



I Sing, Therefore I Am

A DISCURSIVE INVESTIGATION OF
WORK, PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY

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Gemma Munro, B.A. (Hons)
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Abstract

This thesis presents analyses of musicians' talk about their experiences of musical performance. Drawing on a framework of discursive social psychology and an eclectic approach to discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998), attention is paid to the ways in which musicians' accounts of performance work up particular identities for the musical performer, and to the possible functions and implications of these identity constructions.

Two introductory chapters outline the theory and methodology driving the analysis of musicians' talk. Traditional psychological research on the musician is compared with a discursive approach to examining identities, which is concerned with the flexible and situated use of identities in talk to accomplish social actions. The chapters also outline the eclectic approach to discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998) drawn upon to analyse the collected accounts. This eclectic approach focuses on the local pragmatics of specific conversational contexts, as well as on the use of more global patterns of sense-making. It also considers the implications of talk for possible ways-of-being.

Four analytic chapters are concerned with three separate sets of data: first, a set of semi-structured interviews with solo musicians about their reasons for embarking on a career

in musical performance; second, a set of unstructured interviews with solo singers about their experiences of musical performance; and third, a 'future directions' meeting held by members of a leading Australian chamber choir. The analyses explore the flexible ways in which the participants drew on broad, historically situated notions of work, identity, choice, self-expression and self-fulfilment in order to achieve local actions in specific settings of talk. The following analytic findings are discussed:

1. Speakers worked up seemingly opposing constructions of identity for the performer depending on the local context of the talk and the discursive business at hand. Examples include the positioning of performers as both choosing to perform and as having little choice in the taking up of a performing career; and as both 'focusing on' and 'letting go' of themselves in a performance.
2. Participants regularly drew on contrast structures and an 'either/or' organisation of talk to construct musical performance as fulfilling but inherently financially unstable, and 'other' forms of work as financially stable but necessarily unfulfilling.
3. In the context of a group discussion, the construction of identities functioned to prescribe and police 'authentic group membership', and to work up a group decision regarding the payment of choristers.

In the final chapter of the thesis, the findings are discussed in terms of their implications for music psychology, discursive psychology, and for musicians in general.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the reward of any other degree or diploma in any other university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopy.

Signed:

Date: 23/6/05

Gemma Munro

Publications

The following publications have emanated from this PhD:

REFEREED ARTICLES:

Munro, G. & LeCouteur, A. (2003). Musical performance vs. 'normal work': Performing identities and fulfilling selves. *Music Forum*, 9(5).

Munro, G. (2002). Accounting for emotions in musical performance. *Proceedings of the 1st Australian Postgraduate Students' Critical Psychology Conference*, 62-77.
Sydney: University of Western Sydney Press.

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An Informal Introduction

My first inkling of interest in carrying out a substantial research project on constructions of identity for the musical performer appeared on stage at the Australian National Folk Festival in 1998. I was singing with three friends as part of an a cappella quartet; the audience members were smiling; the sun was filtering through the holes in the huge white tent and everything felt wonderful. Later, one of my interviewees was to talk about “moments in performance when everything just goes ‘click’, and everything’s right ... if you were to die right then you would die perfectly happy, and ... yeah, it’s just like nectar”. I was having one of those moments. As I was standing there having an absolute ball, a fleeting thought came to me. It was “this is the most me I can be”. Thinking about this moment later in the day, I experienced simultaneous feelings of embarrassment that I could think something so cringe-worthily self-indulgent and dramatic, and the first stirrings of fascination for the topic I have just spent over three years researching. The folk festival provided plenty of opportunities to ask other performers about their experiences of performing, and I was continually struck by how much of their talk involved ‘identity work’ – that is, talk about performance more often than not seemed to be accompanied by talk about who the musicians were ‘as people’.

This thesis is a product of my revelatory experience at that folk festival, in that – to put it as simply as possible – it examines how musicians talk about themselves in accounts of their performing experiences. However, the analyses presented here are not concerned with the identification of different ‘types’ of performing experiences, or different ‘types’ of musical performers. What I am interested in is how musicians’ talk about performance functions to accomplish identity work: how the talk can be seen to manage self-presentations, to negotiate accounts of anxiety, to justify performers’ social position and so on. This way of conducting analysis draws on a discursive approach to research, which suggests that talk, rather than being treated as representative of our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions and so forth, should instead be viewed in terms of its ‘action orientation’ (Heritage, 1984; Edwards & Potter, 1992); its ability to be drawn upon flexibly to perform specific functions.

As I went about the day-to-day work of doing a PhD, I noticed that I was often grappling with the big question – ‘what’s this thesis all about?’ – in terms of four ‘threads’ of my identity as a researcher. I locate my work in the field of music psychology, and I was consequently keen to make a valid contribution to the discipline. At the same time, my research draws heavily on discursive psychology, which rejects many of the assumptions about identity and language made by mainstream music psychologists. As a musician, I was eager for my work to be of some benefit to

performers, and as a PhD student, I wanted to produce a piece of work that was meaningful and topical. The following conversation between these four threads of my identity as a researcher provides an informal introduction to this thesis.

Box 1	
	A CONVERSATIONAL INTRODUCTION
<i>Music Psychologist</i>	So I hear you're doing your PhD in music psychology. What's your topic?
<i>PhD student</i>	I'm looking at musical performance and identity.
<i>Musician</i>	Fantastic! I didn't learn anything about psychological stuff while doing my music degree. I'd love to have been taught some ways of getting rid of my nerves before a performance. It's shocking! I get the shakes and have to go to the loo constantly and pace continuously and I won't let anyone speak to me! I'm such a bloody prima donna, honestly! As soon as the music starts I'm completely fine, but ... (slight pause) (<i>Discursive Psychologist looks interested and checks stopwatch</i>). Anyway, have you thought about teaching your stuff to some of the Conservatorium students? I'm sure it would really help them.
<i>PhD student</i>	Well, that has actually been one of my dilemmas while doing my PhD – will my research help musicians? You see, I'm not looking at coping skills for performers at all – I'm looking at constructions of identity for the musical performer. (<i>General pause while Discursive Psychologist nods head</i>)
<i>Music Psychologist</i>	Have you looked at any of Anthony Kemp's work? He's basically mapped out all the personalities of musicians ... you know, opera singers are more extraverted than choristers, sopranos are right royal pains in the arse (<i>laughs</i>) (long pause) Aren't you an alto?
<i>Musician</i>	(<i>Shakes head slightly</i>)
<i>Music Psychologist</i>	Sorry, that was a joke.
<i>Discursive Psychologist</i>	Mate, I'm not sure if you comprehend the fundamental theoretical and epistemological frameworks within which discursive work situates itself.
<i>Musician</i>	What?
<i>Discursive Psychologist</i>	Sorry. I mean (pause) well (longer pause). Look, any work on 'measuring' personalities is a bunch of crap, quite honestly. Identities are constructed in language from a wide range of ways that we can talk about ourselves. You can't have a personality that stays the same over time, or even throughout a particular conversation. The way we construct our identities depends upon what our talk is accomplishing within the immediate conversational context.
<i>Musician</i>	Again – what?
<i>PhD student</i>	OK, it's important for me to get my head around this (<i>looks at Discursive Psychologist</i>) sorry, tongue around this (pause) (<i>getting frustrated</i>) you know what I mean! Anyway, please bear with me. Right. Basically, I'm saying that musicians' identities are more flexible than traditional music psychology would have us believe. My thesis looks at how identities get <u>done</u> flexibly in different settings of talk ... how we draw on different ways of talking about ourselves as

	performers to do things like, oh, I don't know, account for a bad performance, or make decisions about our careers, or justify our anxieties about getting up on stage and doing our job.
<i>Musician</i>	God, I knew I should have stopped talking to you bloody psychologists. I <u>knew</u> it! Just ignore whatever I said, it was a load of bollocks, anyway.
<i>PhD student</i>	No, no, no, no, no! I'm not saying that I'll be looking at each individual's account of themselves and making comments about each musician I interview. That's not what discourse work is about. I'll be looking at the very many commonplace, culturally available ways of talking about the musical performer, and identifying how these commonplaces are used by musicians in <u>general</u> , flexibly and contextually, in talk.
<i>Music Psychologist</i>	So how does that help musicians?
<i>PhD student</i>	(<i>sounding depressed</i>) Yeah. I'm still thinking about that one.
<i>Discursive Psychologist</i>	Look, just by critiquing traditional psychological ways of conceptualising identity as a stable entity – you know, as unchanging, unproblematic and as something we can measure by dishing out a few trillion questionnaires – you're highlighting that musical performers don't have to be limited by psychological definitions of what personality type they are, for example. You're pointing out that ways of constructing our identities are flexible, and this in and of <u>itself</u> is a useful thing to do.
<i>PhD student</i>	That's true. I'll also be talking about some of the <u>implications</u> of particular ways of talking about the musical performer. You know, musos often talk about themselves as not wanting a 'real job', and not expecting to be paid much because of their career choice ... I'm sure that particular construction of identity for the performer has significant political implications in the form of government funding of musicians.
<i>Musician</i>	That's true, actually. Union rates haven't gone up in years. Bloody Howard.
<i>Music Psychologist</i>	So basically, you're looking at the ways in which musical performers talk about themselves in terms of what they are doing with their talk –
<i>Discursive Psychologist</i>	- (<i>interrupting</i>) we call it 'discursive business' –
<i>Music Psychologist</i>	- and in terms of some of the possible social and political consequences of the talk.
<i>PhD student</i>	Pretty much

In providing a very basic outline of the focus of my thesis, this conversation also highlighted some of the theoretical tensions between discursive research and a more mainstream approach to psychological work on identity. As alluded to briefly in the conversation above, traditional approaches to psychological work on identity tend to treat identities as something we 'have'. Our identities are viewed as unique, stable,

measurable (through the use of questionnaires and so on) and fixed in time. Moreover, traditional psychological research more often than not treats particular identities as measurably different to one another (e.g., ‘choristers’ are different to ‘opera singers’; ‘artists’ are different to ‘bankers’, and so on). In contrast, discursive approaches to identity suggest that identity is something we *do* in conversation; that we draw on often contradictory ways of talking about identity in a flexible and variable fashion to construct our accounts. Commonplace ways of talking about musical performers, for instance, are not stable or fixed – there are no ‘truths’ about ‘what it is like’ to be a musician. Instead, we have at our disposal a linguistic “kit bag” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) of argumentative resources to construct – variously, flexibly and contextually – identities for the musical performer. To demonstrate this principal of discursive research ‘in action’, I provide extracts from 44 articles referring to ‘musical performers’ that were published in Australia’s major national newspaper, *The Australian*, between 2001 and 2003. In my examination of the articles, I identified three sets of two-set contradictory constructions of the musical performer that recurred repeatedly. These were:

1.1	Musical performers are 'special cases': they are different from 'normal people' and are removed from 'normal life'; musical performers cannot face living in the 'real world'
1.2	Musical performers are no different to anyone else
2.1	Musical performers work hard to succeed
2.2	Musical performers are 'naturally' good at what they do
3.1	Musical performers 'give themselves' to an audience
3.2	Performers are different off stage from their on stage personas

1.1 Musical performers are different from 'normal people' and are removed from 'normal life'; musical performers cannot face living in the 'real world'

Variously referred to as child prodigy, genius, inspired freak and wunderkind, Tedeschi has scarcely led an ordinary life.

(Albert, *The Face*, 31/3/2001)

Simone was volatile and highly strung, and her artistic career was littered with no-shows, walk-outs, fights and tantrums ... She once cancelled a London concert without notice because she was distressed about an injury to her dog.

(*The Australian, Rapture of her spell*, 23/4/2003)

"I was only drinking because I was a musician, you know?"

(...)

The Irish singer suddenly became a star at 29 -- then plummeted into a life of depression, alcoholism and near suicide.

(...)

The demands and temptations of the music industry proved too much.

(Shedden, *Lady reinvents the blues*, 5/8/2003)

1.2 *Musical performers are no different to anyone else*

"I'm treated like everybody else, I feel completely normal", Milton says.

(Albert, *Appreciator of musical beauty*, 8/12/2000)

"I know, I know, I don't fit the stereotype at all", says Krall ...
"I listen to Elton John and Willie Nelson as well as to Billie Holiday and John Coltrane. I like to ski and swim and ride horses. I've bungee-jumped, for God's sake! I hike through mud. I'm not in the least afraid of getting dirty. And yet people hear me and they conjure up this vision of someone floating around in haute couture. Journalists do it all the time. I'll be doing an interview by phone and they'll say, 'Is it a big pressure for you, always having to be so glamorous?' And I'll be formulating an answer as I sit in my pyjamas on the stairs, hair any which way and no make-up on, a plate of macaroni cheese at my side".

(Jackson, *Billie, Ella & Di: A jazz diva for the 21st century*, 14/7/2001)

2.1 *Musical performers have to work hard to succeed*

Fleming epitomises a new species of leading lady. She's famous without being temperamental, talented without pretensions, adored but not arrogant. Today's operatic superstar has both feet firmly on the ground. She's the first to admit that she got where she is thanks to hard work, and audiences love her for it.

(Apthorp, *The cool soprano*, 9/12/2001)

Self-discipline is clearly one of this woman's overriding characteristics. She only allows herself two weeks holiday a year, for instance ... She exercises for an hour every day, slogging her way through aerobics and kickboxing. She forbids herself chocolate and ice-cream, which she adores, because they're bad for her vocal cords.

(Cosic, *Seoul Diva*, 1/10/2003)

Shy, tall and gangly, with hunched shoulders, she was ordered to run up and down a flight stairs 10 times to develop her breathing.

(Lim, *On song*, 28/7/2001)

At a certain age being a goddess requires discipline. "I sleep at least nine hours a day. I rarely allow myself to eat, excuse the word, shit or junk food. In general I am a health freak. I do a lot of exercise".

(Chenery, *Greek goddess of heartbreak*, 24/5/2002)

2.2 *Musical performers are 'naturally' good at what they do*

What Toohy brings to all her roles is that indefinable quality the Italians call sprezzatura -- a genius for the ingenuous and a masterful but unstudied virtuosity

(Van Nunen, *The Face*, 16/8/2003)

His skill was the product of natural ability ... rather than formal training

(*The Australian*, *Hats of to Larry, Hercules of the harmonica*, 9/8/2001)

This consummate performer had no formal training, honing her skills by treading the boards

(Van Nunen, *The Face*, 16/8/2003)

By 13, without formal training, he was playing professionally in nightclubs.

(Litson, *The player: Bold and Brassy*, 28/9/2002)

3.1 *Musical performers give themselves to an audience*

Hailed as the Cecilia Bartoli of the recorder, Genevieve Lacey is the first to admit that she simply can't sing. But for this musical virtuoso that's of no great concern. At the tender age of five Lacey found a voice of her own when she first picked up a recorder, imitating her brother and hero of the time, Mark. She has been "singing" since.

(Rumble, *Wind brings change*, 19/4/2002)

When faced with such exuberance and joy, how can anyone not smile with Durham? Here's a dynamic performer who wants to give of her very heart - which she does.

(John, *Seeker's fulfilment*, 31/8/2001)

3.2 *Musical performers put on a stage persona*

As she sits in the garden of her home on Sydney's north shore discussing her penchant for quilting, I'm struck by how her unassuming private persona belies her commanding stage presence.

(Van Nunen, *The Face*, 16/8/2003)

At the mention of Elroy and Liam, Finn's rock'n'roll persona quickly evaporates and the home-loving dad returns.

(Shedden, *Inside Neil Finn's private universe*, 26/5/2001)

The newspaper articles examined worked up variable identities for the musical performer by describing musicians in terms of what might be considered to be commonplace characteristics of 'the performer'. There are two claims I wish to make about these themes in the chapters to come. First, I wish to highlight the social and historical nature of these commonplace constructions of identities for the musical performer. In Chapter 3, I examine some seemingly 'commonsensical' ways of talking about the self and, more specifically, the musician, in terms of their historical contexts

and possible social implications. Second, I wish to show *how* contradictory constructions of the musical performer are drawn upon flexibly in talk to perform social actions: to accomplish 'discursive business' (Edwards, 1997). In other words, I wish to illustrate how talk about musical performance and identity is constituted *in practice*. This will be taken up in Chapters 4 to 6.

For now, though, I will examine the theoretical and methodological nuts and bolts that form the framework for Chapters 3 to 6. Chapter 1 provides a more comprehensive discussion of the theoretical principles driving this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

Introducing the Theory

This thesis presents a discursive analysis of musicians' accounts of their experiences of musical performance. The findings of this study may be of interest to musicians, music psychologists and discursive psychologists for three reasons. Firstly, the focus is on the examination of talk about *musical performance and identity*. As a musician myself, I have spoken with a number of fellow performers about experiences of musical performance over the years. Typically, musical performance and identity are talked about as being commonsensically linked. Many musicians of my acquaintance, for instance, describe their major goal as performers as being to 'express themselves' through music. Many also report feeling as if they are being judged during a performance. Strangely, however, what is talked about by musicians as a seemingly obvious relationship between performance and identity has been relatively neglected as a topic of investigation in the field of music psychology. Musicians reading the analyses presented here may find the explicit focus on constructions of identity in accounts of musical performance both interesting and informative, in that the analyses explore a much talked about, but under-researched, area of musical performance.

Secondly, the analyses presented here draw on a discursive approach to examining identity. Traditional psychological research on the musician tends to treat identities for the musical performer as unchanging and unproblematic. Music psychologists have drawn on stereotypes such as “the subservient piano accompanist” (Goodman, 2000), the “raucous brass player” (Kemp, 1996) and the “inferior second violinist” (Murningham & Conlon, 1991), for instance, without examining how these identities are worked up and/or contested, and what possible consequences the adoption of such identities may have for performers. Discursive approaches to the study of identity, in contrast, treat identity as multiple, shifting and contextual, and as constructed in language. In other words, discursive analyses of identity examine how identities are worked up, negotiated and disputed in everyday interactions, and also attend to the possible social implications of different ways of talking about the self. I hope that music psychologists reading the analyses might find the application of a new approach to the topic of interest.

Thirdly, although discursive psychologists have produced a great body of knowledge surrounding identities in various contexts of talk, research that examines culturally available discourses surrounding *musical performers* is hard to come by. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the considerable discursive research on how talk about the

self is deployed in everyday conversations and interactions around a relatively under-researched topic in the discursive literature.

In the following three sections of this first chapter, I will develop these three points of focus in more detail. Each section attempts to answer a different question that I have posed to myself while writing this thesis:

1. Why study musical performance and identity?
2. Why look at identity from a discursive perspective?
3. What might a discourse analysis of constructions of identities for the musical performer look like in practice?

In Section 1 below, then, I will discuss some of the ways in which the musical performer is typically depicted in both contemporary culture and in the music psychology literature. I will argue that a more comprehensive examination of performance and identity is required. Section 2 examines traditional psychological approaches to identity, and contrasts these with discursive approaches to the study of the self. Finally, Section 3 outlines the discourse analytic methodology chosen to examine ways of talking about musical performance and identity in musicians' accounts of performance.

1 WHY STUDY MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY?

1.1 *Portrayals of musical performance in contemporary culture*

To many, the relationship between musical performance and identity seems inevitable. In the Introduction to this thesis, one commonplace maxim identified in newspaper articles about musicians constructed performers as aiming to ‘give themselves’ to an audience. This notion of ‘giving oneself’ through performance, while generally not considered of importance in traditional music psychological research, is discussed regularly in the educational literature on acting (see Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1982) and in actors’ biographies (see Archer & Simmonds, 1986; Priest, 1996). In her collection of interviews with female actors, musicians and comedians, Oddey (1999: 280) wrote:

Performing has become a way of life for many (people), integrated into their whole being. It is essential in order to sustain and maintain their identity. Many have spoken of feeling incomplete, empty and bereft without that public, communal, creative process in their lives, where the feeling of revealing and exposing the self to be understood and accepted is a prerequisite for living.

Oddey (1999: 280)

Other regular constructions of the musical performer discussed in the Introduction involve describing performers as ‘naturally’ good at music, as unable to stop themselves

behaving in a manner that is presented as typical of 'the performer' (including throwing tantrums, behaving like a 'prima donna' and so forth), and as different to 'normal' people. Interestingly, though, this commonly reported relationship between musical performance and identity remains relatively unexamined in the discipline of music psychology. One of the reasons I wanted to explore the relationship between musical performance and identity is that, from a psychological perspective, not very much attention has been given to an area that is taken for granted as interesting, and topical, by other academic disciplines, the media, and indeed, by musicians themselves.

In the following section, I review this sparse research on musical performance and identity. The research has been dominated by the study of 'individual differences' between musicians and others, and between different 'types' of musician. I will outline several criticisms of this body of work from a discursive perspective on psychological research, and introduce recent research on music and identity in music psychology which attends to some of these criticisms.

1.2 Traditional psychological research on the musical performer

Psychological research in the area of music and identity can be roughly divided into five categories:

1) Musical taste or preference;

- 2) The use of music to regulate moods or behaviour;
- 3) Therapeutic benefits of music participation;
- 4) Personalities of musicians; and
- 5) The development of 'musical identities' in children.

Categories 1, 2 and 3 do not involve investigations of identity and public musical *performance*, so I will not examine these areas further here (see North & Hargreaves, 2000; Zillman & Gan, 1997 for research on musical taste; Hargreaves & North, 1999; DeNora, 2000 for work on the regulation of moods through music; and Aldridge *et al.*, 1990; Magee, 1999, 2002 for an examination of identity and music therapy). In this section, then, I will review psychological research on personalities of musicians and on the development of children's musical identities.

1.2.1 *Psychological research on musicians' personalities*

Psychological investigations of the musical performer often focus on investigating the personality traits of those involved in music-making. It is widely reported, for instance, that musicians tend to be more sensitive, emotionally unstable, tense, anxious (Kemp, 1996, 1997) and neurotic (Marchant-Haycox & Wilson, 1992; Wills & Cooper, 1988) than the general population. Musicians are also reported to be more introverted than the population norm (Kemp 1996, 1981a), although they tend to score highly on the typical introverted traits of detachment and self-sufficiency (due, say some, to the

necessary hours of solitary practice (Kemp, 1997)), and not as highly on traits of seriousness or shyness. However, Kemp (1996) has also suggested that levels of introversion may vary depending on the type of musician. For example, on the basis of results from personality tests, he argued that solo performers (such as concert pianists, opera singers, and conductors) are more extraverted than ensemble musicians (such as orchestra members and choristers) (Kemp 1997, 1981b). Wubbenhorst (1994) demonstrated that students in music performance courses scored significantly higher on extraversion than did those studying music teaching. So although some work on personality and music attempts to define the common personality characteristics of musicians in general, research has also been conducted to identify *specific* musical identities, such as 'soloists', 'ensemble musicians', 'conductors' and 'composers'. This research is part of a large body of psychological work that looks at *individual differences* – what are assumed to be the stable and measurable disparities between different 'types' of people. In this case, the personalities of certain types of musician are treated as objectively different from one another.

1.2.2 *The development of musical identities in children*

Closely related to this research on individual differences in the personalities of musicians is research that investigates the development of 'musical identities' in children (Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell, 2002: 7). Researchers in this field 'measure'

children's self-concept or self-belief in relation to their musical ability using psychometric tests, structured questionnaires, and structured interviews (see Reynolds, 1992; O'Neill, 2002; Lamont, 2002; Trevarthen, 2002; Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Dweck, 1999). Topics examined have included differences between attitudes to music in primary and secondary school students (Harland *et al.*, 2000; Ross, 1995), the role of instrumental lessons in developing children's musical identities (Lamont, 2002; Spencer, 1993), and the influence of family members on children's musical development (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Trevarthen, 2002). Children's musical identities are again treated as measurably different to the musical identities of other 'types' of musician, in this case, adult musicians. Also linked to work on individual differences in musicians' personalities is a growing body of work on gender differences in music. O'Neill and Boulton (1996) and Maidlow and Bruce (1999), for instance, suggested that girls and boys tend to be drawn to learning different musical instruments, with girls preferring flute, piano and violin and boys preferring trumpet, guitar and drums. Lamont (2002: 54), after interviewing school-aged children about music in the classroom, reported that "girls are more likely to hold positive attitudes towards music than boys".

Common to the research on music and identity discussed above is the treatment of the self as fixed; as static regardless of social, cultural or interpersonal contexts. For

example, 'choristers' are said to be – one assumes unilaterally and unequivocally - more introverted than 'opera singers'; 'female musicians' are reported to be more 'positive' about their music than 'male musicians', and so on. These broad differences in identity types are taken as given – as fixed - regardless of historical, cultural and local contextual influences. What we see in these traditional psychological investigations of individual differences in musicians is a fundamentally different approach to examining identities than that which is common in discursive social psychology. In contrast to the treatment of musicians' identities as stable, fixed in time, and measurably different according to which 'type' of musician is being examined, discursive approaches treat identity as something that is accomplished in talk - as a flexible resource drawn upon to achieve particular social actions. In this thesis, then, rather than examining the nature of assumed differences between soloists and ensemble musicians, for instance, the focus is on how plausible musical identities are worked up, flexibly and contextually, in talk. This discursive approach to examining musical performance and identity will be developed in more detail in Sections 2 and 3 of this chapter. For now, though, I will review one more body of work on identity in music psychology. This emerging area of research attends to the criticism that music psychology ignores the social, historical and interpersonal contexts of music-making (see Hargreaves & North, 1997, 1999) by examining the social aspects of music and identity.

1.3 *A shift in music psychology*

Some recent psychological work on music and identity acknowledges the flexible and constantly evolving nature of musical identities and treats identity as embedded in particular social, cultural and historical contexts (Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald 2002). Increasingly, music psychologists are recognising that music is, first and foremost, a social activity, and that social contexts of music-making must be addressed in the research process (MacDonald & Miell, 2002).

One example of this body of work is Borthwick and Davidson's (2002) interpretative phenomenological analysis (see Smith *et al.*, 1997, 1999) of interviews about families' experiences of music practice and performance. The authors identified themes in the talk of the families, including the influence of parental expectations on the development of children's musical identities. Borthwick and Davidson (2002: 76) suggested that examining the influence of family interaction on the ways in which an individual comes to take on the role of 'musician' provides evidence that "musical identity does not develop in isolation, is not static, but evolves as a part of a multidirectional and reciprocal process". In work with a similar focus on the social nature of identities, MacDonald and Miell (2002: 164), in an interview study with three musicians with special needs, identified three pervasive themes for understanding the role that music participation can play in the "development of personal identity" in

persons with disabilities. These were (1) 'other people's expectations' (i.e., the views of the audience were portrayed as shaping the performer's sense of self); (2) 'responsibility and empowerment' (i.e. talk about taking responsibility for their musical work allowed the interviewees to take on the identity of 'musician'); and (3) 'professionalism' (i.e., the identity of 'professional musician' was drawn upon by the interviewees to construct themselves as being evaluated critically by others; as not getting 'the sympathy vote').

In another interview study, O'Neill (2002) outlined regular ways in which young musicians construct their identities as musicians, focusing in particular on how both personal beliefs and social perceptions about music shape how young musicians 'feel' about their music-making. Pitts (2002) also examined young people's self-identification as musicians, and discussed the role of school and university education, and peer comparisons, in shaping perceptions of oneself as a 'musician' or 'non-musician'. These research studies share in common an examination of the construction of meanings associated with music and identity, as well as a focus on the importance of social contexts in constructing these meanings.

Recent work in music psychology, then, has examined social and cultural constructions of the musical performer, and has focussed on how identities for the musician are presented in language. The analytic studies presented in this thesis share the analytic focus of the studies referred to above. However, the analytic approach used here differs

from this recent psychological research on music and identity in one key way – its treatment of language. The studies mentioned above treat language as a way of ‘getting at’ participants’ supposedly ‘true’ thoughts, beliefs, values, opinions, and so on. MacDonald and Miell (2002: 167), for instance, conducted interviews with three musicians “in order to access individuals’ own views of their identities”, while the analysis of interview extracts presented in Borthwick and Davidson’s study (2002: 76) purported to examine “long-held values belonging to specific family members”. This treatment of language as *representative* of speakers’ psychological states differs fundamentally from the discursive approach to analysis that is drawn on in this thesis. Rather than examining *what* opinions, values and beliefs are expressed in the talk of musical performers, I will examine *how* opinions, values and beliefs are worked up and *used* depending on the context of the talk, and the discursive business being accomplished. This thesis, then, avoids posing research questions such as “what are musical identities, and who has them?” (Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald, 2002: 2), and instead examines *how* identities for the musician *get done* in local contexts of talk. The analytic focus shifts from examining musicians’ talk as an accurate representation of internal processes to examining the flexible, occasioned and contested nature of talk around musical performance within particular discursive contexts.

In the following section, I discuss this discursive approach to examining identity in more detail.

2 WHY LOOK AT IDENTITY FROM A DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVE?

Traditional psychological research on identity has been widely criticised for its reliance on *essentialist* and *humanist* approaches to examining identity (see Gergen 1973; Burr, 1995; Henriques *et al.*, 1984; Willig, 2001; Hepburn, 2003). Essentialist approaches to identity treat the individual as possessing a unique inner essence or nature which can be ‘discovered’, and which can explain individual behaviour (Burr, 1995), while humanist approaches treat these ‘essential’ selves as independent centres of meaning that can be expressed through language (Hepburn, 2003). Mainstream psychological work, with its intense focus on the individual as the primary object of research, relies heavily on these essentialist and humanist notions of identity. The assumption is that traditional psychological research can accurately ‘discover’ a supposedly stable ‘truth’ about a person, often via questionnaires or standardised interview questions which remove the contexts in which questions are raised and answered.

Discursive approaches, in contrast, suggest that our identities should be treated as flexible and shifting, depending on social and historical contexts, with whom we are interacting, and what is being achieved in the local interaction. Traditional research on

the self, then, as mentioned in Section 1 of this chapter, has been broadly criticised for removing context from research and for neglecting the social and historical settings of human behaviour (Hepburn, 2003; see also Armistead, 1974; Harré & Secord, 1972; Gergen, 1973). A discursive approach suggests that the ways in which we understand the world are always culturally and historically specific (Burr, 1995). Also mentioned in Section 1 was the criticism of mainstream psychology for its treatment of language as an accurate and objective representation of the world. Traditional psychological research suggests that language provides a 'window on the mind' (Abell & Stokoe, 2001). Researchers adopting a discursive approach have suggested that language should instead be viewed as contextual and productive (see Gergen, 1973). As Willig (2001: 87-8) writes:

The assumption that language provided a set of unambiguous signs with which to label internal states and with which to describe external reality was challenged. Instead, language was reconceptualised as productive; that is, language was seen to construct versions of social reality and it was seen to achieve social objectives. The focus of enquiry shifted from the individual and his or her intentions to language and its productive potential.

From a discursive perspective, then, identity is treated as *accomplished in language*. A discursive approach to research seeks to explore issues that are typically not raised in

traditional psychological research. Instead of asking questions such as ‘*what* identities are typically possessed by musicians?’, a discursive psychologist might instead ask ‘*how* are identities worked up in talk about musical performance, and to what ends?’. Similarly, the more traditional question ‘what thoughts, opinions or beliefs does this talk about musical performance *represent?*’ might be rephrased in discursive work as ‘what is this talk about musical performance *doing* at this particular point in the interaction?’.

In the analytic chapters of this thesis (Chapters 3 to 6), a discursive approach is adopted for several reasons. First, I am interested in available discourses of identity, or ways of talking about the self, that surround constructions of musical performance in Western culture. Second, I am interested in *how* these discourses of identity are drawn upon in the talk of musicians, and to what particular ends. In other words, I want to explore the sociopolitical functions of certain ways of talking about the musical performer; the possible implications of these constructions of identity for musicians, both in the local contexts of interaction as well as in the broader cultural arena. Thirdly, I am fascinated by how identities get *done* in interaction; how we use talk to justify ourselves, to present ourselves in a positive light, to make social comparisons, and so on. In this thesis, I will provide discursive analyses of transcripts of, firstly, two sets of semi-structured interviews with performers and, secondly, a ‘future directions’ meeting held

by members of a chamber choir to attempt to shed light on the questions I have posed above.

