" for her. Her thoughts follow:

"You might have noticed that neither Susan nor I have a problem talking! [laughter] Truly I think that I started to study piano just to broaden my horizons. I realize that is a cliché phrase, but I like learning new things and it was something I'd always wanted to do and I had the money to do it. I chose piano because it is something that is concrete. It's in my house. It sits there. It's not like going and getting something out of a box. It's right there in the open, which makes a difference. And I don't think I would have felt comfortable with anything else. I did get into a thing called creative memories, which is just the decorative photo albums. I never knew that I had any artistic talent, but I really have some and I didn't know it until I did creative memories. I cross stitch too. I guess those are basically the two creative things that I do.

Music is probably another way of filling that same creative space. It's learning something and doing something for myself. I think that piano is good therapy. I took lessons the whole time I was in chemo-therapy. When I was playing the piano I couldn't think about cancer, so that was a good thing. And I own a piano [laughter] and so I guess if I quit taking lessons I'd have to sell my piano! [laughter] No, I would say that I'm probably not a quitter, I keep up with things. I'm probably not as enthusiastic now as I was several years ago. I'm not as dedicated. I don't really feel the need to be challenged particularly. I'd rather just learn a piece than play it like an accomplished pianist. I know that I have to struggle and I would have to work harder than I plan to work to polish music. So to just get comfortable with a piece is enough for me. I'd just as soon go to a lesson and have Allison tell me how to practice and then go home and practice it,

and then go back to the lesson and learn a little bit more, you know. I'd quit if she pushed me more. In the 5th grade I took flute for 5 weeks and the band director yelled at me and I quit. And I enrolled in French class and I loved it and the teacher made kind of an underhanded remark about my pronunciation and I quit. And so, I think if I were, I don't think harass is the right word, but I think if I were, oh maybe verbally pushed where someone said, "you've got to do better at this" I'd just say, "I'm not coming back." I think if I wanted to be accomplished that would be fine, but my goals are different. And I've told Allison that. In fact, we'll learn a piece and I'll go on and I'll get another one. Sometimes I'm learning two or three pieces at a time, but I never play any of them very good! [laughter] But I don't care! But now I practice really hard when we have the duets. I mean, because I don't want to mess Susan up. The goals are different [depending on] what you are doing.

The blocking and the fingering together during the lesson have been helpful for me. I can learn the right hand and I can learn the left hand, and then I have to learn the two together. The co-ordination is a real struggle for me. I don't like it when she goes "Patti sing this piece." I just don't feel comfortable. And it's just gotten where it's just kind of a joke. I mean I do it, but Allison teaches voice lessons and here she's asking me to sing this piece. I don't know of you noticed this at the lesson the other day, but remember she told Susan to play and for me to come in? Every time it was time for me to come in, Susan would nudge me because I couldn't tell when it was time to come in! [laughter] So anything Allison does like that, I just ignore her if I don't really like it. Life's too short for

me to get upset about it so I just look around and think if she can listen to this, fine. It should be torture for her! But I don't like that part, I don't like ... her to tell me to see, to hear and sing the music. I don't think that she understands that I'm uncomfortable. I've told her and she goes, "Patti it doesn't make any difference." So it doesn't really bother her and it doesn't really bother me as much as it did. I just kind of ignore her sometimes! [laughter] Counting out loud doesn't bother me, but to sing the words really makes me feel self-conscious.

With the duets I enjoy the companionship with Susan. We get tickled when we make mistakes. But I think just the friendship is most important. I mean, we've been friends since grade school. I think it's probably just that we have a good time practicing the pieces together and we don't really care if we play them for anybody. We always play them for Susan's Mother. Whenever Allison has the parties, Susan and I generally play the duets. But it's just for fun. Playing at the parties really does kind of push me since I have to be ready. The first time we did it I was shaking so bad Susan had to put her hand on my knee because I got so stressed. But she took piano as a child and she knows how to play and she plays really well. I've told her several times, "you can find somebody else if you want to," and she goes, "well I don't want to play duets with anyone else because this is just for fun." And that's what it is, but it does push me.

At the parties, Susan and I have been known to play while the others were out looking at the bush in Allison's back yard. We always make sure that everybody's eating when we play. I have to tell you, the first time I went to a party I had only taken lessons for three months. I had this little short piece that I

had learned. I had it semi memorized because I have a sight problem and I play better if I'm kind of memorized. But anyway, I thought she told me I couldn't take the book to play at this deal. We go over to this lady's house and she has this nice baby grand piano. Well, I can tell that I'm in trouble anyway and I didn't even take my book in because I thought she told me I couldn't. And so, I played either first or second and I sat down at the piano and went totally blank. And I was so nervous that finally she said, "ok, now put your right hand on the piano," and I did, and then she said, "now put your left hand on the piano!" [laughter] But it finally came to me and I played it the fastest it's ever been played on record! [laughter] I practice really hard, but it makes me extremely nervous to play for people.

But now, cancer changed my life. I'm not going to spend my life practicing something for a recital, it's just not important for me to do that. It's not the end of the world. I'm not kidding, Susan had to grab my left knee because it would just be shaking because I get so stressed, because I'm a perfectionist. So I guess to not be successful at piano is real stressful. I don't care that I'm not successful at home, but I don't like not being successful in front of other people. But the parties are fun and the group is small enough that it's fine. Susan generally plays a solo. For me it depends. The last time we played, I had to miss [lessons] because of something for two or three weeks, so I practiced the duet with Susan and played that but I didn't play any solos. I do practice more for the parties and I work on smaller pieces that I can do because I have tendency to play through the piece rather than work on small parts. I can't stand not to get to the

end. And Susan and I make an effort to get together more than once a week. We get together every day when we have to play [for the party]. I don't know that there is anything else that is helpful about the experience. I always play first. If I don't get to play first, I don't play. I mean some of them are really good. And I know some who have been taking the same length that I have and they're better than I am. So if I play first then what else have you got to judge me by? But I've always presented papers first in class and I've always done my dance things first, that's just the way I am.

I enjoy hearing the other music except once she had someone who played this beautiful piece, but it went on for ever and ever and I thought, "how boring." It was not fun, it was just a chance for her to play, but for the most part everybody laughs and it is really fun. There are really only about four or five of us and that's it. Now at Christmas more people came because she had her jazz group there and it was just a party with her jazz group playing. Nobody else played, so a whole bunch of us came to that. I was the kind of person that had to go [to the get togethers] when I started piano. I felt like I was supposed to go. It's a big joke [at home] too, they'll say "Patti's going to her piano recital!" But and I would still go. I've gone and played and I've gone and not played, and that's ok.

The biggest challenge with the duets is to keep the count because I have a tendency to pause and I forget that I can not go "oh wait I want to play that, oops!" I guess probably keeping the count consistent, is probably the biggest problem. When I'm playing in the recital at her house I want to play the piece

again because I know that I can play it really good. Susan and I have played a duet again before. We've messed up and we've played it again.

I like the new age music and she just gave me a new piece in a book called *Lyric Moments* by Rollin. Allison always got me really good books to play from until she started writing music and now she gives me her pieces and I don't know whether to be flattered or insulted. She always lets me play them because if I can play them then they're not [laughter] not too hard. But some of her stuff is very dissonant. It is hard playing her pieces because she knows what she wants them to sound like and I don't think I could ever compare to what she really wants them to sound like. So she's probably a wonderful person in that she doesn't grimace when I play them. But, I'd really rather play out of a book and I've kind of told her that but I don't think that she hears me.

Her pieces seem to be written to get you from here to here rather than being really musical pieces that you can hum. I don't mean to be critical because some of her pieces are very difficult, I just prefer the new wave music that I've played. It just seemed to flow for me. I could play that music well. Maybe it met an emotional need because I could make it work for me. Whether it works for anyone else is not important to me. So that might be the fact that I could play it comfortably.

My husband is always yelling, "Patti, play the notes closer together." [laughter] Especially if I'm trying to learn a piece! He just gives me a bad time but he couldn't care what I play on the piano. Allison is always asking, "Do you play for your husband?" I say "Oh, no!" She'll ask, "did he recognize *Aura Lee*?"

"Well, no!" [laughter] But he doesn't care [although] he's the one that bought the piano for my birthday! But he is not going to let me think I'm getting any good! [laughter] He really basically ignores that part of my life, it's just not important to him. In fact, I said something in Santa Fe this weekend, that I had to get back because I had to meet you and be interviewed and this guy we were meeting with nearly fell out of his chair laughing! [laughter] He said, " she's interviewing people over 50 taking piano," and I go "yeah!" Well anyway, he thought it was funny. I mean a lot of people think it's kind of admirable but even though he laughed, he doesn't do it! I mean he bought a banjo and it is still sitting there so forget him! [laughter]

I'm overly critical of myself with everything that I do. I was the perfect child and I get really tense at lessons. Practicing is one thing, it sounds kind of perfect to me at home and I can play it pretty well, but I get to her house and I get kind of stressed. But being overly critical of myself definitely it gets in my way. But that's part of my personality. I get kind of angry at myself because I let that take control. And for 58 years it's made me a much better person in a way because I have strived to be perfect. But it's made me a psychotic, crazy woman too! [laughter] Seriously, it has made me stressed a lot. When people ask, "do you take piano?" I say, "Well yes, but I can't play." Which is crazy because I can play. I learned *Amazing Grace* for one of my friends and I played it for her birthday and she just cried. But I worked for months on this piece, so it would be perfect. It upsets me going to Allison's house to play, because I can play it perfect for myself at home and I get there and I think, "why couldn't I hit that note?" But

it's not just playing those notes when you're sitting there. It's a lot of other things, like thinking, "is my hair straight?" [laughter]

I also enjoy playing Romantic music. I don't like to play popular songs. I love the *Moonlight Sonata.* I loved playing that. I never got very good at it, but I loved playing it. And Allison wrote that arrangement for me. The pieces that I like don't necessarily have to be anything that I recognize though. She gave me the theme from *Beauty and the Beast* and I didn't want to play it because it didn't sound like the full orchestra, as it should. I would love to play rock and roll pieces, but they don't work on the piano. And I don't ever play anything that is fast. I just don't feel coordinated enough to play anything that is very fast.

My ideal piano teacher would have patience and understand that I'm not married to what she's doing. I have a life and [piano] is something that I do for fun. It should be somebody who would who work with me and teach me how to play things and to count and all that sort of stuff, but would forgive me for not being a pianist. Because I do not consider myself a pianist, I consider myself somebody who plays the piano for my own good. As an adult you've got to have somebody to work with you. I mean there are times I go [to a lesson and say,] "look, I haven't touched the piano." I think that's another thing, teachers HAVE to understand that there are times that you can not practice. I practiced more when I worked than I do now. I just had a lot more time! [laughter] But I was organized, so at 7 o'clock at night I practiced piano. Now [I look at the clock and] it's 8 o'clock and I haven't touched the piano yet because I've been busy doing other things! I think a piano teacher just needs to understand what my purpose is as an

adult piano student. That is more important than anything. I don't have any problem communicating these things to Allison, but she doesn't believe me when I tell her I don't want to sing. [laughter]

I find the blocking helpful and memorizing parts that I can't play very well works. I really do sight read slowly. I can do it, but just to sit down and play the music at the tempo, I couldn't do that. I have a problem putting the bass and the treble together at the same time. I can sight read the top line, I can sight read the bottom line, but when I do the two together I have to really work on the co-ordination, so I tend to memorize the tricky parts. I want the music there as a crutch, but it does free me up. For me the patterned pieces are wonderful because of the fact that there is repetition. I generally don't like a piece that is over two pages. I have this new one that is four pages and she took it and showed me that the 3rd page is just part A, so I don't turn the page. And I can do it, but it goes back to liking to learn a piece. I can play it but if I have to spend so long learning it, then I've lost interest, so I'm really kind of a two-page girl! [laughter] And definitely no longer than four pages!

Even though I'd like to play perfectly, I'm not nearly as stressed anymore playing during my lessons. If I haven't practiced I just say, "Allison, we need to work on something because I haven't practiced." Now my challenge is practicing enough to justify taking piano. And a lot of that has to do with my medical condition over the last few years. But when I was in treatment I continued with my lessons. I would like maybe miss a few lessons but she let me pay by the lesson, which she doesn't do very often. But I didn't know if I was going to be in

chemo or sick or whatever so it was difficult to plan too far in advance. Piano really was good therapy. I would get depressed and go sit down and play, I mean that's what's really neat. I've got a huge book of pieces that are just chords and the melody line [lead lines]. I can go sit down and play those and be happy. So I did that a lot while I was in treatment. I also did a lot of Christmas music, because I had a lot of Christmas books.

When I started piano I wanted to be really good. And now I understand that my goals are not what they were when I started out. You know, I would love to go to a piano bar and be able to say, "I could do that," but I can't. I'd have to be really drunk. [laughter] And even then they're not going to let me play the piano! [laughter] I think that would be great to [play] that well but I'm not that talented. I know I'm not, so my goals [have] changed. So I think another challenge was to realize where I stood in this relationship with my piano.

Some of my challenges with motivation have come from the music that I am playing. I really have not liked playing Allison's music and I've tried to tell her. I've asked her to get me another book like the new age one and she'll go "oh, well here I've got this piece that I wrote." I love Allison and I've taken lessons from her for a long time and it's fine if she gives me some of her music, but it's not where I want to be. I think a lot of it is just that she's writing her own music. Her music is fine, but it's very dissonant and so it doesn't sound good to me. I don't dislike playing Allison's music, but I play it for maybe two or three weeks then I go on to another piece. So I don't have a lot of interest in it. Now she wrote some pieces when she first started arranging pieces like the *Ashokin Farewell*, and

that piece was four pages long and had nine million notes but I got where I could really play that. And I loved it, but that's not like what she writes now. She wrote *Moonlight Sonata* [arrangement] for me and I loved that. Maybe most of her pieces don't have any purpose and they don't mean anything to me. She says, "well Patti see how you can do on this piece!" [laughter] And I say, "well Allison, if I can play it, anybody can play it!" [laughter] She kind of did mean it like that because she had some pieces with parts in it that were kind of difficult and she suggested that if I could do this, she thought those pieces would be comfortable enough for anybody. She knows what my level is. We can be dishonest about this, but she knows where I am. I have played several pieces that she has submitted for publication because if I can play them [then anyone can]! [laughter] And she doesn't mean it badly, I know she doesn't.

I can sit down starting in November and get all my Christmas books out and I play every day. And this summer, when I'm not taking lessons, I'll get a lead line book out of pieces like *Aura Lee*. Now, I don't practice them, I'll just play. I feel great after I play. I often say, "yeah, that really was *Silent Night*!" Susan and I often have the same feeling after we have played a duet and we play it really good.

Generally practicing is just something I have to do. But that's not entirely true because the piano really is good therapy. And it doesn't make any difference if I'm good or bad or whatever, it's very good therapy. This probably makes it easy for me because I can practice and not be very good and still feel good. But if I were having to perform up to somebody else's level then it would stress me.

And I will not allow piano to stress me, except when I go to Allison's parties. Even playing with Susan is not stressful for me, not at all. She's much better but she carries me pretty well. We have fun and we giggle. She has other people who get really stressed out at recitals. Betty gets really stressed out and gets real tight. She is definitely very good and she wants to continue to get better. Susan and I would get tickled because my knees would shake. She gets real tense, but she's real good! We're totally different types of adult piano students. If I never get any better at all I don't really care. In my heart I would love to be wonderful, I would love to sit down and just play and all that, but in my mind I know that isn't possible. And I really think it's a talent. I don't think you can teach anybody to play, well that's not true. She taught me to play piano, but I don't think you can teach anybody to be great, there has to be some sort of natural talent. I was a wonderful dancer so I know, but it came so easily for me, I didn't struggle like I do with this. But I enjoy the success that I have [with the piano]. The fact that the notes get closer together. We can laugh, but when they get closer together [and I can play faster], it's kind of neat! Playing the *Moonlight Sonata* was just wonderful because somebody really wonderful wrote it. It just feels good, I like that part.

Co-ordination is the biggest problem for me. The mind to finger movements are just difficult for me, so I guess that would qualify as co-ordination. Of course, I have a little bit of a visual problem as well. I didn't go to class for the first two weeks after the problem started because it stressed me so much to look at the music. But then when it got [a little better], then it didn't

bother me. It's still a problem but it's probably 50 percent better now and I have no problem [playing]. Last week when I went to piano, it was just fine. I may have to move the score a little bit, but it is about to get to the point that I don't even notice the problem anymore. But I have extremely bad vision anyway. I wonder if part of my not being able to do the top line and the bottom line together is not being able to see it properly. I also have a problem with my eyes transferring it to my brain, because I have to memorize one of the two lines. I generally memorize the bass and play the treble. I can do better that way and that's kind of what she teaches anyway, because she generally has you block in the bass for a long time. I hate reading notes on ledger lines. I told her once that I thought they killed brain cells with chemo therapy and she said, "well, Patti what's the excuse with all of my other adults!" [laughter]

Getting the two hands together is the most difficult thing for me. And I probably have to deal with count[ing] a lot. I have a terrible time learning two measures in a row, or even a measure and a half. I always want to learn a measure and then I'm stuck. And whenever I learn a piece I play it very loudly at first. I bang the keys, I don't have any range of sound. I don't have any dynamics, I just play it really loudly. In fact when we learned the duet *Shenendoah*, I played it really loudly then I had to learn where to play it softly. I don't put all that stuff in at once. Allison has to teach me that. Once she tells me, I can hear that I'm should make a bell curve [play a crescendo and a diminuendo], you know. [laughter] But, that's another thing that's a real challenge for me. It takes me two or three weeks to ever get the piece [to the] point [where] we start trying to work on it. It takes

me a while to learn a piece. Susan sits down a learns a piece quickly, but she's different and we're not the same and we never will be. She took piano forever when she was a little kid.

I have lost some memory since my [cancer] treatment. It's not like I'm incapacitated, but there are some things that just aren't there anymore. And who knows, maybe they're not there because I've gotten to be 58. Your mind does a lot of wonderful things for your body when it doesn't co-operate. I think this year was probably just tough to stay focused on piano because I needed to live again. I get to feeling guilty about spending the money on lessons because I don't put a lot of effort into it, and I think that we could do something else with the money. So I think that kind of plays a role too.

Susan and I were already friends, but it's been kind of a fun thing to play duets with her. I've also met a lot of really nice people in piano. And it's a very good conversation piece because people are very impressed that you are doing what you're doing because they don't have the guts to do anything on their own and that's kind of neat. It may not make sense but it was neat that I was able to give my friend *Amazing Grace* on the piano. She thought that it was wonderful, so the pleasure you draw from it is great. And when you get right down to it, I just think it is therapy. And I mean good therapy because what else can you think about when you are practicing?

I think it fits in with the fact that I'm the kind of a person who makes lemonade out of lemons. I wanted to be a good piano player when I started out, but now I just like playing the piano. So rather than making myself upset with the

fact that I wasn't any good, I learned to say, "ok, this is what you are capable of and this is ok."

I was a teacher for 30 years and I think that being a student helped when I was teaching because I knew I had to struggle. I probably am not deep enough to discuss how my life experiences have affected my playing. That's not entirely true because with the *Ashokin Farewell*, I knew that was my husband's favorite television show, and I worked so hard to learn that piece for him. I can't play it now because I haven't played it in a long time, but I got to where I could play it and he could recognize it. I really don't think about my life experiences when I play the piano though.

I think that cancer could have interfered with my playing but it didn't. I think my vision and the other things that we've talked about probably hindered my playing the most. I think that working full time could have been a hindrance, but I did practice more then. I just knew that when I quit work I would just practice all the time and be great, but I have had so many other things to do that I haven't. But mainly health has been the biggest problem for me.

I would prefer to practice in the morning because I'm a morning person. [laughter] That was also Susan's answer probably. But I go exercise in the morning, in fact I used to do that when I was off in the summer. I would do everything that I was going to do and then sit down and practice the piano. But now I tend to practice in the late afternoon. I often will go practice when I'm bored. My husband's a channel surfer and he'll watch the middle of a movie, I mean we don't even know what's going on. And I'll say "I'm going to go practice

piano." [laughter] It drives me absolutely crazy! [laughter] But now I'd rather read or play the piano than watch television if I'm bored. I don't know if that's good or bad, but it means that it [piano] is more important than what I'm doing. My lessons are in the mornings now that I don't work anymore.

I memorize everything a little bit, but if I don't continue to play it, I lose it. So, my memory is in the present. Now I can go back and pick out a piece and I think if I worked on it again I might get there again, but I can't pick up a piece I played a year ago and just play it like I was playing it when I quit playing it. But at the point that I quit playing it, I had a good portion of it memorized. I think that the memory just happens. It is probably the way I learn. I like repetition and then pretty soon it's mine but if I don't continue to use it, I lose it.

I think I'm lazy. I mean [laughter] do you want the truth? [laughter] I have a lot of education and a lot of it's in history, so I know I have pretty good strategies for memorizing. I probably don't apply them enough in music over long periods of time because I have a tendency like I told you, not to practice for long periods of time. I know that that's where I'm going to have to get in the piece in order to play it well.

Every once in a while Susan and I will go to the music store and buy some music. Of course, Allison wants to correct all of their music [laughter] but we just ignore her. But we bought our own duet book one time and oh, she just hated it - so we just played every one of them! But it was real simple, like one person played this chord and the other person played almost one handed. So it was fun for us. Allison kept saying "the piece is too fast," but we didn't care. It just wasn't

important enough to us. I would probably have gone to the music store myself this summer if she hadn't gotten me this new book. In fact, I may go anyway and see if that guy who has written that New Age book has written anything else. I loved playing out of that. And the neat thing is that I think I played really well out of it. I played well enough that I had at one of the recitals two different people ask me what the book was and wanted Allison to give them pieces out of that book. I felt like I could play those pieces, you know. I loved playing them, they were good.

I think that as adults, each of us expects something different and our lives are really different. For the most part, piano is not the center of our lives. And I think that's real important. You could just see Allison cringe the other day when I said "well Allison why don't we just not count May month?" I know she's depending on that and I did sign a contract for that length of time, but Susan and I have both been out of town for a week and haven't touched the piano. So, I think that you've almost got to look at each person differently because adults are really way different from kids. I mean you can almost do a pattern with kids it seems, and you can kind of get them in categories. Well maybe you can put adults in categories and patterns, but you're going to have to be real flexible.

But, I never have felt uncomfortable going to Allison for a lesson, ever. Not even when I was sick. Because I have so much dance [background], she's always trying to show me how you would dance this! But it doesn't work in my fingers! You would think that it would transfer, but it doesn't. I won't quit I don't think unless I got physically incapable or financially unable to do it. Because it is

pretty expensive and when you get right down to it you've got to decide priorities and she's in competition with Barnes and Noble! [laughter]

I know that Susan and I really have very different philosophies about piano. She would really like to be pushed a lot more and, and she's always saying, "Patti, I think she needs to push you a lot more." I feel like it wouldn't make that much difference, you know, so why bother? I don't feel like I've progressed at all in the last two years. I can't tell you if it's the music or if it's the cancer, but I don't feel like I have progressed. I think I'll kind of know with this new piece I have. It just seems to look like the same music I've played for two years. A lot of Allison's music looks the same. I think I should be able to play something that looks like it has more notes than I can count! They don't make a lot of those in two-page stuff! [laughter]

But Susan and I get such a kick out of it. Just like the other day when Allison asked Susan to begin [our duet] in the middle and Susan had to tap me on the knee when it was time for me to come it! [laughter] Susan knows that's not important for me to be able to count and come in. Allison shouldn't be doing that to me as far as I'm concerned because why do I need to worry about coming in? If I get lost, I get lost, I'll figure it out, but don't make me do that kind of thing in the lesson.

We kind of treat lessons like a social time. Now she's got some real dedicated adults too, but we never see most of them. And a lot of them don't stay in lessons for very long, which may also be a problem. But I plan to keep taking for a while yet."

Susan

Susan has a bachelor's degree in history and at 58 is currently retired. At the time that she spoke about her experience of adult piano study she was struggling with how she should measure her progress as an adult. Clearly, the extrinsic motivators that had been important to her as a child were no longer sufficient. She had studied piano for about four years as a child and played in the high school band. She has attended many musical events and piano concerts throughout her life and has confidence in her abilities as a pianist. A dichotomy between her need for challenges at the keyboard and her other life priorities is evident in the following profile. There is also a sense of urgency that may be noted in Susan's words. She revealed during the conversation that when her husband retired within the next nine months, they would be moving to a small town in another part of the country, where she may not have access to a piano teacher. Her story follows:

"We had a small piano and then when we moved into our current house we switched pianos with my Mother because we had room for the grand piano. So I thought "well, I'll start [lessons] again." And my lifelong friend Patti was taking piano, so I just thought it would be fun. My skills were not as a sharp as they might be so I just decided to do it. Maybe I had a little more time and maybe I didn't. But I just thought "well, I have this beautiful piano, I just need to be able to play it a little bit better." I made time for practice, you know and I made sure that I did get to practice and play. I've always enjoyed just sitting down and sight

reading, but I wanted to do this and I wanted to do the duets with Patti. I haven't had another duet partner since I began adult study.

We had an old upright piano when I was growing up. As a kid you took piano, you took dance lessons, and the piano teacher just lived a block away so it was easy to walk to lessons and I enjoyed it. I had played in the band in high school and I think I did that just because a lot of friends were doing it. But I never considered returning to the flute again or any other instrument as an adult. I just I've always enjoyed piano music. I went to hear Peter Duchane one time and I've heard different award winners from [the Van Cliburn Competition in] Fort Worth.

I took a photography class once because cameras were becoming so complicated. Another friend that lives behind us in town took wonderful black and whites. Photography was kind of a thing for her and so I thought that I'd like to try a photography class and I did. I have no talent in the area of painting but the piano is just something that comes back to me, like riding a bicycle. And I don't ever expect to be wonderful, but I enjoy it and I do like to sight read. I like to play hymns. Occasionally I'll get my hymn book out and I'll play two or three hymns. But, I was never good at painting, not even number painting. I didn't have the patience for all of those little bitty spaces. And sculpting, I just wasn't interested. You know, I didn't have that kind of talent.

I like sight reading hymns because if it's a hymn that you've known in church, you can sing along with it. I just think that's kind of fun. My daughter gave me the sheet music of "Memories" from *Cats*. I've worked on that. It's difficult but I could sight read through the first third of it and it made me feel

really good that I could do that. I could even get the parts with four or five flats. I could feel the rhythm and I could sing along. The part that I couldn't play very well I just kind of sang along that part and I just feel like I had accomplished something and finish[ed] it. Whereas with practicing you might work on just one section. Like this morning I practiced on just one part of a piece, mainly trying to move my left hand to cross over my right hand faster so I would be ready for the chord. And I never played the piece all the way through this morning. But, when I sight read I generally stumble through until I finish it. Maybe once or twice a week I'll sit down and sight read though some of the books that I have since I have all of the piano books that I ever used. But the rest of the time I'm working on my piano lessons.

I generally take the summers off from piano lessons. I keep coming back [each autumn] because I want to get better and there is always something that I can learn. I get in a rut sometimes, even in sight reading. I learn something every year. I don't know that I've gotten any better, but I have learned a lot and I think it gives me an appreciation when I hear other people play. And I've got this beautiful piano and when your husband says "I'm going to have it restrung and I'm going to get it refinished," you feel a certain obligation to be able to play it and to play it well.

I grew up learning to recognize the notes when I played. Patti on the other hand has learned to play chords. My sister takes piano in California and she can fill in the chords. Allison has showed me chords and I'm learning how to find the pattern. and we're in a Catherine Rollin book right now that has a lot of patterns.

There's a definite pattern in her music and once Allison explains it to me and I see it, but it's been hard for me to see it. I can see the different parts or sections of a piece but the chords are a different story. I'm finding that interesting and it's quite a challenge to me because I've always just looked at the notes. But whereas some people know the chords, they can't always sight read because they don't know the notes. So there is a good part and a bad part. My goal is to become better and to have a better knowledge of the chords because I know people improvise with chords and I can't do that.

Patti and I generally overlap our lessons so we can do our duets for Allison. When Patti was teaching it wasn't convenient to do back to back lessons so we practiced more at my house but now that we are back to back she comes a little bit early for her lessons and I stay a minute or two after my lesson and we are able to play through the duets and work on them. The duets have taught me patience. [laughter] We have to be very patient with one another. Our relationship has been since grade school. She had no piano [as a child] and I feel like I learn the piece much faster so we go at a slower pace, which is fine. It doesn't bother me at all but we just have to work through it and sometimes I'm able to help her. She'll say, "now where am I?" and we get her on middle C and she works from there. We started off on some very, very simple duets and we've progressed and now we change back and forth between the primo and the secondo. I think we've really made progress. And instead of having the whole piano you've got to learn to just use your little part and to get off the notes when you're supposed to so that she can play. It's been a give and take but I think that duets, especially at the same

piano, are a challenge because you are sharing the bench, you're sharing the keyboard and we're both fighting for our space, but it's been good.