In the following section of this chapter, I present an outline of two theoretical approaches to discourse analysis, and then outline the approach to analysis drawn upon in this thesis – an eclectic synthesis of the two strands advocated by Margaret Wetherell (Potter & Wetherell, 1995; Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

3 WHAT MIGHT A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF MUSICIANS' TALK LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

Broadly speaking, discourse analysis can be defined as “the close study of language in use” (Taylor, 2001: 5). Discourse analysis focuses on language as its object of study (Burman & Parker, 1993; Potter 1996b), examining how language generates meaning within particular contexts of talk (Fairclough, 1992). In recent years, discourse analysts have tended to position their approaches to analysis in relation to two major theoretical strands. Both approaches reject the idea that language is an objective medium that accurately represents objects, and both focus on how language *constructs*, rather than represents, the social world (Gill, 1996; Malson, 1998). Each strand, then, rather than attempting to ‘get at the truth’ by looking at talk, treats discourse itself as the topic of investigation. However, the two approaches also vary significantly. One approach – that

of discursive psychology - draws on the tradition of conversation analysis and the conversation analytic interest in the performative aspects of talk, and is primarily concerned with the fine-grained analysis of rhetoric. A second approach draws on post-structuralist theory to attempt a broader analysis of the ways in which discourses constitute and regulate contemporary practices (Burr, 1995; Malson, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

While some researchers treat these two versions of discourse analysis as entirely separate (e.g., Parker, 1997; Potter, 1997; see also Willig, 2001), others suggest that discourse analysis can draw on both post-structuralism and discursive psychology to form an eclectic discourse analysis (e.g., Wetherell, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Abell & Stokoe, 2001). The following section examines this proposed synthesised strand of discourse analysis.

3.1 An eclectic approach to discourse analysis

Researchers such as Wetherell (1998) and Edley (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) argue that the division of discourse analysis into two competing theoretical camps is not particularly helpful, suggesting instead that the two approaches to discourse analysis are complementary. In refuting the bipolarisation of discourse analysis, Wetherell and Edley (1999: 399) argue that talk will always mirror both the “local pragmatics of (the)

particular conversational context” as well as the “more global patterns in collective sense-making and understanding”. They advocate an eclectic form of discourse analysis that draws on both theoretical factions of discourse analysis. Specifically, they argue that discourse is action-oriented and constructive of reality and, at the same time, is involved in the construction and resistance of power relations. Similarly, Potter and Wetherell (1995) argued that the two theoretical factions of discourse analysis – which they suggested should be distinguished by their respective foci on discourse practices (what people do with their talk) and discursive resources (which people draw on in their talk) – should constitute a ‘twin focus’ for discourse analysis (Willig, 2001: 105). Wetherell (1998) argues that this twin focus allows for an analysis which can concentrate simultaneously on the flexible and contextual use of talk, as well as the broader social context in which it is produced. Sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.2 take a closer look at the key elements of an eclectic approach to discourse analysis.

3.1.1 Examining broad social contexts and implications

An eclectic discourse analysis, drawing on post-structuralist theory, takes into account the way that language produces a social account of subjectivity (see Burman & Parker, 1993). In other words, the analysis considers how language functions to construct human beings as subjects (Willig, 2001). As Parker (1992: 9) explains, discourses are seen to “(make) available a space for particular kinds of self to step in ... the discourse is

hailing us, shouting ‘hey you there’ and making us listen as a certain type of person”. This certain type of person made available to us through discourse brings with it specific rules and rights, simultaneously producing and constraining meaning and action. The construction of particular subject positions through discourse both constitutes and regulates who we are:

In constructing ‘reality’ in one particular way rather than another, discourses also construct particular power relations, particular regimes of truth by which we live. In short ... power is always implicated in social practices and in the (discursive) production of different forms of knowledge.

Malson (1998: 6-7)

An eclectic approach to discursive work also considers the possible political implications of ways of talking about the self. This approach to analysis, then, will often consider the broader historical and political contexts in which talk about a topic is constructed. At the same time, however, an eclectic approach to analysis is concerned with more fine-grained analysis of local conversational contexts.

3.2.2 *Examining the action orientation of local talk*

Wetherell’s (1998) approach to discourse analysis also draws on discursive psychology, which has its roots in the emergence of discourse analysis but became known as a

discipline in its own right with Edwards' and Potter's book *Discursive Psychology* (1992). Discursive psychology is primarily concerned with the reconceptualisation of psychological topics such as memory, emotion and identity - previously considered to be fixed, quantifiable and belonging to the individual - as instead negotiated in interaction. Psychological topics, then, are seen as activities, as things that people *do* in interaction rather than things that people *have* (Taylor, 2001).

An eclectic approach to discourse analysis, drawing on discursive psychology, is interested in the analysis of *rhetoric*, "the ways in which we use linguistic devices to present a justifiable account" (Burr, 1995: 165). Analysts examine why one particular account is drawn upon rather than another, and how that particular account is constructed to be persuasive (Gill, 1996). The interest is in how language functions to do things: to blame, to justify, to present oneself in a positive light and so on (Potter, 2003). Although considering broader social and political contexts, analysts also focus on the local interactive contexts of talk to examine how talk is produced contextually in our interactions with others.

The approach to analysing the talk of musicians that is used in this thesis parallels the eclectic approach to discourse analysis advocated by Wetherell. Drawing on both discursive psychological and post-structuralist theories, such discursive projects

typically pose research questions such as ‘how do participants use language to manage stake in social interactions?’, as well as ‘what characterises the discursive worlds people inhabit and what are their implications for possible ways-of-being?’” (Willig, 2001: 121). The analyses presented in the following chapters will, at various junctures, address both sorts of questions suggested above. As such, an eclectic form of discourse analysis – which considers both the action orientation of talk as well as the broader contexts in which it is produced – is the most effective way of analysing the data presented in this thesis.

In the final section of Chapter 1, I look ahead to the contents of this thesis, and summarise the main orientation and contribution of each chapter.

4 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

In Chapter 1, I situated my research in relation to the music psychological literature on musical performance and summarised the discursive approach to examining identity that makes up the theoretical framework of this thesis. Finally, Chapter 1 outlined the eclectic method of discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998) used to investigate musicians’ accounts of their experiences of performance in the analytic chapters that follow.

In Chapter 2, I spend some time reflecting on this method, examining and situating my research within several key debates in contemporary discursive research. I will also discuss methodological issues such as reflexivity, validity and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3, the first of the analytic chapters, presents a discursive analysis of a set of six semi-structured interviews that were undertaken with solo musical performers. These interviews centred around the question 'why do you perform?' The chapter outlines some historical constructions of notions of work, choice and self-fulfilment, and then examines the use of these constructions in the working up of two broad subject positions for the participants – the 'natural performer' and the 'fulfilled performer'. The analysis considers how the situated use of these subject positions in the interview talk functioned to justify the interviewees' choice to embark on what is commonly seen as a fairly alternative career path.

Chapter 4 also presents an analysis of interview data. The analytic materials are a set of seven unstructured interviews with solo musical performers that concerned their experiences of performance. The analysis considers how two contrasting repertoires around performance and identity were used productively to manage self-presentations in interview accounts of both positive and negative performing experiences. This flexible and rhetorical use of talk about the self is contrasted with traditional

psychological work on performance anxiety, which puts forward fairly rigid recommendations for coping with stage fright.

Chapters 5 and 6 continue the examination of the flexible and occasioned use of talk about musical performance. The analytic focus shifts to an examination of the working up of identities for the ensemble singer in a chamber choir's 'future directions' meeting. Chapter 5 contrasts traditional psychological work on the ensemble musician with a discursive approach to the analysis of identity categories, focusing on the use of identity categories to accomplish social actions in talk. Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the regular interactive practice of making social comparisons, examining how comparisons were drawn upon in the choristers' talk to construct the identity category of the 'authentic' chorister as possessing the 'right' motivations to sing.

In the next chapter, I turn to some of the methodological considerations associated with conducting the analyses presented in Chapters 3 to 6.

CHAPTER 2

Reflecting on the methodology

In the previous chapter, I outlined the approach to discourse analysis that I will employ in the analytic chapters to follow. This approach has been described by Wetherell (1998) as 'eclectic', in that it draws on discursive psychology's focus on the sequential organisation of talk in local contexts of interaction, as well as on the post-structuralist suggestion that the broader genealogical contexts which encourage (and discourage) certain ways of being should also be considered. It could be argued that, since its inception, discursive psychological research has been characterised by continuous debates between these two theoretical camps. Although Wetherell's conception of a twin focus to discourse analysis brings the two strands together, debates continue to be raised, published, commented upon, and published again. These debates can be divided into several key topic areas in discursive research that include what can be classed as 'appropriate' contextual considerations, sources of data, and transcription conventions. In this chapter, I will outline, and situate my analytic approach within, these current discursive debates. Along the way, I will consider the methodological issues of reflexivity, validity and ethical research.

1 DEBATES IN DISCURSIVE RESEARCH

1.1 *What counts as appropriate context?*

In recent years, discursive psychologists have debated whether or not broader cultural and historical contexts should be taken into account when analysing a piece of interaction. Generally speaking, discourse analysts are interested in questions such as ‘why is that event described in that way?’ and ‘why does the speaker construct that kind of position for themselves?’ (Wetherell, 2001). However, different analysts consider these questions in very different ways. For some, the questions are approached by examining what the speakers are accomplishing in the local context; in terms of the discursive work being done in sequential turns of talk in the interaction. Other analysts, however, are interested in a broader understanding which situates the interaction in its historical context (Wetherell, 2001: 388). This section of the chapter discusses the points raised by both ‘strands’ in this particular debate, and leads to an outline of the methodological approach to discursive research adopted in this thesis.

Conversation analysts such as Schegloff (1991) suggest that the only context an analyst should examine is that which is worked up and made relevant by participants in local interaction. In other words, the conversation analytic version of ‘appropriate’ context suggests that analysts should limit themselves to analysing discourse in terms of what it is doing in the immediate interaction (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 2000; Schegloff,

1991, 1997). This version of discourse analysis avoids what Potter (2004: 610) refers to as “a broader contextual determinism which treats interaction as governed by the setting in which it takes place”. This point has been controversial in discursive research, and other discourse analysts take an entirely different view.

Whereas conversation analysts such as Schegloff (1997) criticise the ‘grandiosity’ of analysts who impose their own frames of reference on a world which has already been worked up by speakers (Wetherell, 1998: 387-8), other discourse analysts criticise conversation analysts for failing to acknowledge culture as a speaker’s resource in the production of everyday talk (Abell & Stokoe, 2001: 4; see also Fairclough, 1992). A conversation analytic version of discourse analysis, then, has been criticised for denying the broader social context in which a conversation takes place (Willig, 2001). In terms of analyses of identity work, conversation analysis focuses closely on the interactional occasioning of identities but, it is claimed, does not attend to the cultural positioning of such identities (Abell & Stokoe, 2001: 4). Some discourse analysts argue that we must always attend to the discursive history which makes a particular piece of interaction possible (see Shapiro, 1992). This version of discursive work “insists upon seeing all sequences as embedded within some kind of historical context. It recognises that when people talk, they do so using a lexicon or repertoire of terms which has been provided for them by history” (Edley, 2001: 190).

As we have seen, each version of what counts as appropriate context in discourse analytic work has been subject to its own particular criticisms. As Wetherell (1998: 402) summarises:

If the problem with post-structuralist analysts is that they rarely focus on actual social interaction, then the problem with conversational analysts is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation, and, further, this is not an entire conversation or sizeable slice of social life but usually a tiny fragment.

Wetherell (1998: 403) also makes the point that the 'tiny fragment' of interaction analysed in conversation analytic work is selected *by the analyst* and that, in the process of selecting and rejecting which fragments to analyse, conversation analysts define what is relevant and what is irrelevant, for themselves as well as for participants. According to Wetherell, the imposition of the analyst's framework upon the analysis, much maligned by conversation analysts, remains a problem even in conversation analytic work.

Discursive researchers such as Edley and Wetherell (1999), Edley (2001), Abell and Stokoe (2001) and Wetherell (1998, 2001) suggest that analysts should examine the social world worked up and made relevant by speakers in the immediate interaction and, at the same time, take into account the broader cultural positions of the speakers.

This approach to context suggests that identity should be seen as something that is accomplished in local talk, but emphasises that the social world is not constructed anew in every conversation. It acknowledges that certain ways of using discourse become more pervasive than others; that “society provides us with a set of ready-made resources with which to think and talk about the world” (Edley & Wetherell, 1999: 182). Wetherell (1998: 405) terms her approach to analysing discourse, and the contexts in which it is situated, ‘critical discursive social psychology’, and it is this approach that I will take in the analytic chapters to come:

critical discursive social psychology is that discipline which focuses on the situated flow of discourse, which looks at the formation and negotiation of psychological states, identities and interactional and intersubjective events. It is concerned with members’ methods and the logic of accountability while describing also the collective and social patterning of background normative conceptions (their forms of articulation and the social and psychological consequences). It is a discipline concerned with the practices which produce persons, notably discursive practices, but seeks to put these in a genealogical context.

The widespread debate over what counts as appropriate context in discourse work has implications for the collection of data. Potter (2000), for instance, suggests that when

conducting interviews, the researcher runs the risk of “flooding the interaction” with his or her own expectations and categories, incorrectly assuming that the talk is about the official topic of the interview (Taylor, 2001b). As the analytic chapters in this thesis examine varying sources of data, it is important to consider the potential benefits and disadvantages associated with each data source. I turn now to examine current debates about sources of data in discursive research.

1.2 What counts as an appropriate data source?

In the 1980s and early 1990s, it was customary for discourse analysts to use open-ended conversational interviews as their primary research materials. Unlike the traditional survey interviews used in mainstream psychology to ‘get at’ what is assumed to be truthful information about a topic, the aim of the interview in discourse analysis is to identify sets of discursive resources that are available to the participant (Potter, 2003). In recent years, however, discursive psychology has seen a general shift from analysing these conversational interviews (including focus groups) towards the analysis of what has been termed ‘naturalistic’ data (Potter, 1996a, 2003). Before I outline the criticisms made of interviews by those discourse researchers espousing the benefits of naturalistic materials, I first consider some benefits of analysing interview data.

1.2.1 *Conducting interviews in discursive research*

Using interview data in discourse work has, according to Potter (2003, 2004), several advantages. First, interviews enable the researcher to focus on the chosen research topic; to ask questions that encourage participants to draw on available discursive resources surrounding that topic. Second, without downplaying the contingency of conversation, interviews allow a degree of standardisation, providing the opportunity for participants to draw on similar themes. Third, using interviews enables the researcher to retain control over sampling, which in turn assists the process of conducting ethical research¹.

Potter (2000, 2003) also outlines several disadvantages of using interview data. The researcher, he suggests, must attend to the participant's positioning of him or herself as an 'expert informant' or a representative of a particular group of people (musicians, for example). Participants inevitably orient to the interview setting and, as a result, interview data often reveal more about how 'interview talk' gets done rather than talk about a particular topic (Willig, 2001). Potter also suggests that interviews remove participants from their everyday lives (and, hence, the discursive devices they may draw upon to manage stake, interest and accountability within these everyday lives), yet require participants to speak about their lives "as if disinterested" (2004: 613).

¹ See Section 3.4 of this chapter for a discussion of the ethical considerations involved in this research.

Finally, Potter makes the point that if an analyst is interested in talk surrounding a particular topic or area – he gives the example of relationship counselling – it makes much more sense to examine relationship counselling talk rather than talk *about* relationship counselling.

Even the most unstructured interviews are directed by a schedule that stipulates which themes or topics need to be addressed and as such, the researcher cannot help imposing his or her interpretation on the data (Potter, 1996a). In order “to focus on materials less affected by the formulations and assumptions of the researcher” (Potter, 1997: 150), discursive psychologists are moving away from interviews towards the analysis of naturalistic materials (Speer, 2002). Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis present analyses of naturalistic data.

1.2.2 *Analysing ‘naturalistic’ data in discursive research*

The terms ‘natural materials’, ‘naturalistic data’ and ‘naturally occurring talk’ most often refer to talk that would have occurred even if it had not been recorded (Taylor, 2001b). Silverman (2001: 159), for example, defines *non*-natural data as data that “would not exist apart from the researcher’s intervention”; natural data, then, is natural “in the sense that it has not been got up by the researcher” (Potter, 1996a: 135). Potter (1996a, 2001) suggests that for data to be naturalistic it must pass what he terms ‘the dead social

scientist test' – would the interaction have taken place, and taken place in the way that it did, if the researcher had been run over by a bus on the way to work? Settings such as family mealtimes, counselling sessions, audiotapes of everyday work meetings and classroom talk are typical sources of naturalistic data.

Potter (2000, 2002, 2003) outlines a range of advantages of analysing naturalistic data. First, naturalistic data provide a direct record of the object of study. Second, naturalistic talk is suggested to retain the action oriented and situated nature of talk better than interviews, in which turns of talk are directed by the agenda of the interviewer. Third, it avoids the pitfalls of flooding the interaction with the interviewer's or analyst's expectations. Fourth, the analysis of naturalistic data encourages the study of practices rather than persons – it is a vivid record of people living their everyday lives. Fifth, naturalistic materials, in contrast to interview data, do not position participants as experts on what they are being asked to talk about, thereby encouraging them to provide normatively appropriate descriptions.

Obtaining naturalistic data can be pragmatically problematic, however, in terms of access and ethics (Taylor, 2001b). Certain topics may be discussed rarely, for example. In this research, for instance, it may well have been difficult to collect the naturalistic talk of solo musicians sitting around talking about their identities as solo musicians.

This sort of talk – constructing, managing and accounting for one’s identity as a solo performer – is, however, often found in interviews with musicians. Potter (2000) also notes that certain topics may be particularly delicate or even taboo. Since surreptitious recording is unethical, the researcher may have to take steps to ensure against reactivity. One such step is to actually analyse reactivity when it does occur in interactions.

Despite these difficulties in obtaining naturalistic data, some discursive psychologists argue that natural talk should be the only form of data analysed by discourse analysts. Willig (2001: 92), for instance, suggests that because discursive psychologists are interested in how people manage stake and accountability in everyday life, everyday unsolicited conversations provide the best way of exploring these issues. Similarly, Potter (2003: 46) writes that “the focus on naturalistic materials starts to become inevitable once the importance is fully recognised of discourse being occasioned, action-oriented and constructed ... why do anything else?”.

Not all discourse analysts share Potter’s conviction that discursive psychologists should analyse naturalistic rather than ‘got-up’ materials, and in very recent years there has been strong debate about whether or not there is a place for ‘contrived’ data, such as interview data, in discursive psychology. Speer (2002a: 513), in a debate with Potter and

others, suggests that the argument that natural data “are somehow qualitatively different from, preferable to, and/or ‘better’ (for the purposes of analysis)” than interview data makes little theoretical or practical sense in discursive research. She makes the point that, from a discursive perspective, the traditional social scientific view of bias or context effects – that is, that they should be nullified - is reworked as “both unavoidable and theoretically interesting” (p. 512). Discursive psychologists argue that bias in the form of context effects is a feature of all interaction, and is something that should be celebrated and explored (Speer, 2002a: 516). Discursive psychology’s move toward seeing naturalistic data as ‘better’ than interview data because it passes the ‘dead social scientist test’ highlights, according to Speer, a contradictory tension. In viewing interview data as contrived because it is influenced by the researcher, discursive psychologists such as Potter are presenting the researcher as a biasing force – something which had previously been celebrated in discourse work. Speer (2002a: 518) suggests that the natural and contrived distinction “can only be sustained by relying on assumptions about data and the role of the researcher that discourse and conversation analysts elsewhere seem keen to refute”.

So whereas Potter (2002: 541), in response to Speer, suggests that the more that interview data are treated as products of interaction, the less interesting they become, other discursive researchers argue that the natural/contrived debate “is inherently

problematic” (Speer, 2002a: 518). The ethical requirement of obtaining informed consent from participants to carry out social science research, as well as the necessary presence of a tape or video recorder, means that no data can pass the ‘dead researcher’ test. In this sense, *all* data can be seen as researcher-provoked and therefore contrived (Speer, 2002a). Moreover, the natural and contrived distinction assumes that the researcher’s identity is stable and identifiable:

There are a number of problems with this. What happens, for example, when Potter’s counsellor, who, from his perspective, passes the dead social scientist test, also happens to be the researcher (the position of PhD student in my department)? Would this student’s data now fail the test and be considered non-natural by virtue of their dual role? Or would it pass because one role overrides the other? If the counsellor role does override the researcher role, then on what grounds does one do the overriding? Likewise, what happens when the researcher shifts roles?

Speer (2002b: 547)

In the analyses presented in this thesis, which examine both interview and naturalistic data, I do not identify myself as ‘just’ the researcher. I am also the interviewer, the analyst, the one sitting and listening with a tape recorder, a friend, colleague and/or student of the interviewees, and a fellow musician who has performed with the

majority of the participants in this study. In this sense, the interviews can (and will) be viewed as co-productions; interactions between two musicians. This point raises the need to conduct research reflexively, which I consider in the next section.

2 REFLEXIVITY

Discourse researchers argue that a basic feature of social science research is its reflexivity (Parker, 1992); namely, “the way that the researcher acts on the world and the world acts on the researcher, in a loop” (Taylor, 2001b: 16). In traditional positivist psychological research, the researcher aims to collect and analyse data as neutrally as possible; to exert no influence upon the research process. Discursive researchers, in contrast, suggest that this neutrality – the separation of the researcher and the research - is impossible. In discourse work, the researcher acknowledges that the research will inevitably reflect a particular world view or set of interests (Taylor, 2001a: 319). Moreover, the research is no longer thought of as a neutral representation of ‘reality’; the research itself is involved in reality construction (Atkinson, 1990).

In discourse work, detachment from the research is seen as impossible and, consequently, the researcher’s influence on the research process is something that must be taken into account and even utilised (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As a researcher, then, I am required to consider how my presence and actions affect the

research. This includes examining how my identity is relevant to the research (Taylor, 2001b). The researcher's identity becomes significant in discourse analytic work when considering the selection of a topic, which is usually of particular interest to the researcher, and when conducting interviews (Taylor, 2001b). Sherrard (1991) notes that both the interviewer and the participant play a part in the construction of an interview (see also Silverman, 2001), and argues that many discourse analysts do not attend to the contribution they make to the interview setting. An important part of conducting discourse work reflexively, then, involves the researcher's examination of his or her role in the production of discourse during interviews.

In Section 1.2.1 of this chapter, I examined several criticisms of conducting and analysing interviews in discourse analytic research. Billig (1996) suggests that an alternative to the semi-structured interview is the setting up of group discussions - preferably held by pre-existing groups - which simulates a naturally occurring conversation and thereby encourages spontaneous, relaxed interaction. Other researchers conduct interviews with friends or acquaintances to reduce the artificiality of the interview setting (Willig, 2001: 92). The analytic chapters of this thesis analyse materials from these two data sources: a 'future directions' meeting held by a pre-existing group, and interviews with friends and colleagues. With regard to the interviews, my similar experience in musical performance raises some important

questions concerning reflexivity. The questions that are posed in the interview setting are undoubtedly drawn from my experience of musical performance and issues that to me appear valid and worth exploring. I suggest that, as someone experienced in the area of inquiry, my contribution to the discourse is significant. However, I do not believe that this hinders the research. The broad aim of this research is to examine the culturally available ways of talking about identity in musicians' accounts of performance and, as such, my influence in the interview setting is as valid and examinable as that of the other participants.

In discursive research, then, researchers adopt 'a policy of openness' in order to consider their place within the research process (Taylor, 2001b: 19). The aim of the researcher is "to position her or himself within the project, as part of the social world in which the research is conducted. In practical terms this means including some self-description and accounts of his or her relation to the topic, participants and data" (Taylor, 2001b: 19). In Box 2.1, I provide a personal account of some of the methodological difficulties I have grappled with over the past three years, and how these difficulties have shaped this thesis.

Box 2.1

BATTLING WITH METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS: THE PhD JOURNEY

In analysing accounts of anorexic women, Helen Malson (1998: xii) wrote "as another thin woman I have my own agendas here, my own tale to tell". As a musical performer myself, in conducting this research, I have been very aware that I also have my own tale to tell. Conducting interviews with my friends and co-singers early on in my PhD was very easy and always fun. It felt

like nattering with a conspirator – a fellow musician and friend who knew the ups and downs of being a performer – and the interviews were full of emphatic head-nodding, in-jokes and laughter. In analysing the broad ways of talking about the musician drawn on in these interviews, my impression was that I was analysing ‘chats’ rather than ‘interviews’. These analyses were completed in 2001, and can be seen in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

My initial enjoyment derived from conducting and analysing interviews turned to caution in the summer of 2001 to 2002 when Jonathan Potter, co-founder of discourse analysis and discursive psychology, came to town for three months. Jonathan – a very chatty and amiable man who quite obviously loves his work – injected new life and welcomed controversy into our Discourse and Rhetoric Unit (DARU) at the University of Adelaide. We were challenged by intensive data sessions, interesting lectures and ardent talks over lunch. Although I am grateful for Jonathan’s presence, and the resultant challenging of how I approached discourse analysis, I must admit to feeling ‘all shook up’ – PhD-wise – in the months to follow. In a short space of time, interviewing seemed to be suddenly frowned upon by discursive psychologists, analyses that didn’t focus on sequential turns of talk at a micro level were questioned, and I even had a dream that Jonathan took all members of DARU prisoner and chopped off my writing (or, more appropriately, analysing) hand.

At this stage, about halfway through my PhD, I started to play around with a more conversation analytic approach to reanalysing the data I already had – interview data. The results of this part of my PhD can be seen in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. Still feeling under pressure to join the naturalistic camp, the latter stages of 2002 and beginning of 2003 were spent obtaining permission to record a future directions meeting of an Australian choir, transcribing the meeting to simplified Jeffersonian conventions and, with the much-appreciated help of my supervisor, delving into a conversation analysis of the resultant ‘natural’ materials. This study forms the basis of Chapters 5 and 6.

Although this ‘crash course’ in conversation analysis was challenging and often enjoyable, I was left feeling ever so slightly dissatisfied. I think that my first attempts at the analyses presented in Chapters 6 and 7 said some important things about the use and implications of particular identity categories available to ensemble singers. They did not, however, take into consideration the broader historical ways of talking about the musician. I wanted my analyses to be able to acknowledge that “the social world is not constructed *ab initio* in every conversation”; that “some mobilisations of discourse become more stable and pervasive than others” and that “society provides us with a set of ready-made resources with which to think about and talk about the world” (Edley & Wetherell, 1999: 182). At this point, somewhere in the autumn of 2003, I read Wetherell’s (1998) seminal article on an eclectic approach to discourse analysis. After two and a half often confusing years, I had finally found a theoretical framework for my thesis: a framework that espoused the importance of micro *and* macro considerations of discourse.

In many, many ways, doing this PhD has been a transformative journey. In terms of finding a methodological and theoretical framework, the journey has taken a full three years. My thesis reflects this journey, with each analytic chapter belonging to a different part of it. Taylor (2001b), Malson (1998) and others suggest that considering the identity of the researcher is paramount in discourse analytic work. I agree totally, and make the suggestion that this identity – just like the ways of constructing identities for the musical performer analysed in this thesis – is not static. In collecting, transcribing and analysing the data presented in this thesis, I drew upon the various ways of talking about ‘good discourse analysis’ and constructing identities for the ‘good discourse analyst’ that were available to me. These ways of talking about discourse analysis changed over time and varied depending on with whom I was interacting. In a few ways, then, my experience of doing a PhD has provided solid evidence for the discursive suggestion that our ways of being are always socially, culturally and historically situated!

The next section summarises the methodological and analytical approach employed in this thesis, and outlines the position I take in the debates discussed in Section 1 of this chapter.

3 WHERE DOES THIS THESIS FIT IN THE DEBATES?

In writing about the various debates in contemporary discourse research in Section 1, my aim was to show that there is no one correct way to ‘do discursive research’. In taking part in these debates surrounding discourse analysis, many researchers have made the point that the analyst’s position in each debate must depend upon what she or he is trying to *do* with the analysis. Ten Have (2002), for instance, in response to Potter (2002) and Speer (2002a), suggests that whether we consider any data natural or contrived depends on both the topic of the research and what the researcher intends to do with the data. Similarly, Wetherell (2001: 390) makes the point that what counts as relevant context in discursive research depends on what one is analysing – conversational activities or modes of representation such as interpretative repertoires. As I take an eclectic approach to discourse analysis in this thesis, analysing both conversational activities and interpretative repertoires, I variously take up *both* positions in the debates about naturalistic versus contrived data and what counts as relevant context, depending on the research questions being asked in each chapter. The

research questions and consequent analytic foci are described in the opening sections of the analytic chapters to come.

3.1 What does this thesis examine in talk?

3.1.1 Subject positions

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I will examine some ways of constructing identities for solo musicians drawn upon in interview talk about the topics of performance, work and self-fulfilment. These ways of talking about the musician are referred to as *subject positions*. Analysing subject positions, as opposed to the concept of 'identity', takes into account the discursive suggestion that identity should be conceptualised as a "plural collectivity" (Riley, 1988) of historically and culturally varying ways of talking about the self rather than as a fixed, asocial entity (Malson, 1998; Walkerdine, 1993; Wetherell & White, 1992). In keeping with its analytic framework of an eclectic approach to discourse analysis, this thesis draws on the post-structuralist treatment of subject positions as bringing with them a structure of rights and obligations (Burr, 1995); as legislating "what a person is (and should) be, can (and should) do, feel (and should) feel" (Carbaugh, 1996: 27). The analyses also take into account the discursive argument that subject positions are always highly occasioned and situated – the taking up of identities is troubled and untroubled depending on the surrounding conversational activities (Wetherell, 1998).

3.1.2 *Interpretative repertoires*

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, I examine multiple, shifting and sometimes contradictory ways of talking about the solo performer in relation to the topic of musical performance anxiety. These varying ways of talking about the performer are treated as *interpretative repertoires* according to Wetherell's (1998: 400) definition, which suggests that interpretative repertoires are "culturally familiar and habitual lines of argument comprised of recognisable themes, common places and tropes". Interpretative repertoires can be viewed as a family of terms about a particular topic (Taylor, 2001b) which develop historically and which are drawn on as part of a culture's 'common sense' (Potter, 1996a), providing a basis for shared social understanding (Edley, 2001). As Hepburn (2003: 108) writes, "they can be thought of as little packages of ideas that people use to make sense of and evaluate the world". The term 'interpretative repertoires' was coined by Potter and Wetherell (1987) to examine both the regularities and flexibility of talk about a particular topic (Potter, 1996a). They are seen as 'building blocks of conversation' (Edley, 2001: 198) which are drawn upon selectively to perform different functions in different settings of talk (Potter, 1996a).

3.1.3 *Identity categories*

Chapters 6 and 7 see a change in analytic focus, with an examination of the working up of the identity category of the *ensemble singer* in the context of a choir's discussions

about its possible future directions. In discursive research, identity categories are viewed as resources for speakers; as something that *gets done* in interaction rather than something people 'have' (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). The analytic approach of these two chapters treats social identity categories as accomplished in interaction, and as 'performative of talk's current business' (Edwards, 1998: 17). The analyses examine identity categories for the ensemble singer in terms of the 'business' they are doing in local interactive contexts, as well as their possible broader social implications.

3.2 *What data were examined?*

The data for this research comprised three sets of materials. The first two sets each involved seven interviews with solo performers – primarily singers – and were conducted in August 2000 and July 2001 respectively. Participants were all solo performers known to the interviewer, and were either completing a music performance degree or performing full-time. The first round of interviews was entirely open-ended, employing a non-directive interview technique where no standard interview schedule was followed (Denzin, 1978; see also Kvale, 1996). However, each interview, which lasted for approximately 60 minutes, opened with two set questions: 1) "Can you describe one of your most memorable performances?" and 2) "What do you think it takes to be a brilliant performer?" Subsequent questions were based on participants' responses, and were focussed loosely around the interview topic of memorable

performing experiences, and what they ‘meant’ to performers. The analysis of these interviews is presented in Chapter 4.

In the second round of interviews, conducted with seven different musical performers, I followed an interview schedule which specified a set of questions surrounding the topic of musical performance as a career. Typical questions included “Can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?”² However, not all questions were asked in each interview, and the interview often moved away from the specified schedule. Chapter 3 presents an analysis of the transcripts from this second set of interviews. All interviews lasted between approximately 45 and 90 minutes, and were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees.

The third set of materials involved the recording of a ‘future directions’ meeting held by an Australian chamber choir in June 2002. Consent was obtained from the choir members for the researcher to tape-record and transcribe the talk that occurred in the meeting. In return, the members were provided with a summary of the content of the discussion that took place. The meeting was called by the Director of the choir to discuss ‘levels of satisfaction’ surveys that had been completed by choristers, and to clarify the Director’s draft vision statement which had been completed six months

² The full interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 1.

earlier³. Sixteen singers, the Director and his wife participated in the group discussion, which was chaired – in informal fashion – by the Director. Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis present a discursive analysis of the transcript of the meeting.

3.3 *How were the data transcribed?*

Both the interviews and the meeting were initially transcribed to a conventional orthographic level⁴. In general, discourse researchers suggest that discourse analysis concerned with macro-discursive patterns – sets of interrelated terms such as subject positions and interpretative repertoires – need only use a relatively broad transcription which highlights words, corrections and hesitations, whereas an analysis investigating interactional specifics needs a much more detailed transcription scheme which notes intonation and overlap (see Potter, 1996a; Taylor, 2001b; Stubbe *et al.*, 2003). Of course, each transcription scheme has been subject to criticisms from each theoretical camp. The more detailed Jeffersonian approach to transcription (Jefferson, 1985; see also Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; ten Have, 1999) has been criticised for requiring unnecessary expenditure of time and money, for including unnecessary detail which makes the transcript cumbersome and difficult to work with and, consequently, for reducing the amount of material that can be analysed practically (Taylor, 2001b,

³ Consent was also obtained for the researcher to gain access to the Director's vision statement and the choristers' surveys.

⁴ See Potter & Wetherell (1987: 188-9); also see Appendix 2.

Wetherell, 1998). The less detailed version of transcription (see Potter & Wetherell, 1987, Edley & Wetherell, 1999), labelled 'Jefferson Lite' by Potter (2000), has been criticised for failing to capture the features that demonstrate how the talk is occasioned by the local interaction (Potter, 1996a).

Despite these criticisms, many researchers continue to suggest that the researcher's choice of transcription conventions should depend on the aims of the research and that, therefore, there is no one 'right' way to transcribe data (Taylor, 2001b). Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that the transcript itself, no matter how detailed, is a *version* of the interaction that occurred which reflects those features of talk that the analyst considered relevant and, therefore, it can never be neutral. Transcripts always involve a process of selection, and what is selected depends upon the research questions and the researcher's theoretical judgement about what is important (Ochs, 1979; Potter 2000). In this thesis, the analytic focus on the local, situated use of macro-discursive patterns like subject positions, interpretative repertoires and identity categories led me to transcribe the audiotapes according to slightly simplified conventions adapted from the notation system developed by Jefferson (1985). This system highlights features of speech delivery such as intonation, emphases, pauses, as well as sequential detail⁵.

⁵ Please refer to Appendix 3.

3.4 *What ethical considerations were taken?*

As mentioned earlier, the four analytic chapters of this thesis draw on three data sources: two sets of seven interviews with musical performers, and the recording of a choir's future directions meeting. Before each phase of data collection commenced, approval was gained from the Department of Psychology's Human Ethics Committee. Each participant was given an information sheet regarding the research (see Appendix 4). Having read the information sheets, the participants and I both signed a Departmental Consent Form (see Appendices 6 and 7), ensuring that the participant understood the procedure, and that I agreed to abide by the ethical guidelines set out on the form. These guidelines included:

3.4.1 *Voluntary Participation*

With regard to the interview study, the information sheet emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary; that the interviews would occur at a time and place convenient to the interviewees; that participants were free to discontinue the interview at any time and that they were free to elect not to discuss particular topics. I approached potential participants – all of whom were friends or colleagues - in person, and gave them an information sheet, telling them that they were free to contact me in their own time if they were interested in participating.

In terms of the 'future directions' meeting, I first obtained permission from the choir's board of management to address the choristers at a rehearsal. During the initial briefing, and in the information sheet given to the choir members, it was stressed that participation in the research was entirely voluntary. My telephone number was provided in the information sheet, and participants were free to contact me at any time. The choristers were told that I was available to answer any questions raised by individual singers, but would not approach any singer directly.

3.4.2 Confidentiality

The interviews were tape-recorded, but any information remains strictly confidential. All names and identifying features were changed to ensure anonymity.

The data collected from the ensemble singers comprised two sets of materials. First, I obtained permission from the choristers to examine the surveys that they had completed six months earlier about their levels of satisfaction with the choir. The names of consenting participants were forwarded to the original collator of the surveys, who presented me with those surveys completed by the singers who had given their consent to participate in the study. Singers' names and vocal parts were removed by the collator. The second method of data collection involved the recording of the choir's future directions meeting. This was tape-recorded, but any information remained

strictly confidential. All names and identifying features were changed at the transcription stage.

3.4.3 Benefits for Participants

Interested participants have been sent information about the research findings. With regard to the interview study, I hoped to make the interview a pleasurable experience for each participant. I very much enjoyed the challenge of making interviewees feel comfortable and 'listened to'. In interviewing, my aim was to encourage the participants to enjoy the process of talking about themselves and their experiences. Many interviewees commented that they took pleasure in relating stories of their performances and exploring what music meant to them.

With regard to the choir's future directions meeting, I provided the ensemble with a confidential content analysis of the discussion. This report highlighted not only the rewards of being a member of the choir, but some of the difficulties facing the group. Drawing on the talk of the participants, I listed suggested methods of dealing with these difficulties. It was hoped that the information summarised in the report had the potential to contribute to improving the everyday functioning of the choir and the organisational culture of the group. It was also hoped that the report would elucidate

the choir's broad aims, and the requirements asked of, and benefits offered to, its members.

If I had been drawing on a mainstream psychological approach, I might well suggest that a possible benefit to the participants might be what is conceptualised in traditional psychological work as the validity of the research - my confidence that the information I had provided participants gave them an 'accurate' idea of their place in the world as musicians. In discursive research, however, the knowledge produced by research has been reconceptualised as *situated*; as belonging to the time and place in which the research was conducted. Research findings are, from this perspective, no longer seen as possessing a stable and enduring truth (Taylor, 2001a). Validating discourse work, then, must take a very different form to the concept of validity espoused in traditional psychological research. I turn now to examine some possible forms of validity in discursive research.

4 VALIDATING DISCOURSE ANALYTIC WORK

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) have suggested that discursive research has been experiencing a 'crisis of legitimation'; that because of the discursive dismissal of the possibility of checking research against an objective reality, discourse researchers had

no systems in place for evaluating the analyses they produced. However, a number of procedures for validating discourse work have been proposed by various researchers.

Potter and Wetherell (1987), for example, suggested that valid discursive research is always located in relation to previously published work (see also Edwards & Potter, 1993). They also argue for validation through the examination of deviant or inconsistent cases in the discourse, with reference to new research problems that the analysis may have raised, and through reference to the fruitfulness of the findings. One argument for the value of an analysis in terms of its fruitfulness involves the generation of new theories or hypotheses (Seale & Silverman, 1997), or original explanations of a previously analysed topic (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Another suggested way in which discourse analytic work can be validated is through what Taylor (2001a) refers to as 'triangulation'. Triangulation proposes the use of more than one – but not necessarily three - methods or data sources to examine the same topic. Taylor also suggests that the quality of the analysis can be argued for when the researcher has claims to an 'insider status'; when the researcher can describe what she or he has in common with the participants. However, she warns that asserting one's insider status can come close to a truth claim, where the researcher suggests that the insider status "enables her or him to really 'know'" (Taylor, 2001a: 321).

In this thesis, I have tried to attend to the forms of validating analysis listed above. My research is located in relation to previously published work in the fields of music and discursive psychology; I examine deviant cases in the data; the conclusion of this thesis raises some possible further directions to explore; I draw my materials from more than one source; and I can make a claim to ‘insider status’. However, I do not in any way suggest that the findings reported in the chapters to come represent the most ‘truthful’ analysis – as Hollway (1989) and Burr (1995) have suggested, the possible analyses generated from any one text are theoretically limitless. Moreover, the aim of this research project has never been to reveal universal ‘truths’ about the identities of musical performers. I am not concerned with discovering the true reasons why performers choose to become performers, nor am I interested in labelling the musicians I have spoken with as possessing any ‘typical’ traits. In this project, I will investigate some discursive resources drawn upon by the musicians *to construct their identities as performers*, rather than the performers themselves. I hope that the chapters to come present findings that are coherent, fruitful and that suggest some novel explanations about musical performance and identity. However, as Speer and Potter (2002) suggested, perhaps the best form of validating discourse work takes the form of reader assessment, where the reader judges the analyst’s claims and reaches her or his own conclusions. In that case, I hope you enjoy the chapters to come!

I turn now to the first analytic chapter of the thesis. Chapter 3 is concerned with the subject positions drawn upon by solo performers in interviews about their reasons for embarking on a career in musical performance.

CHAPTER 3

Work & Fulfilment: Accounting for a performing career

In the last chapter, I outlined several debates surrounding the use of discourse analysis in psychological research. One of the debates I looked at involves the discussion of what counts as appropriate context in discourse work. Certain analysts suggest that studies of discourse should always be situated within the talk's broader cultural and historical contexts (see Edley & Wetherell, 1999; Edley, 2001; Abell & Stokoe, 2001; Wetherell, 1998, 2001; Fairclough, 1992), while others argue that analysts should only concern themselves with studying what is made relevant by participants in local settings of talk (see Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 2000; Schegloff, 1991, 1997). Chapter 2 situated my thesis within this particular debate. Drawing on an eclectic approach to discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998), the analyses presented in this dissertation will examine the social world worked up and made relevant by the speakers in the immediate interaction and, at the same time, take into account broader social and historical contexts which make available particular subject positions for the musical performer.

In this chapter, I present an analysis of an interview study that centred around the topic of the interviewees' reasons for embarking on a career in musical performance. Typical questions posed included 'what led you to become a performer?' and 'why do you perform?' The analysis section is concerned with how the interviewees' discourse was organised rhetorically to account for and justify 'choosing' to perform. The first sections of the chapter examine historical constructions of the types of subject positions drawn upon by the performers to construct their accounts. Specifically, I look at some historical contexts surrounding the notions of work, choice and fulfilment.

1 HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF CHOICE AND FULFILMENT

The idea that we strive for self-fulfilment in our everyday lives – in our work, families, sporting achievements and so on – seems commonsensical to us. Similarly, the idea that we are 'in charge' of this process of fulfilling ourselves – that we can choose our own personal goals of self-fulfilment – is generally unquestioned. In discursive terms, notions like 'following your heart', 'loving your work', 'challenging yourself', 'fulfilling yourself' and so on are commonly used as "building blocks of conversation" (Edley, 2001); as ways of constructing and accounting for our identities (Wetherell, 1998). Talk about 'choosing self-fulfilment', however, has only held cultural currency in relatively recent years. This section of the chapter examines some of the historical contexts that

could be seen to encourage the consideration of our (Western) selves as ‘naturally’ – or commonsensically – choosing to seek fulfilment in our day-to-day lives.

Until the religious schism that occurred in the Middle Ages, it has been argued that individuals in Western society were considered to be bestowed from birth with an identity that was based on family lineage, gender, social rank and social role (e.g., Morris, 1972). In these early times, it has been pointed out that the issue of individual choice was unimportant; a meaningful life was equated with rigid adherence to Christian tenets and ideals (Baumeister, 1986). The advent of Protestantism, however, brought with it the possibility of choice, and individuals were able to decide whether they wanted to live by the new Protestant principles of Christianity. The previous singular model of leading a ‘good life’ was now plural in its makeup, and this, according to Baumeister (1986: 34), “created a setting in which one’s identity had to rely on some inner meta-criteria”. Moreover, the introduction of Protestantism had the effect of shifting previous notions of individual responsibility and autonomy. Christianity was now expected to be

Box 3.1

HISTORY REPEATING?

I should mention that, in my outline of historical constructions of identity, it is not my aim to present current concepts of the self as superior to those in earlier times. I do not necessarily see the course of history as inherently progressive. Neither do I wish to present this particular account as the ‘one true version’ of events, or to suggest that, as Shirley Bassey purrs, we are seeing ‘history repeating’. In line with a critical discursive social psychological approach to research, my aim is to outline the discursive history that makes particular ways of talking about the self possible. To paraphrase Wetherell (1998: 405), critical discursive social psychology is concerned with how discursive practices produce persons, and with placing these practices in a genealogical context.

practised directly by all Christians, instead of being mediated by the Church's elite (Taylor, 1989). Under the new Protestant principles, for example, Christians were expected to carry out daily examinations of their consciences (Danziger, 1997) and, in contrast to the promise that every Catholic would be saved, Protestants were required to take responsibility for their own deliverance (Taylor, 1989). Individuals, then, began to be held accountable for their own personal choices.

In the 1500s, a rise in opportunities to relocate one's self and one's family also challenged previous ideas about individual autonomy and choice. As social mobility increased, the importance of social rank and social role – which had previously defined social position from birth – decreased. Individuals could, for the first time, 'redefine' themselves. This was encouraged, in part, by the emergence of European nations (with the exception of Germany) as the central governing bodies, which acted to shift power from local aristocratic families on to the individual; and to the Black Death, which claimed almost a third of the population in some parts of Europe, resulting in labour shortages, superfluous land and, as a consequence, the increased possibility for the impoverished to choose a new position in society (Danziger, 1997).

By the 16th century, individuals were generally understood as entities separable from their social role (Trilling, 1971). Until this point in history, words about the self had

tended to hold negative connotations. At this time, according to Danziger (1997), the English language became proliferated with words such as self-praise (1549), self-pride (1586), self-contained (1591), self-regard (1595), self-made (1615), self-interest (1649), and self-confidence (1653). In Locke's (1694) influential second edition of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he added a chapter which discussed the self in entirely secular terms. This new concept of a self removed from the constraints of kinship and the Church was, according to Danziger (1997: 141), both meaningful and unsettling for Locke's readers:

It was meaningful because in the increasingly commercialised society of post-Revolutionary England social identities conferred by birth – such as class, kinship and occupation – were no longer immutable. Not only were individuals becoming separated from their social identities, but that separation was accelerating at a time when the hold of theologically based notions of personal identity was also beginning to weaken. Where neither social identity by descent nor the immortality of the soul provided a sufficient guarantee of permanence and stability, personal identity had to come into question.

The period from roughly 1500 to 1800 saw the gradual development of the idea that individuals were separable from their social roles and their religion and that, consequently, they were able to make choices about the ways in which they led their

lives. Weintraub (1978) referred to this new belief - that each individual was original and autonomous - as 'the new definition of individuality'. By the 17th and 18th centuries, individuals had turned to notions of personal identity to provide a new 'life model' (Baumeister, 1986). From the 17th century on, diaries and autobiographies became prolific (Stone, 1977). Older versions of the autobiography had tended to serve religious purposes (Weintraub, 1978); the new form of autobiography, in contrast, outlined the private lives, thoughts, feelings and choices of the author (Danziger, 1997). The decline of the Church produced a new view of the unique individual as the site of salvation (Cushman, 1990); the previous quest for a generalised religious *character* was replaced by the quest for a unique, secular *personality* (Susman, 1973).

The second part of Weintraub's (1978) 'new definition of individuality' is the view that each individual has a unique destiny; that we are obliged to "live up to our originality" (Taylor, 1989: 375). The notion of an inner voice, and the search for each individual's feelings, desires and potentials, were crucial concepts in what is referred to as the Romantic period (c.1810-1900) of European history (Taylor, 1989). The Romantic period passed on the now familiar concept of vocation; the idea that we need to find our unique 'calling' in order to achieve fulfilment (Baumeister, 1997). The Romantic concept of personal destiny, then, "entailed personal fulfilment by means of discovering

one's special talents ... and then labouring to maximise and express them" (Baumeister, 1986: 62).

This idea - that we need to find out 'who we are' in order to achieve self-fulfilment - has become "one of the cornerstones of modern culture ... so much so that we barely notice it, and we find it hard to accept that it is such a recent idea in human history and would have been incomprehensible in earlier times" (Taylor, 1989: 376). Historical constructions of notions such as personal autonomy, choice and fulfilment are now common in talk about the ways in which we conduct our everyday lives. They are particularly visible in language surrounding work and career; providing the building blocks of conversations about, for instance, 'finding the perfect job', 'changing careers' and 'worker satisfaction'. The next section looks more closely at some culturally available ways in which we talk about work and self-fulfilment.

2 THE ROLE OF 'WORK' IN ACHIEVING FULFILMENT

It has been argued that the decline of Christianity's influence in determining the model of a 'well-lived life' resulted in what Baumeister (1986: 200) refers to as a 'value gap' in Western society, and that the response to this value gap involved the transformation of the self into a potent value-base. Individuals began to identify with their career at a deeper level, viewing it as their unique 'calling'; particular jobs thus came to take on a new level of importance as an 'identity component' (Baumeister, 1986: 50). In recent

times it has become commonsensical to link our careers with who we are as people – consider the stereotypes of ‘dodgy salesperson’ and ‘absent-minded professor’; the jokey rolling of eyes at the discovery that an accountant is coming to dinner; the standard line ‘said the actor to the bishop’ and so on. Even the word ‘diva’, previously used in its musical sense only, has come to represent what is constructed as a stereotypical artistic ‘identity’.

Alongside this positioning of work and identity as commonsensically linked is the construction of work as a means of achieving self-fulfilment. An entire industry on employment has taken shape, with thousands of books assuring us that “we can take control of our careers, transform ourselves into high flyers, achieve excellence, and fulfil ourselves not *in spite of* work but *by means of* work” (Rose, 1996: 158). Books such as *How to Find the Job you Love* (Boldt, 1996), *Artful Work: Awakening Joy, Meaning and Commitment in the Workplace* (Richards, 1997) and *How to Turn Your Interest into a Career You Love* (Bernstein, 2003) regularly appear on bookshelves, promising us that we will be transformed into better workers, and therefore better selves, by ‘following our passion’. The employment relationship, then, often becomes a matter of the fulfilment it confers (or denies) rather than the financial rewards it offers (Rose, 1996: 158). Standard recruiting enticements appearing on the websites of global corporations include ‘You, Inc.: Your brand, your skills, your talent’

(www.achievegloab.com); 'We look for passionate people' (www.bah.com.au) and 'Where can McKinsey take you?' (www.mckinsey.com). These same corporations invest millions in psychometric assessments to make sure the 'right worker' is placed in the 'right job', thereby maximising worker efficiency and building organisational profits (Cushman, 1990: 602). Career choice, self-fulfilment and economic success have become increasingly intertwined. As Rose (1996: 161) writes, "work has become an essential element in the path to self-realisation, and the strivings of the autonomous self have become essential allies in the path to economic success".

I turn now to look at some possible political implications of these contemporary constructions of the self as seeking self-realisation and self-fulfilment through work. This is done with a view to the eclectic approach to discourse work that drives this thesis – in particular, Wetherell and Edley's (1999) suggestion that discourse is always involved in the construction and resistance of power relations; that an eclectic approach to the analysis of discourse should always consider the talk's implications for possible ways-of-being (Willig, 2001: 121).

3 THE ROLE OF CHOICE AND FULFILMENT IN GOVERNMENT

Many discourse researchers suggest that ways of being that are considered commonsensical serve the interests of relatively powerful groups in a society (see Burr,

1998; Foucault, 1977, 1988; Hepburn, 2003; Malson, 1998; Stainton Rogers *et al.*, 1995; Walkerdine, 1984). According to this view, discourses that have been labeled 'truthful' become dominant and thereby discourage the possibility of drawing on alternative ways of talking about the self. In this section, I draw on the research of Foucault (1988) and Rose (1990, 1996, 2000) which, in its discussion of the political functions served by conceptualising the self as autonomous and as seeking self-fulfilment, outlines the concept of the 'government' of the individual in Western society. In this work, 'government' is seen as the means by which individuals are governed and regulated *through* the positioning of the self as autonomous and free. Foucault (1988, in McCarthy, 1994: 280) defines governmentality as "the totality of practices by which one can constitute, define, organise and instrumentalise the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other". To put it in simpler terms, both Rose and Foucault argue that notions of autonomy, freedom and choice, so prevalent in Western society, are misconceived; that our attempts to achieve self-fulfilment, for instance, are socially managed rather than individually determined. The individualistic concept of 'the person' is seen as inextricably bound in relations of power, and the idea that we are free agents is "a metaphysical fiction" (Hirst & Woolley, 1982: 131).

Foucault (1988) argued that governmentality works by managing "individuals in their liberty". Identity is considered a key element in the regulation of individual selves;

government is said to be accomplished through the construction of ways of understanding the self (Sampson, 1983). As Rose (1990: 213) writes:

the regulatory apparatus of the modern state is not something imposed from the outside upon individuals who have remained essentially untouched by it. Incorporating, shaping, channelling, and enhancing subjectivity have been intrinsic to the operations of government.

Here, Rose is alluding to Foucault's (1988) suggestion that, rather than thinking of power as something that constrains and represses, we should instead conceptualise it in terms of its ability to shape human beings as subjects. Power becomes seen as working through rather than against subjectivity; "governing in a liberal-democratic way means governing through the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than in spite of them" (Rose, 1996: 155). Our 'choice' to seek self-fulfilment, then, according to the work of Foucault and Rose, is intimately linked to contemporary forms of government. As consumers we are promised by advertisers, manufacturers and even politicians that each 'choice' we make will reflect our unique individuality, and help us on our path towards achieving self-fulfilment. Governmentality, according to Rose (1990), works at a distance by forging an alliance between these culturally available notions of autonomy, choice and self-fulfilment, and social goals of profitability and consumption. Research on governmentality suggests that, while we are no longer thought to need instruction from religious and political authorities on how to regulate our selves, we are

now governed through the choices we make in our quest to fulfil our selves. This form of government can be thought of as particularly effective, because it appears to spring from our supposedly individual desires to fulfil ourselves in our everyday lives (Rose, 1996: 17).

As mentioned in the introduction to this section of the chapter, discourse analysts advocating an eclectic approach to analysis suggest that talk is always involved in, and constructive of, particular power relations. An examination of the work of Foucault and Rose on the government of the contemporary self highlights some possible political implications of talking about the self as seeking self-fulfilment. In the analysis section that follows, I examine some ways in which musicians, in interviews about why they became performers, accounted for their choice to perform. One of the major ways in which this justification of career choice was achieved was through the working up of the subject position of the 'fulfilled performer', the implications of which are considered in the discussion section of the chapter. Before I turn to the analysis of the interviewees' talk, though, I will briefly examine some historical constructions of the musical performer that can be seen to contribute to the need for performers to justify their choice to perform.

4 HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF PERFORMERS AND PERFORMANCE

The history of the musician and of music-making is, of course, a major discipline in its own right, and I do not pretend to present a comprehensive review here. My concern is to show some of the historical contexts that have shaped notions of ‘the performer’ as removed from ‘normal’ society; as eccentric, flamboyant and “set apart from the normal system of work and wages” (Raynor, 1972: 354). In light of this brief synopsis of such historical constructions of the performer, the contemporary need for musicians to justify their choice to embark on a performance career – the analytic concern of this chapter – is given a context and, as such, becomes more understandable.

Many of the current ways in which we talk about ‘typical musicians’ can be found in Romantic views of music and art, which placed importance on subjectivity, the expression of personal feelings, and “a desire for freedom from the limitations of convention” (Stolba, 1994: 456). Beethoven (1779-1827), credited with bridging the Classical (c. 1750-1825) and the Romantic (c. 1810-1900) periods, was commonly regarded as “the first true romantic” because of his ability to “withhold nothing of himself” in his music-making (Lang, 1997: 94), and to delight audiences with his famously eccentric behaviour:

His tendency to aggressive discourtesy endeared him to a nobility used to complete subservience, as though Beethoven gave them a rare opportunity to

congratulate themselves on their ability to penetrate his roughness and rudeness to the integrity and genius lying beneath these socially deplorable failings.

(Raynor, 1972: 325)

The Romantic period witnessed the development of the stereotyped identity of the 'mad genius'; the artist so creative that breaches of conventional standards of decency and decorum were readily forgiven. Brilliant musicianship was equated with volatile personalities, perhaps encouraged by the rise of 'supervirtuosos' like Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) and Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Violinist Paganini dazzled audiences with his technical wizardry, and developed a hugely successful stage presence that was emulated by many other 19th century performers. He reportedly arrived in Vienna in 1828 a physical wreck; emaciated, yellow-skinned, and suffering from tuberculosis. Rumours of lost love and murder were whispered, and his peculiarly grand stage manner, with his trademark stiff walk and bow, made him a legend. Throughout Europe, Paganini doubled entrance prices to his concerts and still managed to pack concert halls (Stolba, 1994). Franz Liszt, considered the finest pianist of his era, is thought to have modelled his performances on Paganini. Admired as much for his technical brilliance as his personality, which was said to be "as explosive as a fireworks display" (Raynor, 1976: 16), Liszt's performances were "not just performances by Liszt but performances *of him*" (Kramer, 2002: 87).

The gradual emergence of the celebrity supervirtuoso led to the treatment of the public concert as a forum for performers to – quite literally – perform themselves to the audience; to withhold nothing of themselves (Lang, 1997: 94). This demand for self-expression from individual performers allowed the staging of the first ever solo concert with no accompaniment or support from other musicians, played by Liszt in London in 1840. Together with Beethoven and Paganini, Liszt was perhaps the greatest influence on the construction of the musician as a unique personality. As Raynor (1976: 59) writes, “in future there was to be an inescapable equation between powerful, eccentric personality and supreme virtuosity”.

The Romantic period was the era of the ‘creative genius’, the construction of the artist as too great for normality. Romantic society, according to Raynor (1972), approved of this positioning of the artist, as only by seeing musicians as “born outsiders” could non-musicians forgive themselves for their own lack of creativity:

The artist was drawn into bohemianism partly because the world wanted him (sic) to reject normality and partly because it never paid him in a way which made normal, conventional life natural to him ... He became a man in no way indissolubly tied to the normal courses of society The course of history had set the (musician) apart from the normal system of work and wages ... with their concomitants of social responsibility and social necessity. (Raynor, 1972: 353-4).

The analysis section of this chapter examines transcripts of a set of semi-structured interviews with full-time musical performers which centred around the question “why take up a career in musical performance?”⁶ I consider the ways in which the performers, in the interviews, accounted for their decision to perform in two ways; first, by constructing performance as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’; and second, by positioning performance as leading to self-fulfilment, in direct contrast to constructions of ‘normal’ work. Analysis of the interview transcripts aimed to identify the kinds of taken-for-granted common-sense ideas and norms that were mobilised to explain and account for the interviewees’ reasons for performing. I considered how subject positions of the ‘natural performer’ and the ‘fulfilled performer’ were worked up and used productively by the interviewees to attend to their own accountability in embarking on what is commonly considered an insecure or unstable career. The possible implications of the participants’ talk were also examined.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 *The ‘natural’ performer*

Edwards (1998) suggests that a useful analytic tool when examining discourse involves considering what was *not* said. Possible responses to the question “Can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?” could include such

⁶ Please refer to Appendix 1 for the interview schedule (see Sections C and D); also see Chapter 2 Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for information about the participants, materials and transcription conventions.

varied responses as “I don’t know, I’m just really good at it”, “I got hooked on the admiration and applause” or even “it’s a lazy kind of life, really – I don’t have to work all that hard and I can stay in bed until after noon”. While these responses are certainly available to the interviewees, I suggest that they could potentially cause some problems for respondents. First, speakers may find themselves having to account for their authenticity as performers; to portray themselves as ‘genuine’ musicians as opposed to people that simply ‘fell into’ their job. Second, these sorts of responses may also invite possible accusations of boasting or immodesty. My general point, though, is that considering musical performance is commonly constructed as a fairly ‘alternative’ career choice, speakers outlining the ‘ideas or events’ that led them to become performers would generally need to do a fair bit of work to justify the choice to embark on a performing career. The participants’ responses in Extracts 1 and 2 show just this kind of justificatory work.

Extracts 1 and 2 illustrate typical replies to the interview question “can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?” In immediate response to the question, which generally occurred about halfway through each interview⁷, both speakers described themselves as belonging to a family of performers, and portrayed the process of becoming performers as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ because of their families.

⁷ See Appendix 1.

Extract 1

- 1 **Gemma** Can you te:ll me: about the ide:as or events (.)
2 that led you to become a performer?
- 3 **Laurey** We:ll I'm not sure how much of it is hereditary.
4 So (.) because my family is a performing fa:mily um: (.)
5 it was more natural for me to do it because it was (.)
6 it wasn't so much ↑pushed by anybody
7 it was just ↑nor:mal for everybody
8 >so it was the norm in my family therefore
9 I just started doing it because everybody else was.<
10 Um:m and so I'm not sure if I'd be a performer
11 if I belonged to a different fa:mily.
12 I started when I was so young
13 that I I can't really be sure. The ideas °I guess was that°
14 (.) I think musical talent is hereditary and so because: (.)
15 >because my parents and everybody who makes their family
16 musical they automatically start their children early
17 just because< (.) and so I was one of those (.)
18 and because I guess I showed promise they kept doing it
19 and because I en↑joyed ↓it (.) um:m and so
20 it just ↑naturally led on to (.) little concerts
21 and little competitions and things when I was little

Extract 2

- 1 **Gemma** Ah: (.) can you tell me about the ideas or or the events
2 that led you to become a performer?

3 **Eliza** Um:m (smiles) I s'pose in some way my environment helped.
4 I come from a very musical fa:mily (.) so (.) um:m
5 >you know what it's like
6 when you grow up with music< all arou:nd you
7 it †does †come naturally to you and that's: (.) so I:'m
8 (.) I'm †naturally geared towards being a singer I s'†pose

I would like to look closely at a number of features of Extracts 1 and 2 that can be seen to manage the participants' accounts of their reasons for becoming performers. Note that both interviewees begin their responses to the interview question with fairly vague descriptions of what led them to become performers ('We:ll I'm not sure how much of it is hereditary', Extract 1, line 1; 'I s'pose in some way my environment helped', Extract 2, line 4). The use of softening qualifiers like 'I'm not sure', 'I s'pose' and 'in some way' allows the speakers to present alternative versions later in the interview. The speakers then go on to work up very similar versions of category membership (Widdicombe & Woofitt, 1990, 1995), with both presenting themselves as part of a musical family (e.g., 'my family is a performing fa:mily', Extract 1, line 4; 'I come from a very musical fa:mily', Extract 2, line 4). In response to the question 'Can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?', membership of the category 'performing family' or 'musical family' is portrayed repeatedly as the direct reason that

the interviewees became performers (e.g., 'I'm not sure if I'd be a performer if I belonged to a different family. I started when I was so young that I I can't really be sure', Extract 1, lines 10-13). Potter (1996b) has suggested that narratives tend to be organised in a way that increases the plausibility of the description by constructing it in a manner where the described event becomes expected. In Extracts 1 and 2, the repeated construction of the interviewees' performing careers as 'natural', 'normal' and 'the norm', following descriptions of themselves as performing because of their musical families, effectively removes responsibility for the interviewees' 'choice' to perform. The effect of the narrative organisation is to present the participants' performing careers as outside of their control (e.g. 'because I guess I showed promise *they kept doing it*', Extract 1, line 18) and, considering their membership of musical families, as to be expected. Effectively, the interviewees constructed themselves as having little choice in the matter of performing.

Several other features of the participants' talk can also be seen to manage this issue of choice. Note, for instance, that in Extract 2, Eliza switches from an account presented using the personal pronoun 'I' ('I come from a musical family', line 4) to the more general footing of 'you' to work up her experience as generalisable to many performers ('>you know what it's like when you grow up with music< all around you', lines 5-6). In Extract 1, Laurey's account of performing as a result of her musical family is also

constructed as a familiar, generalised experience ('my parents and everybody who makes their family musical they automatically start their children early', lines 15-16; 'I was one of those', line 17). This talk functions to construct the interviewees' accounts of becoming performers as fairly unexceptional and 'normal' occurrences. This management of a lack of choice is also visible in Laurey's minimised construction of her first experiences of performing. Rather than describing her first major public performance in detail, Laurey constructs her enjoyment of performing as '*just* † naturally (leading) on to (.) *little concerts* and *little competitions* and *things* when I was *little*' (Extract 1, lines 20-21). This minimisation works well to portray the first steps of Laurey's performing journey as inconsequential; as something that 'just happened naturally', thereby mitigating her

Box 3.2

REFLEXIVITY: THE 'NATURAL' PERFORMER

In Chapter 2 I noted that, as a researcher, I am required to consider reflexively how my presence and actions affect, and how my identity is relevant to, the research (Taylor, 2001b). In analysing the working up of the subject position 'the natural performer', it is important to acknowledge the part that I played in the interviews. While the analytic focus here is on the way that the subject position of the 'natural' performer was drawn upon to justify a career in musical performance, an alternative reading could well suggest that the construction of a performing career as 'natural' was inevitable given that the interviewer was known to the interviewees as a fellow performer. In other words, in this particular research context, it could be argued that a performing career does not necessarily *need* to be justified. Although it is important to acknowledge this alternative analytic reading, I argue that the considerable justificatory work done by the interviewees, as discussed throughout this section, points to the interviewees attending to the potential need to account for their 'choice' to become performers – even in the presence of a fellow performer – rather than the working up of an unproblematic construction of their performing careers.

It is also worth noting that, while I was known to the interviewees as a performer, I was also known as a full-time academic seeking a career outside of music. Moreover, although the following chapter examines the use of 'in-jokes' in accounts of performance anxiety, the interview question of 'what ideas or events led you to become a performer?' did not elicit responses that involved the co-construction of an unproblematic shared identity.

responsibility for the 'choice' to perform.