I think I have learned to listen because of the duets. I've had to learn to listen to another part besides my own. I'm having to tune into what she's playing. I think that when I hear other people play, whether it's a two piano or just a one piano, I'm more in tune to both parts. I think even when I hear an orchestra I can hear the different parts being played better. And I like to pick out [different instruments] ... like that it is the flute that is playing that or this is a little minor [passage] that the violins are doing there or something. And I think it's made me more aware of that. Whereas when you play individually you don't hear that.

The get togethers have been fun. Patti had been taking from Allison before I was, so she had been to them. And it made her so nervous that literally the first time we played there I just popped her on the leg! I mean her leg was just shaking so I just popped her and said, "now stop it, we can do this." It's very informal and relaxed. That first time, we [played] it and we just said, "well, we weren't very good that time, we're gonna play it again!" These are small, they're not long duets or anything, and so everybody said "fine." Even I was nervous the first time, but Patti was really nervous. It was the first time that she had done a duet and she was really nervous, but we got through it. We just laugh and say, "this is the one we're going to play," and if someone else comes in and plays a duet with a lot more notes, we just say, "oh, that sounds good too!" But everybody knows just about where everyone is in their work and so we've just said we'll do the best we can. But [the parties are] a fun way [to play for each other], rather than recitals.

It brought back memories of my old piano recitals. Memorizing has just become difficult, so Allison said, "just play with your music, bring your music," so that has made it a lot more fun. Whereas when you were first learning [as a child] you played everything from memory and if your memory left you, you just sat there until it came back and then you started again. But the get togethers have been fun. I think that most everyone has enjoyed them. I had worried about making a fool of myself, but after the first time we realized that well, we sound better than this. We know we're better than this, that was just a trial run, tune us out, we're playing again. Of course you don't want to sound like you can't do it when you know that you can. But when you're sitting in a room and you only know two people, that's intimidating. The first time we went there was a lady that didn't even play. She didn't want to play and she said, "I'm not ready to do this," and that was ok. So, we felt like when we started to play a second time that was all right. And because we have gotten to know the others now, you don't feel so embarrassed when you goof up. And you see them goof up too. [Patti and I] always talk to each other before we start, we count out the rhythm we want and the [others] do too. It's just a fun thing now. One time everyone went out to see something in Allison's back yard and Patti and I didn't go out. So we rushed up and we played our piece and we said, "well you all missed it!" They said "well play it again." Well, because we had played it through once together, we were much more at ease and so we played it well and we were ok. But it's nice to have second chances.

When I played piano as a child I started with the John Thompson series. I liked it, I mean we didn't play every piece in every book but we played a lot of them. I remember going to [another town in the area] for the piano competition and working very hard on the pieces that I played. Those pieces came from the John Thompson books and they were very dear to my heart. And so, I've kept those. I think that a lot of new composers now, like the Catherine Rollin series that I'm working in, are very predictable. But it's a series that's helping me with learning the chords but I don't find them as challenging as the John Thompson series. I feel like I worked harder years ago than I've worked on some of these newer pieces. I can sight read these pieces and sometimes I'll go through a period when I don't apply myself very hard because I get to the point where I say, "oh, I can play this and it sounds ok." But sometimes I think, "oh, ok isn't good enough," but I don't find them as challenging. Maybe it's because I've started in book one whereas maybe I should have started in book three or something. If there is a three, I don't even know that there is a book three. Sometimes I feel like there is not enough challenge in these new books, even though you are trying to learn a basic skill. Maybe we should be looking at individual little pieces of music, but then I don't know that you could find individual pieces of music that have what you're looking for.

That is one of the biggest criticisms that I have with Allison. I feel like she doesn't balance what I need to learn in terms of technique with what I can play. Sometimes I feel like if I have a more difficult piece like *Memories*, even though it's hard I'll work on it. I have worked on that one and I feel like I'm more

challenged by it. I've put in a lot more effort in it at times then I have on the pieces that I've been going to play at my lessons. I can play all of the notes in some of those pieces so I just don't find [them] very challenging. I think adults have to be challenged. If there's ever a criticism of adult teaching in our particular case I think that that's it. I have seen myself move down, I haven't progressed. This may not be a good criticism at all, but I don't think that Patti is challenged enough. Therefore, she's not going to progress. I think we both would do more if we had to really knuckle down and get it. And maybe I'm wrong, maybe Patti doesn't want to give the time to it but I do feel like there are some pieces like in the John Thompson book four and book five that I would love to play. But they are not pieces in a series that Allison particularly likes, therefore I would just have to force it on her and I just don't know how she would feel about that. But I feel like there are some really good pieces in those books that I didn't learn as a junior high student that I could go back and learn now. But it seems like we've progressed to these newer composers. Allison never likes the arrangements and I think that a lot of that is because she is arranging music. Therefore, I've played a lot of her things and some of them I have enjoyed, others I just haven't liked at all. There is too much dissonance. I want it to be something that I can relate to, something that I can hear in my mind. Even though we've taped our lesson and she's put the piece on the tape, I want to be able to hum it in my mind or play it in my mind. Maybe that's one reason I rely on pieces that are classics that I know or pieces like hymns that I can sing. If I don't know how a piece is supposed to sound, even though I can count the rhythm, I'll just stumble around and fumble

around and it won't mean very much to me. But if it's something I've heard then I want it to sound like that.

But I just feel like that on a lot of the newer pieces I'm not challenged enough to sit at home and practice on it and work it out, simply because they're just little one page or two page pieces. And it's not that they don't have merit, they do, but they're just not me. I love to hear classical music and I think about my Mother. She played as a child, she's always played as an adult and she never thinks about going back. She'll get a piece and she'll work on it and if she can't get it, then she takes it to a lady that gives lessons and she says, "I need help with this." Then she'll take four or five lessons and she'll [be able to] play it. But she's always gone for the pieces that have a lot of depth. Like there might be different movements and moods in a piece. You're not just pounding out chords, then you go into the more lyrical [section], then you come back. She does pieces that have more emotion, more substance. I don't mind playing just chords with three notes in them, but I look at my Mother and she's playing four or five notes. I mean her hands are [all over] the piano and she's 88 and she can do this. I've seen her do it and I would like to think that I could sit down and play that way. Maybe I just need to give more effort to [my pieces], and they would sound a lot better. But when you can sight read right through a piece, it doesn't give you much challenge.

I like to be challenged by putting it together and making sure that you are playing the correct notes, the correct rhythms, and so on. In the John Thompson books there were different rhythms in one piece. And there are pieces in there that

are arrangements of classical pieces and I think they're beautiful. And they do have more notes that just seem to give them more substance. One song that I love to play is the *Spinning Song*. That was a piece that I went to the contest and played when I was young. I can't even think of the name of the other one. But I love to go back and play those and once I get my fingers going it comes back to me and it's surprising how I can play those pieces today and just feel good about myself. Because I worked hard to learn all the pieces in those books, I love to go back and play them. And they are beautiful pieces, but I don't have any emotional attachment to some of these new songs that are just so patterned. I guess that's it.

Now I've been working on this one where you cross the hands and you are going to play a chord and I've got to get my left hand over quicker. That is a skill that you need. I do feel like if I can get this, that it will be a skill that I can use in other pieces. But I don't know that this little melody is one that I would ever come back and think "oh, I think I'll go play that," you know. Maybe some of these people will be famous composers some day, I don't know.

A Mighty Fortress is Our God is a hymn that I just loved and Allison did an arrangement of that and I've learned to play that. It is beautiful, but she kept making changes so I don't know that I really have the final arrangement. But, but I learned to play it and I'm glad that I did. I like the challenge of learning to play something that has different parts and different movements to it. I only did part of my teacher's arrangement of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, whereas some students did the whole thing. I feel like I need to show her that my skills are improving and then move on to something else. I know that different teachers use

different books so I think that in the Fall I may go to the music stores and see what they have.

I did pick out a book for my Mother once and I showed it to Allison and Allison didn't like it. It was a Chopin book and there were some pretty things in there but, I don't want someone changing the notes. I feel that if I'm going to buy the book I want to learn it like the book has it. If that is not particularly her [Allison's] style then just help me get what I need so that I can work on it at home. We have butted heads on this but I think that when someone is composing music and doing arrangements and selling it like Allison is, then she's critical of arrangements in books. But I feel like they put those arrangements in the books for some reason. And so Allison and I have to give and take on that.

I want to learn as many skills as I can, while I can. I haven't said anything to anybody but we're moving and I don't know if there will be a teacher available where we're moving. But I know that we bought the house because there's a space for the piano and I'd like to sit down and be able to play as well as I can. And if learning about chords or learning [certain] skills is going to help me do that then I'd better be learning all that I can while I still have a teacher.

I feel a sense of urgency because when my husband retires we are moving from this area. I want to be able to sit down if someone says, "oh, Susan play something for me," and get out some music and play it well. I won't be memorizing all these pieces. Or if someone says "oh, we need someone to play the piano for Sunday School class," well then maybe I could sit down and sight read through the music. I want to be able to do things like that. I don't mean to be

critical but I don't think I'm pushed enough and maybe it's because when I was taking as a younger person I was pushed. I do know that I worked a lot harder when I was pushed. Of course I have a lot of other things going on in my life at this time. But I did then too and I still practiced and progressed. I think that everyone needs to be pushed, given a kick in the rear end once in a while. [They should tell you that] you've been in this book for too long [and that it's time to] move on. We need to be pushed up to another level, because if you don't progress then you lose interest. Especially adults, I think if they don't feel any sense of urgency like I do, they will quit. We think, "I'm not getting any better so why am I paying this money and taking this time," and the piano just collects dust. And if you don't use a piano it just sits there. I already know of one person who just has quit. She said, "I just quit for a while," but I don't know that she'll go back to it. I hope she will, but adults are like children, they want to see improvement and they want to know that they are getting better. I think if they don't see this, and maybe see it quicker than children, then they'll think "oh, this is too much for me."

I think that I should be able to progress as quickly as I did when I was younger but at the same time I think someone needs to say, "You're not giving it your all." Maybe that's true. However, I've learned some really lovely pieces and like I said, I keep all my music, and I like to be able to pull out the pieces that I've worked the hardest on and know that I can play. Your fingers stumble at first but then it just kind of comes back in your fingers and in your mind and so you're able to do it. But I do enjoy it.

I think that a teacher of adults should be someone that is going to understand that at some times you're not going to be able to put in as much time practicing as other times. You have weeks where you just can't get it all done. But then I also want someone that's not intimidated by me because maybe I'm older than they are. I need someone to say, "Susan, you have got to work on this. Now, you should be able to get this done." I think adults need that as well as children. Otherwise they will put it on the back burner. I think that sometimes I get complacent with it and I need that. And I think that there are times when you can not go to a lesson so there has to be flexibility. First in my life now is my husband and my children even though they're grown. But if my husband says "I want you to go to a meeting with me and this is when it is," then I want to go with him. I enjoy going and if it's a piano time then I have to give it up and we have to be flexible. And I think the teacher should be someone that is well rounded in their music. It is important that they themselves enjoy all kinds of music and want me to learn different types of music. I think you have to learn different types of music. I think you have to be well balanced and I would hope that a music teacher would have this balance.

I grew up doing scales and [chord] progressions. We do some scales but I think that doing scales is a real good way of getting your fingers going. I had surgery on my hand and I think playing scales limbers my fingers up. In the morning sometimes when I go to my lesson, my hand is so swollen I can't even reach an octave. Before [the surgery] I could reach farther than an octave. And I think that some warm up drills maybe are appropriate just to get your fingers

going. I have several friends who have arthritis in their hands and they have to do some kind of warm up to get their fingers and their hands going. I think warm up drills are important and I may mention that to Allison because now that my hand is so swollen it is hard for me to sit down and just go right into the piece that we're working on.

And Allison's piano at the studio is different from mine and from hers at home. I think that [her piano] makes you aware of pedaling. If I don't get the pedal on her piano in the ball of my foot, then I can't pedal the music just with my toes because it's too stiff.

Allison tapes our lessons but a lot of times I don't listen to it because I know how it sounded at the lesson. I always like for her to put a new piece on the tape, especially if it is something that I can't relate to or I haven't heard before. I'll listen to that but to listen to the tape over and over doesn't do a lot for me. I don't want to hear something that's bad, I want to hear something that's good. Listening to the tape is not high on the priority list. There have been times that I have dropped the tape and I don't realize that I've dropped it and I'll find it on the driveway at home or in the garage. I have enjoyed the Disclavier. I find that interesting because I'd never heard that before. It helped me to hear that I was playing my duet part way too loud.

It is important for adult recitals to be kept separate from the children's recitals. You don't want to know that a kid is playing better than you are. That did happen to my sister. She went to a recital and the teacher asked her to play. She was so embarrassed when this little six year old gets up, this little prodigy type,

and just goes bananas. She was just absolutely humiliated. I think it just about did her in. Adults don't like to be humiliated and I was telling her about the type of gatherings, Allison calls them parties, that we have. If you want to play, fine, if you don't that's fine too. And there aren't any children. We did have a young man from the dental school who came and played. He was talented and he was much more advanced than any of us, but it was fun to hear him play. But he praised us for what we did and he said, "I've been there, you just need to keep on going." But when you are so embarrassed, it just can be overwhelming and that was an experience that my sister had. Patti and I haven't had that [experience]. Everybody is a little bit more advanced than we are but not much. They encourage us to play our duet two or three times if we need that.

My hand has been a big problem for me this year. I'm so mad that it's not well. After my surgery I expected to be brand new, but it has been stiff. You can see it's swollen this morning. But I think that as an adult you do have problems. For example, I have piano glasses. I just put my glasses on and I sit down and I see just fine and it's no problem.

I think the first thing that is the hardest for me master in music is the counting of the piece. I want to make sure that I understand [the meter]. I like to get all of that in my mind before I work on it. I guess it's like planning a road trip. You want to know where you're going to drive and where you're going turn off before you start out. That's kind of the way I am. I like to kind of map it out and figure it out that way before I get my fingers into it.

The lady that I took piano from when I was young would clap out the rhythm and would say, "now this is in 4/4 or this is in ¾. This is like a waltz, 1-2-3," you know. We would get the rhythm and then she would say, "and we have new notes," and you would just want to find them. And you forget things like that but that's kind of the way I am now. I want to look at the rhythm and the notes because a lot of times I have to figure it out. Allison has just learned to live with that because that is the way I am."

Nancy

Nancy is 68 years of age. She is semi-retired but still works part-time as a therapist. She did not have any childhood experience at the piano but has always used music as an emotional release. When she was younger she played the trumpet and has always been an avid listener and attended many concerts. She is a very deep thinker and has given a great deal of thought to her experience of piano study. She has also written a series of short essays on the subject of her piano studies, particularly with regard to performing at the piano parties that her teacher hosts annually. She has kindly permitted the inclusion of her writing in the appendix. Her insightful thoughts follow:

"I have spent some time thinking about my goals since we last spoke. I didn't think I had goals because I hadn't written them down, but I do have them. I have time now and I've always liked having some way to express myself though music. And really it was something that I'd wanted to do for a long time and I just hadn't had time to do it. I think music has always been, not so much participating as listening, [but it] has always been a way for me to identify certain feelings.

And it fills emotional spaces for me. I'm just real intrigued with piano. I won't say that it's more difficult than I imagined, though some aspects of it are. And I really enjoy Allison. She's a neat teacher and the lessons satisfy a need for me or I wouldn't keep coming back. I think it probably allows me to express some emotions. The work I do has lots of sadness and lots of heavy heartache type stuff connected with it and I think some way to be able to express that and offload it is important and I think music does that for me.

In my lessons I enjoy it when Allison gives me techniques to try. It's like something you've struggled with and she says, "do it this way," or "try this," you think, "ah! Why didn't I see that?" She often stops me when I'm playing to fix things. Sometimes I have the feeling that I'd like to go on but she's never made a suggestion that wasn't right on target and it wasn't something I needed. Yet, often I do feel a sense of frustration during my lesson. I have this concept that things need to move in a linear fashion, where I picked up this concept I don't know. I think that things should be difficult, then you should attempt more difficult things or you're not doing well. Recognizing that has been interesting to me because you think you've left behind a lot of these attitudes about learning and you haven't, not when you start something new. It's the same old stuff, if I'm not doing more and more difficult things than I'm not doing as well as I should. It's that old achievement oriented concept that hangs with you. It would be interesting to see if most adult piano students have that or if it's primarily just the achievers because it's a real hang-up for me.

I had this dream once where and I was so frustrated with Allison because I wanted her to give me a grade and she wouldn't! (laughter) Sometimes when I'm practicing or playing, I hear a passage that really sounds good and that's so neat. I think that's how I measure my success now. One of my writings was about you ought to be able to celebrate something you've worked and worked and worked on.[15] It was all tongue-in-cheek but sometimes you are playing and it's like "Oh my, that sounds a lot better than when I first started!" I tend to hang onto the details and I lose the essence of the music.

I do participate in the gatherings but every time I get ready to play I ask myself "why am I doing this?" There is that push and drive because I want to do it and yet I'm terrified by it. But I have this thing too, when I go into a place and see a piano I want to sit down and then I want to try it and yet I don't really have enough skill to sit down and play. Maybe it's the ham in me, I don't know what it is. [laughter] Maybe it's the challenge because I've always gone for challenges.

There's comfort in playing a duet, Betty is cover! But Allison has always paired me with someone who has more skill than I. So, I have to do this well because I don't want to let the other person down. I have lots of those little characteristics stuck in my personality. That's what we grew up with.

I think an informal atmosphere at the piano parties is much easier. And there are times when that happens. There are still people who are sitting and listening but there are other people getting up and going out and getting food and things like that, and that helps me. You don't have all eyes upon you. That, "what

[15] Here, Nancy is referring to her writing entitled, "Confessions of An Adult Piano Student, Volume 3" which may be found in Appendix E.

if I make a mistake" attitude is firmly ingrained [in my personality]. You correct mistakes, but you don't celebrate the good things. One time we had fun though because when Allison went outside to show somebody her back yard, we locked the door and we played all of our pieces, and she couldn't get in! [laughter] So we enjoy each other's company.

I got a new piano and we had a party to celebrate it. Allison brought her jazz group over, I played duets with Betty, and my partner in private practice played duets with me. Even though all these people were there, it felt more comfortable to be doing it because it was more of a social setting. I think that I really enjoy the people first of all. I think it's that thing of talking about the fears with the other adult students. Listening to the other music is neat too.

Allison finds a lot of books that are useful. I have found some in the music stores and [laughter] naturally I always got stuff that was too hard and I would struggle and struggle and struggle and when I finally told Allison how frustrated I was she said, " I did not buy this book!" [laughter] And I think her selection process works a lot better than mine. I mean, if I buy stuff and bring it in she will help me with it, but I learned the hard way how frustrating that is!

I think that a teacher of adults has to be comfortable and relaxed. I think they have to realize that adults are looking at piano study in a different way, so they've got to be flexible enough to allow the adult to pursue the type of music that they want to play. I would have difficulty with someone who was really hard-nosed about everything, where everything had to be an exact way. And a sense of humor is important to me because I use humor a lot when I am uncomfortable.

I think the challenges that I have encountered are mostly the challenges that are within me. When I was young I used to improvise on the trumpet but I don't have the confidence that allows me to do that on the piano. That bothers me. I am beginning to hear where a chord goes, what the next chord is, what the next bass note is. I'm beginning to get a sense of that, but not always. I think when I asked to learn the chord structure it was really helpful to me. It's easy for me to memorize, but when I get in a stressful situation it's gone. So it wasn't ingrained or integrated. It's easier to memorize because I get panicked or rattled sometimes because I'm trying to accomplish it all. To look at the music and get the chords and the pedal, it feels like there is a whole lot to do on a piano, so it's easier if it is memorized. Once I get something memorized, then I like the way I play it a lot better because I can hear it and my attention isn't so divided.

I think that those adults who took piano lessons as kids seem to be more comfortable. Like Betty is more comfortable playing in front of people than I am because she did that whole recital routine [when she was younger]. Maybe it's just personality, I don't know. The other thing is the baggage of having to get things right or not making mistakes because people are watching. It's been helpful to play with Betty because she goes on so I can't go back and fix every note. When I work on new pieces, I break them down so much [in terms of the counting] that they don't sound musical.

These lessons have allowed me to meet people socially that I would not have known. And emotionally the lessons have been important. In all families certain emotions are not allowed to be expressed. In my particular family when I

was growing up, you couldn't express anger. Sadness was not really allowed either. And so I think that I used music to express sadness more than anything and I've noticed that that still carries true for me. I find I play ballads a heck of a lot more than anything else. I also like the jazz but there's a lot of emotion in jazz. My writing is also an outlet for me. I've actually written more since I started piano, it's like it unleashes the creativity, it allows you to move away from the [idea that] things have to be done a certain way. I have to make myself go do housework before I practice because I would go and practice first. In fact sometimes while my breakfast is cooking I will go and sit down [at the piano]. And it isn't because I want to accomplish anything, it's because it's something I want to do.

You know, if you hear [a piece] in your head it is much easier to play it the right way. I go back and play the tape of my lesson and listen to it [many times] because there is so much information that I get during a lesson that I can't process it all. And then I have two or three tapes of her playing certain pieces, if she plays for me during my lesson. It helps me to know how the piece should really sound, I rely on my ear a whole lot, I really do.

I started keeping the journal [Confessions of An Adult Piano Student] because of the panic [over the upcoming recital], but now I kind of do it once a year. I'm due to write another one in June. What's interesting to me, and I know this is true with everything that you learn, is that a good teacher has the ability to give you certain segments or certain parts of something to learn at one time. Because if you took a particular piece and they talked to you about everything that

you needed to pay attention to, it would feel overwhelming. And so there is a certain amount of breaking it down that a good teacher does. If you had gotten it all at one time it would have been totally overwhelming.

Another thing that interests me is the ego involvement. You think "why do I care?" I'm an accomplished individual, I have skills and I have done these things and I have raised a family and done all of these things. Why is my ego so involved in this? But it is there, it's definitely there you know. And then there is the baggage. I don't think that as adults we are aware of our baggage until it kind of hits us in the face. It's that feeling of being an eight-year old and you can see your feet on the floor...but your legs are swinging and there is that little tiny feeling inside! Those are my experiences, though others might be different. Of course, Allison put up some of my writings in her studio and Betty particularly liked the one about playing to the bottom of the keys. I thought that I was the only one who was not doing it, you know, and that's the egocentricity of an adolescent! [laughter]"

Betty

Music and piano were important aspects of the lives of several people who were prominent in Betty's life. Her Aunt Mary, a Mother figure throughout Betty's life, was her first piano teacher. Betty's daughter is also a professional pianist. As a child, Betty progressed though Grade Nine, in piano and theory, of a national Conservatory system in a foreign country. Both Betty and her teacher agree that she does not integrate theory into her playing. Both have also noticed that Betty learns much slower now, at age 75, than she did several years ago. She

seems to have successfully come to terms with how she measures her progress as an adult piano student, though it still surfaces as an issue for her from time to time. Her thoughts about her piano lessons follow:

"My lessons growing up were sort of a mixture of group and private actually. My Aunt Mary, who was my piano teacher, had a fairly big studio but only one piano. She would have a class of about four or five, she never had any more than five. And so one of us would be having a lesson at the piano, about our piano pieces, while the rest of us would be working on a theory assignment at the blackboard. When we were littler she'd have these ledger lines the length of the long table on tape that she'd pull out and little wooden notes that we could work with. But we kind of graduated from there to the blackboard and occasionally written assignments and so there'd be something that we would be doing while she was working with somebody else at the piano. But she was always turned around and answering the questions that we had. So I guess it was a group lesson of sorts. I'm not sure where along the line it got to be just individual lessons, but somewhere it did.

I kind of think that maybe the major factor in my decision to return to piano now was this same Aunt Mary. It connects me with her. My Mother died when I was 28 or 29 but I had Aunt Mary until I was about 65 and so she's been very much part of my family [and my children's lives] where my Mother wasn't. To some extent it connects me with my daughter Dorothy too because we have piano in common. It's not that we are on the same level or anything, but we both have this major interest. It never even occurred to me to do another instrument.

I also like to quilt. I'm not sure that you could call that artistic because for the most part I'm using a pattern. Any imagination on my part is mostly just in choosing fabrics and colours, but I'm following somebody else's design. I also do lots of gardening but I tend to find it drudgery you see, [laughter] if the truth comes out! I love those begonias that are up on the deck because I hand water them. We have a major watering system, you know, all over the rest of the yard, but there is so much variation between one pot of begonias and another in their needs, so that I'm more involved with them individually.

Piano really is my major artistic outlet. I suppose if I had had a different teacher I might not be as interested, but Allison is fascinating. I think I mentioned to you that at one point I played for duets with a local university professor of piano. That was way over my head and I dreaded it instead of looking forward to it. I loved her, but I was so far behind her and I thought that she was just putting up with me because she didn't have anybody else to play with. So if I had that kind of a feeling about my piano lessons I would probably have looked for a reason to quit. But with Allison, I just say "oh boy, I hope you don't get too busy to put up with me," because I want to keep on going.

I am always pleased when I leave a piano lesson. I can go to a piano lesson thinking, "Oh I haven't practiced worth a hoot this week," and I always want to do fairly well for her. Of course, you don't play as well as you do at home, because there is this little nervousness, but she's always got interesting suggestions and things to try. Allison has always made it fun for me except [for a time] way back when she had me teamed up with somebody who played too much

better than I did for it to be fun. We did a *Peter and the Wolf* duet and I remember thinking "God, if I had much of this I wouldn't stick with it." But for the most part, week after week I'll come home and say to my husband, "I enjoyed that lesson so much, we did thus and so." And I think perhaps it is because there is always something different that we're trying and not just over and over the same old stuff and doing it the same way. She has such a wide range of things that she does. Like with her jazz and arranging and all this kind of thing. There's just always a lot of variety, for example, this Roberta Flack piece that we have discovered recently.

I remember Allison once saying that anybody hearing me play would have no doubt that the piano is a percussion instrument, there was just too much of this [she indicates pounding]. You'd think I'd set a metronome or something. It was just too rigid. And so she is trying to loosen me up. She talks about getting it in your head. It's never going to come out in the keys unless it's in your head, and so that seems that recently we are working on getting rid of the 1-2-3-4 kind of a feeling. I don't recall playing that way when I was younger, or I certainly wasn't aware of it at any rate. I do feel that the emphasis was on getting the notes right and the rhythm correct and not so much on tone production back then. Playing in the bottom of the keys is kind of a new idea for me.

Allison also encourages us to always have a duet partner. I could hardly say that I enjoy that the most during my lesson, but it certainly adds a lot of sparkle to have fun with somebody. And we try to practice every week outside of the lesson. We're not playing as an ensemble, we're both just doing our best to

play [laughter] and keep together! But you can tell there are two people playing there, we're not one. Nancy hasn't taken lessons all that long and yet she does awfully well. In terms of the number of hours in our lives that we've spent practicing and playing at the piano, I should be light years ahead of her but I'm not. So we're a pretty good mix and I enjoy her thoroughly as a person. We really spend an awful lot of time visiting during this practice time.

There've been a few solo pieces that have been just so outstanding, perhaps they've been kind of high points too. There was a Bach, I've forgotten it was a *Fantasia* or something [she sings a measure] I love that. Dorothy played that and I probably like to play something that she has played, that I heard over and over and over again. Maybe I liked that about it the most. I also did the Schumann *Scenes from Childhood*, I kind of liked that. And I have a piece that I played when I was a kid, Allison found it for me. It's a *Toccata* by Perodisi and I played that well. Of course, Canada was in World War II before the United States and I was taking piano lessons, but I must have been in early high school. Anyway, I was playing this piece and my Mother hated it. It was the first time, the only time she didn't like something. And she didn't like it because she said "it's just like the German army, it goes on and on and on and there's no stopping it." But anyway I was pleased because I kind of liked starting it up again and I thought, "Mom, you were wrong. This is a great piece." Ah, so I've enjoyed that one a whole lot and then I did a book of rather easy Bach *Inventions* and I liked those a whole lot too. I loved that third movement of that Bach the other night [at Allison's concert] the fugue, oh, I loved that! I enjoyed the Bach *Inventions*

because they're neat and clean and mathematical. Perhaps it doesn't demand quite as much as more soulful music, I don't know. But for whatever reason, I really did like them. I got a big kick out of one of the *Scenes from Childhood* where it ends on a dominant that is resolved in the first measure of the next piece. Isn't that a neat device! I didn't like every one of them, but I kind of liked that suite and most of them are familiar so perhaps I liked that aspect too.