In Extracts 1 and 2, the working up of category membership and the use of repetition, footing and minimisation in accounts of 'the ideas and events that led the interviewees to become performers' functioned to construct the performers' careers as 'just happening naturally'. In contrast to the cultural construction of performance as an 'alternative' career path, participants regularly constructed their performing careers as 'normal', 'natural', unexceptional, and to be expected. The following three extracts also draw on the subject position of the 'natural' performer to outline similar familial-based reasons for becoming a performer. Extracts 3 and 4 show replies to the same question posed in Extracts 1 and 2 above (i.e. 'Can you tell me about the ideas and events that led you to become a performer?'), while Extract 5 illustrates an interviewee's response to the question 'Have you always felt like you've been a performer?'

Extract 3

- 1 **Gemma** Can you (.) can you tell me about the ideas or events
2 that led you to become a performer?
3 **Julie** Ah:hh (.) I think I just sort of fell into it because:e
4 (.) um: (.) my mother was a musician a professional musician
5 (.) and so she was aware of my voice when it appeared (.) ah:

6 (.) I (.) I noticed it as a mature sort of sound
7 when I was in grade seven I was twel-eleven and (.)
8 ◦I sang in the church choir◦. Um:m and
9 I ↑guess because I'd grown up with music (.) ah (.)
10 I kind of automatically made a classical sound
11 rather than (coughs) (.) >you know< (.)
12 I sort of emulated just through ↑in◦stinct◦ I s'po:se
13 that sort of sound.

Extract 4

1 **Gemma** Can you tell me about the ideas or the events that
2 led you (.) that led you to become a performer?
3 **Maggie** Hm↓:m:. (.) I: (.)
4 first sang in public when I was three years old.
5 Um: I (.) I used to never be into (.) when I was a baby
6 I was never interested in ↑actual TV programs
7 but the minute ads came on with jingles any music like that
8 I'd (.) >you know< (.) my parents'd hear me sort of
9 ↑craw:>ling as fast as I could through the house to the
10 television just to listen to ads< and I would sing things and
11 (.) I never had a tuning problem as a child (.)
12 >I was< (.) I could sing in tu:ne.

13 So I sang when I was three an:d (.)
14 cos this was in a church situation
15 so I've a:lways ↓sung.
16 I did a show when I was: (.) four with my Mum. My Mum was (.)
17 it was a: (.) it was a mu:sical °a church mu:sical°
18 and my Mum was playing a lead role
19 and my Dad was actually in the pit in the orchestra.

Extract 5

1 **Gemma** So have you always felt like you've been a performer then?
2 **Max** Hmm. Yep. If you ask my Mum yea:h.
3 I was almost performing even when I was in the ↑wo:mb (.)
4 I was a breech birth.
5 Arse about and that's what I've been doing ever since!
6 (laughs) and um: (.) yea:h (.)
7 **Gemma** (laughs)
8 **Max** Mum always remembers me sitting in the back seat
9 when I was really young
10 doing all sorts of voi:ces (.)
11 and I'd buy comics and a friend of mine and I would sit
12 and do voices for each of the characters in the comics.

Extracts 3, 4 and 5 present similar narratives to the responses shown in Extracts 1 and 2, with participants drawing on childhood stories to account for their current career. In

each extract, these childhood experiences are constructed, either explicitly or implicitly, as the reason that each speaker embarked on a performing career (e.g., 'I ↑guess because I'd grown up with music (.) ah (.) I kind of automatically made a classical sound', Extract 3, lines 9-10; 'So I sang when I was three (...) so I've a:lways ↓sung', Extract 4, lines 14-15). Note that, in Extract 3, Julie's account of her 'automatic', 'instinctual' music-making is accompanied by various vague or softening qualifiers ('I ↑guess because I'd grown up with music (.) ah (.) I *kind of* automatically made a classical sound rather than (coughs) (.) >you know< (.) I *sort of* emulated *just* through ↑in°stinct° *I s'po:se*', lines 9-12). As discussed in the analysis of Extract 1 and 2, these qualifiers, together with minimisers like 'just', allow the speaker to present an alternative account later in the interview, and also construct a performing career as fairly unexceptional in nature.

In a similar fashion to Extracts 1 and 2, Extracts 3, 4 and 5 also work up versions of category membership, with each relating the speaker's familial upbringing to his or her performing career. As mentioned above, this particular use of categories works to manage the participants' reasons for embarking on what is generally constructed as an alternative career path by presenting it as, in the context of their upbringing, unexceptional and to be expected. Extract 3, 4 and 5, however, also show a different use

of categories in talk, which I suggest achieves similar sorts of discursive business: the working up of the category of witness (Hepburn, 2003).

Extracts 3, 4 and 5 each describe a family member witnessing the speaker's musical talent in childhood ('my parents'd hear me sort of ↑craw:>ling as fast as I could through the house to the television just to listen to ads<', Extract 4, lines 8-10; '(my mother) was aware of my voice when it appeared', Extract 3, line 5; 'Mum always remembers me sitting in the back seat when I was really young doing all sorts of voi:ces', Extract 5, lines 8-10). Note that, in Extract 4, the interviewee shifts footing to repair her description of the event of crawling through the house to listen to ads as witnessed ('I'd (.) >you know< (.) my parents'd hear me sort of ↑craw:>ling as fast as I could', lines 8-9). According to Potter (1996b), constructing an account as witnessed by others functions as an 'externalising device'; in other words, a witnessed account draws attention away from the speaker and the speaker's potential stake and interest in the account by constructing the report as corroborated by others. In Extracts 3, 4 and 5, accounts of childhood musical talent go some way towards presenting the speaker as an 'authentic performer'; as having good reasons (i.e. 'talent') to embark on a performing career. The construction of this talent as witnessed serves to present the accounts as neutral – as 'out there', factual descriptions that are corroborated by others.

Note that in Extracts 3 and 4, witnesses are constructed as knowledgeable via the use of category entitlements. When a witness of an event is built up in talk as *entitled* to speak authoritatively because of his or her category membership, this effectively negates the need to ask how the witness knows; instead, their category membership is seen as sufficient to account for and warrant the event described (Potter, 1996b). In Extract 3, Maggie provides multiple, detailed constructions of her parents as musical ('I did a show when I was: (.) four with my Mum', line 16; 'my Mum was playing a lead role', line 18; 'my Dad was actually in the pit in the orchestra', line 19), while in Extract 4, Julie repairs her original construction of her mother as 'a musician' to the more knowledgeable (and therefore entitled) 'professional musician' ('my mother was a musician a professional musician', line 4). These descriptions of the interviewees' mothers as entitled to comment authoritatively on their children's talent work in two ways. First, any potential accusations of bias (e.g., 'what mother wouldn't consider her child talented?') are effectively negotiated. Second, an account of talent witnessed by knowledgeable others presents this talent as genuine – again, as an 'out there' fact – and the musician's taking up of a performing career becomes seen as understandable, and to be expected.

Accounts of witnessed events are often constructed in fairly vivid detail, which works to further build up the facticity of an account (Potter, 1996b). In Extract 4, for example,

rather than saying that her parents remember her 'listening to ads on TV', Maggie's description is a more detailed 'my parents'd hear me sort of ↑craw:→ling as fast as I could through the house to the television just to listen to ads<' (lines 8-10). Similarly, in Extract 5, rather than describing his mother recalling him 'doing voices', Max says 'Mum always remembers me sitting in the back seat when I was really young doing all sorts of voi:ces' (lines 8-10). Most of the details provided are irrelevant to the account – the general point could have been put across without descriptions of 'crawling through the house' or 'the back seat'. However, these detailed descriptions provide an impression of 'being there' and, in doing so, build up the witness as reliable and, therefore, the speaker's account of his or her childhood talent as believable. The inclusion of the participant's age in each extract (e.g., 'when I was twel-eleven', Extract 3, line 7; 'when I was three', Extract 4, lines 4 & 13; 'when I was: (.) four', Extract 4, line 16; 'when I was in the ↑wo:mb', Extract 5, line 3) and the mention of further specific details (e.g., 'it was a mu:sical °a church mu:sical°, Extract 4, line 17; 'I was in grade seven', Extract 3, line 7; 'I sang in the church choir', Extract 3, line 8) function in the same manner. Note that particular effort is made to get the details right, with both Julie and Maggie repairing their accounts (e.g., 'I was twel-eleven', Extract 3, line 7; 'it was a mu:sical °a church mu:sical°, Extract 4, line 17). Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990, 1995) argued that one of the ways in which authenticity is built up in life stories involves "placing decisive details further back in the 'taleworld' of events" (Edwards,

1997: 227). The specific details provided in Extracts 3, 4 and 5 function to construct the participants as performers with authentic talent witnessed by entitled others, and thereby render the reasons for performing as understandable, effectively mitigating the responsibility for embarking on a performing career.

This section of the analysis has examined how participants' drew on the subject position of the 'natural performer' to mitigate their responsibility for the taking up of a career in musical performance. The participants' use of category memberships, minimisations, category entitlements and vivid detail functioned to present the interviewees' choice to perform as 'natural' and as to be expected considering their childhood experiences, which were constructed as corroborated by knowledgeable witnesses. This construction of the taking up of a performing career as 'natural' can perhaps be seen most explicitly in the following two extracts:

Extract 6

- 1 **Gemma** So (.) what is it about performing that makes it in your
2 heart? Why is it there?
3 **Maggie** (sniffs) Why is it there?
4 **Gemma** M↓:m. >As opposed to< som:e- anything else.
5 **Maggie** Well why have I got blue ey↑e↓s? I think it's: (.) it's that
6 it's just ingrai:ned (.) I (.) I (.)

7 I can't tell you a day when: when it ↑happened
 8 when I woke up and said this is what I rea:lly rea:lly want.
 9 This is my drea:m.

Extract 7

1 **Gemma** Can you tell me what you think one needs
 2 to be a brilliant performer?
 3 **Kathy** Hm:m. (.) Passion. Dedicat:tion. Um: an:d (sighs) (.)
 4 passion in a way that it just ca:n't help being there
 5 >it's just< ↑in you and there's nothing you can do about it
 6 (.) it's just coming out of your every (.) po:re.

Extracts 6 and 7 (and indeed, Extracts 1 to 5) present the performer as having little choice in the matter of taking up a performing career. In Extract 7, the speaker's responsibility for her career in musical performance is negotiated explicitly ('>it's just< ↑in you and there's nothing you can do about it (.) it's just coming out of your every (.) po:re'. lines 5-6). In Extract 8, the rhetorical question 'well, why have I got blue ey↑e↓s?' (line 5) effectively sidesteps the issue of career choice. The construction of embarking on a career in performance as 'natural', 'normal', 'the norm', 'ingrained' and 'just in you', and as coming 'naturally', 'automatically' and 'through instinct', works extremely well to build up the interviewees as 'naturally' talented and, therefore, as 'naturally' taking up a performing career.

5.2 *The fulfilled performer*

The following section outlines responses to questions that directly or indirectly required participants to justify *why*, rather than how, they became performers. In response to questions such as ‘why do you perform?’, participants drew on the subject position of the ‘fulfilled performer’ to position themselves as *choosing* to perform – as having made a considered, rational decision to choose a career that fulfils them. Again, as Edwards (1998) pointed out, we can analyse the discourse in terms of what was *not* said. As discussed in Section 2 of this chapter, ‘work’ and ‘career’ are commonly constructed as a means of fulfilment in our culture. Responses drawing on the subject position of the ‘natural performer’ (e.g., ‘I’m just performing because I come from a musical family’) may encourage suggestions that the respondent is not in control of his or her own self-fulfilment through work. This section examines how, in contrast to descriptions of performers as performing ‘naturally’, participants responded to questions centred around the topic ‘why do you perform?’ by constructing themselves as *choosing* to perform to find self-fulfilment. This working up of a considered decision to achieve fulfilment can be seen in the following two interview extracts:

Extract 8

- 1 **Gemma** So (.) what stops you from working for your Dad?
- 2 Why do you perform?

- 3 **Sarah** It's just (.) it's just more ↑in:teres↓ting (laughs)
- 4 **Gemma** h:hm
- 5 **Sarah** It's just (.) and again it's just that per:sonal thing
6 something for me to relieve stress that I have.
7 But then again (.) sometimes I think (.)
8 I have to admit sometimes I do think (.)
9 what the hell am I ↑do↓ing?
10 How in the hell are you going to suppor:t yourself? You know
11 >and just things like that<
12 so there's another side of it too. It's h:ard °I don't know°.
13 >I have all these little things that I think about<
14 it's so: hard.
15 I ↑do enjoy it but yeah I'm scared ↑shit↓less
16 because I'm not going to be able to support myself (.)
17 >and a family if I do have a family which I will< °you know°.
18 So there's lots of things to think about.
19 (.) There's good and bad ↓things.
20 But (.) I'd rather be living (.) I'd rather just be not poo:r
21 but living comfortably and do what I love doing
22 than be rich and do something that I ↑don't love doing.
23 So (.) you know (.) I'd rather be doing that. De:finitely.

Extract 9

- 13 **Gemma** So if: (.) if the financial rewards aren't that great
14 (.) what makes you continue?
15 **Laurey** (.) The lifesty↑le. It's (.) it's like a (.) uh (.)
16 it's not like a drug but (.) because (.) >you know<

17 you don't get it from outside sources it's with↑in ↓you: and
18 so once (.) once you do that and ↑love ↓it then to give it up
19 it's not worth: (.) for ↑me: it's not worth financial
20 stability to give up what I love doing because
21 if I didn't have the fulfilment of musical expression
22 then I don't know how happy my life would be so I think
23 I'm happier being financially unstable and a performer
24 than I would be °(unclear)°.

I would first like to comment briefly on the interviewees' use of contrast structures (Smith, 1978; Atkinson, 1984) in these two extracts. In constructing their accounts of performing for reasons of self-fulfilment, both Laurey and Sarah construct their performing careers, and the alternative to performing, as two-set classes (e.g., 'I'd rather be living (.) I'd rather just be not poo:r but living comfortably and do what I love doing than be rich and do something that I ↑don't love doing', Extract 8, lines 20-22; 'I'm happier being financially unstable and a performer than I would be °(unclear)°', Extract 9, lines 23-24). The use of dichotomous categories in talk does not simply involve descriptions of two classes of things; rather, it is a matter of two *opposing* classes of things (Edwards, 1997). Moreover, two-set categories imply that "if one category is good, the other must be bad" (Seymour-Smith, Wetherell & Phoenix, 2002: 262). So although the interviewees construct themselves as having considered alternatives to a career in musical performance, these alternatives are summarised as financially

lucrative but devoid of personal fulfilment, while performance is contrastively constructed as 'financially unstable' but as leading to happiness and fulfilment. This use of opposing categories can be seen to function in a similar way to the participants' construction of themselves as 'natural' performers, in that the taking up of a performance career is positioned as inevitable. Here, though, the taking up of a performing career is seen as inevitable or to be expected due to its construction as the 'only' way that the interviewees can achieve fulfilment. The situated production of contrast structures occurred regularly in responses to questions like 'why do you perform?', and will be discussed throughout this section of the analysis.

Extract 8 provides an excellent example of another type of rhetorical organisation that was typically drawn upon in response to questions such as 'why do you perform?' Sarah's narrative constructs careful consideration of both the limitations and benefits of her particular career. Her talk works to acknowledge the reasonableness of what are constructed as two conflicting sides of an argument (Billig *et al.*, 1988) (e.g., 'there's good and bad ↓ things', line 19). What makes this positioning of her decision to perform as reasonable particularly effective is her use of a 'concession/criticism format', where one possible version of events is immediately followed by another, thereby rendering one version as unworkable (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) (e.g., 'So there's lots of things to think about. (.) There's good and bad ↓ things. But (.) I'd rather be living (...)

comfortably and do what I love doing than be rich and do something that I ↑don't love doing.', lines 18-21). This form of rhetorical organisation can also be seen in the following three extracts:

Extract 10 (follows immediately from Extract 4)

- 1 **Maggie** And (.)and (.) >so I sort of lo:ved it<
 2 I just lo::ved performing I lo:ved it when I got to sing
 3 >I just loved getting to sing< (.) and (.) um (.)
 4 then you go through high school and you realise that
 5 you've gotta be sensible and um: (.)
 6 and I did a big >I'm gonna be a doctor< thing
 7 cos I thought they'd make lots of ↑money! (laughs)
 8 **Gemma** hm h:m
 9 **Maggie** and things happened in my life that made that not the ↓cas:e
 10 (.) and um: (.) >and I went< then went to (a music school)
 11 for a year (.) and it was just lik:e (.)
 12 that big light flashed back on again it was (.)
 13 I ↑could be a musician. I cou:ld be a singer
 14 there is no:thing stopping me from actually doing ↓that.

Extract 11

- 1 **Gemma** So (.) can you describe for me how performance

- 2 is different from other career choices?
- 3 **Eliza** You never know what's going to happen to you:
4 you can't have a game plan like you can with other careers.
5 >In music a lot of the time you have to have a day job
6 or you have to have something else
7 or have another skill that you can do<.
8 People say you get a job to support your jazz habit
9 like 'it's' (laughs). Um:: and generally for me (.)
- 10 **Gemma** (laughs)
- 11 **Eliza** with the career (.) the thing that I:'m most thinking about
12 is just the fact that you can't get(.)
13 >unless you go into a tertiary institution<
14 you can't get a stable (.) I s'pose a stable li:fe
15 'you know'. On the other hand
16 I also think that enjoyment's really important:
17 I do feel >very very< pri:vileged to be among um: (.)
18 I s'pose (.) to be among however many that (.)
19 >ten fifteen< fo:ne percent of people who can tell you
20 I lo::ve what I do you ↑know? That's a privilege (.)
21 and it's worth it.

Extract 12

- 1 **Gemma** Umm: (.) and how do you feel about the financial situation
2 for performers?
- 3 **Laurey** Oh:↓h. I think they should all be married
4 to people with very steady jobs! (laughs) Oh:hh!
- 5 **Gemma** (laughs)
- 6 **Laurey** That's the problem I ↑mean (.) the phrase
7 suffering for your art one of the things you're suffering is
8 never having financial stability unless you're (.)
9 you teach in an institu:tion or something like that um: (.)
10 so: (.) but in ↑one way you can't ever have that
11 it's just not a part of perfor:mance
12 financial stability and performance don't go together 'cos
13 (.) that's not what performance is about.
14 If it ↑was just for the money you could be in a cover band
15 and do five nights a week and once again
16 you wouldn't be fulfilled so you choose (.) you know (.)
17 emotional and spiritual fulfilment over more personal (.) um:
18 stability and financial °(unclear)°.

Note that the rhetorical organisation of these extracts involves the consideration of one possible version of events followed immediately by a preferred other:

(from Extract 10)

- 6 **Maggie** and I did a big >I'm gonna be a doctor< thing

14). In contrast, the decision to perform, treated as 'preferred' in the concession/criticism format, was further highlighted as the preferred version with the participants' use of repetition:

(from Extract 8)

20 **Sarah** But (.) *I'd rather be living* (.) *I'd rather just be not poo:r*
21 *but living comfortably and do what I love doing*
22 *than be rich and do something that I ↑don't love doing.*
23 *So (.) you know (.) I'd rather be doing that. De:finitely.*

(from Extract 10)

12 **Maggie** *that big light flashed back on again it was (.)*
13 *I ↑could be a musician. I cou:ld be a singer*
14 *there is no:thing stopping me from actually doing ↓that.*

(from Extract 11)

16 **Eliza** *I also think that enjoyment's really important:*
17 *I do feel >very very< pri:vileged to be among um: (.)*
18 *I s'pose (.) to be among however many that (.)*
19 *>ten fifteen< ↑o:ne percent of people who can tell you*
20 *I lo::ve what I do you ↑know? That's a privilege (.)*
21 *and it's worth it.*

The second normative feature of the participants' use of a concession/criticism format involved the inclusion of a joke about a lack of financial support for musicians (e.g., 'I did a big >I'm gonna be a doctor< thing cos I thought they'd make lots of ↑money! (laughter)', Extract 10, lines 6-7; 'People say you get a job to support your jazz habit (laughter)', Extract 11, line 8; 'I think (musicians) should all be married to people with very steady jobs! (laughter)', Extract 12, lines 3-4). The working up of the financial situation for performers as a joke, as a bit of a laugh, has a scripted anecdotal quality about it. As Seymour-Smith, Wetherell and Phoenix (2002: 260) wrote, jokes tend to serve the function of "revealing and playing with what is already strongly established". This co-constructed sense of 'we know what it's like' (Seymour-Smith, Wetherell & Phoenix, 2002), pointed to by the laughter between interviewer and interviewee, works to further delineate musical performance and financial stability as dichotomous categories. The to-be-expected construction of musical performance as unstable, together with a contrastive presentation of financial stability and fulfilment (e.g., 'you choose (.) you know (.) emotional and spiritual fulfilment over more personal (.) um: stability and financial °(unclear)°.', Extract 12, lines 16-18), work in conjunction to justify the interviewees' choice of career. The dichotomous construction of performance as fulfilling but necessarily unstable, and the alternative to performing as stable but inevitably unfulfilling, helps to construct the musical performers' decision to perform as

understandable – after all, what kind of person would choose *not* to ‘follow their heart’?

This notion of ‘following one’s heart’ is the exact concern of the following two extracts:

Extract 13

- 1 **Gemma** Why do you think you’re performing?
- 2 **Sarah** I suppose deep down I really do enjoy making people happy and
- 3 (.) and I enjoy singing I ↑love ↓it. Music is right here
- 4 (places hand on heart)
- 5 ◦you know◦ I love it with all my hea:rt and um: (.)
- 6 and it’s fun it’s interesting.
- 7 **Gemma** Yeah? Why is it fun?
- 8 **Sarah** Um: ◦I don’t know◦ I suppose because it’s different than
- 9 just sort of: sitting in an office and
- 10 doing paperwork filing all that sort of stuff and (.) yea:h.

Extract 14

- 1 **Gemma** So: (.) tch how would you define a typical performer?
- 2 **Laurey** (.) I think performance requires a lot of (.) um:m a lot of
- 3 the inside coming out and so it’s people who do that best
- 4 that make the best performers usually.
- 5 **Gemma** Can you describe inside coming out a bit more?
- 6 **Laurey** ◦Inside coming out◦. Um:m (.) I guess the art of
- 7 performance in the arts is expressing emotions and things so
- 8 it’s not a desk job where you just sit there
- 9 and fill in ↑pa|pers it’s (.) it’s putting yourself (.)

10 putting your heart on the line (.) everyday.
11 Performance (.) um:m (.) requires (.) >in the
12 theoretical part you learn the mental and the physical< and
13 then in the artistic part you do the emotional an:d (.)
14 >that's what comes out when you're actually doing your job
15 which is performing< (.) whereas if you're on a desk
16 it's only ever mental physical it's ↑ne↓ver emotional.

Extracts 13 and 14 accomplish what Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) call 'ontological gerrymandering'. In its broad sense, this term refers to the inclusion of certain aspects of a phenomenon (and therefore the treatment of these aspects as relevant) and the simultaneous exclusion of others. In other words, when 'gerrymandering the terrain', speakers select and formulate an area which is advantageous and ignore others (Potter, 1996b: 118). These two extracts show the interviewees once again constructing musical performance and the alternative in two-set classes. Here, though, the alternative is summarily positioned as a 'desk job', and this desk job is described as involving the activities of sitting at a desk and filling in papers ('it's different than just sort of: sitting in an office and doing paperwork filing all that sort of stuff', Extract 13, lines 8-10; 'it's not a desk job where you just sit there and fill in ↑pa↓pers', Extract 14, lines 8-9). There are several discursive features that work here to 'gerrymander the terrain'. First, both interviewees construct the alternative to performance as 'just' sitting there, filling in papers and so on. This use of the word 'just' serves to contain what is required of the

'desk worker' to a small list of mundane tasks, leaving out perhaps more fulfilling alternatives like attending interesting board meetings, travelling interstate, and so on – the potential list of tasks is, of course, endless. Second, the interviewees' use of a three-part list (Jefferson, 1985) works similarly to contain what it is that desk workers do (e.g., 'doing paperwork filing all that sort of stuff', Extract 13, line 10). As Potter (1996b) notes, three-partedness generally works to summarise a general class of things; to achieve a sense of completion. Finally (note my own use of a three-part list!), Extracts 13 and 14 position the only alternative to a performing career as a 'desk job' (rather than, for instance, becoming an astronaut, farmer, stay-at-home parent or tennis player), ignoring thousands of possible – and potentially fulfilling – options. Through gerrymandering, the participants' choice to embark on a performing career is effectively positioned as understandable and, therefore, unproblematic.

5.3 *Script Formulations: Normalising and Problematizing Behaviour*

The participants' use of rhetorical formulations such as concession/criticism formats, contrast structures, jokes and gerrymandering to present themselves as fulfilled (and, indeed, their use of concession/criticism formats and category entitlements to construct themselves as 'natural' performers) can be seen more broadly as a use of *script formulations* (Edwards, 1994; 1997). Script formulations are defined by Edwards (1997: 21) as "kinds of talk which describe events as following a routine and predictable

pattern". They comprise a range of descriptive approaches which are used to construct activities with regard to what is expectable or anomalous about them. The participants' talk examined thus far has been analysed in terms of how it constructed the choice to take up a full-time performing career as to be expected and, therefore, how it worked to provide explanatory bases for the interviewees' decision to perform. Script formulations can also be used to work up deviations from what is constructed as expectable and unproblematic behaviour (Edwards, 1997; Smith, 1978). Generally speaking, script formulations achieve the discursive business of 'normalisation and abnormalisation' – they function to present the speaker's actions as normal, natural and expectable, and the actions of others as deviant or problematic. The final three extracts illustrate the 'problematizing' of what is constructed as anomalous performing behaviour:

Extract 15

- 1 **Gemma** So: (.) how do you feel about the financial situation
2 for performers?
3 **Kathy** (laughs) (.) Oh:hh. I can't imagine there being a
4 performer saying tch I'm being pai:d too much. (laughs)
5 **Gemma** (laughs)
6 **Kathy** I can't imagine anyone saying I'll be a performer
7 because I know that's the easiest way to make mo:ney.
8 Although if you get a marketer on your side

9 and you're on Popstars you might (laughs)
10 you might be treated a bit differently

Extract 16

1 **Gemma** Does it make you cross when you think about
2 the lack of financial stability?
3 **Laurey** Y(.)yes and no:. The thing is who's going to ↑give it to us?
4 Who should give it to us?
5 The audiences aren't going to pay fifty dollars a pop to come
6 (.) just to come and see: us 'cos I wouldn't pay that
7 just to go and see somebody else so (.) it's another way of
8 weeding out those who are only in it for the money as well
9 so only those who ↑truly love it and therefore
10 ↑will really do their best that actually continue.
11 If people ↑are just doing it for the money then they (.)
12 they don't usually last all the way up to the °(unclear)°

Extract 12 (reproduced)

11 **Laurey** it's just not a part of perfor:mance
12 financial stability and performance don't go together 'cos
13 (.) that's not what performance is about.
14 If it ↑was just for the money you could be in a cover band
15 and do five nights a week and once again
16 you wouldn't be fulfilled so you choose (.) you know (.)
17 emotional and spiritual fulfilment over more personal (.) um:
18 stability and financial °(unclear)°.

Again, these extracts can be viewed in terms of their use of contrast structures. Two categories of 'the performer' are presented in each extract: the performer who performs for fulfilment and the performer who performs for money. These categories are treated as entirely separate from one another: performers *either* perform for love *or* for money (e.g., 'If it ↑was just for the money you could be in a cover band and do five nights a week and once again *you wouldn't be fulfilled*', Extract 12, lines 14-16). Again, we can note the way in which the interviewees 'gerrymander the terrain' – those that perform for money are constructed as 'on Popstars' (Extract 15, line 9), as 'in a cover band' performing 'five nights a week' (Extract 12, lines 14-15) and as '*only* in it for the money' (Extract 16, line 8). Celebrated (and financial successful) musicians such as Renee Geyer, Anthony Warlow, James Morrison, Kasey Chambers, Neil Finn and so on are conveniently left out. Note the use of generic 'pop' music identifiers such as 'Popstars' and 'cover bands' which are generally constructed as not requiring any individuality (or indeed, talent). Note also the mention of 'five nights a week' in Extract 12 which could perhaps be seen as a comparison of 'performing for money in a cover band' to the 'desk job' that Laurey had described earlier in the interview. Smith (1978) points out that 'abnormal behaviour' cannot simply be labelled and recognised as such. It is always indexical, positioned in comparison to what is constructed as 'normal behaviour'. In these extracts, the participants effectively position 'performing for money' as problematic by contrasting certain specific behaviours (appearing on Popstars, playing

in a cover band) to the more generalised behaviour of 'performing for fulfilment', and by treating the two classes of behaviour as mutually exclusive. This portrayal of performers who perform for money as problematic works well to justify the interviewees' own lack of financial success, and helps to construct their own choice to perform as motivated by the 'genuine' reason of seeking 'emotional and spiritual fulfilment'.

6 DISCUSSION

This chapter has examined some of the historical contexts in which talk about (1) the self as commonsensically choosing fulfilment, and (2) the musician as somehow removed from 'normality', is produced. In the analysis, I considered how musicians justified their decision to embark on performing careers by drawing on the subject positions of the 'natural performer' and the 'fulfilled performer'. Each subject position was used productively in the interviews to present the musicians' taking up of performing careers as 'natural', 'normal', understandable and to be expected through constructions of the interviewees as:

- (1) belonging to 'performing families' that treat performing as 'normal' and unexceptional;
- (2) having their childhood talent witnessed by knowledgeable others; and

(3) choosing a career that provides them with a level of personal fulfilment unavailable in other careers.

I argued that the construction of performing as to be expected worked well to justify what is generally constructed as a fairly 'abnormal' career path. Indeed, the interviewees' portrayal of performance as unexceptional in their talk about belonging to performing families worked well to counter possible accusations of musical performers as removed from 'normality'. Interestingly, though, the interviewees also drew on constructions of performance as different to the 'norm' to justify why they became performers. Typical responses to questions like 'why do you perform?' involved descriptions of performance as providing fulfilment, in direct contrast to the positioning of other, 'normal' forms of work (i.e. the 'desk job') as unfulfilling. Other typical accounts involved the 'problematizing' of 'performing for money', which was constructed in opposition to 'performing for fulfilment'. The use of contrast structures that presented 'genuine' performance as fulfilling and financially unstable, and alternative careers (and 'deviant' performing behaviours) as financially lucrative but unfulfilling, may have certain implications for performers.

The construction of musicians as able to fulfil themselves through performance was, in the context of the interviews, integral in the management of the interviewees' accounts

of their reasons for embarking on a career in musical performance. Participants drew upon historically situated constructions of work and identity to portray musical performance as more fulfilling than other forms of work. It could be argued that such constructions of musical performance bind musicians to contemporary forms of government: in their employment of historically available notions of self-fulfilment, performers are regulating themselves in strict accordance with the social goal of economic efficiency. Rose (1996) argued that, as contemporary citizens, we are governed through our attempts to fulfil ourselves. The construction of the musician as rejecting financial stability in favour of self-fulfilment could be seen as a potent example of the government of the contemporary citizen through constructions of self-fulfilment; the subject position of 'the fulfilled performer' has the potential to portray musicians as not requiring payment for the many hours they put in to their music.

In conducting this analysis, my aim was to examine some of the commonplace, historically situated ways in which musical performers talked about themselves in an interview context, and to discuss some of the possible implications of these particular constructions of the performer. This chapter attended to the suggestion that an eclectic approach to discourse analysis must acknowledge the discursive history which makes a piece of interaction possible (Shapiro, 1992) by situating current discourses of identity in their genealogical contexts (Wetherell, 1998) and, at the same time, should also

consider the material in terms of its linguistic achievements (Edwards, 1991), treating as primary the 'action orientation' of talk (Heritage, 1984). Chapter 3 considered how the situated production of the subject positions of the 'fulfilled' and 'natural' performer functioned to justify the interviewees' careers. In the following chapter, I examine in more detail the accomplishment of situated identities in talk by considering the occasioned use of interpretative repertoires in interview accounts of both positive and negative performing experiences. The interviewees' talk is considered in terms of how it is organised rhetorically to manage self-presentations.