I think that I tend to be drawn to a piece because of its melody. There's one of those George Sherring pieces that I'm not going to spend anymore time on. It is *Over the Rainbow.* It is too dissonant for me. I can't get anything just too dissonant without it being a turn off. And Allison loves it. Sometimes I listen to the local public radio station and I feel like calling up and saying "I'm not going to give you another dollar if you ever play that again!" [laughter]

Now, Roberta Flack is not the kind of music that I would expect to like but it's so interesting. I have the CD in there and I used to like it when I'd hear it on the radio occasionally because it was so different. I used to try to count it when I'd hear it, but I couldn't. And I didn't know until I got this Sherring piece that I couldn't count it because it comes in 1 & 2 & [emphasis on the &] and I was trying to make that the one. [It began with an anacrusis.] It's sort of a puzzle to follow the unexpected notes, the different emphasis, and so on. I think it's the rhythm that I like in that, or lack of.

I grew up with the old Conservatory method where you'd finish off this level and then you are playing things more difficult and that's not the way I'm doing it now. It's disturbing because I can't memorize anymore. I have worked

really hard on one of the Brahms *Intermezzos*. I thought there's no reason in this world why you can't memorize that and I did sort of get it, but I was not comfortable with it. And so now there's no feeling that you have achieved this level reasonably well, now let's try something harder. That's what I grew up with. Now I'm not playing harder things, I can't do them. I can work and work and work on a couple of measures that are tricky and think "well, I think maybe you've got that" and come back again and I haven't got it. It takes far longer to get the bugs worked out now [than when I was younger]. I don't feel that I'm progressing as I used to define progress, as in playing more difficult pieces. I think I probably am playing these simpler things better than I would have when I was a kid.

I can remember when I was probably early teens Aunt Mary gave us some music from *Carmen*. It was for two pianos, eight hands. That was fun. The piece itself wasn't all that difficult but I remember with that thinking, "blend in, nobody should be able to listen to you." I was playing the top of the piano 2 and I remember thinking, "now you've learned something. You do not have to be the one that everybody is listening to, to be contributing."

Allison would probably be my idea of the ideal piano teacher. She's somebody that's patient, reasonably undemanding but you know she inspires me to the point that I don't want to go to a lesson without having accomplished more than I did when I was there the week before. And it would have to be someone that I like personally. I would not wanted to have been my former duet partner, [the professor's] student because I think she was just real demanding. I loved

having Aunt Mary when I was younger. On the other hand, as I look back now I think that she maybe wasn't emphasizing some of the things that I have since learned are important, and Allison does. I haven't really had any experience except with two teachers, you know.

I didn't realize it but I tend to run away and when I'm getting into difficulties. Instead of cranking it down, I go faster and think that maybe nobody will notice! [laughter] I'm not particularly introspective you see, and you are asking me questions I haven't thought about. Another one of the things that Allison is really big on is playing in the bottom of the keys. Dorothy's teacher would say, "get some weight in your arms." Aunt Mary would have some of those sayings, she'd say "get some pull in your fingers," but I've never achieved any of this.

Ideally I'd like to go to a lesson having shown considerable progress since the week before. It doesn't happen that way, it's very slow. I wish that it didn't take me so long to get something going. I wish that it would begin to gel faster. That has slowed down since I was younger. And I may never really get a piece though. I mean there isn't a single [Bach] *Invention* that I've ever played in anything other than a perfectly dreadful way. Of course, I just don't care how long it takes, I just like to have one of those going all the time.

One of the things that certainly didn't happen when I was younger is I can't always see it that well. This is a physical kind of thing. Sometimes I'll take some music out and blow it up. If there's that many notes crammed in close together, especially if there are a lot of accidentals in there, it seems to take me

forever. My hand will fall into a simple major chord or whatever fairly easily. If it's got a lot of accidentals or if it's in a different inversion or something, it doesn't come easy to figure out what those chords are and to get it to the point that my hand falls into them. That's probably the hardest thing on getting started, is the big notes, the big chords. I don't know that I ever feel as at ease with some of these pieces as I would have been back in the days when I knew them by heart. For some of your jumps, you really want to be able to watch your hands. And I feel like I can almost never watch my hands, I feel like I have to watch the music.

Only once in a while do I keep up old pieces while learning new ones. I should be doing more of it because they deteriorate a lot faster than it took to learn them. I'm not all that imaginative in searching out new pieces. I would just as soon go back and relearn something old as to learn something brand new, especially if I enjoyed the piece before. I'd almost rather do that than learn something new unless it's something where I've heard it enough that I know it really is lovely. It's worthwhile putting up with all of this stuff because it really will be lovely.

I'm really arthritic but so far my hands aren't too bad. I've got the really big bumps but they are not particularly painful but I suppose the day will come when they will be. I had carpal tunnel surgery last fall and that was a blessing because I had been really [putting up with] a lot of pain. I have kind of a flaky shoulder too. That coupled with the carpal tunnel I could only [practice] about 10 minutes before I was too numb to do anymore at all and I was really discouraged about that. It was about two months that I was just nearly up the wall with this. So

that's the kind of physical thing that was bad enough to grind everything pretty much to a halt but that's fine again now. So I'm just waiting to see what the next thing will be! [laughter] And then I have piano glasses, they're like computer glasses you know where this is the, I have the bifocal part of it but I have this [indicates distance that book would be on the piano rack] distance too. I can sit at the piano for three quarters of an hour or so, but there again it depends on how bad my back is at the moment.

I feel relieved after I practice because then I get to go and play with the quilts. I try not to let myself get in with the quilt thing until I have spent some time at the piano because there's no question that I have an awfully good time with these quilt patches and they're easier you see, than this. This is hard. [The quilting] doesn't demand so much of me because it's mostly simple things and I'm not learning something new. I know how to do that. I just like the way that the colours are coming out and the patterns are coming out and so on. So piano is much more mentally demanding. If I had my choice, I'd probably practice in the morning. I'm sharper in the morning but in the hot weather I have to be out in the yard then. I usually practice on the evening, right after dinner. My husband cleans up the kitchen and I come in here. Now if I've got five or ten minutes before something is happening, before I have to leave for something or [before] someone's going to pick me up or whatever, then I get five or ten minutes [of piano] in there. But the big chunk [of my practicing occurs] about seven o'clock at night. I think that Allison probably chose the morning lesson time because after school she has kids coming in. But it worked out fine for me.

I usually try to warm up before my lessons, though I wasn't calling it warm up, I was trying to learn something real quick! [laughter] Yeah, I usually try to let her see that something has happened since last week! [laughter] I think that I have experienced a lot of social benefits from taking piano. I enjoy Allison and I enjoy the others. The only person I see with any regularity is Nancy but Allison has had her adult students over a couple of times a year to play for each other. A good many of them won't [play] and I think that's too bad because I think there's something about that goal [of having] to play this piece for half a dozen people, that stimulates you to get with it a little more. This is also a social time. I also got a book of duets from Allison that I'm kind of working on to play with my daughter. So you see, I experience family social benefits as well. Plus, at the parties it's really lovely to listen to all of the music even if it's not what I would want to play myself. And then there's this Aunt Mary thing. It's hard to explain Aunt Mary to somebody who didn't have an Aunt Mary but she's she was so special.

Piano is a very positive thing because at our age there's not that much that is really demanding or stimulating to do and this is. We're so tied up with the yard and the apartments, so we're not doing the volunteer things that a lot of people do and get a lot of social satisfaction from. We've taken a different route than that and sometimes I feel ah badly because we're not contributing to the community, we're contributing to our own activities, but at any rate I think it is all positive.

I listen to CDs and every now and again there is a piece that I've played in a simplified version. One of them was the *Wedding Day at Trandheim*. The one I

played was simple but when I heard it I thought, "that's what that is supposed to sound like, that's what the tempo is supposed to be!" And that was really interesting to me and that pleased me to no end to hear this piece out of the blue that I had played! But, in my family back to my grandfather there have been a lot of very music people. I'm nowhere at that calibre but it kind of pleases me to be in that line too.

Certainly raising four kids and a family, while we had a fish farm and ran those apartments, put my piano playing on hold because I wasn't doing anything with the piano. I was yelling at kids to practice occasionally or going in and saying "count!" [laughter] But as far as my own playing, I don't know that raising a family hindered it but it put a stop to it.

I can't memorize anymore and I don't know why it is. I think my memory was entirely in my fingers. I couldn't tell you what key I was playing, what key the piece was written in, let alone what chords I was working out. Now, if I had a better linkage between theory and piano I might have a different way of memorizing and be able to still do it, but I just don't get the pattern now. Allison tried to help me with different memorizing ideas in the Brahms. And it did help and I sort of got one of the *Intermezzos* worked out so that I knew what I was doing but you see, I don't retain that. Once I quit going through it many times a day it's gone. It didn't bother me to try to memorize that and I enjoyed it. I just wish that it had worked out better. Of course, memorizing is not even on the priority list for me anymore. All I'm trying to do is entirely self-centered, so memorizing doesn't matter.

Allison certainly contributes an awful lot in terms of the music that I should be playing but she doesn't say "this is what I want you to play." You know, you just go through a book that she suggests and see if there is anything in there that you like. I think she feels that I'm way over my head with this Brahms and wonders why I keep wanting to do it. Certainly the pieces that she gives me to flip through are easier, there may be a message there I don't know. But she doesn't say, "you can't do this, you'll never do this." She doesn't say that. I think she is very aware of my needs and goals but I don't know exactly what I'm looking for anyway. Ah, I am sort of goal-less other than to keep on doing this forever, and to someday play a Brahms *Intermezzo* well enough that I could play it for somebody else. That hasn't happened yet but I would certainly like to be able to do that. But that's not a major goal. It doesn't frustrate me that she gives me easier pieces to play because there's always so much in them that I need to learn anyway. There is plenty there.

I think that I have far and away taken piano longer than any of the other adult students who play at her parties. There was a time when there were people who had taken longer than I. There is also one woman who has never played. She's absolutely petrified by it but I find it kind of stimulating. But we usually go to Allison's house and bring a lot of food and eat and talk and one at a time people reluctantly go up to the piano and play something. Allison frequently ends up playing for us and I find the gatherings to be lots of fun and I know many of the other people. She kind of emphasizes that you don't have to play because she doesn't want to intimidate anybody with that. And I'm nervous as I'll get out, but

I think it's good for me to have to do this. But that's coming away from 12 years of recitals. Once I've played I feel relieved! [laughter] I think, "now I can start eating!" [laughter]

This may sound tacky but when I listen to the others play, I mostly find myself thinking, "I don't know why they chose that, I don't like that at all!" [laughter] Like Patti likes quite contemporary music. I don't and I wouldn't spend five minutes trying to learn that, you know! And then other times I find myself, if I play reasonably well, thinking, "ok, you stacked up all right." Of course I should, I've had far more years [of piano] than anybody else there, but I'd rather not think about that because I'm not that good. I do compare myself. Allison once had a student who came and played the *Moonlight Sonata* by memory and she'd only been working on it for a very short period of time. She just blew me away and I wish that she were still taking lessons because she certainly was an example to everybody. Although, she was not an example that you could emulate. She would spend all day at the piano I think if she had the opportunity, but she memorized about just as fast as it would begin to come together for her. I actually found it quite intimidating to hear her. I didn't feel that I was ever going to be able to do that but I certainly admired her. I guess the reason I thought of her was because she was one of the worst for being nervous. I thought, "how can you possibly be nervous, you're just knocking everybody else over with your skill and your talents," but she was very nervous.

I almost never listen to the tapes of my lessons. If I'm listening to that, I'm not working on the music. Now, I especially like to hear Allison play something

that I don't know real well and then I keep that recording and I'll mark on the outside of the tape so I don't tape over it. I will go back and listen to those tapes again. But for every week and every day, no I don't listen to the tapes and I feel guilty about that. But when I listen to myself I sound so much worse than I realize I did. That kind of puts me off. There's a tentativeness that I'm not aware that I have when I listen to these tapes."

Group Participant Profiles

Eloise

Eloise is a 75-year old widow who remarried several years ago. As a child she played violin, accordion, and some piano. She participated in the junior and senior high school orchestras. She was also a member of her church choir. She played piano on her own as an adult and began taking group piano classes at a local community college when a friend recommended the class to her. It was observed that piano is an emotional outlet for her and is an activity in which she can participate as an individual, separate from her husband. There is a poignant passage in her dialogue where Eloise discusses how the group dynamics of her class changed when two outsiders (also interviewed for this study) became members of the class. Her story of piano lessons, in her own words, follows:

"I think [playing the piano] is very relaxing. I had the time and I had the desire, it was just something that I like to do. I guess I think of piano more as an emotional outlet. Maybe my quilts and my lap robes are my artistic outlet. It's hard to practice or it's very easy not to practice if your not in a class, so I think that's one of the main reasons [that I continue with my piano classes]. And then

the fellowship is important too. I also enjoy playing the different styles of music. We've had some jazz and some different styles that I had never worked with before. I did take piano the semester that we looked at the lives of different composers but I really didn't delve into it at home. This semester we are using the *Keys Magazine* but it seems like that we don't stay on any one piece long enough to really master it. I would really rather be able to say that I had mastered some things and play well than just play so many different things.

One semester, we got some newer [students/classmates] and they were not as advanced as we were. So, we had a classical book and during that semester we played maybe two or three of those pieces. [Those of us who had been in the class for a while] were enjoying relaxing and not playing something harder, but we didn't work as hard. I enjoy playing the duets now, mainly because of the timing, I guess. You don't get to pause until you get the note [laughter], you have to keep going regardless if you play the wrong note. So, I think duets help. I have trouble reading ahead. I never was taught to read ahead as a child. The first time I ever heard about reading ahead in music was when we had a guest music conductor at church and we were singing a musical, and he told us to read ahead. And I'd never heard that expression before. So, I need some way to force myself to read ahead, I know that I need that. Then some people tend to get faster and faster and that's a problem for me because I usually can't play it that fast. I think keeping a steady rhythm maybe [beneficial for me]. And the duet sounds better than just your little piece.

I pull out some old books and pieces at times when I'm home but I really haven't had a lot of time to look at old things, but I would like to. But, you know, it is just taking the time. I have a niece that has seven children, so I have started going over there one afternoon a week to help her. And my sister's husband had a major stroke and had a heart attack. He came out of the hospital the day Mother went in the hospital before she died, so I feel an obligation to help my sister some, so there's just no time [to practice extra music].

We did everything out loud together until we got the new students [Alexandra and Vanessa]. They were kind of intimidated by us in a way, so that's when ah, we started using the headphones. I prefer playing out loud. The headphones are a nuisance in a way. [pause] When I haven't practiced though, the headphones are just fine! [laughter] But we played everything out loud first, I mean without headphones for years. You know, that may force us more to practice more.

We have played lots of music over the years. In the past we have used books like Ada Ritcher, and the Pace book which we really enjoyed. We also had a harder duet book. It has a little harder music in it, but some of it, the bass, the secondo is kind of boring. I like our current teacher because she plans ahead for us. With one of our former teachers, I couldn't see that she had done any advanced planning for us at all. Our very first teacher really taught us a lot but we didn't like her because she talked so much that you didn't play a lot. But, many of the things that she said [were] very helpful. Like practicing a measure or two many times, not practicing the whole piece. Practice the hard parts and then play

the piece. We had the recitals with her. The last month [of lessons each semester were] mainly devoted to preparing for the recital. I didn't get as nervous as some people. We usually played a duet as well as our solo piece and we could use our music. Even when I auditioned for the private lessons she let me use the book since I was not a piano major or anything.

I think it was challenging learning new scales and all of the different chords with the scale going up and down. It was kind of challenging because I had never done that before. And some of the new rhythms are kind of tricky until you catch on. I know that until you get the rhythm, you can't really do too much with the piece. I've always kind of prided myself on the fact that rhythm was my strong point. [laughter] The hardest thing for me is full chords. My hands are kind of small and when there are lots of chords in a piece it's hard. I have not really worked at interval reading a lot. In fact, I'd never heard of that for a long, long time. And that does help because there's no way you can read each note when you are playing some music.

If I found a piece of music that I liked I think I could work it out on my own. If the rhythm was a little tricky and I couldn't figure out, then I'd take it in. I never memorize music or wouldn't really know how to go about memorizing. Even though I don't remember memorizing music as a child I have pictures of me playing the accordion and there aren't any music stands, so maybe I did have it memorized!

I prefer playing in the morning, but I hardly ever get to practice in the morning. I usually end up practicing in the evening. Now if the class were in the

evening, I don't think that I would take it. It's much harder to read the music now, with the glasses. I have trifocals. I got some piano glasses but I can't read the music with them, evidently the distance is off or something.

I've made some new friends [through piano class] and it keeps me practicing. It gets me out of the house too. I have a little bit of a tendency to stay at home. The more you stay home the more you don't want to go out, so I think it really helps in that way. I take water exercise also. Well I feel like I've always been an optimistic person, but I think it's really a reason to get out of the house. I think it's good for my husband and me both. I think it keeps you going, it gives you a reason to get up and go."

Sandra

Sandra is 80 years old. She took piano lessons for five years when she was a child. She also took private lessons for brief periods, while she was working as an educator in 1960 and again in 1982-3. She holds a bachelor degree in Science. Since retirement she has participated in an aquatics class, a history class, and the advanced piano class. Sandra admits to having the experience of certain pieces touching an emotional chord, usually a reminder of something from her past, but doesn't wish to talk about it. She wouldn't bring a piece that she wanted to play into class, but prefers to leave that sort of planning up to the teacher. Her thoughts follow:

"I enjoy the personal satisfaction that I get from my piano lessons and I feel like as long as [the lessons are] offered, I should take [them]. I learn lots of different pieces, new musical numbers that I wasn't familiar with. And I enjoy

playing with somebody. I enjoy playing duets, just feeling that you are playing with somebody and feeling the music. I usually do the secondo, I don't know why but, I do. The biggest challenge is trying to keep up! (laughter) You have to keep up your part.

I enjoy the *Keys Magazine* very much. I like it because it's not too difficult. The pieces are challenging enough, but not too difficult. I kind of like playing with the headphones in class. Sometimes I play other music at home as well. I sometimes look at music from other semesters too. At home, the only music that I have are the piano books that we have used in class.

We have used lots of books that I enjoyed, but I can't think of any of the names of them now. We did a book about composers once [*Lives of the Great Composers*], that was interesting. I don't enjoy the theory, but we haven't done much. [laughter] Sometimes our teacher will get off on explaining something having to do with theory. Some of the others might like it, but it is hard for me. It makes sense but it isn't important to me. I like the classical music, popular, and semi-classical [music] too. I enjoy almost anything that we try in class. I don't memorize at all. I guess I could if I tried real hard, but it's just too much effort.

I've had several different instructors since I've been taking lessons but the ideal one would have to be understanding of our level of achievement and not want to push us too hard. But yet, they must present enough challenging material that we stay interested. Classes have always been in the early afternoon. I probably wouldn't come if [the class] was in the evenings.

I can't think off hand of any challenges that I have. I'm lucky, I don't have arthritis or eye sight problems. I just like being able to play [the music] well. I also sight read fairly well. I think that my background in piano helps. It came back pretty quickly. I sometimes play for friends. I think [there have been] social benefits that I've experienced because of piano. I guess that there have been educational benefits [laughter] I guess so, but I don't know really how to explain it. I think that piano has enriched my life. I'm normally pretty busy but I do enjoy coming to these classes. I enjoy the association with the other ladies."

Laura

Laura married after high school and worked as a secretary at a financial institution for five years until her first child was born. After that, she devoted her life to raising her children and to taking care of her family. She took piano lessons for about five years when she was in elementary school but did not play again for years since she did not have a piano for the first 30 years of her married life. On her 30th wedding anniversary her husband bought her a piano. She claims that she was "rusty," so her daughter-in-law suggested that she take some private lessons at the local community college. After three semesters of private study she enrolled in the advanced adult piano class. At age 76, she has been participating in the advanced class for about 20 years. She appears to be very organized and came to the interview prepared to discuss the music that she had studied in the class and her thoughts on her piano experiences. Her enthusiasm for the piano and the class, after 20 years of participation was contagious. Her sentiments follow:

"I think piano is more of a hobby. It's something that I've wanted to do and I have the time to do it now. I've always liked piano and I just wanted to go back and take it up again and see if I could go where I was a long time ago, you know, and I'm still kind of working on that.

I do handwork as far as crocheting and embroidery and I did knit for a while. I also made many quilts by hand [but] I've run out of space and so piano seems to be what I'm more interested in now. And I love to work out in the garden with the flowers. But, I just want to keep playing the piano because I think if I don't [take lessons] I just won't go in and play like I have been and I won't be challenged to do these things. And I like the new music we get. We are always getting new books or she gives us handout sheets and stuff which is fun.

In addition to the *Keys Magazine* we have several duet books. Over the years we've gone through the adult theory books, which have been good for us. We've gone through some Alfred books like *Masterwork Classics* which were good too. I like the classics because the pieces never get old and you never get tired of them. We also liked the Robert Pace book that we used a long time ago. I liked doing the scales and a lot of the different things like the 7ths and the 5ths and so on ... We also used the *All Time Favorites* and that was a lot of fun. [There were] a lot of things we recognized like *Greensleeves* in those books. And the last couple of semesters we went through the *[Lives of the] Great Composers* books. Their lives and their repertoire ... was really interesting. Our teacher gives us a little bit of everything which kind of keeps it interesting and fresh. Today we got several new pieces. One of them was French and one was Italian or something, so

I'd have to get my theory book to look at that. I mean there are different things that either you may have had and forgotten or never known. Every week it seems like we find out a little new thing! I kind of like the variety of what she gives us and we are still learning as we go along. Occasionally, if someone wants to bring a piece in and if we can do it and if all the class wants to do it she will go ahead hand it out. We've all enjoyed it, it's pretty flexible. Most of us have known each other for quite a while, that's why when a man shows up it seems like he only stays two or three weeks and then he's gone!

I'm sure that if you were taking lessons privately you would probably work more and do better. But I don't really see the class as a problem [for me] because I don't want to get up and play before people. I can play for my family if they want me to play something. Most of our teachers have been pretty good. Our teacher does a lot of counting for us and she plays right a long with us.

I'm still having a little trouble with pedal. [laughter] I can do pedal in some songs, but some songs give me a hard time. And I know she is still telling us we have to work on our dynamics. When we did recitals we really had to work on that. It took a lot of time to work on that. But now, we're just trying to learn the piece, you know, forget about all of the other stuff. [laughter]

I think it's different with adults. I've always been in the advanced class. Years ago we tried out to see which group we would go into and I was put in the advanced class. Teachers may have more trouble with the beginner or the intermediate classes because they haven't got the background like most of us do. Most of us have played for years and have kind of come back [to piano]. I think

that giving adults something that is too hard would turn probably most of us off, because most of us have other things we want to do besides practice. We practice some but we don't really go in there and really, really push ourselves, you know. But we do try to practice as much as we can and we do enjoy something that's a little challenging and that's interesting, but not something that's really going to turn you off.

It's not that [my hands or fingers] hurt, but once in a while my fingers won't stretch. I've noticed that if I have to play pieces where I have to get a lot of octaves my hands get very tired, they don't want to do it anymore. So then I have to stop doing it for a while. But I adjust, I just don't play as many notes or I just drop a note down there somewhere, so it works out. We all have our piano glasses though! [laughter] But I never get tired of sitting. I mean I can sit there on a piano bench at home and practice for quite a while but when I sit at the computer for an hour my back hurts! [laughter]

I do not like to play a lot of sharps and flats. When the number goes beyond three I will always miss one somewhere. Sharps aren't as bad for me as flats for some reason or another. I don't know what it is. When the notes go beyond a couple of octaves [and onto ledger lines] then I have to figure out the name of the note [that I am supposed to play]. I also always have to keep the pedaling and the dynamics in mind. Even though we don't want to, we know that the piece sounds better that way.

I feel as if I've accomplished something [in the piano classes]. I could have kept taking private lessons but I didn't feel like I wanted to do that anymore.

And I really do like this group. We've had a good group for years. Some of them have now gone on, but we've always had a pretty congenial group. We would lots of times go over to the Student Union and have coffee after we were though and the teacher would go with us. It's just been fun, you know it's kind of a get together all the time. As a rule I don't take lessons in the summer because we have other things in the summer that keep us busy. For quite a while I couldn't come for the second semester because we went down to Texas for the winter, but since we don't do that anymore I'm able to come now for both semesters. Most of us are busy and have other things going you know, it's not like all we have is music, we're doing other things too. I think that when you get to be a senior citizen you have to keep busy, you can't just sit in a chair. You need to keep busy. Not with only your body, you have to keep your mind busy too.

We discuss a lot of things that we did as kids in this class which is really interesting. We found out how the others [in the class] grew up and stuff, so it's been really kind of interesting. And most of us wouldn't ever have heard a lot of this music if she hadn't given it to us in class. I know for a long time we said, "oh, we don't want any more books, you know, we've got books coming out of our ears, piles of books, you know." But she really doesn't give us many books any more, but this one's [*Keys Magazine*] interesting.

I don't usually practice in the morning. It's usually in middle of the afternoon or else it's in the evening after the meal. If there isn't anything that I have to do or anything good on tv then I go in and play the piano. I think I used to play in the morning after all the kids were gone, when some of the children were

still home, but now it seems like I'm doing something else in the morning. Even though I often end up practicing in the evening, I doubt that I would come to a class in the evening. Most of us aren't too fond of getting out after dark anymore.

I seem to have a problem memorizing. We had to do pieces from memory when I was taking private lessons. And I think we had to do pieces from memory when I was taking in grade school too. I have a few pieces that I can memorize but very few. It takes me quite a while to memorize a piece and after I once memorize it I have to practically play it every time I play, otherwise I have a tendency to forget it. Memorizing isn't really a priority. I don't, as a rule, memorize anymore. Now, as I practice pieces sometimes I find that in doing parts over and over to get it right, they end up memorized.

It's been quite a while now, but there was a time that we did take theory. [sigh] I thought it was kind of hard, but in a way it was good for us. We even had to learn how to conduct and we had to get up front and conduct the piece, which was probably good for us. So we have kind of been through the gamut, I mean we've done a little bit of everything but at the same time we still keep learning. And if we have forgotten these things then we will ask again, and they will tell us, so it's been interesting and fun. It's still a fun class, so that's the main thing. I think that's why we're really all in that class, because it's fun. And we're a good group together."

Alexandra

Alexandra took violin lessons for three years and 'cello lessons for five years when she was a child. She also had some piano background. Following a

divorce early in her life, she supported herself in a male-dominated professional environment. When she retired from her job on a military base after 24 years of service, she bought a piano and began lessons immediately. She also enrolled in an exercise program and in a computer class at the local community college. Alexandra is a feisty woman who seemed driven to learn the piano and to play well. She began her piano studies by taking private lessons at the college for credit. At her instructor's urging, she and her friend Vanessa enrolled in the advanced senior piano class three years ago. She still takes private lessons from time to time when she feels the need to push herself more. She also had a great respect for and a desire to please her teacher. Her observations, which follow, highlight some of the differences that she has noticed between her private and group piano experience with the same teacher. Here is her story:

"I knew I would probably take lessons when I retired from the base. Knitting and crocheting are beautiful but it's a waste of time with me! [laughter] I don't enjoy it. I love to watch people work with their hands like that, but music is my therapy. This is my outlet just like art is my brother's outlet. I keep taking piano to get better. I'm improving, but ask my teacher and then call me and let me know what she said! [laughter] If she says, "she's not improved" well then I'll quit. [laughter] And find another teacher who will think I am [improving]! No, I'm kidding. No, I really think I am [improving]. And just take [the] music, there's so much to learn. I did not realize, really, how much there is. You never get tired of learning. You won't get through with it I know that. If I play a piece well and my teacher tells me that it's good, then I'm happy. You don't hear that

very often [from my teacher]. I think I've heard [it] only once or twice. For me it's a big deal [when I hear that] because I have worked to make it that good. She helps me lots during the lesson, if she didn't help me I wouldn't go to her. It would be a waste of time with me, because I really pay attention to my hour. I'm paying for it and you get individual attention and I'm there to learn, so I won't loaf when it comes to my private lesson. But you know, sometimes we go in to the group lesson and that is the fastest hour. It seems like 15 minutes and the class is over. Now that's the truth it goes that fast some days. She'll start telling us what we will work on during the next lesson and when I look everybody is putting their stuff up and it's an odd felling that [the time] went by so fast.

I think the duets probably help the others more than me because I count! [laughter] Doesn't that sound terrible! No, it's good for all of us really. Everybody has to kind of go together and it's good. We all need it. If there's a few of us, I like to play it out loud during class. But if there's a lot of us, well have you heard all of us play out loud? It's terrible! I mean, you know if everybody is playing the same piece and they're counting it's nice sometimes. Sometimes we'll practice with our headphones individually and then we'll play together with our headphone until we get it fairly well. Then we'll take them off and play out loud so we all kind of know how it goes.

I haven't really enjoyed the duet book. There's a couple of kind of nice [pieces], but most of them I've never heard of, which is fine. But there is just something about them, I don't think they're very pretty. But they are ok I guess. The *Keys Magazine* is nice for a change too, because everybody has to start out

new. It's a whole new book, all new music, and you've never seen it before and they haven't either, so it's interesting to see how they [the others in the class] do it. There was one that was really a tricky little book [*Masterwork Classics*]. I liked that because it was tricky. You could look at it and think well I can get that one done and you'd sit down and work on it and it wasn't that simple. So I liked that. The book about the different composers [*Lives of the Great Composers*] was kind of interesting. We need to do it again so we'll learn a little more about each one. Our teacher can hear a piece and tell us who wrote it, but I still don't know how they do it. I haven't picked that up yet, I don't have that ear.

My teacher really has to help me with the dynamics. That is something I didn't really have a good background in that. But I think almost everybody in class has to work on that, but me particularly. I never paid much attention to it before, I was too interested in getting my notes right and the timing, but now I've got that to work on. I told you, there is always something [to learn], always something!

An ideal instructor must be very knowledgeable and patient. I think I've had some of the best teachers out here. Several were too busy with an outside life, but I've been real happy for the last few years. Our teacher is very knowledgeable and she plays real well. I don't think I'll ever be that good. No I won't, she's still young. [laughter] She's young.

I have lots of challenges. Like, I picked out two pieces last semester and I never really mastered them. I've got the basics, my teacher helped me get that far. I know the music and I know the notes but I can't play them. I was a little

disappointed in myself [because] I couldn't get them down. But I knew it when I started and I still wanted to struggle with them. But she let me do those, but she also picked out her pieces that I had to learn along with those that I wanted to learn. So there was a balance, which worked out fine. I didn't mind and she didn't care because she knew I wanted to learn them. But heavens I've improved since I began!

Now, my fingers don't move as fast as they used to and I can tell that difference. So, I do a little bit more of the scales you know when I practice, and that's mostly just to get [my fingers] limbered up. I warm up a lot for the private lessons, but not the group lesson. It is not as important with the group because [the pieces] are a lot easier. I do the same scales year after year as long as I keep coming. I don't remember [the names of] them. Ask me what key it is and I don't know! [laughter] But you put it in front of me and I'll play it for you. That's the way I am. I can not remember the names of things like scales.

When I was young, we didn't finish a piece unless we knew it, you memorized it. We had recitals and they were memorized. Well, I can play the same page here for a month and I couldn't play it for you from memory! [laughter] My memory is not what it was, that I know. That might be a goal for next semester, to try and do a little memory work. Now, she has helped me pick up some little tricks in reading a page, so I could probably do the same with memorizing.

Sometimes if I have a new piece, she plays it so I'll know how it goes, so that's helpful. When I was a child, they made us count everything that we did out,

and so I've always stuck with that. So usually I'm pretty good on my timing and my notes. And sight reading has gotten to be no problem, more or less, in the last few years. And that's a lot of work to get where you can pick up something, I mean it was for me, so that's a place I have improved too. I've noticed that I'm just as good as the others in class, [laughter] that's it! Now, when she moved us up into that class, we were over our heads, but now we finally decided they're not much better than we are!

I usually feel relaxed after I practice. And after a private lesson, if my teacher is pleased then I'm fine! [laughter] I like to work on something and learn something new. And if I'm learning, I'm as happy as I can be. I'll go home and work on it. I don't feel the same way after a group class. I don't feel as challenged, and yet I've been going all this time. Now that sounds silly, but the group [class] is enjoyable and the [private lesson] is my work. I didn't start on this seriously until I retired. I'm just sorry I didn't start earlier, I should have been taking lessons when I was working. But when I was working I was busy trying to save money, because I made so little. [laughter] [I wanted to] get everything paid off so when I retired I'd have everything paid off. Once in a while I'll find a piece that I can play without slaughtering it that sounds good and it does make me feel something that I can't describe, it does do something.

It seems like I'm a little more alert in the morning. In the afternoon I get kind of lazy [which isn't as good for practicing.]. I do most of my practicing in the morning. But if I feel good and nothing is going on, I may sit down and work some more in the afternoon on it and sometimes I just sit down and play in the

afternoon. I like all my classes, everything that I do over here to be in the mornings, and I don't care if it's 7 o'clock or what. I like to come early and get it done. I don't think I would come to an evening class. I like my evenings free. When I just play for fun, I do church songs and hymns. In the summer I spend a lot of time learning new pieces for fun. Then when I go back in the Fall for my private lessons, she'll ask me what I worked on and what I'm ready to have my lessons on, so I'm ready for her."

Vanessa

Vanessa took six years of piano lessons when she was a child. After retirement from working at a state university at the age of 55, she enrolled in a computer class and in a beginning piano class. She wanted to take piano lessons as though she had never had a lesson in her life. She quickly progressed to taking private lessons for college credit and joined the advanced piano class at the same time as Alexandra. It was easier for the two ladies to enter into this piano class and into this closed social group with the support of their teacher and each other. Below, Vanessa candidly discusses the intimidation that she felt upon joining this class initially. Vanessa's husband also took piano lessons for a time but she sees herself as more "serious" about the endeavor and also uses piano as a way to keep her own identity separate from that of her husband. Like Alexandra, Vanessa supplements the group class with private lessons when she feels the need. The following is her story:

"I started my lessons when I was six years old and then I took them until 1953 so I probably would have been about 15 and a half. I always tease and say I

discovered boys and so I quit piano lessons. [laughter] I was the only girl in the family [during] the Depression years and to have a piano was something. So my mother bought a new Wagner piano, it was what they called a studio piano, and it always sat in our living room. I was the only girl [in the family] so I was to take lessons. Then, when we moved that was the first thing my Dad had to do was to find someone to give me lessons. So my teacher was the church pianist who gave lessons. After I had been playing for a couple of years my youngest brother kind of showed an interest and the teacher we had gave us duets and the petroleum people would come watch us. [When I retired] I went back to piano. I tell my husband that [Mother] sacrificed when I was young. The lessons were 50 cents each and the sheet music was 35 cents, so Mother really sacrificed to do it. I'm grateful that she started me in piano and that I did have that background, because basically I had six good years of lessons.

My current teacher says that I had an early history of chords and scales and that I am a fairly good sight reader, so she said that I must have had pretty good teachers. And back then that would have been pretty good because very few people went to college. Each one of [the pieces that I learned] was done by memory and we had the stars for playing it and stars for memorizing it.

I retired when I was 55 because I worked for the state and did my step retirement. I immediately came up to this college and I enrolled in Introduction to Computers and Beginning Piano, as if I had never known a note in my life. I was going to do it. [laughter] And it was for [college] credit and when you pay for credits, you will [practice]. This college is a very comforting place, but it's strict.

When I first walked into computer class I thought, "ok, I'm going to be the oldest one here." Well, I met the friend that was like me who was aged 48. Now, through the years when I got married and was raising my children I always worked, I did not have a piano in the house. Then my husband and I bought a Lowry organ, but when I started my beginning piano class I basically got my Mother's piano, because she started living with us then too.

So I started back at everything when I was 55 and I've been doing it ever since. What I do, is I take the senior classes a little while and then I take private lessons from our teacher because that's what I need. Now, she's not too strict on me as a teacher, but we have to learn our lessons and we have to do so many [pieces] in a certain time. But when they have the juries and stuff, we just go in and play, because I just need to play in front of someone. We have to play to get our grade. But because we do try and we do get our lessons and we don't have to have it by memory which the [younger] students do. But so far Alexandra and I have carried an A average. Everything I've had to do was hard for me.
It's something I do for myself to be quite honest. I'm 63. So many of the older people in the senior classes here have been recent widows and you see them make the transition and stuff and so piano is always there and it's interesting. And it's always a challenge! [laughter]

And because piano was what I played when I was younger I just felt comfortable with it. I would say that I spend an hour every day practicing and when I'm taking private lessons I can go two hours. So, I'll practice early in the morning before I get tired out in the day. The senior piano is more of a fun class.

Like I had been gone 11 days and I could not practice, but it's ok because we can get in there and kind of run through it because in that class we've got enough talent (laughter) we can carry it through. Now if we're working on a really hard piece it won't work, but she lets us practice a little with our earphones. Then we do lots of duets, which we really like in there. I like the duets because it comes together and you get a harder piece played without having to do all of it. But you have to count. You kind of feel like you are participating in something rather than doing everything by yourself.

Actually you've got to kind of know what you're doing when you play duets, so it makes me feel like I know what I'm doing I guess. It's kind of a challenge like when you're doing a test or something, you know, because you [have to be] real careful that you don't goof up! [laughter] You've got to count and play like they're not even there but both parts make the song. You can play by yourself and unless somebody is really knowledgeable you can kind of camouflage [your mistakes] but you've kind of got to have a little talent to do [duets] that's for sure. But private lessons are harder and it makes you think harder. My teacher won't let me away with anything! [laughter] But it's better than if you were trying to teach yourself. My teacher is strict but that's good, and she's totally different in the private and the group. To me, we're in the group class for fun. I think that's why I'm getting into the duets because they're a little bit harder and you have to do it and so it makes the class a little bit harder then, but it's kind of for fun. I don't think you ever get just perfect on the duets in there, you have to keep learning and moving on.

When I'm at home I really enjoy playing hymns. I'm Baptist and my husband's Methodist so I have a book of each because they have different hymns. I just was raised that way, I relate to it, and I probably play hymns better, but my teacher would be able to tell you more. My husband encourages me to practice. He will say, "I haven't heard you practice today!" In the class I've enjoyed playing the simpler classical pieces that we've had because we've learned that a lot about the composers and it's interesting, but [these pieces are] more simplified. And it is interesting to hear some of the pieces that we've played [outside of class] and I can say, "I can play that." Actually I played no classical when I first started. I sometimes go back and pull out my old music and it's amazing how hard it is! [laughter] I think, "I've never played this, couldn't have possibly, not ever."

This Fall I probably will enroll in private again, I'm more settled now. The last five years, I've had quite a lot of personal things that are more settled down now. I am going to practice more and try to memorize something. In a way, the piano is my identity because you get involved. When you get older and especially if you married someone 10 years older, you lose your identity. The piano and the music are mine, no one can take it away and it's what I want to do and so that's why I do it. It's all about my identity and sanity! [laughter] And I just to get better so [taking lessons] will make me practice because I can get lazy.

I've always liked the Fall semester for private lessons. In the wintertime you have to miss some times because of the weather. And [private lessons are] more expensive. Now the cost wouldn't really break me but I don't want to do the

wintertime and miss six lessons or something. In the summer, it is kind of more carefree and you really aren't going to practice, so the seniors class keeps it going and you're doing something, but you are not having to practice really, really hard. Then as soon as Fall starts everything kind of slows down here and you go, "ok, I'm ready to do [private piano] again." That's what I've been doing now since I was 55.

The personality of the instructor is very important. Immediately you can tell if they're just teaching you because they get paid for it or if they want you to learn. I have been lucky with all of the teachers out here, they're enthused [about what they do]. Your teacher makes all the difference in the world, there's no sense in having one [with whom] you are clashing. But my teacher challenges [me] and she keeps me on my toes and I'm not bored yet! [laughter] Now if I get bored! [laughter] Now if I get bored I'll know I'm not learning anything. [laughter]

I have enjoyed the theory and the scale books that we used. With all the lessons that I had taken I just learned the notes and got the pieces. There was no theory behind it. My scales have smoothed out a lot and you can look at it and say, well that's D scale, and you don't have to say well what's the next note, you kind of work it in.

It has been a challenge of mine to mellow out. I have always taken things too seriously. I couldn't always keep up [with the private lessons] it so I just dropped back and did the seniors class. I could still go out of the house and I'd do my thing and then if it was a good time and there wasn't any sickness or anything going on at home, then I could go ahead an do the private lessons again. I am kind

of a loner so you do see people that are having some of the same family and health problems that you are having. And so I think that's where my music really helped me, because I had my mind on that and I could go and do that and it helped me keep my mind off of family problems. Whether you come in for lessons with a teacher or with the group, it's a social thing. You have a common bond, because there is nobody that comes into that senior class that's not interested in music. Socially I bore easily, and I have never been bored in the senior's class and I have never been bored in the private lessons either. Of course, I can let the work go undone. [laughter] I would prefer playing the piano to scrubbing the floor. Another challenge with the class is that you've got people as good as or better than you and you want to keep you up. Then, once in a while you feel kind of "smart," like in the senior class, we were sitting there one time and the teacher said, "what would you all like to do." And someone said, "I'd like to hear Vanessa play." I thought, "I can handle that." So I played a really hard piece and the teacher said, "Oh, I didn't realize that you played that one." And she hadn't tackled that one yet [with the class]. Counting is the first thing that I have to master when I first learn a piece. I am still working on grace notes and fast notes, but that is coming along. I can go through [my old books], and see that there is progress."

Martha

Martha is an outgoing 72 year old who also took piano lessons for five years in her youth. She also studied clarinet when she was young. She retired after 25 years of teaching in an elementary school about 12 years ago. Since that time

she has taken classes at the college. It was a friend from the aquatics class, Eloise, who encouraged her to join the senior's piano class. She continues with the piano class throughout the year, including during the summer, because it is fun. The following is what she said:

"My friend [Eloise] influenced me to begin piano again. We were in aquatics together and she kept telling me about the piano class. I think that's one way that people come to the class, is through [word of mouth]. The college doesn't really advertise much, except in the enrollment forms. I have continued with the piano class for 12 years now, I just enjoy it. My Mother was a good piano player and she made my sister and I take lessons when we were young. Now I enjoy it and I'm doing it for me. I think [playing] relaxes me. When I have time, I just love to play and relax. You enjoy it more as you get older, I think I'm more relaxed now and it's more fun. When you're young you just make yourself do it.

Over the years we've had theory books and we've studied the lives of the composers [along] with the music. That was good. We learned a little bit about the composer and then [we] had some of the music to play. [Knowing about his life] helped ... a lot. I enjoyed the theory, but it didn't help any [with our pieces], it was just interesting. You don't get tired of the class when she changes the books that we use each semester. I like the *Keys Magazine* because there are a lot of different kinds [of pieces]. There are some that are kind of jazzy, classical, or religious. There are also easy pieces and hard ones, I think that's good. I like the religious songs mostly, and I play hymns on my own at home.

I think the duets are fun because you can't play them at home by yourself and it's fun to play with the others. The whole class always does the duets out loud, together [as a group]. Because I've had band, I guess playing together is more fun. I think that we all enjoy the duets. Years ago we did duets, and then we didn't learn any for years, and now we've started back doing them. They make you think and count your timing more, I think. I don't think that I feel more secure because others are playing my part with me. We play our [solos] mostly with our headphones on. Once in a while we'll play them out [loud], but she can listen to each one of us separate when she wants to [over the headphones]. It doesn't really matter to me if we play out loud or over the headphones.

We have had three or four different teachers over the years. There have been men and women and there've been young and old! I think that the best instructors have had a personal contact with each one [of us]. You know a man teaches a lot different than a woman, I've noticed that. Our current instructor is very thorough.

We don't do as many scales as we used to. We used to do scales every class but we've gotten to where we don't do that, but I think scales are good. I really do. They just limber your fingers up and I just think they're good. I guess it's because that's the way we were trained. When I was young we had to always do scales and that's probably the reason. I try to be careful with the timing, you know that's important. Now, I'm not very good at getting the softness and the loudness, I think I need to work on that a lot. She told us the other day that we're

not very good at that. [laughter] As you get older you play it the way you want to. [laughter]

I think there have been a lot if it is social benefits for me [due to] this class. I have been in class with about four or five of these ladies for quite a while and so, they're friends now. Some of them drop and then start again, but some of them that were here a long time don't come anymore because of health reasons and a lot of different things.

I've always had a pretty good outlook. I'm pretty active. When I was young I memorized several things but not any since I've been older. I don't think that I'd enjoy memorizing now. I would have to really work at it. [laughter] I didn't play in any recitals when I was younger. Some of the teachers here would have recitals and make you play for each other and make you memorize, but that's before I started taking so I missed that. [laughter] I don't know, that might make me real nervous, I just don't know about performing. I do enjoy playing in class with the others. We know each other, so that's different.

I'm beginning to get arthritis in my hand, but it hasn't bothered me yet. [laughter] I think that piano and golf both help because you are exercising your hands. Our teacher listens to us because I was the one who suggested that we do duets this time. So she said, "well we will certainly do that." That's important when you are teaching adults.

I feel challenged in most of the classes. I don't care for the summer classes as much, it seems like we have so many different pieces and different people. I ask myself why I keep taking the summer classes! [laughter] But I enjoy it and I

will practice at home if I'm taking classes. So the classes make me practice more too."

CHAPTER V

PRESENTATION OF THEMES

Introduction

As the transcripts and profiles of each participant were read and re-read, themes emerged from what each piano student had said. Once no new themes could be discerned, the data was considered saturated.

The researcher triangulated data that emerged from each of the participant interviews with the information gathered during discussions held with the piano teachers and from lesson observations of each participant. Where possible, additional materials that were volunteered and supplied by several of the students, such as practice logs and personal essays about piano study, were analyzed to further triangulate the data. These personal essays and excerpts from the practice logs are located in the appendixes of this paper. Upon triangulation of the data from the aforementioned sources, the researcher identified recurring themes for each of the study participants.

A summary of the themes noted for each participant follows. Once the themes from each participant had been identified, themes that emerged from each of the private cases were compared with one another. Similarly, the group-case themes were compared. Themes common among the private lesson participants and themes that the group cases shared were extracted. Finally, the common private lesson themes were compared and contrasted with the common group themes and similar trends were identified. Additionally, there were common

themes noted among those who took private lessons which were absent in the data derived from those taking group lessons. Likewise, the group participants shared themes which did not appear in the private lesson cases.

Themes Identified From Each Private Case

Rebecca

Rebecca had the time, money, and the desire to play the piano. She owned an instrument and had taken lessons as a child. She also expressed an emotional obligation to playing the piano. Rebecca liked the lesson routine and was stimulated by her lessons. She appreciated her teacher's feedback and flexibility. She played the piano for personal pleasure and found the experience to be therapeutic. She expressed a sense of pride about taking lessons and had a desire to please her teacher. She was confident in her abilities at the piano. Although she had experienced some physical restrictions and eyesight problems associated with age, she had found ways to compensate when playing the piano. Rebecca made every effort to practice at her preferred time of day. She avoided fast tempi. Memorizing had become difficult for her and was no longer a priority. She was motivated by the performance opportunities provided by her teacher and enjoyed the social interaction with her peers. She was also aware of the social benefits of her regular lessons with her teacher. Rebecca appreciated musicians and composers more as a result of her piano study.

Rebecca had the time, the money, and the desire to return to piano. She already owned a piano so it was not necessary to incur any additional expense to buy an instrument. She had a background in piano and stated that she had grown to appreciate music and musicians more with age. There were also some

emotional factors linked to her family history that were associated with her return to piano. She stated that her mother would have been pleased that she had begun to take piano lessons again. Her husband had also expressed displeasure at owning and moving a piano that had not been played for years.

Rebecca began taking lessons as an adult in a class setting at a local community college (not the one from which the group participants were drawn). Her only option was to enroll in the piano class for credit, but she found that it was too structured. She ended up missing numerous classes due to her traveling and was required both to memorize and to perform a certain number of pieces in order to receive a grade at the end of the semester. She has found that the flexible bi-weekly lesson schedule that she has worked out with her private teacher Sarah is much better suited to her active lifestyle. She also discussed the benefits of being able to discuss her musical likes and desires with her private teacher. Again, she appreciated the flexibility of her teacher and the way that Sarah was able to tailor the learning environment to suit Rebecca's individual needs.

Rebecca preferred to practice in the morning when her body and mind tended to be more alert. She noted that her body ached more later in the day so she tried to practice during the morning hours. She had arthritis but was accommodating that physical challenge at the time of the interviews. Piano was both challenging and mentally stimulating for her and was one way that she found to stay active after she raised her family and left the work force.

Rebecca suggested that her problems at the keyboard were more mental rather than physical. She did suffer from arthritis problems in her hands and

needed piano glasses. She was compensating for any problems that she encountered while playing the piano and even noted that certain technical aspects of her playing had improved since returning to piano lessons. She was pleased that people were "awed by the fact that [she was] taking lessons" (p. 72).[16]

She stated that she did not have any natural propensity for the piano and recognized that she had to work really hard to learn a piece of music. Rebecca noted that she often experienced a sense of frustration because of the great deal of work and practice required merely to maintain a piece of music. She noticed that she had trouble playing fast pieces.

Memorization was not as easy for her as it had once been. Although she was unable to recall techniques that she had used to memorize when she was younger, she spoke of playing in numerous piano recitals where she had been required to memorize. At the time of the interviews for the present research, Rebecca had no reason to memorize except in certain passages of music where her attention was required for something other than reading the notes. She wished that memorization came easier but acknowledged that it was not a priority for her.

She enjoyed the teacher feedback that she received at each lesson. She was pleased that there was always something new to learn about the piano or her music. She also claimed to enjoy theory and noted that it was important. She recognized that Sarah tried to help her relate her knowledge of theory to her repertoire. Discussion with Sarah and review of the video-taped lessons, however, corroborated the fact that theory had not been integrated into Rebecca's playing in

[16] All page references in this chapter refer to the participant profiles, located in chapter four of this document.

a meaningful way. Although Rebecca stated that she enjoyed theory and expressed pleasure at having worked her way through several theory books, her teacher's perception was that Rebecca did not enjoy theory at all and only used theory when necessary, such as to supplement her knowledge of chords that she was playing in her repertoire.

Rebecca enjoyed playing familiar tunes from her youth. The only classical pieces that she enjoyed playing were things that were somehow familiar to her. Sarah also noted the aforementioned phenomenon during the interview. The idea of familiarity that Rebecca had associated with a piece of music was generally with the melody itself or with an emotion or activity that she associated with that particular piece. For example, *Morning Has Broken* specifically reminded her of her deceased daughter, while *Rustic Dance* vaguely reminded her of winding the maypole in her youth.

Having a regular lesson routine was important for maintaining Rebecca's level of motivation. There was also an important emotional need being met at the lessons and she even compared going to the piano lesson to going to therapy or to church. Lessons have enabled her to appreciate the great pianists and the master composers even more. She mentioned almost always feeling good after a piano lesson.

Ted

Ted had the desire to pursue piano study upon retirement. He owned a piano and had musical training as a child. He appreciated his teacher's flexibility and her positive feedback that he received at his regular lessons. He became

extremely nervous when performing for others, but always availed of performance opportunities that his teacher offered. He had a desire to play his pieces well for his peers and for his teacher. He tried to practice during his preferred time of day. He found it difficult to integrate musical concepts, such as theoretical knowledge, into his playing. He experienced numerous age-related difficulties but had found ways to compensate for those losses. He had well-defined musical tastes, knew which repertoire he wanted to study and play, and appreciated great music and musicians. The struggle that he experienced at the piano was meaningful for him.

Ted noted that a limited amount of time to practice the piano created a challenge to keep up with all of the pieces that he was working on. Sarah also noted that maintaining his current repertoire seemed to occupy the majority of Ted's time and energy. Upon retirement, Ted began taking lessons at a local university but found that the rigid examination and performance requirements, necessary to obtain a grade at the end of each semester, were counterproductive. He did not enjoy the performance requirement. He switched to lessons with a teacher who was not affiliated with the university because she was flexible.

He cited the positive feedback that he received from his private teacher as one of the reasons that he enjoyed his lessons. He explained that the reason he continued with his piano lessons is because he had a "desire to play the pieces properly" and he "can't prove to anyone that [he] can do it" (p. 75). He also spoke of how piano lessons symbolized his determination to see something through.

He claimed that he always chose to participate in the informal recitals that his private teacher offered because he enjoyed the challenge, despite the high level of anxiety that he has routinely experienced. Ted also expressed that theory was an important aspect of music lessons. Despite the fact that he "enjoys it and [finds] it interesting," (p. 77) observations by the researcher and discussions with Sarah revealed that he had not successfully integrated his theoretical knowledge into his playing.

Ted stated that he preferred to play classical music, but he also attempted to maintain some music that had been popular during his youth. He began learning the popular music at his teacher's request. By referring to his practice log, the researcher noted his preference for classical repertoire because he had practiced those pieces with much greater frequency during the months preceding the interview. He also included playing hymns and church music into his practice routine with some regularity.

Despite being retired from his professional career, Ted had remained socially active and lamented about the difficulty in finding enough time to practice the piano. Ted preferred to practice in the morning when he was more mentally alert and physically rested. He liked to be able to warm up before his piano lesson and was able to do so given the lesson schedule that he and Sarah had agreed upon. He did have difficulty sitting for long periods of time and required piano glasses to see the music properly.

He longed to become a better sight reader and admired his teacher's ability to sight read with ease. He wished to please his teacher and to demonstrate that he

was capable of accomplishing the musical techniques and concepts that they had worked on during the previous piano lesson or at least to show improvement from one lesson to the next.

Ted stated that a teacher of adults "needs to be careful to find out what [the adult] wants to play and work on that" (p. 79). Sarah noted that Ted had slowed down in recent years in terms of his learning processes and she noted that he had recently become more forgetful, in general. Ted expressed that he didn't enjoy playing fast pieces and even had difficulty playing things up to tempo. He avoided fast pieces or was satisfied to play a piece much slower than was stylistically correct. He claimed to have more difficulty memorizing than he did when he was younger, but the researcher noted that he relied on his memory as a crutch because he was not a good sight reader. He also needed to have a piece memorized before he would play it for Sarah or in front of the other adult students at the recitals. It was noted by the researcher that the reading trouble that Ted spoke of at great length might have been related to perceptual difficulties in seeing the treble and the bass clef notes simultaneously.

Ted also spoke about having difficulty counting and admitted to probably being tougher on himself as he aged than he was when he was younger. He was a perfectionist and had a refined musical taste which he strove to emulate at the keyboard. Sarah noted that Ted had listened to classical music all of his life and that his musical tastes were very refined. Ted noted that his appreciation of the great master composers and performers had increased as a result of his piano study.

Patti

Upon retirement, Patti had the time and money to pursue her desire to learn the piano. She did not have any childhood experience with the piano. Playing the piano met emotional needs for Patti and the numerous struggles that she encountered at the keyboard were meaningful for her. She wished to be challenged by her music and at her lessons. Duets were motivational for Patti, but they also filled a social need. The performance opportunities provided by her teacher were frightening but also motivational. Some of her social needs were met as a result of participating in performances. Patti experienced numerous age-related problems but always found ways to compensate. She had definite repertoire preferences and clearly-defined musical tastes. She exhibited a sense of pride at taking piano lessons. Patti experienced many struggles at the keyboard, but found those trials to be meaningful. She attempted to practice at her preferred time of day when possible.

Patti began piano lessons as an adult to "broaden her horizons" (p. 83). She did not have any experience with piano as a child. She had one brief but bad experience in her school band when she was younger. Due to the negative memories associated with that experience, she would not have considered going back to that particular band instrument.

Patti liked learning new things, and because she had both the time and the money, she thought that piano would be a way to fill creative spaces in her life. She also felt that piano was good therapy. Allison noted that lessons were like a social time for Patti, and she even continued with her piano lessons while she was

undergoing cancer treatment due to the emotional need that engaging in piano met for her. Many of the comments that Patti made during the interviews led the researcher to conclude that Patti was a determined woman in all areas of her life. During the teacher interview, the researcher noted that Allison did not recognize or value Patti's determination. Because she had invested in a piano, Patti felt a certain obligation to practice the instrument. She also exhibited a sense of pride at having the courage to put herself on the line by taking regular piano lessons.

Patti was aware that she had to struggle to play the piano and expressed that playing the piano did not come naturally for her. She stated that to simply get a piece of music to the point where she could play it comfortably was enough for her. She noted that she was not as dedicated to piano as she had been when she first undertook the endeavor. The researcher noted that due to the major life changes that she had experienced since beginning piano lessons, including surviving cancer, her priorities had changed.