CHAPTER 4

Performing Highs, Performing Lows: The contradictory nature of talk

In the previous chapter, I examined how historical constructions of work and fulfilment were worked up and made relevant in interviewees' accounts of why they became performers. I was particularly interested in the rhetorical construction of two subject positions – the 'natural performer' and the 'fulfilled performer' – in the justification of the interviewees' reasons for performing. Chapter 4, in its consideration of accounts of successful performances and of performance anxiety in unstructured interviews about participants' performing experiences, considers some more justificatory work accomplished by speakers in an interview setting. The analytic focus is on how the interviewees' talk was organised to manage self-presentations. In particular, I examine the use of two contrasting interpretative repertoires around performance and identity – one constructs performance as a 'focus on the self', while the other describes performing as a process of 'letting go of the self'.

The first two sections of the chapter review psychological research on coping strategies for performance anxiety in terms of the two contrasting ways of treating identity

mentioned above. One 'strand' of this psychological work focuses on the individual performer, advocating coping strategies such as the introduction of positive self-talk. The other strand of research maintains that this 'focus on the self' may exacerbate, rather than lessen, musical performance anxiety, and that the most effective approach to performance anxiety involves 'letting go of the self' to focus instead on the performance process. In the analysis section of the chapter, I examine the rhetorical use of these two contradictory themes of social knowledge in the interviewees' accounts, with a particular focus on the conflicting demands for accountability required of participants across various conversational contexts.

The next section begins with a brief summary of traditional psychological research on musical performance anxiety, and then concentrates more specifically on self-focussed coping strategies for the anxious performer.

1 DEFINING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Performance anxiety, also known colloquially as 'stage fright', has been defined by psychologists as "the exaggerated and sometimes incapacitating fear of performing in public" (Wilson, 1997: 229). Traditional psychology usually understands performance anxiety as a version of the 'fight/flight response', in which humans respond to a perceived threat with an "intense activation of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system" (Wilson, 1997: 220; see also Roland, 1997). Musicians who

report experiencing performance anxiety are said to perceive an upcoming performance as a threat. Although performing in public would, commonsensically, be viewed as a psychological threat rather than a physiological one, psychologists suggest that the body responds as if it were being threatened physically (Roland, 1997). Commonly reported symptoms - including rapid heart beat, trembling, a dry mouth, sweating, and shortness of breath (Wesner *et al.*, 1990) - are treated by psychologists as after-effects of an adaptive bodily function activated by the fight/flight response (Williams & Hargreaves, 1994). Heart palpitations, for instance, are said to be caused by the heart pumping harder to supply oxygen to hardworking muscles, whereas a dry mouth is reported to be caused by the body redirecting bodily fluids like saliva to the bloodstream (Wilson, 1997: 229-30). Although the most prevalent reported symptoms of performance anxiety tend to be physiological, musicians are also reported as mentioning a variety of "mental symptoms" such as negative thoughts, distraction, feelings of impending doom, memory blanks and feelings of panic (Roland, 1997: 4).

These 'mental symptoms' of performance anxiety reportedly stem from 'cognitive disturbances' which centre around worrying about potential catastrophes, the quality of the performance, and an exaggerated interpretation of the importance of the performance (Stephoe, 1989). The tendency to overestimate the importance of a performance is perhaps understandable when we consider that most performances

provide only a short time to display the results of what is often weeks or even months of preparation. Performances often take on a 'do or die' quality, and performing artists, according to Roland (1997: 9), tend to overestimate their chance of failing and the consequences of potential failure, and to underestimate their ability to cope with the demands of the performance.

Psychological research suggests that performance anxiety is a very common problem for musicians. Wesner *et al.* (1990), for instance, reported that 21 per cent of 302 questionnaire respondents from the University of Iowa's School of Music indicated that they had experienced 'marked distress' due to performance anxiety, while 40 per cent reported 'moderate distress'. In the same study, 17 per cent of respondents reported that performance anxiety led to 'marked impairment' in their performances, and 30 per cent reported that their performances suffered 'moderate impairment'. A similarly high prevalence of performance anxiety in musicians has also been indicated by Fishbein *et al.* (1988), Liden and Gottfrees (1974), Steptoe and Fidler (1987), and Marchant-Haycox and Wilson (1992).

When it comes to the effects of musical performance anxiety in actual performances, a number of seemingly contradictory findings are reported. Many studies suggest that a certain amount of performance anxiety is necessary for a good performance (Roland,

1997; Wilson, 1997; see also Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). Roland (1997: 5), for example, argues that “a feeling of ‘nervous excitement’ is a necessary part of performing”, suggesting that “as a performing artist, you would be less than human if you did not experience some anxiety in performing”. Other psychologists, such as Salmon and Meyer (1992: 200-1), argue that anxiety is purely detrimental in a performing situation:

Anxiety inhibits spontaneity and makes performers play cautiously, with a minimum of musical expression ... Anxious performers tend to ... exert excessive control over their performing. In doing so, they actually increase the likelihood that they will make technical errors. A second effect of anxiety during a performance is that it calls attention to itself in a most distracting way. Not only do you experience symptoms of anxiety, but you also begin to think about them, diverting attention from your music.

Psychological research on performance anxiety, whether it treats anxiety as necessary for performance, or as purely detrimental, is dominated by a focus on coping strategies for the individual performer. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, psychological work on coping strategies can be roughly divided into two theoretical strands – one strand puts forward coping strategies that focus on the performer; the other argues that a focus on the performer intensifies, rather than lessens, symptoms of performance anxiety. The following two sections detail each strand in turn.

2 COPING STRATEGIES FOR THE MUSICAL PERFORMER

2.1 *Focusing on the individual performer*

Most psychological techniques for coping with performance anxiety share a theoretical focus on self-monitoring, self-instruction and self-assessment. Musicians are instructed, for instance, to ‘get to know themselves better’ in order to manage their stress (Salmon and Meyer, 1992: 25). As Roland (1997: 2) writes:

I often tell performers that, when preparing for a performance, they are not only preparing the external aspects of performance, that is, music, dance, drama, they are also preparing the internal means of producing it – themselves. If they leave out this second, crucial element, then they will not succeed.

Many music psychologists suggest that the most successful approaches to treating anxiety involve a combination of relaxation training, cognitive restructuring (which comprises the examination of mental attitudes, the encouragement of ‘self-awareness’, and the introduction of ‘positive self-talk’), and stress inoculation (which involves individual practice and monitoring of stress management techniques) (Clark & Agras, 1991; Kendrick *et al.*, 1982; Salmon, 1991; Wilson, 1997)⁸. Each of the three techniques listed above encourages the individual musician to focus on him or herself to alleviate symptoms of performance anxiety. Relaxation training often involves the

⁸ See Appendix 8 for further information about each coping strategy outlined for performers.

implementation of an individualised pre-performance routine, for instance, while cognitive restructuring and stress inoculation training both advocate techniques which involve self-monitoring or self-assessment on the part of the individual performer. A different body of work, on the other hand, suggests that the introduction of self-focussed coping strategies can actually lead to increased anxiety, and proposes an entirely different way of coping with performance anxiety. In the following section, I introduce Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1990) concept of 'flow' in performance, which puts forward the idea that all good performances (including achievements at work and on the sporting field) necessarily involve an 'elimination of the self' (Green & Gallwey, 1986: 81).

2.2 *The 'flow' performance*

2.2.1 *Defining flow*

The concept of 'the flow state' was introduced by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) to answer the question 'when are people most happy?' He suggested that people feel happiest when they are engaged in a creative unfolding of something larger than themselves. This experience of the flow state tends to occur when there is a perfect match between the perceived demands of an activity and the abilities of the performer. During flow, the performer loses self-consciousness, becoming completely immersed in the task at hand. The performance itself becomes intrinsically rewarding, and the performer is said

to experience an 'egoless state' (Roland, 1997). As such, Csikszentmihalyi refers to flow as being an autotelic experience (from the Greek '*auto*', meaning self, and '*telos*', meaning end).

The concept of a flow performance differs markedly from the general recommendations put forward in traditional psychological research on musical performance anxiety, which encourage musicians to become self-aware – to measure, monitor and regulate themselves in order to lessen symptoms of performance anxiety. In contrast to this approach, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that performers should focus on the performance process rather than themselves, seeking a 'merging experience' with the task at hand. This concept of the flow performance has been used extensively in sport psychology, and is now often referred to as the 'zone of optimal functioning' and the 'ideal performance state' (see Annesi, 1998; Davis & Cox, 2002; Pates *et al.*, 2003). In the following section, I will examine how the concept of flow has been drawn upon by researchers in educational literature for musicians to suggest that anxious performers should 'let go of', rather than focus upon, themselves in order to perform well.

2.2.2 *Using 'flow' to address performance anxiety: Removing the focus on the self*

Although the concept of flow is drawn upon most commonly in research on peak sports performance, the performance of music is said to provide an ideal forum for

experiencing flow (Czikszenmihalyi, 1975). A universal feature of the flow performance, according to Czikszenmihalyi (1990: 63-4), is a “loss of the sense of self” and a consequent “feeling of union with the environment”. Many musicians speak of ‘magic moments’ in performance in which their instruments seem like an extension of themselves. Similarly, performers often describe music as assuming an identity of its own. As one violinist said:

I've tried to get away from the focus on myself ... where I cease to exist as an artist, and 'it', the music, is the most important ... to make the music become alive and assume its own identity is the most important thing.

Box 4.1

LETTING GO OF THE SELF

I remember very well my own 'autotelic' experiences in performance. One particular choral performance of six Bach motets springs to mind. Walking into the freezing church, I was very aware of the shaking of my hands, the numbness of my toes and the 'frogginess' of my throat. I was snotty, throaty and suffering a shocking cold. As soon as the music started, though, I completely forgot myself. I remember our conductor looking at me during a phrase that the sopranos had worked on, and – rather than thinking my usual 'God, I'd better get this right' – I just smiled with the joy of the music as the top notes soared out. By the end of the performance I was sweating with effort and completely ecstatic with our performance. Three hours later, my body remembered that I had a severe cold and I collapsed into bed. I recall thinking 'if I have to lie in bed for the next four days, it was definitely worth it'. Those two hours 'out of my body' and 'into the music' will always stay with me.

(in Roland, 1997: 33)

Flow theory suggests that a good performance is defined by complete involvement in the music, and consequently, a complete lack of self-consciousness. As Roland (1997:

77) summarises, “there is a sense you are one part of the whole, of being a part of something greater than yourself. This can be experienced as a sense of ‘letting go’”. Performers who experience anxiety, then, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), are hindered by excessive self-consciousness. Educational literature for musical performers drawing on flow theory encourages musicians to “(make) a progression from being self-absorbed to being captivated by music itself” (Salmon & Meyer, 1992: 11). Instead of focusing on the audience, or on themselves as musicians, performers are persuaded to focus on the *performance process*.

While certain authors suggest that a successful musical performance involves a complete absorption in the musical process, and a related ‘letting go of the self’, music psychologists, as we saw in Section 2.1 of this chapter, generally advocate self-focussed approaches to dealing with musical performance anxiety, including the implementation of positive self-talk. There seems to be a tension, then, in the literature on musical performance anxiety. While some researchers argue that “attention on yourself ... is helpful if you are using positive self-talk or relaxation to reduce tension” (Roland, 1997: 77), others argue that it is impossible to deliver a good performance when “one’s head is full of positive self-statements” (Green & Gallwey, 1986: ix); that self-talk “reflects a tendency to think about what one is doing rather than simply being caught up in the activity” (Salmon & Meyer, 1992: 71) and, as such, is unlikely to lead to a better

performance. These researchers argue that descriptions of the most memorable performances always involve a lack of awareness of an ‘internal conversation’:

The hundreds of musicians that I have spoken with ... almost all find it difficult to remember much about the times when everything went well. They were aware that things were falling into place, and they remember feeling exhilarated and delighted. ... Most of us have very clear memories of that self-critical internal conversation running on in our heads while we were playing poorly, and yet it often seems that we hardly remember noticing it at all while we were playing well. Isn't it reasonable to think that our performance would improve tremendously if we could eliminate that critical voice altogether?

(Green & Gallwey, 1986: 14).

Green and Gallwey (1986: 80) argue that the “secret” of combating musical performance anxiety is to “become the music, not yourself”; to “let the character of the music speak through (you)”. As the violinist Kató Havas (1973) writes, “the player needs to be able to forget about himself (*sic*). This is when real communication begins. For with the elimination of the self, he is able to reach the very core of the music, and is free to transmit it” (in Green & Gallwey, 1986: 81).

To this point, this chapter has provided a review of research on coping strategies for the musician in terms of two contrary ways of treating the self, one of which advocates self-

focussed strategies such as the introduction of positive self-talk, and the other of which suggests that this focus on the individual performer is unhelpful, advocating instead an 'elimination of the self' (Green & Gallwey, 1986: 81) in musical performance. The following discursive analysis of musicians' interview talk considers the ways in which these contradictory themes of social knowledge were organised rhetorically to accomplish the discursive business of managing self-presentations in talk. This is done in the context of an examination of performers' accounts of successful performances and of performance anxiety.

Analysis of the interview transcripts⁹ began with the identification of two main interpretative repertoires in the interviewees' talk about their performing experiences that were repeated pervasively throughout the interviews – first, the construction of performance as a focus on the self, and second, the construction of performance as a 'letting go' of the self. The analytic focus was on how the interviewees deployed and adapted the two interpretative repertoires in order to counter possibly problematic alternatives. In other words, the analysis concentrates on the *situated* use of the two repertoires in terms of how they are invoked to manage various 'demands for accountability' (Speer & Potter, 2002) – to counter possible alternative accounts and, in turn, to resist being countered (Potter, 1996b: 108).

⁹ Please refer to Chapter 2 Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for a detailed description of the participants, materials and transcription conventions involved in this study.

3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Focusing on the self in performance*

This section of the analysis considers the rhetorical use of a repertoire that constructed performance as a 'focus on the self', with a particular focus on the discursive strategies drawn upon to manage accountability and to work up positive self-presentations for the interviewees. Constructing musical performance as involving a focus on the self is no simple matter; it invites possible accusations of narcissism, immodesty, self-absorption, and so on. Interviewees portraying performance as an 'expression of the self', for instance, may risk charges of inauthenticity (what, for instance, is stopping Joe Average from becoming a performer if all it takes is an ability to express oneself?), while interviewee accounts that construct successful performers as 'comfortable with themselves' may present problems for participants when accounting for their own lack of self-confidence on stage. These various demands for accountability are evident in the way that speakers attempt to negotiate multiple concerns in building up self-presentations (how, for instance, a heterosexual man describes his experience of a gay bar without seeming gay or homophobic) (Speer & Potter, 2002). This section of the analysis examines how the interpretative repertoire of musical performance as a 'focus on the self' was drawn upon to manage various demands for accountability that were repeatedly played out in the musicians' talk.

The first three extracts, below, show participants constructing musical performance as a 'focus on the self'. At the same time, the interviewees can be seen to orient to and manage potential alternative accounts. This section of the analysis outlines two discursive strategies employed by the interviewees to construct performance as self-focussed and, at the same time, to account for potential alternatives by working up positive self-presentations for musical performers. Extracts 1, 2 and 3 show parts of a discussion about successful performers that followed the interviewer's question "what do you think it takes to be a brilliant performer?" In Extract 1, Danny is continuing on from his immediate response detailing an ability to 'melt' an audience. Extract 2 shows Carmen describing what it would take to be able to express oneself fully in performance, after previously constructing herself as being able to show 'sixty to seventy percent' of herself on stage. Extract 3 represents Kate's immediate response to my question.

Extract 1

1 **Danny** when you see really great performers who are so:
 2 themselves ↓you know they're ↑so (.) they are so content
 3 as what they are in that moment that that's when the
 4 audience really gets mo:ved.

Extract 2

1 **Carmen** not being conscious of the fact that you are trying

2 to show personality just going up there and being yourself
 3 and not giving a ↑da:mn ↓about what everybody thinks.
 4 Being com↑pletely comfortable with yourself and wanting to
 5 give nothing ↑but yourself to an audience.

Extract 3

1 **Kate** it's about you translating something from a composer's
 2 ide:as or mi:nds or thou:ghts, putting it through ↑yo:ur
 3 own version of its expression and sharing it with other
 4 people.

These extracts show typical interviewee replies to the question “what do you think it takes to be a brilliant performer?” In response to the question, each speaker works up descriptions of a focus on the self (e.g., ‘when you see really great performers who are so: themselves ↓you know they're ↑so (.) they are so content as what they are’, Extract 1, lines 1-3; ‘just going up there and being yourself’, ‘being com↑pletely comfortable with yourself’, ‘wanting to give nothing ↑but yourself to an audience’, Extract 2, lines 2-5; ‘putting it through ↑yo:ur own version of its expression’, Extract 3, lines 2-3). What I would like to focus on, here, is how the accounts were organised to manage accountability for the interviewees.

In constructing successful performers as able to be themselves on stage, speakers may find themselves needing to defend against potential accusations of inauthenticity or a lack of credibility. To take a rather extreme example, if performers need only feel 'comfortable with themselves' to be brilliant, then many karaoke artists might well meet the criteria. One of the ways in which the participants can be seen to manage this particular concern involves the use of extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986). Constructing extreme cases is a common descriptive practice which functions persuasively to strengthen the case being put forward; to show how good something is, how large, how serious and so on (Potter, 1996b: 176). The use of extreme case formulations in these three accounts of performers' abilities to 'be themselves' can be seen to function to lay claim to a certain kind of moral credibility whereby the performer might be seen as 'authentic'. A BBC Executive gave this piece of advice to prospective TV presenters:

If offering advice I'd say "be yourself, but with both the colour and the contrast knobs turned up by a notch. You have to break through the screen, not by raising your voice but by raising your personality a touch" (emphases added).

Roberts' (1999: 36)

This notion of 'turning oneself up a notch' can be seen in the interviewees' use of extreme case formulations. Pomerantz (1986) suggests that extreme cases are constructed via the use of modalising terms (such as 'completely', 'nothing' or 'never')

that work to modify descriptions. In Extract 1, performers are constructed not just as 'themselves' but as 'so themselves' (lines 1-2) and as not just content with who they are, but as '*so* content' (line 2), while in Extract 2, the interviewee, rather than describing performers as 'comfortable with themselves', works up a description of the successful performer as 'being completely comfortable with yourself' (line 4); as 'wanting to give nothing but yourself' (lines 4-5). We can also note the emphases placed on identity terms (e.g. 'so: themselves' Extract 1, line 2; '↑yo:ur own version of its expression' Extract 3, lines 2-3) in terms of Edwards' (1998: 19) suggestion that 'if (descriptions) did not *have to be* described that way (or described at all) then the way they *are* described can be examined for what it specifically might be doing'. In Extract 3, for instance, Kate may well have emphasised the word 'version' (e.g. 'your own version'), which would have served to highlight the many possible interpretations of a piece of music. However, the emphasis is placed upon the word 'your', which effectively calls attention to the unique individual expression expected of and delivered by musical performers.

This use of extreme formulations and the emphases on identity terms can be understood in terms of the function of "‘authenticating’ celebrity"; of working up authenticity for performers through the use of descriptions of performers as 'performing themselves' rather than acting (Tolson, 2001). So while your 'average Joe' may be able to 'be

himself, performers are distinguished from the everyday in terms of their ability to *turn themselves up a notch* – to be ‘so themselves’ (Extract 1) and ‘completely comfortable with themselves’ (Extract 2).

Another way in which the interviewees drew on the repertoire of a focus on the self to work up moral credibility involved the construction of a higher ideological purpose for performing. In Tolson’s (2001) analysis of the documentary film *Geri* (Halliwell – of ex-Spice Girls fame), he argued that one way in which Geri worked up moral credibility for herself involved the construction of celebrity as something to be *used* in service to a higher ideological cause. Tolson argued that Halliwell’s credibility as a celebrity was achieved through the use of self-descriptions as seeking employment to ‘do good for others’ (in this case, via her role as United Nations Ambassador). In Extracts 1, 2 and 3, it can be noted that descriptions of performers as self-focussed appeared in conjunction with the construction of this focus on the self as being for the benefit of the audience:

‘they are so content as what they are in that moment that *that’s when the audience really gets mo:ved.*’ (Extract 1)

‘Being com↑pletely comfortable with yourself and *wanting to give nothing ↑but yourself to an audience*’ (Extract 2)

‘putting it through ↑yo:ur own version of its expression and *sharing it with other people.*’ (Extract 3)

In each extract, the idea that being or expressing oneself is for the benefit of other people is appended to the interviewee's account of self-expression in performance. Billig et al. (1988: 22) suggest that a common discursive practice involves the simultaneous assertion of the reasonableness of two often conflicting ideas, and that the second idea put forward is generally given argumentative preference¹⁰. In Extracts 1, 2 and 3, then, the interviewees' inclusion of notions of pleasing others after accounts of self-expression works to present 'performing for the benefit of others' as more important than 'performing so I can be or express myself'. This structure can be seen to effectively manage the interviewees' self-presentations as people who work to 'do good for others' – as belonging to a category whose members serve a higher ideological purpose than mere self-expression – which in turn can be seen as working to lay claims of moral credibility for the performer (Tolson, 2001). Talk of successful musicians as 'self-focussed' may risk charges of these performers being narcissistic (rather than talented, or hard-working, or passionate about music, and so on). The construction of self-focus as a major factor contributing to the audience's enjoyment (e.g., '(successful performers) are so content as what they are in that moment that that's when the audience really gets moved.', Extract 1, lines 2-4) effectively mitigates possible accusations of narcissism and, at the same time, works to ratchet up the speaker's moral credibility.

¹⁰ See also Chapter 3 Section 5.2 for a discussion of the use of a 'concession/criticism format' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) to present the interviewee's choice to seek fulfilment in performance as preferred.

The inclusion of one version of events immediately following another (Billig *et al.*, 1988) also appears in interviewees' accounts of experiences of performance anxiety. I turn now to examine how the interviewees can be seen to be managing the dual concerns of presenting themselves as self-focussed – specifically, as 'comfortable with themselves' as performers and therefore as being able to 'give themselves' to an audience (see Extract 2) – whilst simultaneously justifying their own experiences of stage fright.

3.2 *Justifying performance anxiety*

In the light of the taken-for-granted cultural construction of performers as comfortable with expressing themselves on stage¹¹, musicians' talk about performance anxiety could be seen as potentially problematic. If 'brilliant performers' are commonly constructed as comfortably able to be themselves in front of an audience – as 'so content with who they are' (Extract 1) and as 'completely comfortable' with themselves (Extract 2), for instance – musicians who claim to experience debilitating nervousness and/or lack of self-confidence before a performance may need to do a fair bit of work to justify their anxiety; to manage their presentations as *not* comfortable with themselves. In this

¹¹ See Chapter 3, Section 4 for an examination of historical constructions of performers as 'giving themselves' to an audience. The introduction to this thesis also shows contemporary portrayals of performers as 'giving themselves' in an analysis of newspaper articles on performers and performance (see Section 3.1).

section of the analysis, I examine two discursive practices that were typically drawn upon by interviewees to achieve this justificatory work.

One of the ways in which the interviewees can be seen to be justifying experiences of performance anxiety involves minimising personal responsibility for their nerves and, at the same time, maximising their own abilities to 'shift' to professional, non-nervous behaviour, described as taking the focus *off* oneself at the right moment. The following two extracts show the interviewees talking about their experiences of pre-performance nerves. In Extract 4, Carmen is responding to my request to talk about one of her most memorable performances, while Extract 5 shows Maria's response to the question 'how do you feel before a performance?'.

Extract 4

- 1 **Carmen** we were the most nervous I've be:en I think like ↑literally,
- 2 all four of us kept using the toilet in ↑cy↓cles! [(laughs)]
- 3 **Gemma** [(laughs)]
- 4 **Carmen** Often that happens when you get nerves everyone rushes to the
- 5 ↑toi↓let! Um: >and so in the dressing room beforehand we were
- 6 all done up in our costumes and stuff like that and Helen and
- 7 I were just< pa:cing the floor just pacing back and forth
- 8 >seriously fifteen minutes< and people would try and talk to
- 9 us and we'd say "No! We're pacing! Shush! Can't answer you!"

10 Um >and (a friend) was there and she was just trying to calm
11 us down and< (laughs) and she said, "Oh by the way like
12 there's a rea:lly big line of people outside waiting to get
13 in" and we're going "Oh no:o, that's going to make it
14 ↑wo:rse!" So even though we were sort of guaranteed more that
15 our concert was going to be a success it made us ↑mo:re
16 nervous because we thought all these people coming to see us
17 are going to be really pissed off if we don't (.) deliver.
18 And so: (.) then when we were told we had thirty seconds to
19 go and then our pianist walked out and started (.) we just
20 had to (.) you had to shift (clicks) your mindset into
21 completely professional you couldn't be selfish and worry
22 about yourself any more. You had to worry about the whole
23 grou:p, about the whole show about the audience about
24 delivering the best thing so although I was still (.) like I
25 was still shaking and trembling I felt more in command of
26 myself because I let go of the selfish nerves and
27 concentrated on the nerves as a who:le. Um:m (.) then during
28 the concert it went like (.) it really went like a dream.

Extract 5

- 1 **Gemma** How do you feel before a performance?
2 **Maria** >Oh my gosh.< It's cra:zy. I don't want to go on ↑stage!
3 [(laughs)]
4 **Gemma** [(laughs)]
5 **Maria** Before (.) it's (.) I've dealt with this a ↑lot better now >a
6 lot much better< but um: I've learnt to focus on the music.

I look first at the ways in which the interviewees' accounts worked to minimise their experiences of stage fright and to maximise their ability to get over their nerves (which, interestingly, was described as taking the focus off oneself). There are several points which can be highlighted here. First, it can be noted that the performers' descriptions of anxiety are punctuated by frequent laughter between interviewee and interviewer (e.g. 'all four of us kept using the toilet in ↑cy↓cles! [(laughter)]' Extract 4 lines 2-3; 'she was just trying to calm us down and< (laughs)', Extract 4 lines 10-11; '>Oh my gosh.< It's cra:zy. I don't want to go on ↑stage! [(laughter)]' Extract 5 lines 2-4). This laughter can be seen to be functioning here not only to diffuse the potential delicacy (Speer & Potter, 2002) of talking about debilitating anxiety, but also to minimise the seriousness of the account. The rather humorous description presented in Extract 4 (lines 1-14) works to, first, gloss over the situation as a moment of 'jovial excess' (Squire, 1994) and, second, to give preferentiality to Carmen's subsequent description of her ability to 'shift' to professional behaviour at the required moment (lines 18-28) – as Billig *et al.* (1988) note, humour often works to construct one possible version as less privileged than another by working it up as unqualified and parodied. In both Extracts 4 and 5, the interviewees' accounts of pre-performance nerves, glossed over in comic overtones, are immediately followed by descriptions of themselves as able to 'shift mindset into completely professional' (Extract 4, lines 20-1) and to 'deal with this (anxiety)' (Extract 5, line 5) when required. As I noted before, the description of one

possible version of events immediately followed by another works to represent the second version as preferred to the first (Billig *et al.*, 1988). In Extracts 4 and 5, the use of a parodied opening description of performance anxiety immediately followed by a description of the speaker's professional behaviour (e.g., letting go of nerves, feeling in command of oneself, focusing on the music) functions to represent the experience of pre-performance nerves as trivial – as a bit of a joke - in comparison to the subsequent account of the actual (successful) performance.

The account of performance anxiety represented in Extract 4 can also be viewed in terms of the way in which it is organised to minimise the interviewee's personal responsibility for her nerves. This is achieved in a number of ways. First, the interviewee generalises her experience of anxiety to all musicians performing in the concert. Hepburn and Brown (2001: 701), in their analysis of teachers' talk about stress, suggested that descriptions of stress as generalised to the teaching profession allowed interviewees to build immunity from accusations that they were not capable of doing a good job due to any features personal to them. In Extract 4, Carmen builds immunity from similar accusations by accounting for performance anxiety as belonging to the *group* of musicians performing rather than to herself personally. Likewise, Abell and Stokoe (2001) noted that in an interview, the late Princess Diana strategically switched from the use of the first person singular pronoun 'I' to the plural 'we' to implicate her

husband as responsible for their marriage breakdown. This discursive practice is commonly referred to as 'shifting footing' (Goffman, 1979, 1981). The notion of footing identifies three primary roles available to the speaker: 1) the animator (who says the words), 2) the author (who scripts the words) and 3) the principal (the party whose position the words represent). In Extract 4, when Carmen is speaking about her pre-performance nerves, the 'author' footing shifts a number of times. For the sake of clarity, part of Extract 4 is reproduced below:

- 1 **Carmen** we were the most nervous I've be:en I think like ↑literally,
2 all four of us kept using the toilet in ↑cy↓cles! [(laughs)]
3 **Gemma** [(laughs)]
4 **Carmen** Often that happens when you get nerves everyone rushes to the
5 ↑toi↓let! Um: >and so in the dressing room beforehand we were
6 all done up in our costumes and stuff like that and Helen and
7 I were just< pa:cing the floor just pacing back and forth
8 >seriously fifteen minutes< and people would try and talk to
9 us and we'd say "No! We're pacing! Shush! Can't answer you!"
10 Um >and (a friend) was there and she was just trying to calm
11 us down and< (laughs) and she said, "Oh by the way like
12 there's a rea:lly big line of people outside waiting to get
13 in" and we're going "Oh no:o, that's going to make it
14 ↑wo:rse!" So even though we were sort of guaranteed more that
15 our concert was going to be a success it made us ↑mo:re
16 nervous because we thought all these people coming to see us
17 are going to be really pissed off if we don't (.) deliver.

18 And so: (.) then when we were told we had thirty seconds to
19 go and then our pianist walked out and started (.) we just
20 had to (.) you had to shift (clicks) your mindset into
21 completely professional you couldn't be selfish and worry
22 about yourself any more.

In lines 4 to 5, Carmen constructs performance anxiety from the generalised position of 'you' ('Often that happens when you get nerves everyone rushes to the ↑toi↓let!'). This footing, in conjunction with the use of the quantifier 'often', depicts anxiety as occurring to performers in general, and as occurring relatively frequently. 'Going to the toilet in cycles', then, is depicted as a routine, ordinary activity that is widely experienced, while the use of the generalised 'you' paints 'getting nerves' as equally to be expected. At other times in this part of the extract, the voicing is plural: 'all four of us kept using the toilet in ↑cy↓cles!' (line 2); 'Helen and I were just< pa:cing the floor' (lines 6-7); 'it made us ↑mo:re nervous' (lines 15-16). This plural voicing permits the inference that Carmen is reporting a *general* experience of anxiety of a *range* of people (Potter, 1996b), thereby minimising her own personal responsibility. This minimisation of responsibility is also achieved via the use of active voicing (Wooffitt, 1992), which involves using quotations from others as corroborating the speaker's version (Hepburn, 2003) (e.g., 'people would try and talk to us and we'd say "No! We're pa:cing! Shush! Can't answer you!"', lines 8-9; 'and we're going "Oh no:o, that's going to make it

↑*wo:rse!*"⁶, lines 13-14). Again, this practice works to demonstrate that the experience of performance anxiety does not just belong to Carmen alone.

Footing shifts tend to occur in conjunction with speakers' self-repairs (Potter, 1996b), and are often observed when the speaker is about to make a controversial or sensitive claim (Clayman, 1992). The general point, here, is that distanced footing works to achieve neutrality. However, I suggest that the self-repairs around shifts of footing in the musicians' accounts of anxiety function differently. In Extract 4, for instance, Carmen's continued use of the plural 'we' to account for her nerves is repaired and replaced once again with the more generalised 'you' when she begins to talk about her ability to 'shift' to professional performance behaviour: ('And so: (.) then when we were told we had thirty seconds to go and then our pianist walked out and started (.) *we just had to (.) you had to shift* (clicks) your mindset into completely professional you couldn't be selfish and worry about yourself any more', lines 18-22). Later, this footing switches to 'I': ('I felt more in command of myself because I let go of the selfish nerves', lines 25-26). Extract 4 provides an excellent example of the rhetorical business managed by shifts of footing. When talking about performance anxiety, Carmen alternatively used the footing of 'you' and 'we' to present nerves as belonging to performers in general, and to the group of musicians with whom she was performing, effectively minimising her own responsibility for the experience of anxiety. This footing shifted

with the topic, however, as Carmen claimed responsibility for her ability to 'let go of the selfish nerves'. While 'professionalism' was built up as attributable to Carmen's personal abilities as a performer, performance anxiety was constructed as belonging to *all* performers.