A major criticism of her teacher was that she did not feel particularly challenged by her music. Yet, there was a dualism in her comments because she also stated that she would stop taking piano lessons if her teacher placed too much pressure on her to practice and to improve. Patti's ideal piano teacher would have patience, understand the life demands of the adult student, but still offer guidance that would lead to improvement of piano skills.

Patti was motivated to practice more for the duets because she did not want to let her partner down. She cited the friendship with Susan to be the most important component of the duets. They just played the music for themselves and

simply playing the music together was a fulfilling activity. Staying together was the biggest musical challenge that she experienced with the duets. The greatest benefit was that she had to keep going despite making mistakes. This was a challenge for Patti who was a perfectionist.

The piano parties were nerve wracking for Patti.[17] She always played better when she had her music memorized. She found sight reading to be difficult and it did not come easily for her, in part due to the fact that she had trouble with her eye sight. The researcher suspected that Patti experienced perception problems as she spoke of finding it difficult to read both the treble and bass clefs simultaneously. She was motivated to practice more before a party because she did not want to be unsuccessful in front of her peers at the piano party.

If she did not have a solo that had been adequately prepared due to other priorities in her life, Patti was happy to play only a duet at the party. She always liked to play first so that there was no one with whom she could be compared. Patti appreciated the fact that she had the opportunity to go back and play a piece again if she did not play well the first time. She did note that everyone had fun at the parties and that she enjoyed the light-hearted atmosphere. She also looked forward to hearing the music that the others played.

Coordination problems, as well as perceiving the treble and bass clefs together, were problems that constantly surfaced during the discussions with Patti and her teacher. She tended to pause at bar lines and didn't easily incorporate dynamics. She felt self conscious when her teacher asked her to sing during her

[17] Allison hosted piano parties which were informal recitals at her home. The emphasis was on socializing and on enjoying piano music with the other adult piano students in Allison's studio.

lessons. The reason for singing was usurped by her lack of ease singing in front of Allison. She felt that her teacher didn't believe that she did not like to sing out loud. Allison realized that Patti did not like to sing, but discussions with her revealed that she did not realize how truly uncomfortable it made Patti feel. Nor did Allison recognize that there may have been other methods, more conducive to Patti's learning style and personality, that could accomplish the same musical goal. However, Allison's suggestions for blocking and fingering that Allison gave Patti were found to be most helpful. Patti preferred short, two-page pieces.

Patti disliked dissonance and noted that Allison's music was very dissonant. She did not enjoy playing much of Allison's original music or arrangements because they were so dissonant and did not sound pretty. She noted that Allison had not chosen any good books for her since she began publishing her own music. Patti liked playing new age music, especially at the parties, because people would not identify her mistakes as readily since they were not as familiar with the music. She also believed that she played new age music well. She disliked playing fast pieces, but saw no philosophical problem in playing a fast piece at a slow tempo if that suited her. She simply enjoyed playing for herself and found enjoyment in playing music even at a slow tempo.

Patti had very well-defined musical tastes. Even though Patti loved popular music, she did not particularly enjoy playing it on the piano because it did not sound the same on the piano as it did with the instrumentation on recordings. She also liked playing classical music from the Romantic period because of the melodies. She enjoyed playing patterned pedagogical pieces. However, the music

that her teacher had assigned in recent months was not terribly motivating for her. She noted that she was motivated to learn a piece of music if she really liked it. She cited the *Ashowkin Farewell* and the *Moonlight Sonata* arrangement (p. 92) as examples of music that she liked and was really motivated to learn even though those were quite challenging for her. She did say that she enjoyed playing the piano, but not necessarily practicing the piano.

Patti was proud of the fact that she was taking piano lessons and she was studying in order to improve her skills. It was part of her personality to be overly critical of herself and she had a tendency to become stressed at her lessons because she wanted to play her music as well as she did at home. At the same time, she stated that she always felt comfortable going to Allison for lessons, even when she was sick. She was often frustrated because she was not able to accomplish something at a lesson that she had been able to do at home. She wanted to show improvement at each lesson. Patti discussed the fact that she had not felt as though she had progressed much in recent years. Though by her own admission she noted that if Allison had pushed her harder she would not have been motivated to practice more.

Patti preferred to practice in the morning but her busy lifestyle often did not permit her to practice until the evening hours. Her lessons have been scheduled during the morning hours since her retirement. The scheduling of her piano lessons was dependant upon the schedules of Allison and of Susan since they worked on their duets together during their lessons.

Patti discussed how her goals for piano changed since she first began studying piano. The researcher noted a tone of resignation when Patti spoke about how her priorities had changed since she began studying the piano. She was not willing to devote an exorbitant amount of time to piano practice. Yet, she found that she had to struggle a great deal and practice for many hours in order to master a piece. Because she had other priorities in her life, Patti had to change her goals where piano was concerned.

Susan

Having the time, money, and an instrument were factors that contributed to Susan's decision to resume piano study after retirement. She also expressed emotional commitments that kept her returning to piano lessons. She played for personal pleasure and as an emotional outlet. Susan had repertoire that she preferred playing. She availed of performance opportunities provided by her teacher and found duets to be motivational and beneficial. She needed to be challenged by her music and her teacher and appreciated a stimulating learning environment. Teacher flexibility was important to Susan.

Susan inherited a grand piano from her mother and felt an obligation to be able to play it well once her husband decided to have it re-strung for her. She wanted to improve her skills. Also influenced by the fact that her friend Patti was already taking lessons, Susan decided to make it a priority to find time for piano lessons and for practicing. At the time of the interviews, she felt an additional sense of urgency because she and her husband were planning to move to a remote area out of state within a year and she feared that she might not have access to a

piano teacher. She wanted to learn as much as she could while she still had the opportunity. She desired to be able to sit down and play for someone, or to be able to play some hymns for Sunday school if someone asked her.

Susan liked to sight read for her own enjoyment and often played hymns and Broadway show tunes that she could sing along with at home. She noted that those selections did not have to be perfect as long as she could get the gist of them. After sight reading through hymns or familiar music she felt a sense of accomplishment. After practicing, she did not necessarily feel like she "had accomplished anything" (p.103) due to the ongoing nature of skill refinement.

Since beginning piano lessons as an adult she found that she appreciated hearing others play more than she had before. Her reading had improved, especially since she was beginning to learn how to recognize intervals and chords, as opposed to reading individual notes. Duets taught her patience; they were fun, provided an opportunity to make music with her friend, and helped her to listen to more than one line of music simultaneously.

The piano parties were fun for Susan. Even though she got nervous, she was confident in her abilities and she saw that she did not get as nervous as others who participated. She also liked the fact that there were second chances if things did not go well the first time. The parties initially brought back memories of childhood recitals. Even though she found the whole experience intimidating at first, she knew the group of students well enough by the time of the interviews that she enjoyed the camaraderie with her peers. Her only fear was about making a fool of herself in front of the others. However, she had learned to accept the fact

that she would never play as well at the parties as she did at home. She noted that it was important that adult recitals be kept separate from children's recitals because adults did not want to be humiliated by being compared to young children.

Susan had very well-defined musical tastes. She did not like the patterned teaching pieces that her teacher often assigned. She noted that they were "very predictable [and] not challenging" enough (p. 107). She believed that Allison was not encouraging her to work hard enough. Because she could sight read through many of the pieces that Allison was assigning, she presumed that there was no challenge for her and therefore she was not motivated to work very hard. After in-depth discussion about this patterned teaching music and this criticism of Allison, the researcher realized that Patti did not recognize the musical challenges that much of the aforementioned music offered. Allison also expressed that these pieces addressed numerous musical techniques which Susan needed to work on. However, Allison's perception was that if a piece was not easy, Susan would not think that it was pretty or enjoyable.

Susan expressed that Allison did not balance what she needed to learn, in terms of improving her piano skills, with what she was capable of playing. She maintained that if a piece was difficult she would work on it and apply herself more than if she perceived it as being easy. She felt that a piece was easy if she could sight read it adequately.

Susan did not like pieces with excessive dissonance. She claimed to have no "emotional attachment" to the more modern pieces (p. 110). She liked classical

pieces, even if they were arrangements of the standard repertoire. However, she did not want Allison to re-arrange what was already printed in a book, simply because she didn't like that particular arrangement or because she knew that she could compose a better arrangement. Susan noted that a piece was much more meaningful to her if she knew how it should sound before she played it. She liked to be able to hear it in her head before she played. She preferred to work on longer pieces with contrasting sections or movements. She claimed that such music had more substance.

Susan needed a challenge in order to feel as though she was progressing. In her mind, the challenge came from mastering coordination between the hands, playing the correct notes, executing the correct rhythms, and from accomplishing various other technical aspects of playing the piano. She believed that she should be able to demonstrate progress as quickly as she did when she was a child.

As she has gotten older she has experienced difficulty with stiffness in her hands and she has had to begin wearing piano glasses in order to see the music properly. She preferred to practice in the morning and needed to warm up before practicing or going to a lesson because of her hand problems.

Susan's ideal teacher would be flexible and recognize that Susan did not have unlimited time to practice. She also noted that the teacher should not be intimidated by the fact that the student may be older than the tutor. Susan required the teacher to motivate her to practice, otherwise she had a tendency to put piano lower on her daily priority list. She saw no benefit in taping her piano lessons and

never listened to her tapes because she "knew how she sounded" and she "did not want to listen to something that was bad" (p. 114).

Nancy

Nancy had the money and the desire to play the piano. Playing the piano served as an important emotional outlet for Nancy. She enjoyed the stimulating learning environment that her teacher provided and experienced numerous benefits as a result of playing duets. She availed of performance opportunities regularly. She had repertoire that she preferred playing and had sophisticated musical tastes. She appreciated her teacher's flexibility and expertise. Nancy found the challenges that she experienced at the piano to be meaningful.

Nancy had not articulated her goals for piano study prior to the outset of this research study, so initially she thought that she did not have any. Lengthy discussions with the researcher and much contemplation in between the interviews made her aware of the fact that she most definitely did have goals. She had wanted to study piano throughout her adult life and once she was semi-retired, she found that she had the time to pursue lessons. Music had always been a way for her to identify certain feelings. Playing the piano had become a way for her to fill emotional spaces and off-load certain problems from her work as a therapist.

She enjoyed the suggestions offered by her teacher during lessons. She noted often feeling a sense of frustration during her lessons because she still defined progress in a linear fashion. She was struggling with changing this attitude about learning when she met with the researcher.

Nancy noted that she tended to get so caught up with the technical details of a piece that it was easy for her to lose the "essence of the music" (p. 118). The partner that she was paired with for duets had helped her to let go of some of the details and to keep moving forward. Duets motivated her to work hard because she did not want to let her partner down. She also enjoyed the companionship with her duet partner.

Preparing to play at a party was also very motivating for Nancy despite the fact that she found the experience of playing for the other adults terrifying. She experienced a certain degree of comfort in playing a duet at the party because she was not as exposed as she was in her solo repertoire. She enjoyed the informal atmosphere of the parties and enjoyed meeting other adults who were going through similar experiences while studying the piano. Nancy's perception was that those who took lessons as children were more comfortable at the piano as adults. At the time of the interviews with the researcher, she was using the parties as a vehicle to explore how she might celebrate the good musical things that had occurred while she played.

Nancy really liked the books and music that Allison chose for her. In her experience, when she chose something to work on it was always too difficult and proved to be far to frustrating to achieve any degree of success. She believed that a teacher of adults should be flexible and recognize that adults approach piano study from a different angle than children. She also believed that it was important that adults be permitted to pursue the kind of music that they were interested in. She was also aware of how the teacher should present new information in

manageable chunks. She recognized that she would have found it overwhelming if she learned too many new things at one time. Allison also discussed this concept in her interview with the researcher. Nancy felt that it was important for her teacher to have a sense of humour since that was one way that she dealt with stressful situations.

She was drawn toward pieces that expressed sadness or feelings of melancholy, and enjoyed playing pieces that expressed those emotions for her own personal satisfaction. She did not feel the need to accomplish something every time that she sat down at the piano. Just to sit and play the piano for her own enjoyment was a satisfying activity for Nancy. She noted that she found it easier to play a piece if she could hear it in her head before beginning. She enjoyed listening to the tapes of her lessons, especially when Allison played the pieces for her. She also discovered that there were too many concepts to absorb during the lesson so reviewing the tape allowed her to get more out of the experience.

Nancy noted that most of the challenges that she experienced at the keyboard came from within herself. Memorization came fairly easily for her, at least kinesthetically, but she recognized that the music was not encoded in a meaningful way. She made memorizing certain passages of music a priority because there were too many things requiring her attention on the page. She said, "once I get something memorized then I like the way I play it a lot better because my attention isn't so divided" (p. 120).

Keeping a journal has allowed her to bring more meaning to the experience of taking piano lessons and to learn from the emotions that she experienced while preparing for the piano parties. Her journal writing allowed her to recognize how involved her ego was in her experience of piano study. She had a great deal of respect for her teacher and wanted to demonstrate progress or success at each lesson. Meeting with her peers at the piano parties allowed her to recognize that others were experiencing similar thoughts, feelings, and emotions. The struggles that Nancy experienced at the keyboard were very meaningful for her and she analyzed her own experiences in order to grow and learn even more about herself through her encounters at the piano.

Betty

Betty also had the time, the money, and an emotional need to play the piano. It was her primary artistic outlet, but it also connected her with certain family members. She found the duets to be motivational and availed of performance opportunities even though she found playing in front of her peers to be quite stressful. She was confident in her abilities, though she was aware of the age-related problems that she was experiencing at the keyboard. She had very sophisticated musical tastes and could articulate clearly her musical preferences. Integration of musical concepts into her playing was problematic for Betty. Memory was difficult but no longer a priority. Teacher flexibility was important to Betty and she attempted to practice during her preferred time of day, though that was not always possible.

The study of piano connected Betty with her deceased aunt, who had been her only piano teacher prior to Allison, and to her daughter who was a professional piano teacher. In addition, many of her extended family members had been involved in musical pursuits throughout their lives, so piano represented a common interest with people that she loved.

Betty considered piano to be her major artistic outlet. She enjoyed the social and educational aspects of her lessons and of the duet experiences. She had a desire to please her teacher and to demonstrate that she had progressed since the previous lesson.

She enjoyed the duets as long as she was paired the right person. If she had to struggle just to keep up the experience was not enjoyable for her. She had considered such past experiences too stressful to be fun. She also enjoyed the social aspect of practicing and playing with her duet partner. She was aware that they were not playing as an ensemble. Betty and Nancy met once a week outside of their lesson, and spent much of that time socializing. They met more frequently if there was a performance coming up.

Betty found the piano parties to be stimulating and motivating. She experienced social benefits of meeting with others going through similar difficulties while learning the piano and she loved hearing the variety of music that was performed at the parties. She did compare herself to others at the parties, however.

Betty enjoyed the variety of music, the exercises, and the practice techniques that Allison incorporated into her lesson. She found executing

dynamics and musical nuance difficult. When playing on her own, she was not always aware of tone production. Allison commented that Betty was a very tight player and the difficulty that she had relaxing was noted when the researcher observed her lesson. Betty recognized that when learning a new piece of music she tended to place a great deal of emphasis on playing the correct rhythms and notes, rather than on musicality.

Betty enjoyed playing music that reminded her of her daughter, specifically music that her daughter had played. She also enjoyed playing music that reminded her of her own youth. She felt that she was probably initially drawn to a piece of music because of the melody. She disliked dissonance. She also found music theory and various rhythmic devices employed by composers to be interesting but had little success at integrating her knowledge into her playing. Allison noted that Betty was not confident that she really had the knowledge required to integrate theory into her daily practice. The researcher noted that Betty had been studying theory in a succinct and progressive fashion since her youth and she was aware that she had a good foundation in that area.

Betty was no longer able to memorize music and she found that to be quite frustrating. Although memorizing was no longer a priority for her but she also found that it was difficult to retain information as she aged. Allison also noticed that Betty had experienced trouble retaining many things in recent years.

Betty found it frustrating at how quickly a piece of music deteriorated once she had learned it. She also noted that she had to work much harder to

accomplish a new piece of music as well. Allison also noted that Betty had slowed down in terms of how quickly she progressed in the recent years.

Betty was also frustrated by the fact that Allison was assigning music that was easier than she expected, such as music that she had played in her youth. She took these easy assignments very personally and spoke with a tone of resignation even though she recognized that she was able to play that repertoire well from a musical standpoint. She was struggling with how she defined progress when she spoke with the researcher. She recognized that she was playing her pieces much more musically than she had when she was younger, but she still felt frustrated by what she defined as a lack of progress.

Betty's ideal teacher was patient, reasonably undemanding, but someone that she would respect enough to work for and who would inspire her to do better. She rarely found time to listen to the tapes of her lessons, but saved the tapes where Allison was playing one of her pieces. She noted that it was discouraging to hear herself on tape because she sounded worse than she realized.

Betty's eye sight had become a problem as she aged but she found ways to compensate, such as copying and enlarging the music upon which she was working. She also experienced arthritis in her hands, carpel tunnel problems in her arm, and shoulder problems in recent years. Again, she found methods of compensating for or working within her means.

Betty preferred to practice early in the morning when both her body and mind were more alert but her busy lifestyle generally did not allow her to practice until after dinner in the evening. She tried to warm up before lessons due to the

stiffness associated with her arthritis. Betty believed that playing the piano kept her mind active and also noted that it was rewarding for her to hear professional recordings of music that she had played.

Individual Group Participant Themes

Eloise

Eloise found herself with the time, the money, and the desire to return to piano study upon retirement. She enjoyed the social aspect of group piano study and the emotional outlet with which playing the piano provided her. She appreciated the lesson routine and enjoyed the variety of music that she encountered in piano class. She was confident in her piano skills. She appreciated her teacher's flexibility and preparation for each class. She experienced some age-related problems at the piano but was able to compensate. She tried to practice during her preferred time of day. Theoretical concepts that she had learned were not integrated into her playing.

Eloise resumed piano lessons upon retirement because she had the time, the desire to get back to music, and a piano in her home. She found that piano served as an emotional outlet. Having to go to a weekly piano class encouraged her to maintain a practice routine. She also noted that the fellowship that she shared with the other ladies in the class was important.

The class also provided her with an opportunity to learn a variety of styles of music, many of which she would not have learned on her own. She also appreciated the other elements of music that the class studied, such as music theory and the history of certain composers, which she would not have done on

her own. The researcher observed that even though Eloise found the theory interesting, she had not integrated it into her playing in any meaningful way.

Her biggest criticism of the class was that they did not remain on any one piece of music long enough to perfect it. Eloise did feel like she was a part of the social group that constituted her piano class. She was confident in her abilities at the piano. She cited having to keep going, despite the mistakes, as one of the greatest benefits of playing out loud together in class and of working on duets during class time. She also noted that her ability to read ahead and keep a steady tempo had improved as a result of the class. She believed that the "duets sound[ed] better than just your little piece" (p. 137). She found the experience of playing duets to be musically satisfying.

Eloise enjoyed some challenges during the piano class, but she didn't want to have to work too hard because she had other things going on in her life. She noted that playing out loud forced her to practice more and to be prepared because she did compare herself to the other members of the class. She cited rhythm, big chords, and intervallic reading as challenges for her. She had to get piano glasses to read the music with more ease.

Eloise's ideal piano teacher would not talk too much because the students are there to play. The teacher should also be flexible. When she was in a class where recitals were required, she got terribly nervous and saw no useful purpose in the ordeal. She was not required to memorize her music for the recitals and had no desire to memorize.

Eloise preferred to practice in the morning but usually had other commitments and generally could not find time to practice until the evening. However, she would not take a piano class in the evening. Eloise considered the time she spent at the piano to be important in maintaining a personal identity that was separate from her husband.

Sandra

Sandra began the piano class because she had the time and money. She cited personal satisfaction as the primary reason that she continued with the class. She appreciated the variety of music that they covered in class and enjoyed playing with others, either out loud on a solo piece or with the duet music. Playing with the others motivated her to practice so that she would be able to keep up. She found it challenging to maintain her own part in the duets. She liked to be a little challenged with her repertoire, but wanted the challenge to be reasonable since she had other priorities in her life.

She found theory to be very difficult and did not enjoy working on it during class. She had not been able nor had she wished to integrate theory into her playing. She did not memorize her music and had no desire to do so. To memorize would have required more effort than she was willing to exert.

Her ideal piano teacher would be understanding and not push the students too hard, but "present enough challenging material that we stay interested" (p. 141). She would not have participated in a piano class if it was offered in the evening.

She was confident in her abilities at the keyboard and mentioned that her background in piano helped. She believed that she experienced social, educational, and emotional benefits from participating in the piano class. Even though she had always been busy, she felt that the class enriched her life and she enjoyed being a part of the group.

Laura

Laura had the time and a desire to study piano upon retirement. She enjoyed the social aspect of piano class. She also believed that she was adequately challenged by the classroom activities. She enjoyed the variety of music that she encountered in piano class. She was confident in her piano skills. Laura recognized that the class members did not perfect their repertoire, but just played as well as possible. She felt a sense of accomplishment after each class and enjoyed learning new things. She had other priorities in her life in addition to the piano. She experienced age-related problems but was able to compensate for them when playing the piano. Laura had a preferred time of day for practice. She had not integrated theoretical concepts into her playing.

Laura had wanted to take piano lessons throughout her adult life and when she had the time she decided to see if she could get her skills back to where they had been when she was younger. Enrollment in piano lessons encouraged her to practice regularly. She believed that the theory and the history that they explored during the piano class was "good for them" but observations and discussions with the class piano teacher revealed that Laura had not integrated these concepts into her playing (p. 143). Laura did note that theory was difficult for her.

Laura enjoyed the variety of music to which she was exposed during the class. She noted that the diversity of music kept piano interesting for her. She also liked playing pieces that she recognized. She was pleased to always be learning new things, even after 20 years of piano classes. She felt like she was part of the group and spoke about the closed social system, noting that "men had never lasted very long in the class" (p.144).

She admitted that she would work harder if she took private lessons but the class satisfied her needs at that time. She claimed that if the music were too hard and the teacher too demanding, she would have been turned off. She enjoyed practicing but did not wish to devote her life to the piano.

In recent years she had experienced some hand stiffness, eye sight difficulties, and problems with pedaling, rhythm, and dynamics. She did not enjoy playing music with a lot of flats or sharps and found reading notes on ledger lines difficult. She could not memorize with the same ease as when she had been younger. While she had to memorize several pieces when she took private lessons, the memorization of music was no longer a priority for her.

When she left piano class she always felt as though she had accomplished something. She liked her class and enjoyed the company of those in it. She looked forward to social gatherings with the group outside of class and to the support that she received during class with respect to the life problems that they were all experiencing.

She preferred to practice in the morning but time constraints did not often permit morning practice. If classes were offered in the evening she would not

have participated. She did not participate in the summer classes because the group dynamics were different due to the participation of additional members. She believed that piano study was good for her mind and body.

Alexandra

Alexandra had the time, the money, and the desire to begin piano lessons upon retirement. She was confident in her keyboard skills. She enjoyed the social aspect of the group lessons, but took private lessons when she wanted more of a challenge. She found the class environment to be stimulating and enjoyed the structure of the class activities. She appreciated the teacher's flexibility and knowledge. She had noted several age-related problems was determined to compensate for those problems at the piano. She enjoyed the variety of music that she encountered in the piano class. Alexandra was attempting to integrate theoretical knowledge into her playing, but had not accomplished that goal at the time of the interviews.

Alexandra had always wanted to take piano lessons and when she retired she found that she had both the time and the money. She was feeling a sense of urgency at the time of the interviews because she felt like she had to make up for the time that she had missed at the piano while she was devoted to her career. She expressed regret at not having started piano earlier in her life. It was that sense of urgency that led her to take private lessons from time to time when she could commit more time to practicing and when she wanted to learn more than she would in the class environment.

Alexandra loved learning and wished to please her teacher or at least show that she had improved since the previous lesson. When she first joined the class, she did not feel as though she was part of the group but eventually came to realize that she did fit in. She compared herself to others in the class and once she realized that she was just as good as the others, she began to feel as though she belonged to the group.

She liked to play out loud during class but recognized that it often did not sound good. She believed that the duets helped to improve counting, although she did not feel as though counting was a real issue for her. She often had an optimal experience during class because she was fully engaged in what she was doing at the piano.

Alexandra was able to articulate what she liked or disliked about repertoire. She did not like pieces that were highly dissonant. She enjoyed playing pieces that she recognized or that sounded pretty. She enjoyed challenging pieces, but did not expect to be challenged to any great extent in the senior's piano class. When she studied piano privately, she enjoyed the struggle that she experienced with the challenging repertoire. She found that it was helpful if she knew how a piece went or if she could hear it in her head before she played it. She felt relaxed after she practiced and claimed that she was happy as long as she was learning new things.

Alexandra preferred to practice in the morning and made it a priority to practice at her preferred time of day. She would not have considered participating in an evening class. When playing for her own enjoyment, she was drawn to

hymns and church songs. During the summer when she did not take the piano class, she would sight read through new pieces for fun. She was aware of the progress that she had made since beginning her piano studies and was confident with her abilities, though she wanted to continue to hone her piano skills and to improve. She exhibited a great sense of commitment toward the piano.

Vanessa

Vanessa had the time, the money, and the desire to play the piano upon retirement. She expressed some emotional obligation to play the piano, although she played primarily for her own enjoyment. She enjoyed the social aspect of the group environment. She enjoyed the variety of repertoire that they played together and had fun during class. She appreciated her teacher's flexibility and positive feedback. She expressed concern over age-related problems but had found ways to compensate for these problems. She was confident in her keyboard skills and felt adequately challenged by the class. When she wanted to progress, she engaged in private piano lessons. The lesson routine kept her motivated to practice. She enjoyed music theory but had not integrated it into her playing.

Vanessa began piano lessons as soon as she had retired since she found herself with the time, the money, and an instrument. When she was working and raising her family she did not have time to play the piano or to engage in regular lessons. She also discussed emotional reasons relating to her past for continuing with the piano. She noted that her mother had sacrificed a great deal in order for her to study piano as a child.

A weekly class encouraged her to practice at home. Being in a class setting, she was motivated to practice because she wanted to keep up with the others. She mentioned that piano was wrapped up with her "identity and [her] sanity" (p. 157). She enjoyed the social interaction with the other ladies and found it helpful to witness others experiencing similar life experiences. She realized that seeing others was good for her and playing music during the class helped to keep her mind off of her own family problems.

She believed that the duets allowed the class to play more difficult music together than they would have been able to do on their own. She believed that a benefit of the duets was that they encouraged everyone to move forward, despite making mistakes. She also recognized that her mistakes could be camouflaged by her classmates. She knew that she had to work harder and think more when she took private lessons and that she was more exposed if playing on her own for a teacher. She also noted the greater expense involved with private study.

She preferred to practice early in the morning because she tired as the day progressed. She would not have considered participating on an evening class. She appreciated the fun that she experienced during the class. She believed that there was not a great deal of pressure to practice, so if family commitments required her to travel and miss class, she still felt comfortable returning without much practice.

Vanessa had trouble executing grace notes and fast passages of music. She also required piano glasses to see the music properly. She was aware of the progress that she had made since she beginning piano lessons as an adult.

When she played the piano for fun at home she played hymns. Vanessa also enjoyed the easier classical repertoire that she learned in class. She found the history of the composers to be most interesting. She also noted that it was rewarding to hear a piece that she had played on a recording or on the radio.

Vanessa's ideal piano teacher was flexible and treated each student as an individual, being aware of each person's needs within the group setting. Her ideal teacher would also be enthusiastic about piano and provide just the right amount of challenge to the students.

Martha

Martha had the time, the money, and the desire to pursue piano lessons upon retirement. She enjoyed the social and the emotional benefits that she experienced as a result of the piano class. She appreciated the teacher's flexibility, expertise, and friendly disposition. She had some emotional obligation to continue with piano lessons. She was confident in her abilities at the keyboard. Martha compensated for the age-related difficulties that she experienced at the piano. She enjoyed theory but was unable to apply it to her repertoire. She enjoyed the constant variety of music that she encountered during class. Martha appreciated the fact that she piano class was not too challenging.

Martha was influenced to join the piano class because she had a friend who was already participating in the class. She had the time and the money and viewed the piano class as a social activity. She had experienced many social benefits as a result of participating in the piano class. In fact, four or five of the ladies in the class had become friends. Piano class was relaxing for her. She also

believed that the class encouraged her to remain active. She noted that she was taking piano lessons for herself, whereas when she was younger she took lessons because her mother wanted her to do so.

She enjoyed the theory that they learned in class but said that it did not help with her repertoire. Martha enjoyed learning about the composers who wrote the pieces that she was working on. She liked the variety of styles of music that they worked on in class. She also appreciated the fact that their teacher interspersed difficult pieces with easier ones. When she was at home, playing for her own enjoyment, she played hymns and religious songs.

The duets were enjoyable for Martha because she could not execute those at home on her own. It was significant that she needed to be in a social setting in order to play the duets. She stated that it was "fun to play with others" (p. 161). She felt that there was a sense of security in having others to play her part with her and believed that her timing had improved as a result of playing duets because she had to keep playing, no matter what happened.

Martha noted that the best piano instructors had personal contact with the students. Also, they had been open to the suggestions of the students and seemed to have been aware of their individual needs.

She felt that scales were good for her fingers and used them to warm up. She noted that she had been trained to do that when she was a child. She had trouble executing dynamics but asserted that "as you get older you play it the way you want to" (p. 162). So, dynamics were not a huge issue for her. She had arthritis and eye sight problems but felt that keeping her hands active was good

for her physical ailments. She was confident in her abilities at the piano. She did not enjoy memorizing and saw no reason to attempt to memorize her piano music.

She did not participate in the summer classes because the people were different and she really enjoyed the particular group to which she belonged. The weekly class did encourage her to practice regularly. She practiced more when she was enrolled in the piano class than when she was not during the summer months. She felt adequately challenged enough by the activities of the senior's piano class.

Themes Common Across the Private Cases

Time, Money, and Desire After a Life Change

Each of the participants expressed that they began or returned to piano lessons during their third age because they had the time, money, and an instrument. While these three factors contributed to their decision to begin piano lessons as an adult, it became clear throughout the course of the interviews that these factors were not the primary reasons for continuing with piano lessons. In fact, all of the participants in this study led busy lives and struggled constantly with finding enough time to practice their repertoire. Prior to beginning piano lessons, however, each of the participants in this study had undergone a major life change such as retirement (either their own or their spouse's retirement). The women had put learning the piano on hold or had discontinued playing for many years because they were busy with their careers and raising their families. Betty noted that "raising four kids and a family, while we had a fish farm and ran those apartments put my piano playing on hold because I was not doing anything with

the piano" (p. 133). All of the private participants had wanted to either begin or return to piano study upon retirement. Ironically, each thought that they would have more time once their children had been raised and once they had retired or cut back on their professional responsibilities, but that was not the case.

Priorities and Lifelong Learning

Because each of these participants was a lifelong learner who had always lead an active life, each participant experienced difficulty finding enough time for piano practice. Even though these participants were shifting their priorities away from work and professional attitudes toward the pursuit of leisure activities, these particular people did not have as much time to practice the piano as they had anticipated. The private participants maintained active lifestyles upon retirement and even though piano was clearly a priority for each of them, all expressed that they were rarely able to find enough time to practice each day. However, all of the participants found that a regular lesson routine encouraged them to practice as much as possible.

Desire to Please Teacher and Reasonable Goals

The researcher noted that all of the private students were interested in pleasing their teacher or at least, as Betty phrased it, "showing considerable improvement since the last lesson" (p. 129). Conversations with the private teachers revealed that they were aware of this need that their students had to please them. The private students all discussed their commitment, of both time and money, toward their piano lessons. Yet, there was a dichotomy. Even though those who had committed themselves to private lessons had invested a great deal

of time and money (and most spoke at length about this commitment), they clearly had other priorities in their lives. They remained conscious of the fact that piano study was but one facet of their lives. Patti, a cancer survivor, put it into perspective when she said, "I'd rather just learn a piece than play it like an accomplished pianist. I know that I have to struggle and I would have to work harder than I plan to work to polish music. So to just get comfortable with a piece is enough for me" (p. 92). However, the private students displayed a great sense of responsibility about the expectations surrounding their lessons, in terms of practice, improvement, and success.

Definition of Progress

All of the private participants in this study defined their success in terms of linear progress. Several students (Nancy, Betty, and Ted) were struggling with their perceived lack of progress and were attempting to redefine how they measured their progress at the keyboard. Nancy spoke of this most eloquently when she said, "I think that things should be difficult, then you should attempt more difficult things or you're not doing well. Recognizing that has been interesting to me because you think you've left behind a lot of these attitudes about learning and you haven't, not when you start something new" (p. 117). They were all discovering that the methods of measuring success when they were children (through grades and advancing to the next level, for example) did not apply to their adult piano lessons.

Betty spoke with a tone of resignation when she wistfully commented, "I don't feel that I'm progressing as I used to define progress, as in playing more

difficult pieces. I think I probably am playing these simpler things better than I would have when I was a child" (p. 128). Their teachers were aware of these changing attitudes and were guiding their students as they learned to redefine musical success. Patti and Susan, however, were struggling with their lack of linear progress but at the time of the interviews had still failed to recognize that progress need not be measured linearly. Their teacher was encouraging them to redefine progress at the keyboard, but she seemed unaware of the challenging dichotomy that this new perspective about learning created for both Patti and Susan. The researcher surmised, from lesson observations and interviews with the teacher, that the lack of linear progress was the source of much of the dissatisfaction expressed by both Patti and Susan.

Musical Expression

While Betty had begun to recognize the importance of musical nuance when playing the piano, not all of the private participants had arrived at that conclusion. Observations of lessons and discussions with the teachers revealed that thoughtful musical expression at the piano was not initially a priority for any of these participants. This notion was underscored by Susan's comment, "when you can sight read through a piece, it doesn't give you much challenge...I like to be challenged by putting it together and making sure that [I am] playing the correct notes, the correct rhythms, and so on" (p. 109). These highly motivated adults expected rapid progress. Susan confided, "I think [that if adults] don't see [improvement], and maybe see it quicker than children, then they'll think "oh, this

is too much for me." I think that I should be able to progress as quickly as I did when I was younger" (p. 112).

Meaningful Struggle

Four of the participants (Patti, Rebecca, Nancy, and Ted) noted that playing the piano did not come naturally for them. The remaining two private participants, Betty and Susan, had been playing for the majority of their lives and did not specifically mention that playing the piano felt unnatural. However, they discussed constant problems including coordination and physical gestures that were difficult to master or uncomfortable to execute. This led the researcher to surmise that accomplishing many of the necessary physical gestures did not come naturally even to the students who had been playing the piano for most of their lives.

Physical and Aural Awareness

The teachers discussed how achieving and maintaining a relaxed physical state was difficult for each of these students. The researcher's observations during lessons corroborated that notion. In addition to difficulties in attaining an awareness of their physical motions while playing, these students were often not initially aware of the sounds that they were producing at the piano. Of the six private participants, Ted and Nancy were the students who were most keenly aware of musical nuance in their playing. They spoke to the researcher about their appreciation for great Western art music and their teachers noted that these two particular students had been exposed to great music for most of their lives.

Sarah noted that Rebecca was inclined to pound the keys while playing and the researcher observed an athleticism to her playing during her lesson. Like Patti, Susan, and Betty, who suffered from the same problem, all suggested that dynamics and musical expression were areas that needed improvement. Patti said, "I am so busy with the notes, I don't hear that [I am playing too loudly] until [Allison] points it out to me" (p. 95).

Preferred Time of Day

Each private participant noted that they were more mentally alert and physically able to meet the technical demands of playing the piano during the morning hours. Even though the participants were aware of their optimal time of day for practicing, the daily demands of life often did not permit them to practice during their preferred time of day. However, all of the participants did take lessons during their optimal time of day. The teachers found the morning or early afternoon hours to be most convenient for their own schedules. They were aware that late afternoon and evening hours were not optimal for their older adult students, however, that was not the primary motivation for scheduling lessons early in the day.

Emotional Obligation

Three of the six private students (Rebecca, Susan, and Betty) expressed some emotional obligation related to their past that contributed to their desire to continue with piano lessons. Rebecca noted that "Mother would be pleased to know that I started [piano] again" (p. 68), while Susan said "when your

husband...has your piano re-strung...you feel an obligation ...to play it well" (p. 103).

High Level of Ego Involvement

The ego involvement of each of the private students was prominent. While only one student (Nancy) spoke specifically in terms of her deep personal involvement in her piano lessons, after speaking with each of the participants the researcher came away with a clear sense of the great personal investment that each student had made with respect to their piano lessons. Patti, for example, said, "I'm a perfectionist. So I guess to not be successful at the piano is real stressful. I don't care that I'm not successful at home, but I don't like not being successful in front of other people" (p. 86).

Emotional Needs and Therapeutic Benefits

All of the private students spoke about piano lessons being good therapy and a good routine in their daily lives. Playing the piano also filled emotional spaces for each of the private participants in this study. Nancy noted that music "allows her to express and release painful emotions" (p. 117). Rebecca and Betty each enjoyed playing pieces that reminded them of their deceased relatives. The participants spoke about enjoying music with which they had some emotional attachment. For several of the participants (Betty and Rebecca) a particular piece of music reminded them of a particular family member. Others (Ted and Rebecca) experienced an emotional connection to music from their youth. Patti noted that piano was simply "good therapy" for her because while she was playing the piano she could not focus on her other problems (p. 83).

Meaningful Challenges

All of the private students enjoyed the challenge and complexity of learning the piano. While the challenges were different for each of them, discussions with each student revealed that the frustration and the struggles that they encountered were meaningful for them. All of the participants spoke about the high level of frustration that they experienced due to the exorbitant amount of work that required to maintain the pieces that they had learned. All were surprised at how quickly their repertoire deteriorated without constant reinforcement.

Avoidance of Fast Tempi and Musical Struggles

The private participants spoke about the difficulty that they experienced in executing fast pieces. While Rebecca and Patti spoke of wishing to stay away from fast pieces, others (such as Ted and Betty) felt comfortable playing such pieces at a slower tempo and saw no need to even attempt such repertoire at the standard acceptable tempo. In fact, they gleaned a great deal of satisfaction from playing such quick-paced pieces at a tempo that was slower than would be considered stylistically appropriate.

The participants also frequently identified rhythmic and dynamic accuracy to be a constant struggle for them. If the participants experienced physical difficulties that are associated with the normal aging process, such as eye sight or arthritis, they had found various methods of compensating for their physical declines. Each was determined to continue playing for many years to come.

Memorization

Memory was a problem discussed by each participant. All spoke of having more difficulty memorizing than when they were younger. The teachers also spoke of a noticeable slowing or failure of typical memorization techniques in their students as they aged. Sarah and Allison discussed noticing this phenomenon in both Ted and Betty, the oldest private participants in this study. The teachers also noticed a general slowing of their thinking processes and some confusion at times with these two particular students.

The participants warned that memorizing music was not a priority for them. The researcher noted that those students who were poor sight readers had better strategies for memorizing music, even if only sections of the music were memorized because they had to rely on their memory as a crutch.

Teacher Flexibility and Ability to Inspire

A quality that this group of private students expected in a piano teacher was the ability for the teacher to inspire them to do better. Betty said of her piano teacher, "she's somebody that's patient [and] reasonably undemanding, but...she inspires me to the point that I don't want to go to a lesson without having accomplished more than I did when I was there the week before" (p. 128). They also appreciated teacher flexibility.

Clearly-Defined Musical Tastes and Required Guidance

This group of individuals could also clearly articulate their musical likes and dislikes and for the most part felt comfortable expressing their preferences to their teachers. Despite their strong opinions, however, the private students still

required guidance and structure from the teacher. The private students overwhelmingly spoke of an aversion to dissonance and to music that made excessive use of dissonance. They also recognized that they needed to "hear" how a piece sounded in their heads before they could play it well. It might be suggested that they were more successful in this endeavor than those taking group classes. Students such as Nancy were certainly aware that audiation[18] was important. She observed that "...if you hear it in your head it is much easier to play it the right way" (p. 121).

Lack of Integration of Musical Concepts

Each of the private participants spoke of the importance of including music theory into their lesson routine. However, few of the participants understood how theoretical knowledge might help their playing. Observations of lessons and discussions with the piano teachers revealed that none of the private students had been successful in integrating theoretical concepts into their learning processes when it came to their repertoire.

Duet Benefits

In addition to the motivational factors elucidated above, duets provided companionship. Playing a duet in front of others provided the participants with a feeling of security that they also appreciated. Betty characterized the duet experiences when she noted that "it adds a lot of sparkle to have fun with somebody" (p. 125). She also commented that she "enjoy[ed] Nancy thoroughly

[18] Audiation is a term that has been discussed extensively by Edwin Gordon (1989). He claimed that audiation is a "process which allows one to comprehend music silently" (p. 7). Listening is the first stage in a seven-step process that he claims is at the basis of this "cognitive psychology of music" (p. 21). Students must be able read, write, and notate music, in addition to hearing it in their head according to his theory.

as a person. We really spend an awful lot of time visiting during [our] practice time" (p. 125). Patti said, "with the duets, I enjoy the companionship with Susan. We get tickled when we make mistakes. But I think the friendship is most important...We have a good time practicing the pieces together and we don't really care if we play them for anybody" (p. 85). Many of these participants chose to play duets for the other students when performance opportunities were offered by their teachers. Incidentally, all of the students recalled having more performance gatherings each year than did the teachers!

Performance Opportunities

The final themes that emerged only among those studying piano privately centered around those performance opportunities. While nerve-wracking for all involved, these gatherings provided students with an opportunity for camaraderie, motivation to achieve and improve their skills, a chance to compare oneself with others, and occasion to recognize that they shared common musical experiences with others. The private students, however, had put considerably more thought into both the advantages and the drawbacks of performing at a get together with their peers than the group participants had even though they were playing for each other and experiencing similar benefits on a weekly basis. The private students each experienced an overwhelming sense of pride (and relief) once they had played for their peers.

Group Participant Themes Across the Cases

Time, Desire, Money, and Life Changes

The participants in this study who took piano lessons in a class setting also cited having the time, desire, money, and owning a piano as reasons for resuming piano study after a major life change, such as retirement. All could be considered lifelong learners and during the interviews they revealed that upon retirement they viewed piano as a way of keeping both the mind and the body active.

Emotional Outlet

The group participants also noted that piano served as an emotional outlet for them. Several of the participants (Eloise, Vanessa, and Martha) spoke about piano as something that they do for themselves. After a lengthy discussion with each student, it was clear that piano was important to their personal identity (separate from their spouses) and that while they may have played because of family expectations when they were younger, now they were playing exclusively for themselves.

Social Benefits

The group participants expressed that playing the piano was a relaxing activity for them. Clearly, all enjoyed participating in the class and interacting with their friends and felt good afterward. All stressed that the weekly class was motivating in terms of encouraging them to practice and to be prepared for the class. They enjoyed playing the solo repertoire together in class (out loud), simply filling in as many of the notes as they could. Observation of the class and

discussions with the participants revealed that they liked making music together during class.

In addition to the musical benefits of the class, the participants were also eager to discuss the social benefits that they experienced as a result of the piano class. Each felt like an insider in the complicated social system of the advanced senior's piano class. They received social and emotional support from one another, not just about musical issues but also in terms of sharing past and present life experiences. The participants discussed forming friendships as a result of the class and even about getting together socially outside of the class environment.

Duets

Duets were also motivating because they had to keep going and keep up their end of the piece. Duets were also cited as being enjoyable because they sounded better and were more musically satisfying than their solo repertoire. Playing together, out loud, during class was a musically satisfying activity for these particular individuals. They enjoyed duets, in large part, because they could participate with their peers in making music without being too challenged. Sandra noted that "the pieces are challenging enough, but not too difficult" (p. 141).

Performance Opportunities

It should be noted that the group piano participants expressed that they would not have played in a recital had such a performance opportunity been offered. While the private students noted benefits of playing for one another in a social setting, the group participants expressed no desire to participate in such an activity. However, they experienced similar benefits from merely attending the

piano class. Therefore, a recital was not necessary for the group participants in order to experience similar benefits.

Lifelong Learning and Limited Challenges

The group participants all displayed pleasure at continually learning new things and all enjoyed the reasonable challenges with which they were presented during class. Clearly, all had other responsibilities in their lives and did not want to have to practice as much as if they had been studying piano privately. Laura noted that "if you were taking lessons privately you would probably work more and do better, but I don't really see that as a problem . . . because I don't want to get up and play before people" (p. 144).

Desire for Greater Challenges

Alexandra and Vanessa displayed more of an urgency to learn and progress than did their classmates. Consequently, they also engaged in private piano lessons when they had more time to devote to practicing and during periods when progress was more important to them. They were also the only group participants who had a well-defined opinion about the type of music that they liked to play, who wanted to please their teacher, show weekly progress, and who discussed feeling a sense of pride upon hearing a piece that they had played outside of class.

Repertoire Choices

All of the group participants enjoyed playing hymns and music from their youth in their spare time. They did not feel the need to make suggestions about

what repertoire the class might explore. All were expecting to be challenged but within reason. Progress was not necessarily one of their goals for piano class.

This particular group enjoyed the variety of music with which they were presented. Most acknowledged that it was unlikely that they would have discovered this music on their own or outside of class. They were less motivated, with regard to achievement, than the private students. They didn't want to be pressured to learn too much during each class. Vanessa, who also took private lessons said, "The senior class is more of a fun class. Like I had been gone for 11 days and I could not practice, but it's ok because we get in there and kind of run through [the pieces] because in that class we've got enough talent. [laughter] We can carry it through" (pp. 155-6).

Confidence in Abilities

All of the group participants felt confident in their abilities at the keyboard and expressed pleasure at being a part of the advanced senior's piano class. Alexandra and Vanessa who were aware of their technical limitations, engaged in private lessons when they wished to improve more rapidly and when the class failed to satisfy all of their educational needs and goals. The group participants were more interested in maintaining their current level of abilities, rather than developing new ones. Playing for others or getting together for a recital was not of interest to this particular group. Memorizing was not a priority for any of the members of this particular class. All of the group participants were good sight readers.

Integration of Musical Concepts

All felt that theory was good for them but could not really explain why. It was observed that the theory that they had learned had not been integrated into their own playing in any meaningful way.

Teacher Flexibility and Expectations

All of the group participants appreciated a flexible teacher who was well prepared for class, who understood the needs of each person in the group, and who was in charge of choosing all of their repertoire. They appreciated a teacher who cared about what was happening in their lives outside of class and who loved music as much as they did. The group piano students expected their teacher to be well-prepared and preferred to have less control over what they learned, in terms of musical repertoire and course content. They did, however, want to play a lot. Eloise recalled one teacher that they didn't like "because she talked so much, you didn't play a lot. But many of the things that she said [were] very helpful" (p. 138).

This group had more of a desire to be entertained or kept busy playing the piano during class and left that responsibility up to the teacher. It was noted that the group participants who were more inclined to be motivated by progress were those students who were regularly engaged in private lessons in addition to the piano class. Those students who were engaged in private lessons in addition to the class could also more clearly articulate the ways in which the class was a useful emotional outlet for them.

Age-Related Physical Problems

Common physical problems experienced by the group participants included arthritis and problems with eye sight. Each participant had found ways to compensate for their physical restrictions. All of the participants noted that practicing earlier in the day was preferred. No one would have considered attending an evening piano class. Musical problems and challenges included difficulty executing dynamics, learning fast pieces, reading ledger lines, and counting.

Lack of Perfection

Finally, pieces were rarely perfected in the group environment. Eloise thoughtfully said "it seems like...we don't stay on any one piece long enough to really master it" (p. 137). Perfection of piano repertoire and progress, however, were not the primary goals or motivation for the participants in this class. Clearly, their emotional and musical needs were being met since many of the participants returned year after year. For those who wished to accomplish more musically, they continued with the group but recognized that they would benefit private lesson experiences.

Themes Common Between Private and Group Participants

Lifelong Learners

All of the participants in this study had attained at least a secondary school level of education. Each student had also participated in professional or personal development activities throughout their adult lives, suggesting that lifelong learning was important to them. All participants in this study satisfied the criteria

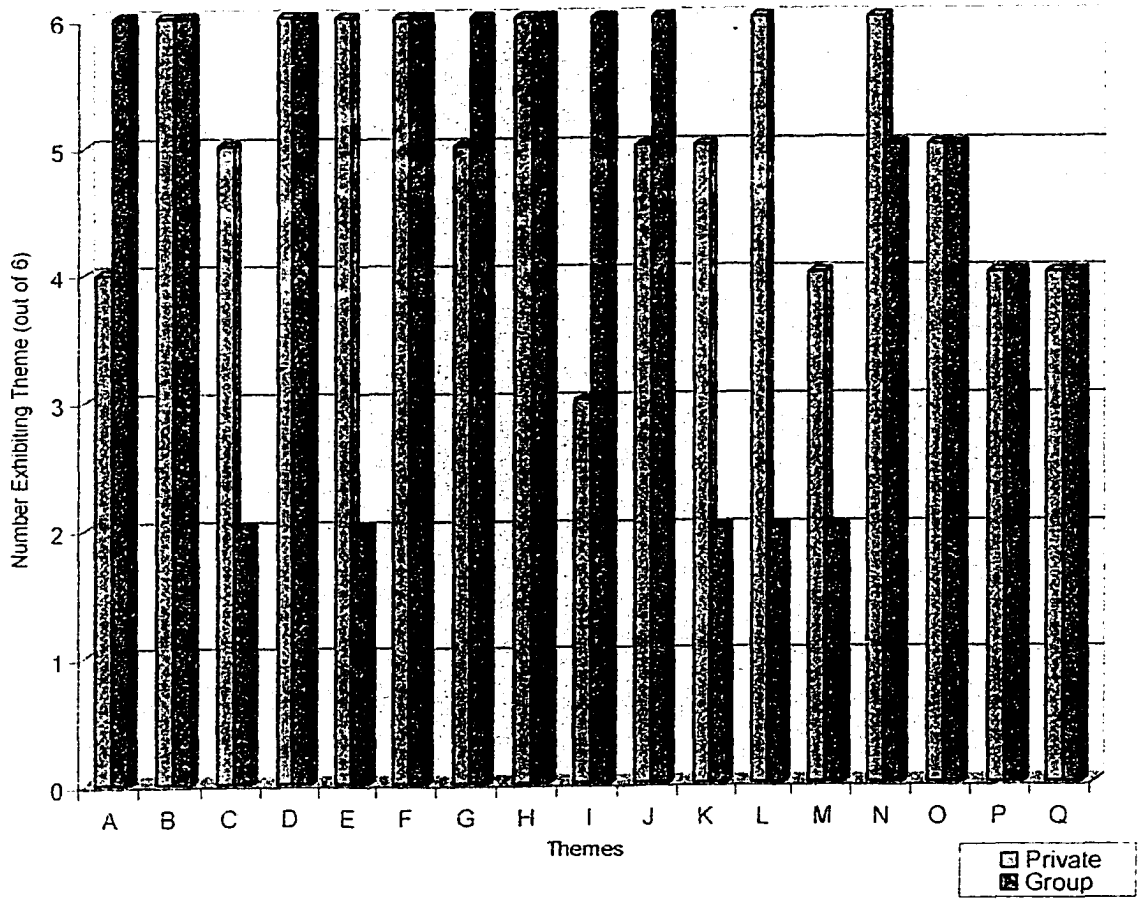
to be classified as lifelong learners. Each of these individuals had continued with educational endeavors, to varying degrees, beyond high school. At a time when society dictated that many of these women should stay home to raise families, their dedication to educational pursuits is a significant finding. All of the participants in this study had demonstrated characteristics of a blended life plan throughout their adult lives. The commencement of adult piano study was triggered by a life-changing event for every participant in this study. Retirement was the most common catalyst for change noted in this study.

Catalysts for Piano Study

Everyone who participated in this study was retired or semi-retired. All indicated that it was retirement or another life-changing experience that had prompted their decision to study piano as an adult. Thus, upon retirement (or their husband's retirement as was the case with several of the females in this study) they began or returned to piano lessons. Given that they had the time, the money, and an instrument it made sense for these participants to engage in a mentally stimulating activity such as the piano. Some of the common themes that emerged across the group and private cases are highlighted in figure 3.

Figure 3. Themes Common to Both Private and Group Cases.

A	Childhood Experience in Piano
B	Like Lesson Routine
C	Want Challenging Lessons
D	Want Interesting Lessons
E	Like Teacher Feedback
F	Piano Provides Personal Pleasure
G	Piano is Therapeutic
H	Sense of Pride Because of Piano
I	Has Inflated Sense of Capabilities
J	Memory Not a Priority
K	Concerned That Memory is Difficult
L	Want to Please Teacher
M	Good Sense of Musical Aesthetic
N	Experience Some Physical Restrictions
O	Age-Related Eyesight Problems
P	Perception Problems
Q	Avoid Fast Tempi



Patti shed some additional light on the subject of beginning piano as an adult when she said, "...I like learning new things and [piano] was something I'd always wanted to do and I had the money to do it. I chose piano because it is something concrete. It is in my house. It sits there. It is not like going and getting [an instrument] out of a box" (p. 83). Elaborating upon this train of thought, many of the participants described feelings that might only be described as a mild sense of guilt about having an expensive instrument that they weren't using. Susan reiterated this notion when she said, "...I've got this beautiful piano and when your husband says [that he is] going to have it restrung and...refinished, you feel a certain sense of obligation to be able to play and to play it well" (p. 103). Along the same vein of emotional obligation due to family commitments, Rebecca noted wistfully, "I thought that Mother would have been pleased to know that I started [piano] again. She would occasionally mention about the money that she had spent on lessons and how I hadn't done anything with the piano" (p. 68).

Intensity Toward Learning

It was noted that while all of the participants in this study could be defined as lifelong learners, those who chose to take private lessons exhibited a greater degree of intensity toward learning new musical techniques and a determination to succeed at piano despite the constant struggles. Ted emphatically stated that he "come[s] away [from my lessons] with a great sense of frustration because I wish I had done better, every time... What I bring to my piano study is probably the determination to see something through" (p. 81) In addition to the greater financial investment, or perhaps partially because of it, there was a greater

personal investment noted among the private students. Putting oneself on the line by playing for a teacher on a regular basis may also be cited as a plausible reason for the greater emotional investment on the part of those engaged in private piano study.

Need for Regular Lesson Routine and Motivation

All participants in this study noted the need for a regular lesson routine in terms of motivation for practice and for the achievement of their underlying goals. Martha said of her group lessons, "I will practice at home if I am taking classes" (pp. 162-3). All felt that playing the piano kept both their mind and body active. Rebecca stated, "I think I need something to stimulate my brain...Piano is just a way to stay active" (p. 67). Figure 4 refers to the most common factors cited for motivation to continue with piano study. A comparison between the private and group cases, in terms of the importance of these motivational factors, is represented below in figure 4. Although duets were not cited as a main reason for continuing with piano lessons, playing duets motivated both the private and group students to practice more.

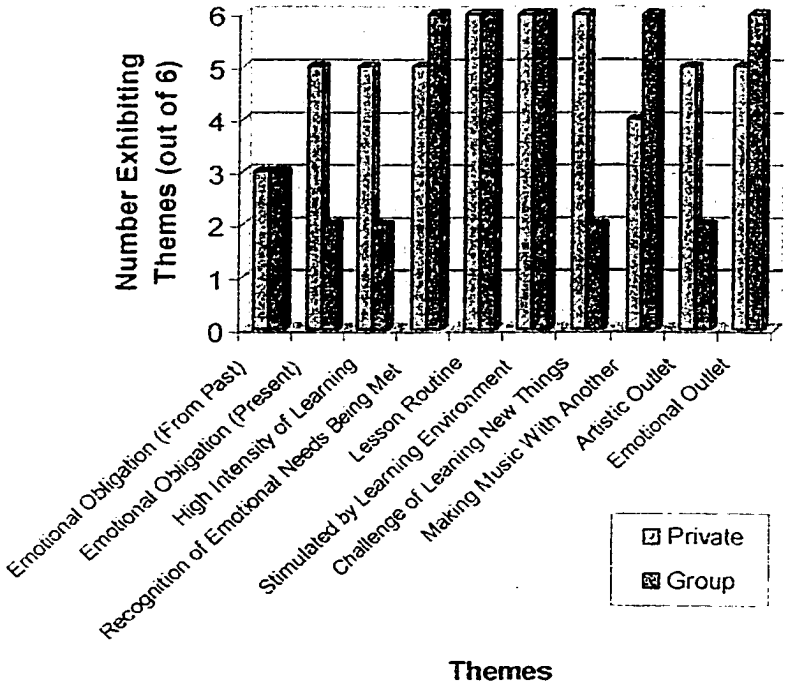
Social Benefits

It also became apparent that the social benefits of piano lessons, including the one-on-one interaction with the teacher in private lessons, were numerous. Patti spoke in depth about how she continued with piano lessons even when she was undergoing chemo-therapy; "I never felt uncomfortable going...for a lesson, ever. Even when I was sick...We kind of treat lessons like social time" (p. 99).