In both extracts, the interviewee's jokey talk around personal experiences of stress and anxiety was followed by an account of the speaker's ability to take the focus *off* herself in order to perform successfully (e.g. 'you couldn't be selfish and worry about yourself any more. You had to worry about the whole grou:p, about the whole show about the audience about delivering the best thing', Extract 4 lines 21-24; 'I let go of the selfish nerves', Extract 4, line 26; 'I've learnt to focus on the music', Extract 5, line 6). This depiction of the performer as focussed on the *performance* is markedly different to the construction of performance as a focus on the self, which was discussed earlier in the analysis section. Discursive research treats talk as inevitably inconsistent (Wetherell & Potter, 1992: 190). Moreover, talk is viewed as drawing upon 'commonplaces' (Billig, 1991; 1996) – sets of taken-for-granted and culturally available value terms – that are often organised through contrary themes, making talk ideal for achieving rhetorical ends (Billig *et al.*, 1988). This chapter began with a discussion of two seemingly contradictory ways of treating the self in psychological research on coping with performance anxiety – that is, as requiring (1) a focus on the self, and 2) the removal of

a focus on the self. This section of the analysis considered how musicians' accounts of performance as 'self-focussed' were oriented to, and designed to manage, potential alternative accounts. Participants drew on extreme case formulations and constructed a higher ideological purpose to work up moral credibility for the performer, while experiences of performance anxiety were justified via the use of minimisation. Interestingly, the interviewees' accounts of their ability to 'get over their nerves' in Extracts 4 and 5 were accompanied by talk that positioned the performer as removed from the performance (e.g., 'you couldn't be selfish and worry about yourself anymore', Extract 4, lines 21-22; 'I've learnt to focus on the music', Extract 5, line 6). In the following section, I examine how - in contrast to earlier descriptions of performance as a focus on the self - the interviewees negotiated potential accusations of boastfulness by constructing musical performance as a process of 'letting go of the self'.

3.3 *Letting go of the self*

When talking about memorable or successful performances, the use of constructions of performers as self-focussed - as 'expressing themselves' or 'being themselves' - may become potentially problematic. When asked about their favourite moments on stage, for instance, the reply of 'well, I was just being myself' might invite accusations of immodesty. This section of the analysis examines how musical performers avoided taking on another culturally available subject position of 'egotistical/narcissistic

performer'¹² in accounts of their own successful performances. The following two interview extracts show the interviewees partway through their responses to the question 'can you describe one of your most memorable performances?'

Extract 7

- 1 **Sandy** I was really proud of the way I sung that day. I was very
2 ner↓vous but once I got into it (.) 'cos I knew it well yeah
3 it really clicked.
4 **Gemma** And how does it feel?
5 **Sandy** I don't know it just feels right. And it's flowing more you
6 don't have to think so much >you don't have to think about
7 what you're doing it's just flowing more< (.) it does flow
8 naturally and you sort of (.) I feel a bit more out of
9 myself.

Extract 8

- 1 **Jack** Everything just feels so right that I just wanna cry. It just
2 sits here (places hand on heart) and just goes "mmm:↓mm"
3 (moves fingers from heart to face) and sometimes I get tears
4 in my eyes 'cos it just feels so (.) it just clicks it's just
5 so ri:ght. I think the times that ↑I actually experience that
6 when I'm actively performing are rare because I'm too busy
7 °kind of° (.) I can't spare a lot of the energy to notice

¹² See the Introduction (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.2.2) for descriptions of media accounts of the performer as 'removed from normality'.

8 that 'cos it just overtakes me it just comple:tely (.) washes
9 over me.

Extracts 7 and 8 demonstrate the use of an alternate construction of identity for the musical performer, one which involves describing the musician as being 'overtaken' by the music (Extract 8, line 8). This construction of the performer is noticeably different from the interviewees' previous depictions of performance as a forum for self-expression (see Section 3.1.1 of this chapter). Sandy, for instance, who we see describing herself as 'feeling out of myself' in Extract 7 (lines 8-9), had earlier in the interview suggested that 'when you're putting your own voice up there, it's such a personal thing, that's you', while Jack, the speaker in Extract 8, had said 'it's good being the centre of attention'. Here, though, we can see the interviewees drawing on an opposing way of talking about themselves as performers which is reminiscent of Czikszenmihalyi's (1975, 1990) work on the 'flow performance', discussed in Section 2.2 of this chapter.

This 'switch' to an alternate construction of identity for the performer can be seen as occasioned by the context of its use, and serves two major functions in this context. First, as Tolson (2001) pointed out, the use of notions of 'taking the emphasis off yourself' in demonstration of service to a higher ideological cause can be seen to function to work up positive, authentic, and morally credible self-presentations for performers. In Extracts 7 and 8, the interviewees' use of phrases such as 'I feel a bit

more out of myself' (Extract 7, lines 8-9), 'it just overtakes me' (Extract 8, line 8), and 'it just completely washes over me' (Extract 8, lines 8-9) works to portray *music* as the higher focus, rather than the musicians themselves. Second, it is instructive to view these extracts in terms of their use of vivid and vague detail in managing possible accusations of boastfulness. It is this second function of the talk that I will concentrate on in the final section of the analysis.

Potter (1996b: 118) suggests that the description of events in vivid detail can pose problems for speakers because such accounts are able to be undermined in a number of ways, including identifying inconsistencies which cast doubt on the speaker's credibility. In Extract 8, Jack begins his turn of talk with a detailed description of how he feels in memorable performances ('everything just feels so right that I just wanna cry. It just sits here (places hand on heart) and just goes "mmm:↓mm" (moves fingers from heart to face) and sometimes I get tears in my eyes', lines 1-4). At this point, the speaker starts to reintroduce how a successful performance 'feels' ('it just feels so (.)', line 4), but after a hesitation, he switches from the use of vivid detail to the vague formulation 'it just clicks, it's just so right' (lines 4-5). In Extract 7 we can see a similar pattern, with the introduction of how the speaker feels in a successful performance ('proud', 'nervous'), a hesitation, and a vague formulation ('it just clicked', line 3).

The interviewees' use of vague detail illustrated in Extracts 7 and 8 can be examined in terms of what was *not* said (Edwards, 1998), considering the ways in which the accounts were organised to counter potential alternatives (Speer & Potter, 2002). Using Extract 8 as an example, Jack could have continued his reintroduction of how he 'feels' in a memorable performance ('it just feels so (.)', line 4) using similarly vivid descriptions as those used at the start of his turn and similar constructions of 'being the centre of attention' drawn upon earlier in the interview (e.g., 'It just feels so amazingly good, like I've really achieved something, like I'm doing something important with my life, like the audience loves me, like I'm KING OF THE WORLD!!'). However, the continued vivid description of performers as 'being themselves', in the context of talk about a successful performance, could easily invite accusations of boasting. Jack avoids this dilemma by switching to the vague formulations of 'it just clicks, it's so right', and by describing the performance as 'overtaking' and 'washing over' him. These vague descriptions, accompanied by the use of an alternative construction of identity which positions the performer as removed from the performance, effectively mitigate potential accusations of immodesty.

The next section, in its analysis of four short interview extracts which again show participants' responses to the question 'can you describe a memorable performing

experience?', looks in more detail at how expressions such as 'it just clicked' were used by the interviewees to achieve the same function.

Extract 9

1 **Sandy** every time we've sung with (a choir) (.) um (a particular
2 piece) (.) it has a:lways clicked (.) a:lways I've felt
3 really happy ↑no nerves whatsoever ↑totally into it just fun
4 in singing. Every time we've sung it it's rea:lly clicked,
5 °it's really clicked°. Um: (.) and I think up at (a music
6 festival) the one voice per part thing that I was a part of
7 that really clicked (.) that really felt like it really
8 worked.

Extract 10

1 **Carmen** Um:m (.) then during the concert it went like (.) it really
2 went like a drea:m.

Extract 11

1 **Maria** You get that (.) you know that rush that you get through your
2 body (.) >but it's definitely a good feeling not a bad
3 feeling.< Um:m (.) everything is ali:ve. (.) Um:m (.) gosh I
4 don't know how to ex↑plain it. >I know how I feel it's just
5 hard to explain the feeling that I get.< I get very smi:ley
6 (laughs), always very smiley. I don't know how to explain.

Extract 12

1 **Annie** it wo:rks and it's just ↑such a (.) and it works and they (.)
2 they have this (.) um: ↑beau:tiful warm kind of (.) tingly
3 feeling. O:h, I can't explain it.

As with Extracts 7 and 8, these four interview extracts can be viewed in terms of their use of systematic vagueness (Edwards, 1997; Hepburn, 2003; Potter, 1996b). In this section, though, the focus is on the use of idiomatic expressions in constructing vague accounts. Drew and Holt (1988) suggest that idiomatic expressions – clichéd expressions such as ‘between a rock and a hard place’ and ‘banging your head against a brick wall’ – tend to appear at specific junctures in talk, generally at the end of a sequence or topic, and/or when the topic is controversial or delicate. The vagueness of idiomatic expressions makes them difficult to challenge (Edwards & Potter, 1992); as Potter (1996b: 168) suggests, “‘banging your head against a brick wall’ can be ‘right’, or descriptive, in all sorts of situations and in all sorts of ways. It takes work to undermine”. In Extracts 9 and 10, the use of the idiomatic expressions ‘it really clicked’ (Extract 9, lines 2, 4, 5 & 7) and ‘it went like a dream’ (Extract 10, lines 1-2) in accounts of successful performances effectively ended those particular sequences of talk – the next turn in each interview involved the introduction of another question from the interviewer – thereby putting a stop to the interviewee’s need to talk about him or herself in a possibly boastful manner. As with Extract 8, then, the use of (vague)

idiomatic expressions can be seen to be doing work to manage the interviewees' identities as 'modest' performers. These vague descriptions can also be seen to work to manage the speakers' identities in another way. A detailed, 'self-focussed' description of the way in which a performer expressed him or herself in a successful performance may lead to performers having to defend against the implicit question of 'why can't you always reproduce your successful performances?' The use of vague detail in accounts which construct the performer as 'removed' from successful performances, and which present performances as 'just clicking', effectively avoids this possible question.

Extracts 11 and 12 show another use of vague expressions in the management of interviewees' self-presentations. The repeated use of formulations such as 'I don't know how to explain' and 'I can't explain' gives the interviewees' accounts, as Potter (1996b: 168-9) puts it, "no narrative point of view, it reports no individual perceptions or emotions; instead it provides a broad categorisation of the event". The lack of detail provided in the broad phrase 'I can't explain' in the context of talk about successful performances effectively manages possible accusations of immodesty – by reporting "no individual perceptions or emotion", the interviewees are able to present accounts which, in their descriptions of successful performances, do not invite accusations of boasting. At the same time, the discursive strategy of *not* explaining works well to avoid the need to justify subsequent accounts of negative performing experiences. By

constructing themselves as unable to explain how a successful performance occurred, speakers effectively mitigate their responsibility for producing consistently good performances.

In this final section of the analysis, I considered the allied use of vague formulations and constructions of the performer as removed from the performance in the context of interview talk about positive performing experiences. The analysis focussed on how these discursive strategies were drawn upon to manage the interviewees' self-presentations as modest, and how accounts of successful performance were oriented to the potential question 'why aren't all your performances as successful?'

4 SOME CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examined the rhetorical use of two seemingly contradictory ways of talking about musical performance. From the perspective of discursive psychology, which treats contradictions as the standard stuff of talk (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), the traditional psychological quest to find 'the answer' somewhere within the many contradictory culturally available ways of constructing a topic is seen as futile. The present chapter considered how the inherently contradictory nature of talk gives rise to various demands for accountability (Speer & Potter, 2002), and analysed the ways in which self-presentations were managed by speakers in interviews about musical

performance. More specifically, I examined how accountability was managed via the occasioned use of two contrasting ways of treating the 'anxious performer' put forward by traditional music psychology: 1) the suggestion that performers should focus on themselves to lessen their nerves, and 2) the suggestion that this focus on the self exacerbates anxiety; that performers should 'eliminate the self' and concentrate instead on the performance process.

Billig *et al.* (1988: 133) suggest that an analysis of talk will always reveal the presence of contrasts and contradictions, and that these are usually obscured by the traditional psychological procedure of focusing on 'the answer'. The analysis presented in this chapter illustrates that psychology's bid to find *the* most effective coping strategy for musical performers suffering from performance anxiety – if done at the expense of considering other perhaps contradictory techniques – is, from the perspective of a discursive approach to research, a futile exercise. Traditional music psychology may examine talk about performance anxiety, but this talk is treated as representative, rather than oriented to action. This treatment of language, in its quest to find the 'truth' about coping with performance anxiety, hides the presence of inconsistency in musicians' talk about anxiety, and consequently fails to acknowledge the rhetorical, occasioned, multi-layered and contradictory nature of talk. A discursive approach to treating talk, with its consideration of the complexities, contradictions and dilemmas surrounding the

experience of performance anxiety, can be seen as a useful addition to music psychology.

In the following chapter, I continue the examination of how musical identities get done in talk with an analysis of the working up of the identity category of the 'ensemble singer' in a group meeting of members of a choir.

CHAPTER 5

Using identity categories in talk: Constructing identities for 'the ensemble singer'

In the last two chapters, I examined constructions of identity in the talk of solo musicians. The analyses investigated the management of self-presentations in various contexts of interaction in interviews with solo performers. In the next two chapters, I turn my attention to an examination of a different identity category: that of the ensemble singer. Unlike traditional psychological research, the aim of these analyses is not to define in what ways the 'ensemble musician' may differ from, or indeed be similar to, the 'solo musician'. Instead, the focus is on how identity categories *get done* in talk, and with what effects.

Traditional social psychology often treats identity categories as explanatory resources for analysts. Music psychologists, for instance, typically approach the identity category 'ensemble musician' as a given; as a solid basis upon which to justify their analyses, rather than examining how such a category might be constructed in talk. Drawing on the theoretical framework of discursive psychology, this chapter will consider how

social identity categories are used as resources for participants to accomplish social actions – such as making decisions and producing opinions - in talk.

The chapter begins with a brief review of research on ensemble music and ensemble singing. From a discursive perspective, I will outline some broad criticisms of traditional psychological research on ensemble musicians, and consider an alternative discursive framework to the study of identity categories. The analysis section of this chapter presents a preliminary investigation into the working up of different identity categories for the ensemble singer in a chamber choir's 'future directions' meeting. The chapter ends with a discussion of the social actions accomplished in and through the use of identity categories in the talk, and leads into the more detailed analysis of the meeting presented in Chapter 6. First, though, I consider traditional approaches to research on ensemble music in the field of music psychology in order to advance an argument for the need for fresh perspectives that address the social psychological aspects of ensemble music and identity work.

1 TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON ENSEMBLE MUSIC

Research on performance in music psychology is dominated by examinations of solo piano performance (Goodman, 2000). Surprisingly little attention is given to ensemble music, and the research that does explore ensemble performance concentrates mainly

on string quartets (e.g., Murningham & Conlon, 1991; Young & Colman, 1979) and symphony orchestras (e.g., Allmendinger *et al.*, 1994; Allmendinger & Hackman, 1991; Atik, 1994; Parasuraman & Nachman, 1987).

In general, this research has involved the use of traditional, qualitative interview and survey methods, in which the focus is on the *content* of interviewees' statements. Topics of investigation have included social facilitation, group function, and group leadership. This body of research is representationalist in theoretical orientation (McGannon & Mauws, 2000), in that the responses produced by participants are treated by researchers as representative of speakers' attitudes, motivations, and beliefs, as well as of various real states of affairs, events and processes in the world. Murningham and Conlon (1991), for example, interviewed individual members of 20 professional string quartets in Britain in order to shed light on those factors of leadership and group function that differentiated more and less successful quartets (categorised in terms of features such as number of concerts performed and albums produced, concert fee, and reviews). Findings were presented in terms of differences in the content of members' talk around issues of leadership and democracy, conflict and compromise. More successful quartets reported having a clear group leader, whilst also believing that their group was run on democratic lines; members of less successful quartets were reported as

believing there was too much democracy in their groups, and that talk about areas of conflict, and attempts at compromise, often got in the way of playing music.

The effectiveness of different leadership styles in string quartets was also investigated by Young and Coleman (1979), who concluded that democratic styles were more effective, and resulted in higher levels of member satisfaction, than did authoritarian and laissez-faire styles. Other research on ensemble performance has focussed on the symphony orchestra. Social psychological research in this field has been concerned primarily with leadership dynamics (Lehman, 1995). Atik (1994), for instance, described various stages and styles in the building of leadership relations within the orchestra ('testing', 'transactional', and 'inspirational' stages; 'charismatic' and 'transformational' leaders) that were reported by members. Faulkner (1973a) reported key elements in symphonic leadership to involve 'reciprocity', 'respect', 'flexibility', and 'trust'. Other research on orchestras has considered job attitude and performance, examining areas such as career expectations (Faulkner, 1973b) and career prospects (Westby, 1961) of orchestral musicians.

A new body of social psychological work that examines decision-making processes in orchestras has emerged in recent years. A preliminary study by Maitlis (1997) considered how decision-making varied across three symphony orchestras in the

United Kingdom and examined, in particular, the levels of involvement of the musicians, as well as how the musicians felt about their involvement. Maitlis' analysis is primarily observational, and suggests that players' desire for involvement is dependent on their perceptions of the competence of orchestral management.

According to Maitlis (1997: 45), very little research exists which examines the day-to-day functioning of artistic organisations. In particular, she suggests that there is a neglect of the role that musicians play in their organisation when they are not on the stage. Although her study goes some way towards bridging this gap, her analysis does not examine the 'day-to-day functioning' of the orchestras studied in any detail. Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis examine the interactive practices of decision-making in a 'future directions' meeting held by an established music ensemble and, as such, represent a small step in a new direction for music psychology. Moreover, the chapters move away from the more common psychological investigations of string quartets and symphony orchestras to consider the interactive practices of members of a choir. In the next section, I review available research on ensemble singing in music psychology.

2 TRADITIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON ENSEMBLE SINGING

Although there is a small body of work concerning ensemble singing in music psychology, the literature is concerned almost solely with defining the benefits of

singing in choirs. Bailey and Davidson (2002), for example, examined the positive life transformations experienced by members of a choir made up of homeless men. They argued that group singing positively influences emotional, social and cognitive processes; that “active participation in singing may act to alleviate depression, increase self-esteem, improve social interaction skills and induce cognitive stimulation” (2002: 2). Similarly, Clift and Hancox’s (2001) content analysis of questionnaires completed by members of a university choral society reported that singing appeared to positively influence the social, emotional, physical and spiritual lives of the choristers. And in another study, Beck *et al.* (2000) studied the effects of group singing on choristers’ immune systems by measuring the levels of the antibody immunoglobulin A in the saliva of choristers before, during and after rehearsals, and after a performance of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*. The authors reported that levels of the antibody increased 150 per cent after rehearsals, and 240 per cent after the performance. As part of the study, Beck and his colleagues developed the *Singers’ Emotional Experience Scale*: a 28 item, 5-point Likert scale that measures emotional responses to singing. The majority of their participants agreed strongly with statements such as ‘singing is very important to me’; ‘singing is exhilarating’; ‘singing gives me a kind of high’; ‘singing has made me healthier’; and ‘singing has contributed to my personal well being’ (p. 98).

The dominance of research on the benefits of singing is reflected in the titles of presentations given at an international symposium *Sharing the Voices: The Phenomenon of Singing* held in Newfoundland, Canada in 2000. Titles included 'How can I keep from singing: A lifetime of sweet singing in the choir' (Adams, 2000), and 'Singing a woman's life: How singing lessons transformed the lives of nine women' (Patteson, 2000). The latter title points to an area that is commonly explored in research on singing: the ability to change one's life through the activity of singing. In the literature mentioned above, the researchers all examined the transformative effects of group singing. Bailey and Davidson (2002) discussed how singing in a choir changed the lives of homeless men; Clift and Hancox (2001) explored how, through singing, the lives of members of a university choir were positively influenced; and Beck *et al.* (2000) measured how the immune system response of choristers changed when they sang.

This perception of singing as transformative is also commonly constructed in popular culture. In one article in a Melbourne broadsheet, for example, ('We are strong: Singing has the power to alter you', *The Age*, 18/05/02) a journalist wrote of her experiences rehearsing and performing in a 200-voice community choir for a one-off performance. In the article, the conductor of the choir described an instance in which a chorister with a history of mental breakdowns had reported that, as long as the choir was practising, she could "do without her psychologist". The conductor's point was that

ensemble singing is transformative: “if people sing in a group together, it changes all sorts of things about their lives. Probably most people who participate are altered in some way, and for some people profoundly altered”.

This construction of ensemble singing - the idea that group singing has positive effects on singers; that singing ‘foster(s) emotional health’ and ‘improves life satisfaction’ (Bailey, 2002: 7) - seems to hold both scholarly and popular currency. Researchers have suggested that music-making induces transcendental experiences that have the effect of lifting performers out of the ordinary (Adams, 2000; Gabrielsson, 2001), and that “the joy received from singing by amateur choristers suggests that the activity provides a form of gratification that engenders extraordinary dedication” (Bailey & Davidson, 2002: 5). As mentioned in Section 1 of this chapter, most traditional research on ensemble music is representative in nature; concentrating on ‘discovering’ themes or patterns in the content of musicians’ responses to interview and survey questions. Rarely does this research move beyond an identification of these themes to consider their possible social and political implications. In Chapters 5 and 6, I present an alternative to this traditional, representationalist perspective. Specifically, I will explore some of the ways in which ensemble musicians work up the identity category of the ‘good ensemble singer’ in order to negotiate important decisions about the future of the group in their ongoing talk and interaction. Using a discursive psychological approach, I

focus on what group members accomplish by talking in particular ways in specific conversational contexts. Rather than attempting to investigate factors that may be associated with different styles of group leadership, or with ensemble performance success, the topic of this investigation is the naturally-occurring talk of choristers in the context of a group discussion. This talk is subjected to close textual analysis, informed by the principles of critical social discursive psychology (Wetherell, 1998)¹³. Before turning to this analysis, however, I will provide a more detailed critique of traditional research on ensemble music by highlighting some of the problems that discursive psychologists would suggest are inherent in mainstream psychological work concerning ensemble musicians.

3 A DISCURSIVE CRITIQUE

Research on ensemble music often highlights the importance of interaction in ensemble performance. Individual ensemble musicians are seen as vital parts of a whole – the musicians involved in an ensemble performance could be likened to different parts of an engine, and the performance to the engine itself. Each musician must attend to his or her component part, and at the same time ensure that the part fits in with the whole. As Goodman (2002: 6) writes,

¹³ See Chapter 1, Section 3.1 for an outline of the approach to discourse analysis employed in this thesis; see also Chapter 2, Section 1.1 for a description of Wetherell's (1998) critical social discursive psychology.

In effect, the individual's concentration is divided between monitoring the sound produced from his or her own part and attending to the sound produced from the rest of the group. As a result, fine adjustments are made (either consciously or unconsciously) to the balance and resolution of the ensemble's sound throughout performance.

It seems strange, then, that in spite of music psychology's claim that interaction in music ensembles "involves a degree of intimacy and subtlety possibly not equalled by any other kind of group" (Young & Colman, 1979: 12-13), music psychologists more often than not remove the context of interaction from their analyses of ensemble performance. In her research on cello-piano duets, for instance, Goodman (2002: 6) suggested that "regardless of the size of the ensemble, all the tiny nuances emerging from the individual parts will have some greater or lesser effect on the way in which the music is expressed". Her analysis of the duets, however, is based upon Chambers' (1991: 32) definition of analysis: the "act or process of separating a thing into its component parts" (Goodman, 2000: 17-18). It would seem that music psychology's reliance on traditional psychological methods of "separating a thing into its component parts" to analyse ensemble music is at odds with its theoretical treatment of ensemble music as a piece of interaction. The analytic focus of this chapter, and indeed this thesis,

is on how identities are done *in interaction* by participants. In Chapter 5, I will be examining the use of the identity category of the ensemble singer in talk.

4 DISCURSIVE APPROACHES TO IDENTITY CATEGORIES

Identity work¹⁴ is often characterised by the interactive use of categories. In Chapter 3, for instance, I examined how descriptions of the interviewees as belonging to the category ‘musical family’ functioned to present the speakers as ‘genuine’ performers. As Widdicombe (1998a: 52-3) writes, “notions of category membership and social identity are crucially linked: a reference to a person’s social identity is also a reference to their membership of a specific category”. From a discursive framework, identity categories are treated as a resource for participants, not a topic for analysts:

... the identity category, the characteristics it affords, and what consequences follow, are all knowable to the analyst only through the understandings displayed by the interactants themselves. Membership of a category is ascribed ... in local places and at certain times ... We take it not that people passively or latently have this or that identity which then causes feelings and actions, but that they work up or work to this or that identity.

(Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998: 2)

¹⁴ Please refer to the Introduction to this thesis for more information on ‘identity work’.

Much traditional research on ensemble music refers to social stereotypes in ensembles, such as “the subservient piano accompanist” (Goodman, 2002: 14), the “raucous brass player” (Kemp, 1996) and the “inferior second violinist” (Murningham & Conlon, 1991). These stereotyped social identity categories are more often than not used by the analysts as explanations for the musicians’ behaviour. Here, for instance, Goodman (2000: 97) writes about pianists’ identities ‘as accompanists’:

there is a trend across some of the rehearsals that shows the pianists ‘asking’ for more orientation or opinions than the cellists. This perhaps reflects an urge by the pianists, as accompanists, to gain as much information about the intentions and ideas of the cellists.

More often than not, music psychologists treat the identity of ‘ensemble musicians’ as taken-for-granted, and as somehow inherently different from that of ‘solo musicians’. In the extract above, for instance, the identity category of the ‘accompanist’ is drawn on to explain the pianists’ motivation to follow the musical ideas of the cellists. Discursive psychologists take issue with the treatment of identity categories as ‘explanatory resources’ (Edwards, 1998), suggesting instead that analysts must consider how participants themselves work up identities in their talk to perform social actions. This chapter considers how identities are ‘done’ in interaction and examines the possible functions of these constructions of identity.

This chapter, then, examines the situated use of social identity categories in talk. As such, it builds on the work of Sacks (1992) and Edwards (1998), who provided empirical investigations of “how social identity categories are handled in use” (Edwards 1998: 15). Edwards (1998) has suggested that social identity categories should be examined in terms of what people do with them in talk. The analytic approach of this chapter treats social identity categories as accomplished in interaction, and as “performative of talk’s current business” (Edwards, 1998: 17). I draw on the eclectic approach to discursive psychology outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, which argues that a focus on the local business of interaction must also be accompanied by a consideration of the more ‘global’ political consequences of the talk. The analysis, then, examines the identity category of the ‘good ensemble singer’ in terms of the ‘business’ it is doing in the local context of a choir’s future directions meeting. At the same time, it considers some possible broader social implications of this particular identity category for ensemble singers.

5 PARTICIPANTS, MATERIALS AND SETTING

The participants involved in this study were members of one of Australia’s leading chamber choirs (given the pseudonym, here, of the Nameless Choir of Australia, NCA) who attended a ‘future directions’ meeting called by the choir’s Director. In recent times, NCA has experienced a number of changes. For many years, the choir was run by the Director and an Administrator alone. However, in the last few years, the Director

established a Board of Management made up of NCA singers, and gave the positions of Administrator and Finance Manager to NCA members. The result was a democratically run organisation, and one of the Board's first tasks was to prepare, distribute, and collate the results of, surveys that asked singers to report on their experiences and levels of satisfaction with NCA. The results of the surveys suggested that singers enjoyed being in NCA, with 13 of the 17 respondents rating their 'level of satisfaction from singing with NCA' as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. However, two main concerns emerged from the results. Firstly, the members were worried about NCA's hectic schedule, and the resultant lack of time for preparation for concerts. Secondly, the singers raised the issue of professionalism; that is, whether or not NCA should pay its members. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the use of identity categories in this particular debate raised during the choir's future directions meeting.

Six months before the surveys were distributed to the singers, the Director of NCA drafted a vision statement for the choir. His comments about the possibility of paying singers were as follows:

The current situation is that for all professional engagements, it is the organisation Nameless Choir of Australia Inc. which is paid a fee. We then decide how best to use the proceeds in the best interests of the choir. In general, some of the money is used in the ongoing administration of the choir and some is used to subsidise choir tours. Over the years, some singers have asked the

question: 'Can the singers get paid for their involvement in NCA?' From my point of view, the simple answer at this stage is 'No'. I think we all accept that none of us are involved in the choir for the money.

The singers' surveys suggested some 'disgruntlement' with NCA's policy at the time, however. Responses in the 'general comments' section of the survey included the following:

Long term I think choir members should be paid something, which would make the commitment easier to make (i.e., at the expense of everything else!)

I feel that our Director should be more understanding about our unavailability if we are offered paid work. NCA is a hobby for we singers, as we are not paid individually for our work. I have had to turn down paid work in the past.

It would be great to at least consider rewarding singers financially rather than making them pay for everything.

The Director and Board of Management set up a 'future directions' meeting to discuss some of the issues raised in the surveys. The materials for this study consist of a tape recording of the choir's meeting¹⁵. The meeting ran for approximately two hours, and covered a range of topics such as membership, touring, contracts with other

¹⁵ See Chapter 2, Section 3.2 for a more detailed outline of the materials analysed.

professional organisations, administration, repertoire, and the choir's subscription series. By far the most frequently discussed topic, however, concerned the issue of whether the choir should pay its members.

6 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following analysis of an extract from the meeting examines the negotiation of identity categories between the members of the group. The focus is on the ways in which such identities were made relevant in the context of a discussion of potential payment for choristers. This preliminary analysis of the talk illustrates the discursive argument that identity categories – rather than being something we *have* – are better considered as something that *gets done* as part of the local business of talk. Extract 1, below, shows the Director of the choir, Leo, responding to a chorister's question 'if you aren't getting the best singers (in NCA), what's stopping them joining?'. In the analysis of this extract, I concentrate on the working up of three different identity categories for the ensemble singer, and discuss possible implications for group membership.

Extract 1

- 101 **Ian** Leo can I ask [(.)] if you are:n't getting the best singers:
 102 **Leo** [°mm°]
 103 **Ian** what's (.) what's stopping them joining?
 104 **Leo** okay. (.) the single (.) biggest thing (.) stopping (.)

105 certain (.) um: singers from joi[↑]ning and they (.) um (.)
 106 >the small number I'm thinking of at present< a:re (.) um
 107 (.) tenors >cos that's the section that's on the line at
 108 present cos um< we've got some cha:n[↑]ge (.) right? (.) the
 109 money is not the issue (.) what is ↑really the issue: (.)
 110 is (.) that those particular in- um individuals actually
 111 don't li:ke (.) um en[[↑]sem_↓ble singing (.)]

112 **Singers** [mm mm]

113 **Leo** they just don't have the mi:nd_↓set (.) right? they're not
 114 interested in it (.) >°it's just not something that's
 115 that's important to them°< (.) so ↑no amount of money is
 116 going to cha:nge (.) that ↑fundamental mindset [(.)]

117 **Singers** [(mm)]

118 **Leo** °you know° (.) all it would probably do is just guarantee
 119 that they did it for the wrong _↓reasons.

120 **Nathan** that's right. [(.) it might bring them in but they'd be]

121 **Alison** [and having them (inaudible)]

122 **Leo** [yeah yeah yeah]

123 **Nathan** there for the wrong reasons.

(...)

132 **Alison** [if people] [if people] are

133 rea:lly good ensemble _↓singers they're gonna wanna be (.)

134 and they're in (this city) they're probably gonna wanna be

135 (.) °you know° [(.)] in the choir regardless of whether

136 **Singer** [mm]

137 **Alison** they're paid if °they're [really good ensemble singers°]

138 **Rose** [yes that's right]

139 **Yasmin** if they wanna be there (.) they're gonna be there [(.)
 140 if they don't wanna be there then we don't ↑want ↓them]

The speakers in this extract work up three different identity categories: (1) 'certain singers' (described as not wanting to join NCA); (2) the 'NCA singer' (via the use of the pronoun 'we'); and (3) the 'good ensemble singer'. In constructing the category of 'certain singers' (line 105) who do not wish to join NCA, Leo draws on the notion of a 'fundamental mindset' (line 116) about ensemble singing. In lines 110 to 116, this 'fundamental mindset' of ensemble singing is worked up in the talk via a four-part list. 'Certain singers' who do not wish to join NCA are constructed as (1) not liking ensemble singing (line 111): (2) 'they just don't have the mi:nd↓set', (3) 'they're not interested in it', (4) '>°it's just not something that's that's important to them°<' (lines 113-115). The subsequent interaction between Leo and two choristers (lines 118-123) works to construct payment for singers as, firstly, incapable of altering 'the fundamental mindset' of those who do not enjoy ensemble singing, and secondly, as a possible motivation for those without the mindset of an ensemble singer to become an ensemble singer, but to become an ensemble singer for what are described as 'the wrong reasons' (line 119, line 123).