Vanessa astutely noted, "whether you come in for a lesson with a teacher or the group, it is a social thing" (p. 159).

However, the students who participated in the piano class articulated a greater awareness of the social aspect of piano study. The group participants also ranked the social benefits of piano much higher on their list of priorities. All of the participants interviewed for this dissertation clearly enjoyed their learning environments and felt stimulated by them.

Figure 4. Motivation for Continuing with Adult Piano Lessons.

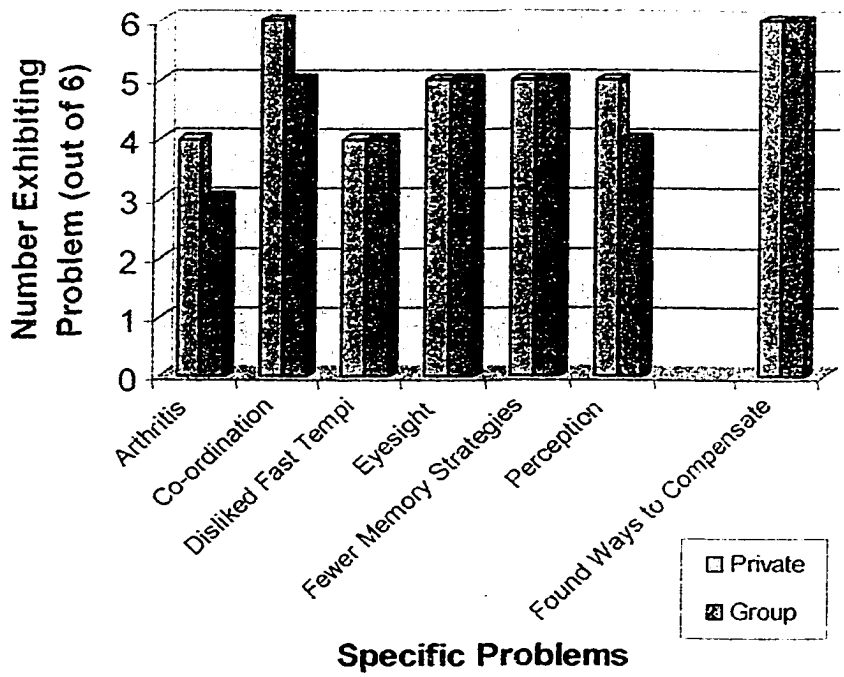


Age-Related Problems and Compensation

Most of the participants expressed concern over coordination issues and numerous perception problems were noted during lesson observations. Beyond the normal coordination and perception problems associated with playing the piano, some of these problems were clearly exacerbated by issues surrounding advancing age such as eyesight problems, arthritis, and less accessible memory techniques and strategies. As a result, the participants overwhelmingly shied away from fast pieces and apparently if faced with playing a lively tune, derived pleasure from playing such a piece at a slow tempo even if that tempo was stylistically incorrect. While discussing her repertoire Martha wryly pointed out that "as you get older you play it the way you want to" (p. 162). It was noted that all of the participants had found ways to compensate for the particular problems

that they experienced as a result of their age. All shared a determination to keep playing into their third age for as long as they could. Figure 5 shows some of the more common learning issues and problems, noted during the course of this research study, that were associated with age. The final column on the right-hand side of the chart in figure 5 demonstrates how likely the participants in this study were to find methods of compensating for age-related problems that they experienced. Because compensation for cognitive loss is not an age-related problem, the researcher has chosen to separate this particular column from the others for clarity in figure 5.

Figure 5. Learning Issues and Problems Associated with Age.



Perception About Capabilities at the Keyboard

There was a sense among those participants who did not begin piano until they were adults that those who had studied piano as children were better players. This sentiment existed even if several decades had elapsed where the latter group had not even touched an instrument. Patti said "but [Susan] took [lessons] as a child and she knows how to play and she plays really well" (p. 85). Nancy perceived that "Betty is more comfortable playing in front of other people than I am because she did that whole recital routine [when she was a child]" (p. 120). Betty, however, confessed about her experience of performing at the piano parties, "I'm as nervous as I'll get out, but I think it is good for me to have to do this" (pp. 134-5).

Similarly, those who had studied piano as children displayed more confidence when discussing their experiences at the keyboard. Susan was wrestling with the issue of lack of progress, as she defined it, when she expressed that she really wasn't being challenged enough by the music that her teacher assigned for her. She said "I don't find [these pieces] challenging. Maybe it's because I started in book one whereas I should have started in book three or something" (p. 107). In reality, the researcher observed that she was playing music appropriately suited to her technical and musical abilities. All of the participants were playing at similar grade levels and appeared to be similarly at ease during lessons. All of the students demonstrated similar technical competency and illustrated similar problems or issues at the keyboard. It was noted that the majority of participants who had studied piano in their youth were more likely to have exhibited an inflated sense of what they were able to accomplish at the piano, than their peers who began piano study as adults.

Duets

Every student who played duets with their peers identified staying together (which they called "counting" or "timing") as the greatest musical challenge presented ensemble music. Duets also seemed to be motivational in the sense that one had to have their part prepared before they played with another individual.

Personal Motivation

None of those interviewed for this study suggested that they experienced a particular need to play for their spouses or for their family members, unless they had prepared a piece especially for someone special in their life. Numerous

participants expressed that piano helped them to maintain their own identity, separate from their spouse, and that playing the piano was a deeply personal experience. Piano was something that they each did for themselves and for no one else. Martha said "I have continued with piano class for 12 years now, I just enjoy it...I'm doing it for me" (p. 160).

Musical Expression

Lack of dynamic contrast and musical expression were commonly observed across all of the cases. Alexandra, like most in her class, spoke for the entire group when she said, "my teacher really has to help me with the dynamics. That is something I didn't really have a good background in...But I think almost everybody in class has to work on that...I was too interested in getting my notes right and the timing" (p. 150).

Perceived Goals

The final and most surprising theme was that participants unequivocally stated that they had no particular goals concerning their piano studies. They also claimed that they did not believe that their life experiences affected their playing. They often reiterated this statement after they had spent an hour or more discussing their experiences and aspirations for keyboard study during the interview.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

Once the themes had been identified within and across the cases, the researcher analyzed the meaning that evolved from the common trends. What follows is an interpretation of the data and of the trends noted upon completion of this research study. Seidman (1998) stated that:

> it is tempting to let the profiles and the catergori[es] ... speak for themselves. But another step is appropriate. Researchers must ask themselves what they have learned from doing the interviews, studying the transcripts, marking and labeling them, crafting profiles, and organizing categories (p. 110).

Where possible, the interpretation has been related to the existing theory which was presented in the related literature chapter of this paper. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) stated that:

> Different theoretical perspectives that researchers hold shape how they consider, and make sense out of the data ... When we do analysis we are usually part of a dialogue about the topic we consider ... Therefore, we may analyze and code against another way of considering our topic to which we object ... Theory helps us to work through the contradictions we learn about. And contradictions take us deeper into the important parts of our data and expand theory (pp. 177-181).

It is worth noting that several of the students (Alexandra and Vanessa) who were participating in the group piano class were also regularly enrolled in private lessons. Themes emerging from the discussions about their private lesson experiences corresponded with trends found among those who were engaged in private study only. It became apparent that some of the additional trends noted

only in the group-participant data filled other social needs that were not being met elsewhere for these particular students. Thus, it was to the advantage of Alexandra and Vanessa to participate in both group and private lessons simultaneously at various times throughout the year.

Goals and Life Experiences

Perhaps one of the most unexpected recurring themes that emerged from the data was the fact that the participants consistently stated that they had no goals where their piano studies and lessons were concerned. This issue was most troubling because it seemed clear from the conversations that these particular people were highly motivated in every aspect of their lives, including piano. Throughout the interviews they were encouraged to discuss their goals even though the subject of goals was often couched behind other questions. These participants clearly felt that they did not have specific goals, nor could they articulate any specific desires where their piano studies were concerned. The fact that these participants did not readily acknowledge their goals contradicts Meyer's (1992) conclusion that the goals of adults are more clearly established than those of children.

After lengthy discussions that explored various aspects of their piano study however, all of the participants expressed their desires, even though they had not initially identified these desires as goals when they were asked directly about them. They all clearly enjoyed the process of learning music and of refining their piano technique. The participants also encountered numerous struggles and

obstacles on their journey of piano study. Yet, each participant derived some sort of meaning from the frustration and the struggles that they experienced.

It was also surprising that 100 percent of the participants initially responded that they did not bring any of their life experiences to their playing. Upon asking more in-depth questions it was apparent that their previous musical and general learning experiences did have an impact upon how they practiced, played, performed, and expressed themselves through their music. Yet, not one of the students recognized that fact. Even after discussing many of these details throughout the course of the interviews, they still arrived at the same conclusion (when prompted again) by stating that their life experiences did not have any bearing on their piano playing.

The vast majority of the piano students interviewed for this study also believed that their life experiences in no way influenced their playing or interpretation at the piano. Ernst and Emmons' (1992) supposition that the life experiences that adults brought to the learning environment would result in a deeper level of musical interpretation was noted to be the case in this research. The piano teachers who taught these students noted that these adults were often more concerned with technical issues such as co-ordination between the hands and playing all of the correct notes and rhythms, rather than with the interpretive aspects of their music. In fact, when asked about what they found to be most difficult when trying to master a piece of music the initial response of many of the participants highlighted their technical concerns. Further discussion, however,

always revealed that these piano students were very aware of the emotional qualities of their pieces.

One might speculate that even though the emotion did not always come across in their performances or during their lessons, they were able to tap into those qualities while practicing at home. True, these students may not ever achieve the mastery of projecting musical expression and emotion or the nuance of executing a musical phrase. However, it is clear (from the observations and discussions) that those musical qualities do not necessarily have to be audible to the listener or audience, for that emotion to be experienced by the older pianist.

Educators are keenly aware that every student brings the sum of their life experiences with them into the learning environment. Music has the power to express emotions that often transcend speech and language. It might be hypothesized that the older adult, who brings years of rich life experience into the piano lesson, would be aware of how those personal experiences affect their playing. That was not the case with these particular participants.

The issue of goals and life experiences are closely related in that motivation for continued piano study and the attachment to certain repertoire is very complex. In fact, life experiences, past learning experiences, and emotional issues are all at play as the student forms their personal goals. Simply pursuing piano as a form of therapy, to process various emotions, to heal past relationships, or to improve skills and keep the mind stimulated are all acceptable reasons for someone to study piano. This is especially true for adults who are 55 and older. The interview data revealed that these were the most common reasons that

participants in this study engaged in piano lessons. This finding also refutes Rutland's (1986) claim that adults pursue piano study for more substantial reasons than personal growth and satisfaction. The data from this study revealed that those are, in fact, very substantial and justifiable reasons for pursuing piano study during the third age. Because the teachers of these students had astutely identified their students' goals, they were able to create a learning environment that fulfilled each student's needs and stimulated each participant to learn. In the case of the group piano students, all shared similar needs in terms of the social support or emotional outlet which is why the class was successful. One can surmise that those whose musical or emotional needs were not being met within the constraints of that particular class either dropped out or chose more suitable venues to pursue their piano studies. All of the participants had been engaged in piano lessons for several semesters prior to the commencement of this study. All said that they would continue with their lessons in the future. This finding supports Graessle's (1998) claim that continuing education programs were considered to be successful if the students' needs were met. The fact that the students in this study continued with their piano lessons and planned on continuing with their studies in the future demonstrated that their needs were being met adequately by their teachers.

After observing lessons and talking with students it must be suggested that their previous life experiences did affect their playing. In fact, for the participants in this study, it was noted that those students who had taken piano lessons as children were much more comfortable playing for others and were more confident in their abilities than those who began their piano studies as adults. It might be

speculated that if one had endured a bad childhood experience at the piano, that individual would not be as comfortable as an adult piano student. Perhaps, those who suffered negative experiences as children hesitate to return to piano as adults. If this is true, creating positive childhood experiences at the keyboard is even more crucial. It was noted that those who had experience at the piano as children felt more confident about their own abilities. Upon observing the lessons, reviewing the video tapes, and talking with the teachers however, it was noted that these students were not necessarily any more advanced than their counterparts who did not study piano in their youth. Yet, there certainly was a sense of returning to something familiar and manageable expressed by this group of returning adults. Many of them also spoke about reacquiring skills and getting as good as they had been in their youth. Without any concrete evidence, such as audio recordings from their childhood, one can not be certain if these people were actually as skilled in their youth as they remember. Adult students also come to their lessons with many more life experiences and expectations than they did as children, which the majority of these students failed to recognize. Teachers must be ever vigilant, however, and recognize how such experiences and expectations might effect a student's learning and progress at the keyboard.

Definition of Success and Progress

It was also interesting to note that these adults did not initially measure their progress or success in terms of musical performances that exhibited sophisticated interpretation. Rather, success seemed to be measured by perceived difficulty of the notes and the rhythms and by how well those technical aspects

were executed. Only by asking more thought-provoking questions during the interviews did the participants reveal that they understood, on an intellectual level, that there was just as much value in playing a piece that is musically sophisticated, rather than just technically complex. Success was almost always measured in terms of the aforementioned degree of perceived technical difficulty by these students, rather than by the degree of musical sophistication required to execute the work.

How hard one has worked also seemed to be a common measure of progress, rather than the musical aesthetic result among these older students. These adults expected to work hard. They did not expect short cuts, though they appreciated their teacher's helpful suggestions. However, it was the struggle before achieving their goal that was meaningful to them. Orlofsky and Smith's (1997) supposition that older adults were eager to learn and likely to be oriented toward the completion of specific goals was demonstrated in this study. Those students who had more investment in their piano study also expected a greater struggle and appreciated it more. For example, the majority of the group piano participants clearly viewed piano as little more than a social activity. While the private piano students also valued the social aspect of piano study, this was not what they initially articulated. They were more interested in their technical aspirations and musical achievements than in the social interaction. This age group grew up as part of a generation where ethics about hard work were instilled from youth and many spoke of this. It will be interesting to note the changes or

similarities in the work ethics of future generations as they reach retirement age and invest in piano study.

The group participants placed a greater emphasis on and enjoyed the shared musical and social experience that the class offered them. Because this particular group had been together for so long, friendships had formed and members witnessed their friends experiencing life events, such as deaths and illnesses, similar to their own. This particular class environment also enabled students to revisit and discuss events from their youth. Educational gerontologists claim that this practice is healthy and important as people age. Laura said, "we discuss a lot of things that we did as kids in this class which is really interesting. We found out how the others [in the class] grew up and stuff, so it's been really kind of interesting" (p. 146). Demonstrating musical progress at the keyboard clearly was not the primary motivation of these particular group piano students. Playing with others in class was a wholly satisfying activity for the group participants.

Emotional and Financial Investment

It must also be reiterated that the group classes at the community college were very reasonably priced and geared toward fixed income seniors who would enjoy the social and mental activity but not be able to afford or commit to private lessons. Many of the participants in this study who studied piano privately signed year-long contracts with their teacher and all paid substantially more money (though the rates were still at a fair market price) for private piano lessons. Just

the mere financial investment probably accounts for the greater emotional and personal investment in their pianistic pursuits.

All of the group participants were pleased with what they were learning and with the pace of the class. All cited the wide variety of repertoire presented during the class as a source of pleasure and enjoyment. This finding supports Darrough's (1992) assertion that older students should be presented with a wide variety of repertoire. The diverse musical interests of this particular group seemed to be satisfied by the wide assortment of music studied in the class.

Social Benefits

Clearly, the social aspect was an important element but not consciously the one that was of primary importance for most of the private students. The teachers, however, unequivocally stated that the social interaction seemed to be very important for all of their students. Admittedly, those students who had thought about their piano lessons recognized that the social interaction between teacher and student or between themselves and other piano students was important. While measuring levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Tims, 1999) felt by the participants was beyond the scope of this dissertation, the group students and some of the private students (Patti, Nancy, and Betty) expressed the social benefits that arose from their participation in piano study.

Meeting the Students' Needs

It was also interesting that the majority of the study participants had not thought about their experience of piano lessons in any depth prior to these

interviews. At some point they had to make a decision to continue with their lessons. This would seemingly be a decision that would take a lot of thought and consideration due to the large drain on finances (especially for those taking private lessons), to the huge time commitment, and due to the fact that they put themselves on the line every time they played for their teacher or in front of other students. Undoubtably these issues were considered and weighed carefully by each of these participants each year when they made the commitment to continue with another semester of piano instruction. However, these issues did not surface during the interviews until more probing and thought-provoking questions were asked. Since their needs were being met, it was likely that many of the participants had not thought about some of these issues. Conda (1997) noted that piano study was perceived as a successful activity if one's needs were adequately met.

Emotional Benefits

It was also astounding that such an intensely personal experience such as sharing the emotional elements of oneself through the music had not been explored by many of the piano students interviewed for this study. Again, it was clear that piano study and practice was filling an emotional need for them, but the data revealed that unless one had been through a life altering experience or stressor while taking piano lessons, these participants had not addressed the role of piano or music in their own lives. Those who had been through life changing experiences, such as the participant who was a cancer survivor, could easily articulate the emotional space that piano filled in their lives. Even though most of

the students could not articulate the emotional space that piano and music filled in their lives, five of the study participants expressed a keen knowledge of this fact. Perhaps there was no need to articulate in words the emotional space that piano filled because it was meeting the emotional and aesthetic needs of the individuals in ways that transcend language.

It is worth noting that these were the same students who were struggling with how they defined their progress. While all of the study participants grew up believing that progress was measured in terms of advancing from one level in a method book to the next, those who recognized that piano filled emotional spaces were becoming increasingly aware of how they needed to make more of the expressive qualities of their piano music. These particular participants (Patti, Nancy, Betty, Alexandra, and Vanessa) exhibited traits that support interactionist learning theories. These participants were availing of their educational experiences at the piano to strive for "growth enhancing cognitive experiences" that their teachers facilitated (Cross, 1984, p. 229). These students were exhibiting what andragogues such as Cross advocated as one of the most important benefits of adult education. The events that were taking place for the aforementioned participants in their learning environments illustrated Petterson's (1990) assertion that "education is different from learning" (p.1).

Many of the students observed during the course of this study were not expressing themselves terribly well through the music. Rather, they were simply playing the notes and gaining pleasure from having surmounted the technical obstacles that a piece presented. It may be that they did not need to exude the

emotional meaning or musical qualities to others since they were playing for themselves. The obvious joy that these students gained from merely conquering the technical challenges of a given piece should not be underplayed. It is plausible that this feat alone may be adequate for those students who also gain the benefit of social interaction, mastering techniques that may be physically challenging or painful due to age-related conditions, and the mental stimulation of playing the piano on a daily basis.

Appreciation of Professional Musicians

Another surprising and unanticipated theme was the notion that the private piano students involved with this study were more appreciative of concert pianists that they heard in recitals and on recordings. In addition, they consistently noted that they were in awe of the genius that the master composers. This comment was made by 75% of the participants and was most unexpected. The teachers were also unaware that their students recognized the talent and skill of composers and performers. Each of the teachers noted that the majority of the students did not enjoy theory, nor did they incorporate or integrate theory that had been studied into their playing. Yet, the comment about the genius of the master composers demonstrates at least an elementary understanding and appreciation of basic theoretical aspects. It may also exhibit that these students understood how difficult theoretical concepts are and appreciated how difficult it might be to master music theory. It also demonstrates that the participants understood (at least intellectually) how music must be conceived of in an abstract form, or audiated, before it can be written down or performed.

Musical Expression (Actual and Perceived)

Observations and discussions with these leisure piano students suggested that they had strong opinions about how a particular piece of music should sound. Even if they didn't execute some of the more refined musical gestures, they did have some sort of sound ideal in mind as they practiced their music. Lesson observations and talking with the teachers revealed that those students who could articulate clearly and describe the emotional spaces that the piano filled for them were also the students who more often exhibited musical expression in their playing.

It also became quite clear that the participants who studied piano privately had a very strong sense of what Edwin Gordon refers to as audiation. One could surmise that part of the frustration of several of these students stemmed from the fact that they could not reproduce, at the piano, the music that they heard in their heads. Concerns about the variance between what they "heard" and the sounds that they actually produced at the keyboard surfaced as issues for these private students. This is probably why the students who taped their lessons did not listen to their tapes. It was too depressing to them because the disparity between what they wanted to play and what they actually played was too great. If that is the case, what they hear when they play is not what we hear as an audience or as teachers of older adults. It is suspected that these individuals felt that they were producing much more musical sounds than they actually were. It is perhaps not that they did not care about the musical interpretation, as the teachers suspected, but that they were listening for what they wanted to hear and not necessarily to

the sounds that they were actually producing at the keyboard. It is possible that they were filling in sounds or musical gestures in their head as they played, just as the mind can easily fill in letters missing from a word while one is reading. This phenomenon may explain why these people were getting such enjoyment out of practicing, even if we, as musicians and educators, did not perceive of what they were playing as being musical!

At the same time, these particular students always performed their pieces much better and by their own admission enjoyed playing the music a great deal more if they "knew" the piece well. It wasn't just familiarity with the music, but they really knew how it should sound; they could hear it in their heads. They had a sound ideal in mind. It stands to reason that if they knew what they wanted to achieve, they would have a much more fulfilling experience than if they didn't know what they were aiming for. This experience would be like looking for a needle in a hay stack and understandably would not be either enjoyable or fulfilling. Patti articulated this nicely when she said that she did not like playing arrangements of Broadway music or of musicals because it did not sound right or full enough on the piano. This is a very astute observation on her part. Patti grew up attending concerts and listening to band and orchestral music in her community. Her comments support Darrough's (1992) claim that the current third-age population is musically literate because of the musical education experiences that they encountered while they were in school.

Patti's comment is balanced by Susan who didn't have the same sound ideal, in terms of tone colour. Rather, she was more interested in the melodic line

and with the memories or associations that arose from particular pieces of music. It is worth noting that Susan had childhood experiences with music and that Patti didn't have any childhood music experiences. Similarly, Nancy who did not study piano for more than three lessons as an eight-year old, was very aware of the tone colour and appreciated having recordings of her teacher performing the music that she was learning. Betty, on the other hand, enjoyed playing easy versions of pieces that she either remembered from childhood or that her Aunt or daughter had played. The emotional connection between music and her relatives and memories seemed to hold great meaning for her. Betty recognized that these arrangements were easy, and even apologized for not being up to the task of playing the more difficult versions of the repertoire, but was beginning to accept her level of technical mastery. Her acceptance of this was noted to be more a feeling of resignation. She seemed, however, to have found a way of making peace with her technical limitations. Likely her teacher's approach, which included optimism and fresh presentation of integral concepts, contributed greatly to this acceptance. Naturally teachers must be aware of these sorts of variances in preferences among all of their students. Teachers of older adults need to be very flexible about using arrangements, simplified music, and the like with this age group. Even though one does not want to compromise on the quality of the music, the instructor must seek to musically satisfy each student.

Finally, every student who was enrolled in piano class maintained a high degree of rhythmic accuracy. Such rhythmic success was not identified as a universal trait among the private cases. It might be suggested that because of the

very nature of the piano class, where much of the playing was done out loud, playing the same music together, mastery of counting and rhythm would be crucial to ensure success in the class. Thus, this technical aspect would be one of the first issues that participants in this class would have addressed as they practiced their music. Careful and thoughtful pairing of duet partners among those private students who participated in duets resulted in a similar outcome for the private cases in this study. Teachers might note this phenomenon and find creative ways to achieve positive rhythmic accuracy results which were shown to be a reasonable outcome of class piano instruction.

Slowing Progress with Increased Age

The teachers interviewed for this dissertation noted that even though their older students took longer to complete tasks, they still possessed the cognitive abilities to cope with learning. That idea supports Verduin and McEwen's (1954) decades-old assertion to that effect. Her teacher noted that Betty had slowed down with age. Ted's teacher had also noted a similar phenomenon over the years that they had worked together. It is worth noting that out of all of the private students interviewed during the course of this study, Betty and Ted were the oldest students and had taken lessons with their teachers for the greatest amount of time. Parr and Mercier (1998) found that the judgement of those with an average age of 70.64 years was slower if stimuli were presented in quick succession. They postulated that the decrease in processing speed was due to less available working memory in older adults. Ted and Betty were aware of their slowed processing speed. While expressing recognition of their gradual decline, however, they made

it clear that they were choosing to fight against it and continue in their pursuit of piano for as long as possible. This may be the attitude of many lifelong learners and the spirit that has served these two participants well thus far in their lives.

Perfect and Dasgupta (1997) demonstrated that older people used less elaborate encoding strategies when presented with new information. They also found that people were able to compensate for these deficiencies. All of the participants in this dissertation study were actively engaged in compensating for losses, associated with the normal aging process, that effected their playing. Schacter, Israel, and Racine (1999) found that using a dual mode of presentation helped older people encode new information in a way that made it retrievable. The participants interviewed for this study confirmed that if they had several modes (visual and auditory) of learning new music they tended to be more successful with their endeavors.

Teachers must be cognizant of this gradual physical and mental decline, associated with the normal aging process, and present their students with new challenges that are still adequately physically and mentally stimulating yet not too overwhelming. These pieces must also represent a challenge to the students (in a way that is meaningful to the particular student), however, frustration may occur more readily due to slower mental and physical reaction time on the part of the aging piano student. While these students may have slowed down, they are still intelligent and aware of patronizing behavior toward them on the part of their teachers. Several of the participants were highly offended when their teacher

assigned music that they had worked on in their youth and, in their estimate, had progressed beyond in their earlier piano studies.

The findings of Intons-Peterson et al (1999) regarding morning as the optimal time of day for senior citizens to pursue activities involving cognitive function was noted among the participants in this study. All of the participants in this study stated that they preferred to practice in the morning before they were too physically or mentally exhausted. Most of the students interviewed for this study were also able to schedule their lessons either in the morning or at a time of day in which they were able to function efficiently.

Ideal Teacher for Leisure Piano Students

Of no surprise was the fact that the most important quality on a teacher of adult piano students is flexibility. An honest appraisal of the student's performance during the lesson was also found to be critical, but positive feedback was appreciated. Surprisingly, the positive feedback was often unanticipated by these students. Other ideal features of a piano teacher were discussed. As expected, each student had different ideas of what constituted the ideal teacher. Depending upon a student's strengths or weakness, their likes and dislikes, such features as a good sight reader, good accompanist, motivator, and overall well-rounded musician were offered as important. These participants also appreciated a teacher who was aware of their other commitments in life. They noted that a teacher who was married and responsible for a family was more likely to be aware of their different priorities, as opposed to a teacher who was married to their career. While how the teacher balanced the demands of her lifestyle was probably

completely based on supposition on the part of the student, the perception was that a married teacher was more receptive to the different priorities of the older adult piano student than an unmarried piano teacher. This is an observation worth noting if one teaches older adults. Perhaps teachers need to articulate the struggles that they all face, whether married or not, in terms of balancing a career with a well-adjusted, peaceful, well-balanced lifestyle. Being understood was extremely important to these particular students. Perhaps it is important to all older adults and the fact that these students have continued with their lessons for an extended period of time demonstrates that their teachers have been receptive to their individual needs. That is what makes the findings of this case study important. Even though one can not necessarily generalize the results of a phenomenological study to all older piano students, the awareness of student's needs, the ways in which those needs are both discerned and addressed, and the satisfaction level of these particular students is not an accident. It is the result of very astute teaching and of high level communication between pupil and tutor and of a great deal of flexibility on the part of the teacher.

Summary

Although there were some similar themes common to both those studying group and private piano, significant differences between the cases were also noted. In general, those who were best suited to group instruction (and thus met with the greatest success in the class setting) had previous childhood experience at the piano. These particular individuals were not looking to improve their skills as much as they were simply interested in exercising their current piano skills on a

weekly basis. Additionally, piano class was more likely to be viewed as a social activity and an emotional outlet rather than as an artistic endeavor.

Clearly, the shared experience of making music together in class was enjoyable and more meaningful for these students than surmounting various technical challenges at the keyboard. The notion of progress, a major issue with the private students in this study, did not even surface with the group case. This was due partly to the fact that they were enrolled in the advanced piano class and they truly perceived themselves as advanced pianists. They also continued to find mental stimulation in piano class through new things that they would learn and due to the variety of music with which they were introduced during the semester.

The priority of needs, in order of importance, for the group cases were social, emotional, and finally educational. These desires were being met adequately by the continuing education group senior classes. The private lesson cases placed more emphasis on their educational and emotional needs than they did on their social requirements. Their social needs, however, were also met during the weekly private lesson, duet rehearsals, and informal performance parties. While few of the private participants initially discussed their social needs, the social experience associated with piano lessons did surface as being important to these people. Educators must be aware of the different prioritization that students assign to these three basic needs and thus recommend either group or private instruction accordingly.

It was also noted that the four key felicitous outcomes that occurred as a result of the performance opportunities offered to private students included the

motivational aspect of the experience, the opportunity for camaraderie with peers who were sharing a similar experience, a chance to compare oneself to others (which may help to measure one's progress or success), and a chance to hear a variety of music. These same four areas surfaced as issues that were addressed during group piano lessons. This fact may be the strongest evidence in this study that suggests why offering non-threatening performance opportunities to private students is of great importance.

Finally, those students who studied piano privately exhibited a higher degree of intensity and commitment toward their piano endeavors. The fact that data from two of the group participants who also took private lessons corroborated this evidence is encouraging. These individuals recognized that their additional needs could be met with individual piano lessons. Their discussions highlighted differences between the group and private piano experiences. Their thoughts on private lessons also closely parallel those of the participants that were solely engaged in private piano study.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

Just as each participant was treated as an individual case for the purposes of this study, teachers must assess the unique needs and goals of each of their older piano students. If students choose a group setting as the vehicle for their piano instruction, the abilities of each participant should be similar. The teacher should also be aware of the social needs that will need to be met for those participating in such a group and facilitate meeting those needs as much as possible.

Teachers of private students should create opportunities that might fulfill the social needs especially through the opportunities that non-threatening music-making with peers may offer. Opportunities for duets and ensemble music should be invited on a regular basis. The teacher must pair or group students carefully. It is clear that the great success enjoyed by the participants in this study who played duets was due to the thoughtful partnerships that the teacher had facilitated. She paired together individuals who complemented each other both in terms of personality and musical strengths and weaknesses. The weekly coaching at the lessons also ensured success by encouraging a commitment to consistent practice by each pair as well as offering consistent professional feedback.

In addition, the opportunity to perform for one another in a non-threatening, informal environment must not be underplayed. Even just attending without performing offered social and educational benefits to those who chose to

attend. It has been demonstrated in this study that those who chose to perform a solo or a duet at these informal gatherings reaped untold benefits from the experience. Positive outcomes ranged from a sense of personal satisfaction, pride, and accomplishment, to overcoming their fears, succeeding and meeting personal goals, or offering a new found piece that others in the group might like to learn. Of course, the discussions and food afterward were also important.

While individual students wish to be challenged to varying degrees and demonstrate a vast array of musical aspirations, in general older students without a great deal of piano background sought music that wasn't too long, rhythmically complex, or intimidating. Yet, they wanted to learn music that was substantive and worth the effort. They expressed a desire to play music that sounded appealing without excessive dissonance and that didn't have unreasonably fast tempi. Teachers should be cognizant of the fact that editions of music often vary greatly and great care should be taken to select the most appropriate edition of a particular piece for each student.

While the private students interviewed for this study had very strong opinions about what they wanted to learn, it should be reiterated that they still required and appreciated the guidance of their accomplished teachers. More than simply wanting the structure of a regular lesson for motivation, they required the feedback and guidance that they received during each instructional period. Teachers then, must assess the perceived needs and goals of their older students and balance those with the desires that the student has articulated. Keeping the lines of communication open encourages students to express their needs and

concerns without feeling intimidated. Yet, the teacher is the expert and must provide the needed guidance in a way that is acceptable and flexible for both the student and the teacher. While this balancing act can be treacherous at worst, at best it can facilitate one of the most rewarding learning relationships where both the teacher and the older, leisure piano student make and share music in a stimulating learning environment.

The findings of this study demonstrate the different hierarchy of priorities between the private and the group cases. Private students place greater emphasis on their educational and emotional needs, even though the social aspect is still important. For the group participants in this study, the fellowship or social event of making music with others was slightly more important than the educational aspect. The emotional needs that were being met were important for both of the cases examined in this study.

Teachers must become aware of how to assess the aforementioned needs when auditioning or interviewing potential leisure-age piano students. Encouraging a student to participate in either group or private lessons, depending on their personal needs will ensure a more positive and enjoyable experience for both the student and the teacher. Teachers must also be aware of the different options that senior citizens and third-age students have for instruction in their particular geographical area. If a teacher is not equipped or inclined to offer both class and private instruction, viable options for potential students must be available elsewhere.

Teacher flexibility is a primary consideration when working with this particular age group. Health and family issues may arise and even occasionally interfere with regular piano study. The participants in this study demonstrated that they wished to continue with their piano lessons for as long as possible. The teachers who explored viable options such as bi-weekly lessons or paying on a lesson-by-lesson basis during times of serious illness permitted their students to pursue something that was obviously a much needed emotional outlet during times of great stress. The relaxed atmosphere and reasonable tuition in the group class studied enabled students to miss classes when family and personal commitments arose, yet still return to the group and continue to participate in the music making and the camaraderie.

The role that non-threatening performance opportunities provided for the private students in this study was most unexpected. Data from this study demonstrates that there were four key needs that this environment helped the students meet. Those needs include motivation, camaraderie, an opportunity to measure relative success, and exposure to great music. Duets and ensemble experiences also offered the same benefits on a more frequent and consistent basis. The added benefit of making music with another was both socially and emotionally meaningful for many students.

Naturally, teachers must be vigilant whenever they place students in an environment where there is a potential to compare oneself to another. Careful preparation for such events, as well as reconditioning students to place an emphasis on different values can thwart any negative effects that such experiences

may have on students. It was clear that the group participants believed that musical dynamics were important, even though few dynamics were displayed during the observation period. Obviously, these students believed their teacher when she stressed to them the importance of dynamics in musical expression.

Similarly, several of the private students who had been wrestling with the issue of their progress and how they should define it, were also coming under the positive influence of their teachers. These participants were beginning to understand the importance of musicality, musical gesture, and nuance in their playing. Several students were even starting to view these traits as benchmarks of their progress. This positive shift in attitudes was certainly an outcome of groundwork that had been carefully laid by their teachers. The participants' new found philosophy about their playing allowed them to measure their success more accurately, especially in light of the performance of their peers at musical gatherings and when playing ensemble music.

As the percentage of the population over the age of 55 increases, piano teachers will be confronted with more educated senior adults who wish to return to piano or begin music lessons for a myriad of reasons. Educators who are interested in working with and learning from this age group must begin to offer classes and private lessons that will adequately address the needs and goals of this particular population.

In addition to understanding how to assess the needs and goals of piano students who fall into this category, teachers must be flexible and creative enough to adapt to each individual's normal physical and mental decline as they age. The

participants in this study demonstrated their ability to compensate for losses and declines associated with the normal aging process. Teachers must be aware of age-related problems that might be encountered by these students and suggest possible strategies that will eliminate unnecessary frustration on the part of the older piano student. While the struggle to learn can be meaningful for the student. physical struggles related to arthritis, eye sight, or memory can be infuriating and demoralizing for these students. Thus, teachers must be cognizant of concerns over tempi, perception problems, and co-ordination issues as they choose repertoire and editions of music. Teachers must also provide their older students with learning strategies that facilitate the making of enjoyable music at the keyboard.

Even though the thrust of this study was to examine the experience of piano study from the perspective of the older student, discussions with the teachers revealed that they were also lifelong learners in their educational encounters with their leisure piano students. While teaching this particular age group meant that the teachers had to exhibit an extra degree of flexibility and create unique learning opportunities, it was clear that the teachers also reaped untold benefits from working with this extraordinary group of piano students either in the private or group lesson.

Suggestions for Further Research

Now that some of the fundamental ideas about goals, concerns, and issues of these particular participants have been explored in relation to their experience of piano study as an adult over the age of 55, other questions inevitably arise. The

following questions are areas that may be explored by future researchers in order to comprehend more fully how the experience of leisure piano study might be enhanced. The suggestions for future research follow:

1) Extensive studies that explore the emotional role that the piano plays in the lives of older men and women need to be undertaken. Researchers should also attempt to discover if there are fundamental differences between the sexes (since only one male participated in this study) with regard to the emotional role that piano study can play in the lives of senior citizens.
2) Researchers might explore whether certain people, with specific personality traits, are predisposed to either private or group piano study.
3) Additional studies exploring group dynamics of piano classes should be undertaken. Perhaps the group studied here truly was unique because so many of the students had been members of this class for such a long period of time.
4) More research should be conducted that explores other options for facilitating meaningful performance opportunities that will satisfy the emotional and social needs of leisure piano students.
5) More research into the retardation of musical progress as a result of the normal decline in physical and cognitive function associated with the normal aging process should be studied. Future research may help educators understand how to help older students learn effectively at the piano.
6) Research that explores perception problems common among the aging population should be undertaken so that suitable large-print editions with

uncluttered notation and music texts may be developed for older piano students, including duet books and solo repertoire series.

7) More expansive studies that survey the social and educational needs and goals of the older population should be undertaken so that the findings may be generalized to the majority of the third-aged population. Then, suitable curricula for older adult classes or group piano lessons that meet both social and educational needs of the population should be developed.
8) Long-term studies should investigate whether or not many of the traits observed in the current study hold true for adults of subsequent generations as they reach retirement age.

Significance of This Study

Although the results of this phenomenological case study can not be generalized to the majority of the third-age population, several of the findings are significant. Themes that emerged from the profiles of each of the students who participated in this study suggested that these adult students could neither succinctly articulate their goals, nor did they have a clear idea about how their learning at the piano should progress. These findings contradict many of the adult learning theories that have been accepted by educators for decades.

It was also significant that regular performance opportunities with peers, whether those opportunities were merely playing out loud in class or in an informal gathering at a teacher's house, provided several important benefits to the students. The performance opportunities were motivational, they provided an opportunity for camaraderie with peers who were sharing a similar experience,

they provided the students with a chance to compare themselves to one another, and they allowed the students to hear a great variety of repertoire. The private students who played duets with their peers also experienced many motivational, social, and musical benefits as a result of that shared experience.

Teachers must also be aware of how students perceive and define their progress at the keyboard. While many of the struggles associated with playing the piano were meaningful for these particular participants, the perceived lack of linear progress was frustrating to them. Teachers must begin to reframe how musical progress at the piano is defined when working with leisure students.

Musical awareness and accurate aural perception of the sounds that they were creating at the piano was also a problem for these particular participants. These students had very refined musical tastes and could discuss musical performances very articulately, however, their own performances were generally lacking in musical expression. Teachers must be aware of the fact that playing the piano places great demands upon one's attention. Thus, older students may not actually be listening to the sounds that they are producing at the piano. Over time, an awareness of musical expression and how to achieve it may also be fostered during piano lessons. Finally, teachers must recognize that merely executing the correct notes and rhythms at the appropriate time is both engaging and enjoyable for these students and may be a fulfilling and enjoyable activity in and of itself.

In the field of piano pedagogy there is little empirical research about the needs, age-related problems, and goals of piano students who are over the age of 55. The findings of this phenomenological study should serve to sensitize teachers

to the avenues that they might explore when working with the older adult. Piano teachers will then be able to facilitate the development of musical technique and knowledge, meet their students' social and emotional needs, and provide a comfortable and stimulating learning environment for their third-age piano students.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INDIVIDUAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM
For the research study
Leisure Piano Study: A Case Study in Lifelong Learning
A Doctoral Dissertation Research Project
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

Introduction

This research study entitled *Leisure Piano Study: A Case Study in Lifelong Learning* is being conducted by Pamela Pike, Ph.D. Candidate in the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma. The faculty sponsor of the project is Dr. Jane Magrath, Chair of the Piano Department at the University of Oklahoma School of Music.

Description of the Study

During this research project, I (the researcher) will be interested in learning about your goals, needs, and thoughts that pertain to your piano studies. Before embarking upon the study I will give you an overview of the proposed project and answer any questions that you might have about my research. Once you have signed this Informed Consent Form, I will briefly meet with you to learn about your background in music and education.

After our initial meeting, I will meet with you a second time for about an 90 minutes to find out more about your goals and needs as an adult piano student. I will be recording that interview on audio tape, so that I can make notes once we have finished our discussion. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout this entire process. Even if I quote statements made by you in my dissertation, your name will be changed so that you cannot be identified. After I have

transcribed our interview and written a summary, I will give you the opportunity to read my summary to ensure that your thoughts have been captured accurately. Because your thoughts and feelings are what I am interested in learning about, I want to be sure that I have not misrepresented your statements.

I will only need about an hour and a half of your time outside of class. Once I have gathered the data, I will synthesize the information into the main body of my doctoral dissertation. If you are interested, I would be happy to share my findings with you once my dissertation has been completed.

Potential Risks and Benefits of Participation

I foresee no potential risks or discomforts that you will experience as a result of your participation in this study. My goal is to observe you in your own piano lesson environment and to understand your goals and needs as a leisure piano student.

It is hoped that piano teachers will have a better understanding and insight into the goals of leisure piano students, as a result of your participation in this study. In the future, you and other adult piano students may benefit from more enjoyable and stimulating piano lessons that meet your individual needs, as a result of your participation in this study.

Subject Assurance

Please be assured that your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits that you would regularly enjoy as a participant of this piano class. You may discontinue participation in this study at any time without penalty. Please be

assured that your identity will remain anonymous (you will be assigned a pseudonym) throughout the entire study and in any subsequent writings about my findings.

Compensation for Injury

Since this study involves no inherent risks, above and beyond those which you would normally encounter by participating in this piano program, there will be no compensation and/or medical treatment available for injury if it should occur.

Contact Information for Questions about Research Subject's Rights

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Office of Research Administration at the University of Oklahoma at 405-325-4757. If you should have any questions about this study at any time during the research process, please feel free to contact myself or my advisor, Dr. Magrath, at the University of Oklahoma School of Music at 405-325-2081.

Signatures

To participate in this study you must be 18 years of age or older.

I, _____(print name) have read and understand the information contained above. If I have any questions or concerns I will contact the researcher or the Office of Research Administration immediately. I will retain a copy of this form for my records. I volunteer to participate in this research study, as outlined above, and give the researcher consent to use comments that I will make during the course of this research in her final dissertation.

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX B

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
   High school_____ Undergraduate_____ Graduate_____;
   Which degree?_____

2. Did you participate in musical activities as a child? Yes_____ No_____
   For how long? _____

3. If so, what instrument(s) did you play?_____

4. Did you participate in an ensemble activity? Yes_____ No_____

5. If so, in which activity did you participate?_____

6. Did you participate in musical activities (apart from this class) as an adult?
   Yes_____ Which activities?_____ No_____

7. What were your hobbies as a child?_____

8. Which hobbies have you pursued as an adult?_____

9. Has lifelong learning always been important to you? Yes_____ No_____

10. What was your profession? (How did you make a living?)_____

11. Did you participate in professional development activities once you began to work in your career? Yes_____ No_____

12. Which factors contributed to your decision to take piano lessons now?
    Time_____ Money_____ Always wanted to learn_____
    Location_____
    Other (please list)_____

13. Why did you choose to take piano (as opposed to another instrument)?

14. If you are studying in a piano class, why did you choose classes rather than private lessons?

15. Do you have a piano at home? Piano_____ Keyboard_____Organ_____

16. How much time do you spend practicing each day?_____

17. What music do you listen to when you are at home?_____

18. What music do you enjoy playing?

19. What music do you want to learn to play?

20. What are your goals for these lessons (for this semester)?

21. What are your long-term goals for piano study?

22. If you plan to continue with piano lessons, what type of instruction will you take? Piano Class_____ Private Lessons_____ Both_____ Other_____ Why?

23. If you continue to pursue piano lessons, what do you hope to gain from the experience?

24. Are you retired or do you still work? Retired_____ Work Full Time_____ Work Part Time_____

25. What is your age? _____

26. Are you Male _____ or Female _____?

27. Are you Married _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____Single _____?

28. Have you experienced a significant life change, such as divorce, death of a loved-one, retirement, etc.
in the past six months?_____In the past year?_____
Do you anticipate a significant life change in the near future?
Yes____ No_____
What will that change be?_____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you choose to study piano at this stage in your life?

2. Why did you choose to study the piano rather than another instrument or artistic endeavor?

3. Why have you chosen to continue with piano study? Why? OR

   Why will you choose to continue with piano study? Why?

4. Which activities do you find most engaging during your piano lessons? Which activities are most enjoyable? Which activities are most rewarding? Please elaborate. How do you bring your life experiences to the piano or to the music that you play?

5. What materials (music, method books, etc.) do you find most useful and/or enjoyable in your piano study?

6. What qualities does your instructor bring to the lesson that you find most engaging or helpful?

7. What special struggles have you encountered as you have pursued these piano lessons? Have you noticed any special technical difficulties while taking piano lessons? When working on a new piece, what is the most difficult aspect/component of the music to master?

8. What musical, educational, and/or social benefits have you experienced (if any) as a result of pursuing piano lessons?

9. What aspects of your life experiences are you able to bring to your piano s study?

10. How have these experiences enhanced your playing?

11. How has piano study affected your life in general?

12. What pieces do you enjoy playing the most?

13. How do you feel after you practice the piano? Does practice help you to relax?

14. When are your lessons? What time of day do they take place?

15. Did you choose that time or did your teacher choose it, or did you choose the time together?

16. What are the advantages to having your lesson when you do? Are there any disadvantages to that particular time of day?

17. What time of day do you usually practice?

18. What time of day do you prefer to practice or enjoy practicing, even if this is not always possible?

19. Is there a particular time of day when you are most successful and get the most accomplished with your practicing?

20. Have you tried to memorize any music? Why or why not? Have you noticed any particular struggles associated with memory at the piano?

21. Are you able to figure out a new piece without your teacher's help? Are there any special struggles with this aspect of piano playing (learning new music)?

APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you perceive as the problems associated with age in your older piano students?

2. How do you accommodate those special needs?

3. What music do your older students seem to enjoy playing?

4. Do you assign special music because of a student's age? (ie. because of co-ordination problems, memory considerations, popular music from their youth, etc.) OR

   Do you feel that the age of the student has little bearing on the repertoire that you assign? Why?

5. Do you place a different emphasis on technique, repertoire, functional skills, improvisation, or any other aspect of piano playing for your older students as opposed to what you emphasize for your traditional-aged students? If so, why? If not, why?

APPENDIX E

CONFESSIONS OF AN ADULT PIANO STUDENT

Introduction

The following personal essay was written by Nancy. It represents her thoughts about her piano study and her fears about performance at the piano parties. She divided her material up into five sections which she labeled volumes. Each volume was written prior to a Spring piano performance. The entire essay was written over a five-year time period and demonstrates Nancy's growth as a result of her piano study.

Confessions of an Adult Piano Student

Those of us who embark upon the journey of "piano student" as adults share a common bond. Whatever precipitated this sometimes crazy [and] sometimes wonderful experience is often lost in the flurry of renting or buying a piano, scheduling lessons, getting music, etc. at the beginning...Whether we want to resume what was started in childhood – surely three lessons as an eight year old counts as a start, or whether we are fulfilling a longtime dream, we sail forth into these waters with confidence and cheerfulness. After all, if you mastered the *Happy Farmer* once, surely you can do it again.

I have to say that I was not prepared for the terminology used by music publishers for adult piano material. There are big-note standards, the older beginner piano course, today's easy adult piano series and the new easy piano encyclopedia for adults. So you can choose what classification you will fall into – those who have trouble seeing or those whose finger dexterity is suspect.

I really was not prepared for the emotional aspect of this venture. When you are seated at the piano, even though you can see your feet squarely on the

floor, emotionally you are that small child whose feet swung from the piano bench. You suddenly become the original poster child for performance anxiety with sweaty palms, dry mouth, and shaking hands. Whatever happened to the confident, capable person who functions in the family and work place with ease and enthusiasm? Gone – wiped out – erased – all those years of mastery and confidence. Just as you once thought your mother wouldn't notice you were not practicing, now you fervently hope your piano teacher will not notice the wrong notes and missed cues. Foolish person!

Speaking of wrong notes – why as adults do we insist on going back and playing a note until we get it right? I have known adult students who take 20 minutes to play a two-page prelude, either because they were correcting wrong notes or trying to get their bifocals into focus enough to read the notes. The other school of thought advocates playing fast so that no one will know you are missing notes. So far, neither of these methods has proven successful for me. I probably will not live long enough to correct all the wrong notes and playing fast has not proven to be a winner either. I have heard that finger dexterity is one of the first things to go when we get older. Also piano teachers have really good hearing – sort of like those mother ears that can hear you talking in the next room. You have to wonder how [teachers] can do this after years of hearing Beethoven and Bach reduced to less than a joyful noise.

Let me add one word of clarification. When the piano teacher says she is having an adult get together, it's a code word for recital in which everyone plays

one at a time while everyone else listens! You just thought you had mastered all your fears.

Lest you think the adult journey into piano lessons is all anguish and fear. I have to confess that those times when the notes and the chords blend together to make a sound that pleases your ear and fills an empty emotional space, you know the joy of being an adult piano student and your feet rest squarely on the floor.

Confessions of an Adult Piano Student (Volume 2)

"When I grow up, I'm going to learn to play the piano." Many of us have spoken those words to ourselves, our parents, or whom ever was urging us to take lessons. Then we added the rationalizations that follow. [When I am older] I will have:

a) more time

b) more money

c) more motivation

d) longer fingers

e) all of the above

So here we are all grown up and the time has come to keep the promise that we made to ourselves and to others. We go forth with courage, confidence, enthusiasm, and perhaps longer fingers to learn as adults. A few cautions need to be added here:

1) Teachers come in great variety now. They are young, older, and oldest; but most have the ability to teach all ages. Shop until you can find one who does not remind you of your very first teacher, lets you play "awesome music," and

has the ability to remain calm when you collapse onto the keyboard weeping great tears of frustration. Some even have had CPR training in the event someone loses consciousness while playing in their first recital, which is called almost anything rather than the "R" word.

2) All students need to check their critical inner voice outside the door before entering the studio. Whether the voice is reminiscent of parents, teachers, spouses, or a colourful blend of all, it can not exist comfortably in the same room as an adult piano student. When the voice is present, you will miss the opportunity to say, "oh, that was a nice sound," and no teacher is as critical as the voice you carry inside you.
3) You can not always rule out criticism from other sources. "Mom, are you going to play that same dumb thing again?" "Wow, I can really tell that was a wrong note." "Mom, why are you doing this – just to embarrass me in front of my friends?" These are just a few of the comments coming from your family. However, these can be dealt with by talking under your breath after they have left the room.
4) Expectations can be tricky in this setting. Realistic expectations of hard work, slow progress, and difficult times can be handled with grace. But, expecting to play for party guests, family gatherings, and public performances after "only ten easy lessons with the tapes you purchased" will set you up for frustration.
5) Be prepared to feel like an eight-year old child again when you start this process. You may think you are emotionally mature until you take piano lessons, then you find you are [the] insecure little kid whose feet won't even

reach the floor. You may need constant reassurance from your teacher, spouse, friends, and casual acquaintances that indeed your rendition of the *Happy Farmer* is the best they have ever heard. A warning – do not milk this too much or you may be ostracized by these people.

6) If you are the type of person who needs to do something over and over until you get it right, forget it. It's a paradox that the same people who encourage you to play the right notes in one breath will at the same time tell you to "keep going." I suppose this is in the interest of brevity as some adult students have been known to play for 20 minutes on a one-page composition trying to get it right.

All of the above cautions fade away when you hear a chord that strikes a pleasing response within you, or a family member walks through the room humming what you are playing. Being able to produce the sounds that fill in empty emotional spaces within you brings the joy and fulfillment you sought when you started on this journey of learning. All the frustration and hard work falls to one side as you hear and feel the sounds you have just produced on the piano.

Confessions of an Adult Piano Student (Volume 3)

Now that I have achieved some small level of skill (translated as being able to play several simple songs recognizable to most who hear them), I have become aware of another dilemma. There is no place or permission in piano performance for the mini-celebration. I'm not suggesting the gymnastic or dance routines that college and professional athletes perform, as in the end-zone

celebration. I do not wish to see the pianist leap into the air or turn back flips upon successful completion of an extremely difficult passage, although a little white-haired lady doing the moonwalk around the piano bench would be entertaining. I also think it would be fun to see a singer pump her fist in the air upon reaching a high note, but I have never seen that.

However, there must be a way for the beginning student to celebrate performing a particularly troublesome phrase without losing concentration, to say nothing of [losing] the beat and her composure. A discrete "all right!" or "yes –s – s!" muttered softly would provide that need for instant gratification that beginning learners all crave.

Since we are all children when learning new skills, we have not yet mastered delayed gratification techniques. When you have practiced a phrase hundreds of times, and everyone around you is saying, "come on, get a life – move on," then "getting it right" deserves some type of celebration. Most adults who embark upon music lessons are seeking personal joy, so why not celebrate our small steps?

I must confess that at this point I am not able to either talk aloud or give myself congratulations without losing everything or coming to a complete stop. I am looking forward to the day when I can celebrate internally while keeping the slightest hint of a smile on my face – and of course maintain the tempo, the notes, and the proper decorum.

Confessions of an Adult Piano Student (Volume 4)

My perspective has changed after four years of the learning process. My comfort zone for performance now extends to the teacher, selected family members, small children, and occasionally other adult students. Loosely translated, this means I no longer entertain fears of expiring during a performance or developing a massive case of hives before, during, or after the performance. Now I resort to therapeutic relaxation and breathing techniques to ease my anxiety. This tends to prompt questions as to whether I am about to give birth or simply trying to play through a Gershwin piece without hyperventilating.

Now I have encoded piano teacher messages in my head that surface at various times of need. For those who are familiar with such messages, they include such phases as "count," "relax," "sink into the keys," "count," "play across the bar line," "don't stop," "no strike-overs," "count," "keep going," "relax," "have fun," and "enjoy the music."

The combination of relaxation and breathing techniques with the encoded messages sometimes allows me to "get it all together" enough to produce music that is surprisingly pleasant to the ear. However, the obvious accomplishment is overshadowed by the unseen processes that occur within me. The sounds that occasionally come forth when I strike the keys produce a warmth and sense of comfort that eases a weary spirit, elevates a sagging hope, and enriches my daily world.

Ah, yes. That is the real reason I am learning to play the piano.

Confessions of an Adult Piano Student (Volume 5)

The years build one upon another, similar to the way notes on a scale follow in line. As the tones [of] the chord build to create a harmonious sound, so the days of lessons, practice, and performance blend together to create a time of discovery. Discovery of frustration, pleasure, panic, disappointment, and joy await the piano student who searches for the right sound, the right note, the beautiful performance.

Although the perfect seldom comes, small snippets of beauty slip into being each time you sit at the piano. One note, one chord, one phrase alone sometimes reveals the feeling you want to share. When you hear that sound you know it is right. That's what keeps adult piano students returning again and again to the keyboard to learn, to practice; to say to anyone within shouting distance, "did you hear that lovely sound? Maybe I can do that again!"

And so we go on day after day, searching for the sound that brings us pleasure and fills our hearts with joy. Perhaps it will always be so with us. Perhaps it has always been so with those who look for beauty in the music.

APPENDIX F

TED'S PRACTICE LOG

Introduction

Ted kept track of his practicing in a weekly practice log. He was trying to maintain a large amount of repertoire and the practice log was an effective tool for tracking the pieces that he had recently practiced and for noting which music he would need to look at in the near future. The researcher was interested in his practice log since reviewing several months of practice logs showed the specific music that Ted was practicing with consistency. Noting that Ted was practicing his classical music regularly corroborated his teacher's sense that Ted preferred to play classical music.

Practice Log (May 2000)

Week 1:

	May 1/00	May 2/00	May 3/00	May 4/00	May 5/00	May 6/00	May 7/00
Scarlatti				X	X		
Bach	X	X		X		X	X
Mozart	X		X		X		
Chopin	X	X	X				
Brahms		X	X		X	X	X
Mendelssohn						X	
Misty							
Embraceable You							
Ice Castles							
Organ							
Theory							

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

The University of Oklahoma
Norman Campus

MEMORANDUM

TO: Renee Jenkins, Curriculum Advisor
Graduate College

FROM: Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Ph.D., Director
Office of Research Administration

DATE: February 23, 2001

SUBJECT: IRB-Review of Use of Human Subjects in Research
Project (FY00-164)

This is to confirm that Pamela Pike's study, "Third-Age Group Piano: A Case Study of Lifelong Learners," has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, Norman Campus under the University's expedited review procedures. This study meets the criteria for consideration under the expedited review category.

Please contact me if you require any additional information regarding this approval.

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board
Ms. Pamela Pike, Principal Investigator, Music
Dr. Jane Magrath, Faculty Sponsor, Music