At this point in the interaction, Alison, a chorister, introduces a new identity category: the 'really good ensemble singer'. This new identity category is constructed in direct

contrast to the description of ‘certain singers’ who might be tempted to join NCA for ‘the wrong reasons’. ‘Really good ensemble singers’, in contrast to singers who do not possess the fundamental mindset of loving ensemble singing, are positioned as wanting to be in NCA regardless of whether or not they receive payment (lines 135-137). The subsequent turn of talk from Yasmin, another NCA singer, works up yet another identity category: that of the NCA singer. This is done via the use of the collective pronoun ‘we’, and is contrasted to a generalised ‘they’: singers who do not want to be in NCA (‘if they wanna be there (.) they’re gonna be there [(.) if they don’t wanna be there then we don’t ↑want ↓them’], lines 139-140). The identity category of the NCA singer, then, is positioned as belonging to the category of ‘really good ensemble singers’ who want to be in NCA regardless of payment, while the category of ‘other’ is described as not wanting to be in NCA, and, therefore, as not wanted by NCA members.

Extract 1 demonstrates three regularly occurring features of the choristers’ talk that will be focussed upon in more detail in Chapter 6. First, the singers worked up the identity category of the ‘good ensemble singer’ as someone who sings for enjoyment rather than payment. Second, this construction was aided by the use of social comparisons in the talk: the contrasting of different identity categories. Third, as Yasmin’s turn of talk clearly demonstrates, identity categories were worked up in the talk to construct and to police group membership. The singers’ talk served to set the boundaries of what constitutes authentic membership of NCA. The use of identity categories in talk to

define group membership illustrates that talk, rather than being simply representative of the speaker's thoughts or beliefs, can instead be viewed as performing social actions. Further analysis in Chapter 6 examines the use of identity categories in the policing of group membership.

Extract 1 also demonstrates that the construction of identity categories in talk has social and political consequences for speakers. For instance, describing the 'really good ensemble singer' and the NCA singer as enjoying ensemble singing, and as wanting to be in the choir regardless of whether or not they are rewarded financially, has clear implications for the singers. The talk of the singers in this extract worked to construct an identity for those who are paid to sing as 'there for the wrong reasons', and the NCA singer as singing for the right reasons, i.e., for the love of it. In the context of this interaction, any singer who might wish to be paid has a fair bit of work to do to justify an argument for payment while attempting to present him or herself as a 'really good ensemble singer' who wants to be in the choir for the 'right' reasons. Part of the analysis presented in the following chapter examines how a singer requesting payment was managed in the interaction.

The positioning of good choristers as enjoying ensemble singing, and as not wanting to be paid for singing, reflects the commonly reported construction of group singing as

inducing positive effects in the lives of choristers, discussed in Section 2 of this chapter. Although this explanatory narrative is commonly studied in music psychology, most researchers do not go further than simply identifying it. In line with arguments made by Parker (1992) and Wetherell (1998), I suggest that researchers must go beyond identifying themes or categories to study their implications. I argue that the broad cultural construction of 'group singing induces positive effects' has serious social implications for group singers. Musicians who position themselves in the identity category of 'ensemble singer' are encouraged to construct themselves as enjoying singing so much that to be paid for it would seem almost insulting. Music psychologists often report findings suggesting that "group singing induces joy" in choristers (Bailey & Davidson, 2002) without examining the implications of such a statement. From the perspective of discursive social psychology, this blanket statement is best viewed as a cultural construction, drawn on in talk, that has implications for the social and moral identities that ensemble singers may take up.

I suggest that if music psychology is to continue to research the benefits of singing for choristers, the research should be accompanied by an examination of the contexts surrounding the production of data, as well as a discussion of the functions or implications of the findings. Discursive researchers would also argue that music psychologists should refrain from treating the identity category of 'ensemble singer' as a

fixed entity, and as something that analysts can use as an explanatory resource, and instead consider how participants themselves construct identity categories in talk to accomplish particular ends in local contexts of interaction.

This chapter has moved away from the examination of constructions of identity that were employed by solo musicians in interviews to present a preliminary analysis of the working up of identity categories for the ensemble singer in the 'naturalistic' talk of choristers. I discussed how, from the perspective of discursive psychology, identity categories are viewed as resources that participants can use in talk to perform certain actions. In the extract analysed in this chapter, the choristers drew on the regular interactive practices of working up identity categories and making social comparisons to construct the good ensemble singer as someone who sings for enjoyment, not money. I suggested that the singers' talk worked to construct and to police a version of authentic group membership for the choir. In the next chapter, I examine the use and implications of this membership talk in more detail.

CHAPTER 6

Accomplishing group membership: Social comparisons in choristers' talk

In the previous chapter, I examined how identity categories can be constructed and used productively in talk. The preliminary analysis focussed on how various identities for the ensemble singer were worked up as relevant in a chamber choir's discussion about payment of its singers. This chapter provides a more detailed analysis of the singers' talk about group membership. The analytic focus will be on the negotiation of a particular identity - that of the authentic ensemble singer - which manifested as an ongoing participants' concern in the recorded talk. The analysis will examine the accomplishment of social identity categories in a real-life setting, highlighting some of the linguistic resources and rhetorical practices that the choristers used to work up the identity of authentic ensemble singer. Specifically, I will discuss how this identity was produced in the talk via the process of social comparison, and how these social comparisons functioned to construct and to police group membership. This chapter, then, examines the use of social comparison in the membership talk of the choristers.

1 THE DISCURSIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The negotiation and management of authentic group membership has been the focus of analysis in several discourse studies over the last two decades. These include Sack's (1979, 1992) seminal work on young people's talk about group membership ('hotrodders'), Watson and Weinberg's (1982) examination of accounts of homosexual identity, and Widdicombe and Wooffitt's (1990, 1993, 1995) work on membership of youth subcultures ('goths', 'punks').

In social psychology, the social groups and categories to which we belong are traditionally seen to influence identity via the process of intergroup or social comparison (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1988, 1990; Dickerson, 2000; Tajfel, 1978). According to Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990: 258), the aim of such comparisons is the achievement of "positive psychological distinctiveness" for the ingroup. Theoretically, the underlying processes of categorisation and comparison are assumed to be cognitive in nature. Individuals are seen to remember cognitive representations of the defining features of groups (Vaughan & Hogg, 1995; see also Hogg, 2000). Similarly, motivation for the making of social comparisons is viewed as a cognitive state - variously hypothesised as a need for positive self-esteem, a desire for coherent self-conception, or a desire to make one's self and one's experiences meaningful (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). In contrast, discursive approaches to identity and social comparison have focussed on the

language through which people account for their identities and relationships within groups (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Edwards, 2001). Cognitive or intentional states are treated as the kinds of things that are *at issue* for participants in interaction; they are studied as part of the *business* of talk, rather than as actual cognitive objects or mental states that exist independently of their description. In discursive approaches, then, social comparisons are studied as social practices; that is, in terms of what such descriptions are *doing* in the interaction. Comparisons are viewed as talk-in-interaction activities which can be analysed fruitfully from the perspective of the speakers themselves; examining how the comparisons attend to the interactional issues at hand (Dickerson, 2000: 381, 386).

Studies that have investigated the ways in which identity and group membership are constructed and used in talk have generated a range of interesting insights into the recurring linguistic resources, structural regularities, and organisation of talk-in-interaction. Discourse researchers suggest that, in talk, social categories are typically organised into systems with contrasting elements or pairs: good or bad, male or female, normal or abnormal (Hester, 1998; Smith, 1978). Edwards (1997: 237) describes such contrast structures as “a powerful general purpose discursive device for constructing the

world as falling naturally into two-set classes”¹⁶. The regular and taken-for-granted nature of such contrastive organisation of social categories has important rhetorical implications – it may, for example, be difficult to gain acceptance for depictions of group membership that do not meet this ‘either/or’ organisation (Billig *et al.*, 1988). I will return to this point in the analysis and discussion sections of the chapter.

Descriptions of social groups are often accompanied by the use of other category terms. Sacks (1979, 1992), for example, investigated the way descriptive categories around cars and driving were used by a group of young people attending group therapy sessions in the 1960s to manage the accomplishment of group membership. In part, authentic group membership (as a ‘hotrodder’) was managed in terms of the selection of various other category terms (e.g., a ‘hotrodder’ would be described as driving a ‘Bonneville’; a ‘teenager’ - an adult’s descriptive term - would be described as driving a ‘Pontiac’). Sacks’s concern was to illustrate how authentic group membership, and its policing, can be negotiated and displayed in terms of members’ use of particular descriptive category terms.

¹⁶ Analysis of interviewees’ talk about career choice noted that the contrasting presentation of two-set classes - presenting performance as fulfilling but financially unstable, and ‘other work’ as financially lucrative but unfulfilling – worked well to justify the interviewees’ decision to embark on a career in musical performance (See Chapter 3, Section 5.2).

Discourse work that examines the discursive accomplishment of group membership identifies the management of motivation as a key linguistic resource for differentiating between groups. Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1990, 1995), for example, analysed a set of talk-based data to investigate the ways in which members of youth subcultures drew upon social comparisons to achieve authenticity for group membership. In their interviews with 'goths', 'punks', and 'hippies' at rock festivals and on London streets known as meeting places for these groups, they focussed, in particular, on constructions of members' motivations for joining. Members of some groups were portrayed as having shallow or insincere reasons for joining (e.g., conformity to a fashion or cultural fad; displaying only transitory interest). Authentic or genuine group membership was depicted as requiring a display of moral commitment or investment in the chosen group (e.g., adoption of the subculture as a way of life; long-standing involvement).

These constructions of authentic membership are similar to those described as pervasive by Watson and Weinberg (1982) in accounts of homosexual identity produced in a research interview setting. Respondents repeatedly distinguished between 'being' homosexual, and performing activities which could be classified as 'homosexual' ('doing' homosexuality). To explain this 'being vs. doing' feature in the accounts, Watson and Weinberg drew on Garfinkel's (1956: 420) distinction between 'behavioural' and 'motivational' descriptions of public identities, arguing that a key feature of

constructions of identity or authentic group membership is not the actions that a person may have engaged in, but what is held to be the reasons or grounds for a person's actions. Work by Edwards (1998), using materials from relationship counselling sessions, examines the rhetorical business involved in speakers' contrastive applications of the categories 'girls' and '(married) women', showing how such uses are "locally constructed, occasioned, and rhetorically oriented" (p. 30) with regard to managing the speaker's accountability. Edwards' research is concerned with the ways in which people perform and manage what he refers to as the "interactionally sensitive business" (p. 19) of constructing their motives and reasons for doing things when they draw upon particular identity categories.

The analysis presented in this chapter is also concerned with exploring the discursive construction of motives and membership categories; with analysing what people *do* with categorical and membership descriptions. The analytic focus is on the detail of how categories and motives are deployed in natural interaction - in this case, accounts produced during a group meeting of choristers¹⁷. The analysis presented here focuses on sequences of talk in which members raise the issue of motivations for being an ensemble singer. This concern with participants' orientations to membership categories, and the management of motivations, interests, and accountability, is consistent with a

¹⁷ See Chapter 5, Section 5 for an outline of the participants and setting; also see Chapter 2, Section 1.2.2 for a discussion of the benefits of using naturalistic, as opposed to interview, data.

critical social discursive psychological analytic orientation (Wetherell, 1998), which focuses on the local, situated flow of discourse and, at the same time, considers the broader implications of the talk. As such, I will be concerned with the fine detail of members' talk in this interactional setting, analysing talk around group membership in terms of its practical, social accomplishments.

Authentic membership of NCA was a central and ongoing interactive accomplishment of this group discussion. The analysis illustrates how a particular construction of membership, with significant financial implications for members, was occasioned in such a way as to resist potential challenge, and explores the consequences of choosing one way of talking about genuine group membership over another in this context.

2 ANALYSIS

The analysis explores the ways in which participants talked about membership categories, occasioned in a group discussion held to consider 'future directions' for the Nameless Choir of Australia. Four sequences of talk will be considered in detail in the analysis that follows. After repeated listening to, and reading of, the group discussion, these sequences were chosen in order to demonstrate some of the ways in which the category of 'authentic chorister' was oriented to, talked about, and negotiated as a salient social category in the interaction.

2.1 *The use of social comparisons in talk*

In the first section of the analysis, I look at how authentic membership of NCA was constructed and policed via the use of social comparisons in the interaction. In particular, I examine how the members of the choir drew on social comparisons to construct the NCA singer as possessing the 'right' motivations to be an ensemble singer.

2.1.1 *Intergroup contrasts*

In the first extract, speakers can be seen assessing members of their own and other choirs by comparing them in relation to a number of psychological features, such as disposition, agency, motivation, and by drawing on contrasting constructions of what they gain from membership. The extract occurred 24 minutes into the group discussion. The Director had started the meeting by initiating talk about the choir's draft vision statement which, amidst discussion of a number of issues, raised and dismissed the possibility of members being paid. In the first 20 minutes of the meeting, the choristers and Director had discussed the perceived benefits of becoming a professional choir and in doing so, mentioned a number of choirs in Australia that had decided to pay its singers and had folded soon after. In Extract 1, we see Nathan, the longest-serving member of NCA, begin his first turn at talk by introducing the idea of the choir's 'going professional' as something about which the group should be careful. This first extract has been broken into three parts for analysis due to its length.

Extract 1

- 20 **Nathan** it seems to me that we have to be ca:reful (.) not to
 21 think of: (.) this going professional [(.)] as: (.) the
 22 **Singer** [mm]
 23 **Nathan** next step in: in the route we're taking it isn't (.) it's
 24 (.) swapping into a different universe.
 25 [(.) u:m (.) °I mean° without (.)]
 26 **Rose** [yeah (.) yeah (.) it sounds a very (unclear) to m[↑]e]
 27 **Yasmin** [mm (.) mm]
 28 **Nathan** without meaning to sound (.) >°conceited or anything°< I
 29 think that I: could have been making >quite a lot of
 30 money< for some ye:ars singing with (another choir) (.) I
 31 haven't been because I can't stand it [(.)]
 32 **Singers** [(laughter)]

Extract 1 provides a number of examples of the practice of making social comparisons and constructing identity categories in talk. I will start by examining Nathan's account of why "this going professional" needs to be avoided (lines 20-52), focusing on his contrasting descriptions of members of NCA and professional choirs. At the start of his turn, we can see Nathan orienting to the alternative position on payment for singing that may be held by other members of the group. He uses several softeners to introduce his argument against 'going professional' that work to soften what may constitute an interactionally problematic disagreement with the position of other group members

(lines 20-23: '*It seems to me that we have to be careful not to think of this going professional* (.): as: (.): the next step in: the route we're taking...'). Whereas Nathan might well have stated his position in absolute terms (e.g., "We should not think of this going professional as the next step in the route we're taking"), his hedged formulation softens his argumentative line from its introduction. He also draws upon an extreme case formulation of the alternative path for the choir (Pomerantz, 1986), characterising 'going professional' as a matter of 'swapping into a *different universe*' (line 24) for the group. Becoming professional is not constructed merely as a matter of the choristers taking the next 'step' forward on a set path (or 'route') for the group; this description of the extremity of the situation works to legitimate Nathan's call for care to be taken by group members in arriving at a decision. By making repeated use of the plural pronoun, 'we' here, Nathan also manages to construct the sense of a jointly-held group identity. Rhetorically, this practice works against any possible inference that his argument might be self-serving, or that it might not work in the best interests of the group as a whole.

After Nathan's extreme case description, at the end of line 24, there is a potential transition point in the conversation, at which two other speakers take the opportunity to enter the conversation with tokens of agreement for Nathan's stated position. These indications of agreement from Rose and Yasmin (lines 26-27) occur simultaneously with Nathan's continuing talk. This type of talking in unison is, according to Edwards

(1997), a common way in which consensus is brought off by successive speakers in conversation. As Nathan elaborates his argument in lines 28-31, he explicitly introduces the idea of payment for ensemble singing with a brief autobiographical story that works to manage his own authenticity in choosing to sing for no payment. He uses a standard disclaimer to head off accusations of conceitedness regarding his own talents (lines 28-9), in the process of working up a portrayal of his choice not to be paid (he hasn't been making money for singing because he cannot 'stand' to do so; not because no one will pay him for it). His description of the amount of money that he has foregone in choosing this path is sufficiently vague to protect his claim from dispute, but it remains suggestive of considerable financial gain ('quite a lot of money', 'for some years'). He is similarly vague in his explanation of why he has not chosen to join a choir that pays its members – 'because I can't stand it' – although the laughter with which his account is greeted by other members is indicative of an in-the-know put down of the 'professional' choir that he has named at line 30¹⁸. What we are offered here is a version of events that is worked up as an active counter to the speaker's own, financial, interests. As Edwards and Potter (1992: 134) have pointed out, "versions of events can be warranted by constructing them as disinterested or, even better, as *anti*-interested, as going *against* the speaker's interests".

¹⁸ Recall, also, the use of 'in-the-know' jokes to present the lack of financial stability in musical performance as to be expected in interviewees' accounts of why they became performers (see Chapter 3, Section 5.2).

In the next section of Extract 1 (1b, below), Nathan can be seen making another explicit comparison between his own group and that of other choirs whose members receive payment.

Extract 1b

- 33 **Nathan** an:d I mean it it it e:ven a couple of points that Leo
 34 made about [(.) you said that] a number of those choirs in
 35 **Child** [Mum (inaudible)!]
 36 **Alison** [shh shh]
 37 **Nathan** Eng↓land for example a:re (.) or no perhaps it's
 38 was the Sydney one you meant [(.)] it's scratch [(.)]
 39 **Leo** [mm] [mm]
 40 **Nathan** they're people brought together (.)
 41 no:w >but< (.) if
 42 if they're people who: enjoy ensemble singing >°and so
 43 forth°< that's ↓fi:ne (inaudible) can make a ↑go of ↓that
 44 (.) ↑but even that (.) is different from what ↑we've ↓been
 45 doing [(.)]for the past umpteen years because we ↑a:ll get
 46 **Meg** [°mm°]
 47 **Nathan** (.) we meet to↓gether (.) we kno:w each other (.) we're
 48 fr- we're ↑friends we know each other's ↑singing styles
 49 there is something °we get° ah war- °well something ↑I: get
 50 out of that° [(.)] that you don't get out of either °of
 51 **Meg** [°mm°]
 52 **Nathan** these other (inaudible)°

53 Meg °mm°

In this series of turns, Nathan embarks on a more detailed comparison of what makes his own group members different from those of other groups that pay their members. He develops specific details of circumstances and events around his own group, in comparison with other 'professional' choirs, that work to support his explanations concerning the 'right' motivations of choristers. He draws, first, on information concerning specific choirs that has previously been provided by the Director, Leo, about how such groups are put together: "it's scratch ... they're people brought together" (lines 38-40). In this description, members of the comparison groups are depicted as having no agency in the formulation of their groups. The agency is external to them; they are 'brought together' (line 40), presumably by others, and in order to fulfil a specific requirement (The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (1994) defines 'scratch' as "gathered together promiscuously, hastily assembled; of a game or match: impromptu, played by scratch teams").

At this point (lines 42-3), it is possible to see Nathan orienting to what Billig *et al.* (1988) have referred to as a basic tension or dilemma concerning the breadth of generalisability around group membership. As they point out, introducing generalisations about the motivations of a group is something which is interactionally

problematic; it requires careful negotiation because it is potentially challengeable. And so we see, at lines 41-43, that even when he opts to talk in terms of a categorical explanation ('a number of those choirs . . . are . . . it's scratch . . . They're people brought together'), Nathan also displays an acknowledgement of the possibility of an alternative explanatory version ('but if they're people who enjoy ensemble singing and so forth, that's fine ... can make a go of that'). As Stokoe (1998) argues, the making of generalisations may typically require such mitigation. Here, the mitigation is performed by an acknowledgement that choristers who are paid may get something other than money out of the experience, but the overall generalised comparison between such (paid) choir members and those of the speaker's own choir is maintained in NCA's favour (lines 44-45: 'but even that is different from what we've been doing (.)'). In making this explicit comparison, Nathan again constructs a jointly-held group identity for his own group through the repeated use of 'we' (lines 44-49). He emphasises the longevity of his own group's membership ('what we've been doing for the past umpteen years') and constructs the members' agency ('we've been doing. . . we all get. . . we meet together. . .'). Here we see the development of an explicit contrast between features that characterise authentic group membership (longevity, agency) and those that are indicative of inauthentic membership (incorrect motivation, transience, lack of agency). As Edwards (1997) points out, contrasted identity categories can be used in ways that are relevant to the accountability of actions. In other words, what we see here is an

example of identity categories being constructed in order to perform social actions – to construct and to police authentic group membership.

Another interesting feature of Nathan's listing of the social and moral benefits of authentic choir membership is his repair around a pronoun change at line 49. After seven repeated uses of 'we' in close proximity (lines 44-49), to describe NCA in contrast to other, paid, choirs, Nathan repairs his eighth use of 'we' to refer to his own *personal* sense of gain from membership of NCA ('there is something we get ah war- well something I get out of that (.)'). He then extends the comprehensiveness of his statement by concluding with the generalised or indefinite 'you' ('that you don't get out of either of these other'). Whereas he might have drawn on the alternative pronoun 'they' to describe what choristers who choose to 'go professional' miss out on, Nathan's use of the generalised 'you' here serves to reinforce the universal applicability and rightness of his claim, and as such appears to be rhetorically designed nicely to manage the speaker's credibility.

What we can see, here, is the working up of a moral dimension to motivation for group membership. Nathan's description implies that he, personally, is satisfied with the rewards of NCA membership - depicted as getting to know other choristers, and developing long-lasting friendships with them. These are higher social and moral

virtues that can be contrasted with mere financial compensation for services rendered, or with relationships between people that exist merely for utilitarian or mercenary purposes.¹⁹ Notably, too, he can be seen to be personalising the morally virtuous outcomes that he has experienced as a result of NCA membership ('something I get out of that'), thus making available the inference that he is possibly motivated by higher moral considerations than other members of his own group whom he perhaps cannot be sure of speaking for.

As this extract continues, we see another NCA member, Ella, entering the conversation (line 54) to agree with Nathan's general claim concerning what unpaid choristers versus paid choristers 'get' out of their membership. Nathan's account in Extracts 1a and 1b provides a social comparison of professional and amateur choristers. The ensuing interaction (seen as Extract 1c) involves an elaboration of this comparison, and the continued working up of an identity category for the 'authentic' NCA singer.

Extract 1c

54 **Ella** and ↑al↓so it's li:ke having the upper level of community:
 55 (.) ↑music because [it's ↑still] people who
 56 **Louise** [mm mm]
 57 **Ella** are actually doing other things and have (.) a great love

¹⁹ This bears striking similarity to the construction of interviewees' decision to choose 'emotional and spiritual fulfilment' over financial success discussed in Chapter 3, Section 5.2.

- 58 of ↑this group and a great love for the ↑repertoire and a
 59 great love for ↑singing
 (...)
- 72 you've got a group of singers who: (.) do
 73 this °because they really like doing it° [(.)]
- 74 **Singer** [°mm°]
- 75 **Ella** °and you would not get a group of pa:id (.) professionals
 76 (.) doing they do it because they need money (.) they m-
 77 they ma:ke money out of it° [(.)] whether they li:ke
- 78 **Singer** [°mm°]
- 79 **Ella** it or not is actually irrelevant to what they do (.) and I
 80 think (.) the he:art of the choir is the he:art of the
 81 °choir° [(.)] of each individual coming in (inaudible)(.)
- 82 **Singer** [°mm°]
- 83 **Ella** and I think that that ca:n't be um (.) underestimated (.)
 84 in the way we make music.

There are a number of interesting features in this extract. With her use of 'and' to commence her turn of talk, we see Ella orienting to Nathan's description as an agreed explanation of the differences between paid and unpaid choirs. She latches onto and, in a sense, completes, Nathan's turn of talk here. This latching activity constitutes a common way in which consensus is brought off by successive speakers in interaction (Edwards, 1997). At this juncture, what we see is Ella aligning with Nathan's version by producing an almost Aristotelian description of the moral virtues of being an NCA

member based on friendship through pleasure in shared activity ('it's like having the upper level of community'). Specifically, she introduces the notion that NCA members are motivated by 'love' and by enjoyment ('because they really like doing it'). Her turn is put together in terms of a three-part listing that works to emphasise the credibility and robustness of the claim that NCA choristers are people who "have a great love of this group and a great love for the repertoire and a great love for singing". As Jefferson (1990), amongst others, has argued, lists – and, in particular, those taking a three-part form – work to convey the completeness or representativeness of descriptions. Ella manages the rhetorical business of countering the alternative argument (that NCA group members should be paid) by working up a direct contrast between correct and incorrect motivations for membership of a choir. At lines 72-73, we are presented with a description of her own group members: 'a group of singers who: (.) do this because they really like doing it'. This is immediately followed at lines 75-79 with another three-part-list-formulated description of the contrasting mercenary motivations of professionals who will do anything for money:

'a group of paid (.) professionals (.) doing they do it because they need money (.) they m- make money out of it (.) whether they li:ke it or not is actually irrelevant to what they do'.

Her closing statement (lines 80-84) depicts the significance of 'love' and 'liking' as correct or appropriate motivations for group membership in terms of a play on the word

'heart'; idiomatically, the metaphorical location or container of such motivations. At lines 83-84, she links the art of making good music, of making music well, to these authentic motivations of 'each individual' member of the choir ('I think that can't be underestimated in the way we make music').

In summary, in this stretch of talk (Extract 1), we can see an identity being worked up interactively for the category 'authentic ensemble singer'. A variety of psychological terms is used in the extract to develop this descriptive category, including expressions of enjoyment, getting to know other people, sharing friendship, experiencing community, loving, and liking. Inauthentic or inappropriate motivations for membership of a choir are constructed in terms of psychological references such as being unable to 'stand' such as insincere membership, and being motivated by a 'need' for money, where liking what one does becomes 'irrelevant'. This oppositional contrast is introduced by Nathan who depicts the rewards available to NCA members as being unavailable to those who sing in professional groups. The contrast is taken up by Ella, who develops it into a distinction between the identities of group members who sing for 'love' (NCA members) and those who sing for 'money' (professionals).

These discursive practices of building social comparisons between members of groups that have associated moral dimensions can be viewed in terms of Sacks' (1992)

discussion of membership categorisation. Sacks noted that particular *activities* are category bound to members of particular categories; in other words, that certain activities are “expectably and properly done by persons who are the incumbents of particular categories” (Psathas, 1999: 144). Others have pointed out that what is category bound is better described in terms of classes of *predicates* (that reference, for example, motives, rights, obligations, knowledge, and so on) which “can conventionally be imputed on the basis of a given membership category” (Watson, 1978: 106; see also Jayyusi, 1984). In the present materials, certain category-bound activities and predicates can be seen being worked up interactively in the discussion for the two contrasted membership groups. For NCA members, the activity of singing because one “really likes” or “loves” it, and for rewards that transcend financial recompense, are highlighted features. This version of authentic membership that is created at the outset of the discussion can be seen as a powerful rhetorical construction which has serious implications for the identities available for NCA members to take up in ensuing interaction. In the interactive context of a discussion about whether or not NCA singers should be paid, this kind of talk has the potential to create problems for any member who might want to argue in favour of payment for ensemble singing. It would be difficult for any singer to claim to want monetary reward for his or her involvement in the light of the construction of the NCA singer as singing for love, and not money. This will be discussed in more depth as the analysis progresses. For now, though, I turn to

Extract 2 and an examination of building consensus in talk through the use of ‘second stories’ (Sacks, 1992; Edwards, 1997).

2.1.2 *Autobiographical warranting and consensus building*

Extract 2 occurs approximately one minute after Ella’s turn at talk at the end of extract 1c. In this minute between extracts, a singer proposed that the current method of subsidising choral tours meant that choristers who were able to take time off work always benefited, and suggested that any extra income should instead be used to make sure that no NCA member is ‘out of pocket’. Extract 2 occurs at the end of this turn of talk, and explicitly refers to ‘(that other choir)’ mentioned by Nathan in Extract 1.

Extract 2

95 **Vera** if I can just relate aga:in to that sorry to bring up
 96 (that other choir) all the time but I was actually the:re
 97 ↑in the chorus (.) when they changed o↓ver. (.) when: the
 98 ↑u↓nions marched in quite literally and sat swinging their
 99 leg on the end of a table
 100 chewing their chewing [gum and saying]
 101 **Singers** [chuckling]
 102 **Vera** you will (.) join the (.) while the general manager was
 103 there sort of (.) cap in hand and yes this was the way it
 104 was going and up until then we had had that sa↑:me (.)
 105 cohesion that we ha:d that ↑very (.) ↑that co:re that

106 essence that (.) that (.) [you ca:n't]
 107 **Singers** [mm mm]
 108 **Vera** (.) put a monetary value ↓on. (.) and we were ↑paid (.)
 109 to: (.) cover our petrol (.) and what have you and
 110 everybody did it for the love ↓of. (.) an:d the:n °as I
 111 say° it was u:nion rates from then o:n and then the ↑next
 112 time I was in [that other choir] we we (.) the who:le (.)
 113 no I didn't stay ei:ther.
 114 [(.)] °it was [(.)] two years of that was enough°.
 115 **Singers** [°mm°] [°mm°]

What we see in Extract 2 is Nathan's story (see Extract 1, lines 20-32) being received by a group member in and through the telling of another story that matches it in various ways – a practice that Sacks (1992) referred to as the production of 'second stories'. Sacks argued that such stories are formulated very specifically for the occasion of their production; that the hearable similarity of a 'second story' functions to further the interactional business of the talk. We can see Vera's story as rhetorically designed to counter the alternative of payment for choir members. She starts her story with an explicit eyewitness account. Both her eyewitness status, and the preface that she employs to introduce her story ('if I can just relate again to that sorry to bring up (that other choir) all the time but I was actually the:re in the chorus (.) when they changed over'), work to accomplish the credibility of her report of what happened to another choir when they changed to a formal system of payment of choristers. She provides

specific details in her account that could only be known by someone who was physically present:

‘the unions marched in quite literally and sat swinging their leg on the end of a table chewing their chewing gum and saying you will (.) join the (.) while the general manager was there sort of (.) cap in hand’.

Vera reports what she heard the union representative say in the form of direct speech. This active voicing (Wooffitt, 1992) works to establish the factuality of her claim. What we have is an eye-witnesses version of standover tactics (the description is not of a controlled, polite, business meeting; the unions ‘march in’, sit *on* the table, emphasise their physicality by ‘swinging their leg’, and crudely chew gum). This description is again formulated in terms of an explicit contrasting comparison: the cowed demeanour of the choir’s manager against the coarse energy of the Union representatives. This is a description that is organised in such a way as to make available the inference that members of the choir were forced to change to a system whereby they had to accept payment against their will. Vera’s description also includes specific details of the similarities between this ‘other choir’ before the unions came in and insisted that they work for payment, and NCA (lines 104-110). Her version involves the working up of a moral dimension in which the emphasis is again on the sorts of higher social virtues of singing ‘for the love of’ it (‘that same (.) cohesion that we had that very (.) that core that

essence that (.) that (.) you can't (.) put a monetary value on'). The upshot provided by her story - although no specific details of her experiences of being a paid chorister are given (lines 111-113) - is that, as an *authentic* chorister with the correct motivations, she *chose* to leave the group. This extract illustrates that, as Edwards (1997) so cogently argued, the interactional practice of telling stories can be understood, not as a matter of the reporting of memories of actual occurrences, but as a performative, discursive action that does specific discursive business.

2.2 *Managing alternative versions*

In the next section of analysis, I will examine how, in two sequences of talk, speakers accomplished the discursive business of managing alternative versions in local conversational contexts. In analysing Extract 3, I will investigate how the Director does considerable rhetorical work to defend a suggestion that NCA fails to attract the 'best singers' because of its inability to pay them, while Extract 4 shows a singer managing and justifying her request to be paid to sing in NCA. I look first at Extract 3, which was examined briefly in Chapter 5 in terms of its construction of the 'wrong reasons' to sing with NCA. Here, I will concentrate on how Leo manages the implied suggestion that NCA may be missing out on the 'best singers' because of its policy of not rewarding them financially. Extract 3, which occurs 40 minutes into NCA's meeting, shows Leo responding to two previous questions from an NCA member: (1) the indirect 'whether

you're happy that you're getting (.) the best (.) ↑sing↓ers whether (.) you need to pay them to get the best singers' and (2) the rephrased 'If you aren't getting the best singers (.) w- what's stopping them joining' (lines 121-3). The implication of the question "What's stopping them?" is that the lack of payment is the reason, and that this situation is to the detriment of the choir. In Leo's response, we can see a further instance of the way in which the identity category of 'authentic' ensemble singers – those who sing for the 'right' reasons – was worked up in talk.

Extract 3

- 121 **Ian** If you aren't getting the best singers (.) w- what's
 122 stopping them joining (.) ah and wha- is there anything
 123 [(inaudible)]
 124 **Leo** [okay. (.)] the single (.) biggest thing (.) stopping (.)
 125 certain (.) um: singers from joi↑ning and they (.) um (.)
 126 >the small number I'm thinking of at present< a:re (.) um
 127 (.) tenors >cos that's the section that's on the line at
 128 present cos um< we've got some cha:n↑ge (.) right? (.) the
 129 money is not the issue (.) what is ↑really the issue: (.)
 130 is (.) that those particular in- um individuals actually
 131 don't li:ke (.) um en[↑sem↓ble singing (.)]
 132 **Singers** [mm mm]
 133 **Leo** they just don't have the mi:nd↓set (.) right? they're not
 134 interested in it (.) >it's just not something that's
 135 that's important to them< (.) so ↑no amount of money is

- 136 going to change (.) that ↑fundamental mindset [(.)]
 137 **Singers** [(mm)]
 138 **Leo** °you know° (.) all it would probably do is just guarantee
 139 that they did it for the wrong ↓reasons.
 140 **Nathan** that's right. [(.) it might bring them in but they'd be]
 141 **Alison** [and having them (inaudible)]
 142 **Leo** [yeah yeah yeah]
 143 **Nathan** there for the wrong reasons.
 (...)
 152 **Alison** [if people] [if people] are
 153 really good ensemble ↓singers they're gonna wanna be (.)
 154 and they're in (this city) they're probably gonna wanna be
 155 (.) °you know° [(.)] in the choir regardless of whether
 156 **Singer** [mm]
 157 **Alison** they're paid if °they're [really good ensemble singers°]
 158 **Rose** [yes that's right]
 159 **Yasmin** if they wanna be there (.) they're gonna be there [(.)]
 160 if they don't wanna be there then we don't ↑want ↓them]

2.2.1 *Rebutting alternative versions*

At the outset of his response to the question from Ian (lines 124-131), Leo does considerable work in defining the problem in a particular way. His initial 'okay', and hesitation, prefaces what turns out to be a dispreferred second-part pair to this question: disagreement ('the money is not the issue', line 128-129). The version that Leo then produces involves minimisation of the 'problem' raised by Ian. He defines it as a small

issue: 'the small number I'm thinking of at present', and of circumscribed character: 'tenors', only, are involved. He seeks agreement for his description of the problem at line 128 ('right?') from Ian, one of the three tenors in NCA, and is not challenged. Then, in an extreme-case formulation that mirrors his initial extrematised description at line 124 ('the single (.) biggest thing (.) stopping certain (.) um singers from joining', underlining added), he makes an emphatic statement (line 129) of 'what is really the issue: (.)' using descriptive language that builds his version of events as factual, and bolsters its non-negotiability. He then deploys a four-part listing to work up a comprehensive description of the dispositional state of inauthentic singers: 'those particular individuals actually don't like ensemble singing (.) they just don't have the mindset (.) right? They're not interested in it (.) it's just not something that's important to them', lines 130-135). What we see here is a particular account being worked up as a rhetorical, comparative counter to the suggestion that good singers are not joining the NCA because of a lack of payment. In this occasioned version, singers' desire for payment is explicitly denied as a motivation; rather, emotional and cognitive reasons are highlighted to explain 'other' choristers' motivations. And again, the point is developed in terms of extreme-case formulations ('no amount of money is going to change that fundamental mindset').

At this point (lines 138-139), as mentioned in Chapter 5 (see Section 6), Leo explicitly refers to receiving money as payment for ensemble singing as being indicative of doing it for the 'wrong reasons'. Having worked up an account of the 'real' reason why some singers do not want to join NCA (they just 'don't like ensemble singing'), Leo can then work up both the incorrectness of, and the likely negative consequences associated with, paying singers – payment would be likely to 'guarantee' that they joined for the wrong reasons. At this point, Nathan, who has previously developed a similar argument (lines 20-52, Extract 1), indicates agreement and reiterates Leo's conclusion that ensemble singing for money is indicative of inauthentic group membership: "that's right. (.) it might bring them in but they'd be there for the wrong reasons" (lines 140, 143).

Lines 144 to 151 have been omitted from the extract. In these lines of talk, a chorister suggests that there is a difference between the 'best singers' and the 'right singers' for NCA. Amidst general agreement and laughter, Alison begins her turn at talk at line 152, which is where Extract 3 recommences. At this point, another aligned version of authentic group membership is presented. The category, 'really good ensemble singers' is deployed here by Alison to distinguish those who would 'wanna be' members of NCA 'regardless of whether they're paid'. Alison gets prompt agreement here from other members, Rose (line 158) and Yasmin (line 159). Yasmin's contrastive repetitive

construction reproduces the notion that the right reason for being an NCA member is having the correct dispositional motivation: 'if they wanna be there (.) they're gonna be there (.) if they don't wanna be there then we don't want them'). This formulation can be seen as a type of externalising device that Edwards and Potter (1992: 135) have referred to as a "rhetoric of argumentation" (see also Antaki & Leudar, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), in which events are constructed "in almost syllogistic form: if and only if p then q; not p therefore not q." This version's conclusion is presented as warranted by the impersonal operation of logic; its facticity is therefore external to its creator.

The general patterns of the working up, and repeated policing, of the category 'authentic ensemble singer' that I have identified here are of interest for what they can tell us about the ways in which identity categories are used rhetorically to accomplish business in local conversational contexts, and also for what they can reveal about the construction of collective, group opinions in talk. The talk of the singers has, so far, worked to construct the collective group opinion that those who are paid to sing are 'there for the wrong reasons', and that, contrastively, the 'authentic' ensemble singer sings for the 'right' reasons; that is, for the love of it. In the context of this interaction, as mentioned in Chapter 5, any NCA singer who states a wish to be paid in the subsequent discussion must do a fair bit of work to justify why s/he would like payment

while attempting to present him or herself as an 'authentic' ensemble singer. I turn now to look at the final extract, which shows a dissenting voice in the group discussion. The first sections of the analysis examined how social comparisons were drawn on in the interaction to construct – consensually - the identity category of the 'authentic' chorister as singing for love, not money. The investigation of a dissenting voice, then, is important in corroborating the previous analysis of patterns in the talk (Puchta & Potter: 2004). The following section presents a deviant-case analysis. I explore in more detail how the decision for NCA not to go professional was constructed in the interaction as a collective one. In particular, I focus on the interactional trouble caused by a dissenting voice, the justificatory work done by the speaker in light of the previous interaction, and how the contributions of other speakers worked to lessen the position of the nonconforming speaker.

Extract 4 occurs after a long turn of talk between the Director and several singers about the choir's contracts with orchestras, and the various clauses that are to be inserted. One group member, Alison, then reintroduces the much-discussed topic of payment for ensemble singing.

Extract 4

211 **Leo** Is: (.)

212 **Alison** (.) uh can ↑I just? (.) oh sorry

213 **Leo** go on

214 **Alison** >can I make a quick comment<

215 **Leo** mm

216 **Alison** um: just going back to something you said a little while
217 ago: (.) are w-we all happy with um I think it's really
218 nice I think we all want to be (.) treated like
219 professionals whe- especially when we're working with
220 other people but like not necessarily get paid like
221 professionals °we don't expect that° um and we wanna be
222 working with a group who all wanna be there (.) rather
223 than people who are then: who are there under duress and
224 sometimes professional groups can be actually boring (.)
225 if they're not necessarily .hh dedicated to the music (.)
226 um: tch but on the other hand I actually ↑do really like
227 it (.) when we get a little bit of money for doing a
228 concert especially if it's a concert that's being paid
229 an:d (.) even just getting that hundred dollars or
230 something just u:m helps with babysitting or whatever[(.)]

2.2.2 *Introducing alternative versions*

Here we see an alternative view on payment for group members being tentatively introduced. What Alison does after a hesitant start that is punctuated by pauses (line 212), and after prefacing her remarks by asking the Director's permission to speak and apologising (212, 214) – which are typical features of dispreferred responses (Edwards, 1997) – is to fill her turn of talk with descriptions of (1) motivations for ensemble

singing and (2) her physical circumstances, which manage her accountability for producing an alternative view to that which has so far been collaboratively worked up by other members of the group. Alison draws explicitly on earlier contrasts that have been mobilised between authentic and inauthentic choristers ('we wanna be working with a group who all wanna be there (.) rather than people who are then: who are there under duress and sometimes professional groups can be actually boring (.) if they're not necessarily .hh dedicated to the music', lines 221-25). She then identifies her own position with this consensual depiction, and using the plural pronoun 'we', repeatedly, to orient to the jointly-held nature of this position. At line 226, however, there is evidence of some speech perturbation of the kind that Potter (2001, 1996a) has referred to as signalling 'interactional trouble'. At this point, Alison utters 'um: tch but on the other hand', drawing on the type of rhetorical organisation that Wetherell and Potter (1992) have referred to as a 'concession/criticism format', where – by presenting one possible version immediately followed by an alternative – an inference is made that the first version is somehow unworkable.²⁰ In her presentation of this alternative on the issue of payment for singing, Alison presents herself as an 'honest soul', reporting her true inner feelings on the matter ('on the other hand I actually do really like it'), whilst minimising or downgrading the value of the monetary amounts to which she is referring ('when we get a little bit of money . . . even just getting that hundred dollars

²⁰ See also Chapter 3, Section 5.1 for an analysis of the use of a concession/criticism format in an interview setting.

or something'). It is interesting to note, too, that toward the end of her turn (line 230), she describes her reason for wanting to be paid for singing in terms of something that is outside of her control. It is not a matter of what she would like, or feels is necessary, as a musical performer; her need for payment is due to her obligations as a mother – it 'just u:m helps with babysitting or whatever'. Conversation analysts have repeatedly noted that dispreferred turns such as rejections or disagreements are typically accomplished by framing them as being outside of the speaker's agency or wishes (Drew, 1984).

It is also fruitful, at this point, to consider the work done by Alison's turn in terms of what she did *not* say (Edwards, 1998). She might, foreseeably, have presented an argument in favour of payment for singing by emphasising, for instance, that people who are very good ensemble singers would expect/want to receive payment, or that professional singers who devote substantial hours of their time to training and performance should be paid like any other professionals. That she does not frame her alternative view in these sorts of ways can be seen as further support for the reading of her turn as oriented to its dispreferred – or dissenting – status in the conversational sequence.

In terms of the general business that is being done in the discussion – the working up of a group 'opinion' or position on the matter of payment, Alison's tentatively dissenting

voice does not attract much support in the turns that follow. With almost nothing in the way of uptake or acknowledgement tokens forthcoming from other speakers in the discussion, Alison continues to mention the issue of payment in a succession of brief turns at talk involving justifications, which I turn to examine now.

2.3 *Producing collective opinions*

When we consider the previous interaction in the meeting, which functioned to work up an identity for the NCA singer as singing for love and not money, a request for payment by an NCA singer would most likely be treated as controversial. Silverman (2001: 120) suggests that what he terms 'delicate matters' are produced and managed by participants in local contexts of talk. He argues that an account is marked as 'particularly extraordinary and delicate' by multiple speech

perturbations. Extracts 1, 2 and 3 examined in this chapter were characterised by

Box 6.1

PRODUCING OPINIONS

Much of the analysis presented in this chapter deals with the production of opinions in talk. From a discursive perspective, opinions - like identities - are seen as things we do in talk, rather than things we have. People express opinions, not in some abstract sphere, but in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes (Puchta & Potter, 2004). Opinions, in other words, are "performed rather than preformed" (Potter, 1998: 246).

The discursive suggestion that opinions are produced differently in different settings (e.g., Billig, 1991) can be seen at its broadest level in the varying opinions produced by the choristers in the questionnaires (see Chapter 5: 168-9) and in the subsequent meeting. While the questionnaire responses indicated a shared feeling of dissatisfaction with the non-payment of singers, this opinion was not widely produced in the context of the group discussion. Discursive psychology points to the inevitability of people constructing their opinions in inconsistent and dilemmatic ways (Hepburn, 2003). Thus, different and inconsistent opinions are not viewed as the stuff of communication failures or misunderstandings; rather, they are treated as accounts that vary according to the context in which they are produced, and the task at hand (Potter, 2004). In this chapter, the close examination of the production of a dissenting opinion in a group setting highlights the flexible, rhetorical and occasioned nature of opinion-making.

frequent interactive support from other members of the choir such as mms and laughter. In Extract 4, the lack of interactive support as Alison begins her account (lines 216-230) suggests that her talk is controversial and, as mentioned above, we can see all sorts of ‘interactional trouble’ (Potter, 2001, 1996a) going on (7 pauses, 6 hesitations, 2 repairs) in Alison’s opening statement. In this last section of the analysis, I examine the interaction immediately following Alison’s request for payment, and how it worked to consolidate what was constructed as a collective decision not to pay NCA members.

Extract 4b

229 an:d (.) even just getting that hundred dollars or
230 something just u:m helps with babysitting or whatever[(.)]
231 **Singers** [mm]
232 **Alison** but it a:lso it’s just a an appreciation it’s like a
233 little bit of a getting s- I don’t know but I would quite
234 like that (.) um
235 **Leo** (.) (.) the- (.)
236 **Alison** makes me feel (laughs)
237 **Rose** (inaudible)
238 **Alison** yeah yeah
239 **Leo** what d- what do the rest of you feel about this then
240 becaus:e (.) because (.) because if ↑that was the case (.)
241 that would effectively ha:↓l↑ve o:r (.) take two thirds
242 off (.) the amounts of money that would be: (.) put
243 elsewhere it would ↑mean (.) it would mean that we would

- 244 need to budget differently for a whole lot of things. (.)
- 245 ↑So (.)
- 246 **Alison** I guess I don't mean every concert I just mean once or
- 247 twice a ye:ar at most [(.)](...)
- 248 **Ian** [mm]
- 249 **Alison** it would be nice to get something (.) something
- 250 **Meg** another option might be (.) NCA throwing a ↑di↓nner at the
- 251 end of the ye:a:r and all those who've been involved
- 252 come to dinner and and (.) °get paid that way° (.) yeah I
- 253 know I know it's not reimbursed for babysitting you
- 254 probably have to get more babysitting!
- 255 **Singers** [(laughter)]
- 256 **Rose** [yeah to get to dinner!]
- 257 **Nathan** [that's right (laughs)]
- 258 **Alison** and that's just an example that you know parking and [(.)]
- 259 **Meg** [yeah]
- 260 **Alison** just (.) especially when you've got those really intense
- 261 weeks kind of and I s'pose we're in a difficult position
- 262 as well because (my husband) is also in the group [(.)]
- 263 **Meg** [yeah]
- 264 **Alison** being a bit (.) probably being selfish
- 265 **Nathan** when I said earlier that (.) about making sure nobody was
- 266 out of pocket (...) having to park the car to go to
- 267 [gigs is an-another example] and I mean it no it no longer
- 268 **Singers** [yeah ↑yeah]
- 269 **Nathan** applies to me: but the babysitting thing may be something
- 270 ↑else (.) °um you know there are occasions when people have

- 271 to fork out money^o in order to be able to sing in the group
 272 [(.)]
 273 **Meg** [^omm^o]
 274 **Singers** (...) (more suggestions for reimbursing those out of pocket)
 275 **Leo** u:m (.) just before we move on does everybody feel that
 276 they've had a (.) enough chance to (.) to have their say
 277 about (.) um about the professionalism: (.) busi[↑]ness?
 278 ye[↑]ah?
 279 **Henry** (passes on apologies of a singer who can't come)

The Director of the choir is the first to respond to Alison's account, and he does so by asking the other singers the question 'what do the rest of you feel about this then' (line 239). By describing the other NCA members in the room as 'the rest', Leo could be seen to be homogenising sixteen individuals, and treating them as sharing a singular position that, assumedly, differs from Alison's (dissenting) view. Leo then works up a description of the consequences of meeting Alison's request with his use of an extreme case formulation ('it would mean that we would need to budget differently for a whole lot of things', lines 243-4). Alison then immediately minimises her original request (lines 246-7). This minimisation can be seen as functioning to manage Alison's self-presentation as someone who is not motivated to sing in terms of mercenary reasons alone ('I guess I don't mean every concert, I just mean once or twice a year at most', lines 246-7). Interestingly, as the interaction progresses, each turn of talk sees Alison further

minimising her position, and I argue that this is due, in the main, to the increasing interactive support from other singers as Alison softens her request.

The first time there is any interactive support (in the form of agreement tokens such as ‘mm’ and ‘yeah’) during Alison’s account occurs in lines 230 to 231, when Alison mentions reimbursement for babysitting. At various junctures in the meeting, it was established that NCA would continue to reimburse singers for costs incurred such as petrol money for country concerts.²¹ Alison’s talk of a fee that does not mention reimbursement (lines 216 to 228, Extract 4) is not supported by the other NCA members in the interaction – unlike most of the talk in the meeting, the other singers remain silent as Alison begins her account. The subsequent options raised by NCA singers in response to Alison’s request describe reimbursement, not payment for payment’s sake (eg., ‘another option might be (.) NCA throwing a \uparrow di \downarrow nnner at the end of the year’, lines 250-1; ‘having to park the car to go to gigs’, lines 266-7). Alison gradually diminishes her position throughout her account, and her turns of talk begin to resemble the ‘group decision’ to reimburse rather than reward, e.g., ‘and that’s just an example that you know parking’ (line 258).’. Note that when Alison does lessen her position, she receives more interactive support from the other singers, e.g.:

230 something just u:m helps with babysitting or whatever[(.)]

²¹ Please refer to Appendix 9 for a transcript of the choristers’ talk detailing possible methods of reimbursement for costs incurred.

- 231 **Singers** [mm]
 (...)

 246 **Alison** I guess I don't mean every concert I just mean once or
 247 twice a ye:ar at most [(.)] (...)

 248 **Ian** [mm]
 (...)

 258 **Alison** and that's just an example that you know parking and [(.)]
 259 **Meg** [yeah]

Extract 4b, then, shows Alison, in the face of rising support from other speakers as she lessens her position, increasingly downgrading her initial request for payment (e.g., 'it's also just a an appreciation it's like a little bit of a getting s- I don't know but I would quite like that (.) um', lines 232-33; 'I guess I don't mean [payment for] every concert I just mean once or twice a ye:ar at most', lines 246-47), until in her final brief reference, she justifies her earlier (stronger) position by constructing herself as in an unusual situation ('I s'pose we're in a difficult position as well because (my husband) is also in the group', lines 261-2). Finally, she appears inured to the moral unacceptability of her own position: 'being a bit (.) probably being selfish' (line 264).

Silverman (2001: 128) writes that the management of controversy tends to be "a cooperative matter" in local contexts of talk. The interaction provided by the other speakers in this particular local context functioned to encourage Alison to diminish her

controversial or dissenting stance until it resembled what had been constructed as the 'collective' opinion in the meeting. The gradual minimisation of Alison's position allowed the Director to signal the end of discussion of the topic. This was achieved by reiterating the 'group decision' to retain the status quo; that is, to remain an amateur choir, and to continue to reimburse those who are out of pocket.

3 DISCUSSION

This chapter has been concerned with the collaborative accomplishment and rhetorical organisation of identity categories around group membership that were worked up in the talk of ensemble singers in the context of their choir's 'future directions' meeting. These materials provided a forum for exploring the way that psychological issues like motives, interests, choice, opinions and decisions are managed interactionally, and with an orientation to accomplishing discursive business within local conversational contexts.

The discursive practices and rhetorical organisation that were observed in these materials had the following features. Social comparisons were used to define group membership in ways that were oriented to the accountability of speakers' actions, and that worked to undermine a particular alternative position put forward by certain NCA members – that they could be paid for singing with the choir. The issue of motivation

for membership was identified as a recurring discursive resource for differentiating between groups and for policing group membership. Authentic choir members were constructed as choosing to sing for the 'right' reasons. Singing for the love of it, for the social experiences of choice, enjoyment, friendship, and community were set up against the motivations of inauthentic (paid) ensemble singers who were depicted as being mercenary, and as lacking agency and longevity in their group membership. Interestingly then, on this occasion, members were for the most part arguing against their own financial interest – that is, arguing that they did not want to receive payment for their choral singing in a way that would define them as 'going professional'. The analysis was focussed on how, in drawing on issues around music and identity, this position was managed and worked up as one that was collaboratively held by the group.

By focusing on the social actions that were accomplished as particular versions of group identity were made relevant in conversation, I hope to have demonstrated another instance of the discursive and rhetorical power of the contrastive organisation of categorisation around membership. In the naturalistic group discussion materials analysed here, the authentic choir member was constructed in such a way as to make it all but impossible for members to resist. Given the taken-for-granted nature of the contrastive organisation for structuring the world and objects, events, and dispositions within it, participants in this discussion were left with little option but to identify with

those who sang for 'love' rather than for 'money', once this description of authentic membership had been introduced. In this sense, the analysis has demonstrated, again, that descriptions or versions of people and events are typically organised to undermine competing alternatives (Billig *et al.*, 1988; Potter, 1996b; Speer & Potter, 2002).

More generally, in this chapter I have illustrated how identity was a locally managed participant's concern. The analysis showed authentic membership being collaboratively constructed in the turn-by-turn sequencing of talk, and I examined an instance of an unsuccessful attempt at resistance to this particular version of authentic identity. The concern has been with the significance of (choral group) membership within members' own accounts, and with what is argued to constitute authentic group membership. The chapter was also concerned with how the meaning of payment for musical performance is negotiated within the context of these accounts of authentic membership. I hope to have demonstrated the relevance of a discursive psychological approach to the study of identity in the field of music and psychology – an area in which research has traditionally taken a cognitive and individualist perspective of identity, and a representative view of language.

The broader implications of this discursive analysis of members' ways of constructing identity and authentic membership can be examined in terms of questions about how

the meanings of payment for singing, for performance more generally and, indeed, for work, are negotiated and occasioned within the context of particular constructions of authentic identity. In the analysis, two contrasting motivations for ensemble singing were worked up: performing for the love of it (authentic) and performing for financial gain (inauthentic). The second version depicts musical performance as a type of work that people engage in at the direction of others. The ensemble singers rejected this version of musical performance as inauthentic and inferior. They described themselves as being motivated by 'higher' considerations, and thus depicted musical performance as something other than mere 'work'. It may be fruitful to regard the meanings and implications of identifying as a musical performer in contemporary society as involving, essentially, a dilemma. Although there are obvious exceptions, it is the case that the majority of those who 'choose' this path are unlikely to receive much in the way of financial gain for engaging in what can be a serious, time-consuming, exacting, activity that requires considerable talent and training. In these circumstances, it may be preferable to construct accountability for one's actions/choices/lifestyle in terms of a preference for renouncing or foregoing financial recompense. One's activities can then be explained in terms of motivation by higher personal values and moral considerations. Such activities can also be respecified as something 'other' than mere work. This type of dilemma extends beyond the context of musical performance to a range of other activities in which people engage and for which there is little in the way of financial

recognition or recompense. I believe that it is worthwhile to explore the rhetorical processes of negotiation and argument that are involved as people attempt to deal with this type of dilemma. Understanding more about the taken-for-granted cultural, linguistic, and organisational features and practices involved can have important practical applications.

Some conclusions ...

1 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYTIC CHAPTERS

Chapter 3 considered how responses to interview questions like ‘why do you perform?’ were organised to account for the taking up of a performing career. Particular attention was paid to the rhetorical use of historically constructed notions of work, choice and fulfilment to justify the decision to perform – notably, the interviewees’ constructions of themselves as both 1) having little choice in the taking up of a performing career because of their musical upbringing, and 2) choosing to perform to achieve fulfilment. The subject positions drawn upon in the interview talk – those of the ‘natural performer’ and the ‘fulfilled performer’ – were examined in terms of how they functioned in the local interaction to mitigate the interviewees’ responsibility for embarking on an unusual career path.

In response to the question ‘can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?’, the interviewees worked up the subject position of the ‘natural performer’. The taking up of a career in musical performance was constructed as understandable and to be expected via the participants’ positioning of:

- 1) themselves as belonging to the category of ‘musical family’;

- 2) their childhood talent as witnessed by knowledgeable others;
- 3) their first performing experiences as unimportant and inconsequential.

The interview question 'why do you perform?' was generally responded to fairly differently. Typical participant replies involved the construction of the taking up of a performing career as understandable and to be expected via the use of:

- 1) a concession/criticism format that presented speakers as making a rational, considered decision to perform for reasons of fulfilment, and
- 2) contrast structures that constructed
 - i) musical performance as fulfilling and 'other work' as unfulfilling;
 - ii) fulfilment and financial stability in opposition to one another;
 - iii) alternative types of work as involving activities that belong to the category 'desk job';
 - iv) performing for love and performing for money as mutually exclusive activities.

I argued that the two seemingly contrasting subject positions worked in similar ways. The effect on the hearer – from my perspective at least – was to encourage the opinion 'well, of *course* you chose to perform. Who wouldn't take up performance with such a musical family/with such genuine talent? Who wouldn't follow their heart to find fulfilment rather than make money sitting at a desk and filing papers?' The similarity in

function of the two subject positions may well raise the question 'Why didn't the interviewees just construct themselves as 'natural performers' all the way through the interview?' The question is a valid one: What encouraged the interviewees to switch to the subject position of the 'fulfilled performer?' Following the discursive suggestion that talk is organised sequentially, Chapter 3 looked closely at the local conversational contexts of the talk. The two types of interviewer questions shown in the extracts seem similar on a surface level. However, the questions 1) 'Can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?' and 2) 'Why do you perform?' can be differentiated in the following ways:

- 1) Question 1 positioned 'ideas and events' as determining the decision to perform (and thereby encouraged descriptions of performance as 'just happening naturally'), whereas Question 2 positioned *the performer* as responsible for his/her performing career. Interviewee responses to this question that described performance as 'just happening' might have presented the respondent as non-agentive; as not in charge of his or her life;
- 2) Question 1 encouraged responses based around *stories* about performing, whereas Question 2 required respondents to elucidate their *reasons* for becoming a performer;
- 3) Choice of career is historically and commonsensically linked to self-expression and self-fulfilment. Responses to the question 'why are you in your particular line of

work?’ that did not draw on notions of fulfilment and self-expression could well have encouraged accusations of the respondent being an ‘inauthentic’ performer.

In Chapter 3, then, a strong case was made for the discursive argument that talk is drawn upon to perform particular bits of discursive business according to the context in which it is produced.

Chapter 4 continued this examination of the flexible, action-oriented and situated nature of interview talk. The chapter contrasted traditional psychological research that suggests that performance anxiety is helped by *either* a ‘focus on the self’ *or* a ‘letting go of the self’ with interview talk that variously positioned performing experiences as involving *both*. Again, the analytic focus was on how the interview talk was organised sequentially and oriented to action. Specifically, Chapter 4 considered the interviewees’ responses in terms of how they were organised to accomplish the discursive business of managing the multiple demands for accountability that were visible in the local interaction. Participants’ responses to the question ‘what does it take to be a brilliant performer?’, for instance, drew on the repertoire of ‘performance as a focus on the self to construct successful performers as:

- 1) Genuine or authentic (because of their ability to be *so* themselves; to give *nothing but* themselves);

2) Motivated by higher ideological reasons (i.e., 'giving themselves' to please an audience).

However, when required to answer questions about their *own* negative and positive performing experiences, the participants switched to accounts drawing on the repertoire of 'performing as a letting go of the self'. Descriptions of letting go of the self worked to manage the following demands for accountability:

- 1) Accounts of performance anxiety portrayed the interviewees as able to switch from a focus on the self to a focus on the performance at the right moment, thereby managing their identities as 'good performers';
- 2) In conjunction with a use of idiomatic expressions (e.g., 'it just clicked') and vague detail (e.g., 'I can't explain'; 'it went like a dream'), descriptions of letting go of the self in accounts of memorable performances worked to portray the interviewees as:
 - i) modest, and
 - ii) not responsible for reproducing their successful performances.

The variability of the participants' talk worked well to manage the discursive business at hand at the various conversational junctures. In contrast to traditional (and opposing) psychological reports that performers should either focus on, or remove a focus on, themselves to perform well, the analysis of the materials presented in Chapter 4

displayed talk that - contextually and productively - drew upon both of these constructions of identity.

Chapters 5 and 6 also took issue with traditional psychological treatments of identity, with a particular focus on the use of identity categories in talk. In these two chapters, I turned my attention to the working up of identities for the ensemble singer. *Chapter 5* outlined the theoretical framework driving a discursive approach to the examination of identity categories. Mainstream research in music psychology – which, I argued, tends to treat identities for the ensemble musician as decontextualised, unchanging, unproblematic, and as an explanatory basis for analytic conclusions – was compared with discursive work that treats identity categories as worked up, negotiated and disputed in local settings of talk. The chapter continued the examination of how identities get done in talk, and to what effects, by analysing the construction of identity categories for the ensemble singer in a choir's future directions meeting that raised the possibility of the choir 'going professional'. Three regular features of the talk of the NCA members were briefly alluded to:

- 1) A number of different identity categories for the ensemble singer were constructed in the interaction (e.g., 'good ensemble singers'; 'NCA singers'; 'other singers').

- 2) The contrast structure of singing for love/fulfilment versus singing for money, seen regularly in interviewees' talk about career choice, also appeared repeatedly in the choristers' talk.
- 3) The working up of identity categories in the talk functioned to construct and to police group membership.

These features of the singers' talk were examined in depth in *Chapter 6* with a fine-grained analysis of the turn-by-turn accomplishment of 'authentic' group membership. The following rhetorical practices were noted in the four sequences of interaction examined:

- 1) Speakers drew upon intergroup contrasts to present their choir as motivated by 'higher' considerations (e.g., friendship, love of singing, community) than 'other choirs', who were portrayed as motivated by money only. In doing so, the choristers worked up the identity category of the 'authentic ensemble singer' via descriptions of appropriate or genuine reasons for membership of a choir (i.e., love, friendship) in contrast to descriptions of inappropriate or inauthentic reasons for ensemble singing (i.e., payment). As such, authentic choral singing was portrayed as unavailable to members of professional choirs.

2) Consensus was built for this construction of the authentic ensemble singer via the use of a second story that matched previous descriptions of authentic and inauthentic motivations for singing in a choir.

3) In the context of what had been constructed – via agreements and second stories – as a group opinion about authentic membership of the choir, the speakers' talk was organised rhetorically to manage the alternative version of payment for the singers.

This was done via:

- i) descriptions of paid choristers as singing 'for the wrong reasons';
- ii) the management of a dissenting voice – i.e., a speaker requesting payment – in the interaction. The group interaction encouraged the speaker to increasingly downgrade her position until it resembled the group decision not to 'go professional'.

Chapter 6 showed in detail the working up of a group decision via the use of identity categories in talk, highlighting the discursive suggestion that identity categories are constructed in interaction to accomplish social actions.

2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

2.1 *For music psychology*

In general, music psychology has been predominantly concerned with explaining mechanisms that are internal to the musician (e.g., perception, memory, emotion,

neurophysiology, intelligence, sensation). As mentioned in Chapter 1, music psychologists are increasingly taking into account the broad social contexts surrounding music and musicians. Work in this area, though, continues to produce analytic findings suggesting that the speakers involved deployed particular themes about musical performance in a uniform and unproblematic manner. Discursive analyses focusing on the variable and occasioned nature of talk tend to be considered insufficiently rigorous to play a part in a 'scientific' discipline intent upon 'discovering' singular 'truths'. Indeed, any research focusing on multiple and often conflicting versions of 'reality' comes from a fundamentally different epistemological framework to that of mainstream psychology. While it is not the aim of this thesis to find a solution to what is an extended debate between mainstream and discursive psychologists, I do want to make several points regarding the place of discursive research in music psychology.

First, it should be acknowledged that some of the analytic findings presented in this thesis directly counter some outcomes of mainstream psychological research on the musician. I refer, in particular, to Chapter 4's examination of the variable use of discursive repertoires that constructed performance – rather than a focus on, *or* a letting go of, the self – as a focus on, *and* a letting go of, the self. The analyses of musicians' talk in both interview and group discussion settings presented in this thesis drew attention to the flexible, variable, multi-layered and contextual nature of talk. As such, I suggest

that traditional psychological attempts to find singular 'truths' about performance in musicians' accounts may not prove especially worthwhile. The analyses shown in Chapters 3 to 6 illustrate that identity is plural; that identities are worked up in talk, flexibly and productively, depending on the contexts of the talk and the discursive business at hand. I suggest that a case can be argued for the usefulness of considering an approach to research that focuses on multiplicity, flexibility and variability.

Second, it is clear that music psychology is moving towards a consideration of the importance of the social aspects of music²², and that investigations of the social aspects of music are increasingly acknowledging the significance of language²³. This is particularly evident in the new body of work in music psychology, examined in Chapter 1, which treats identity as flexible, shifting, and accomplished in language²⁴. The place of discursive research in mainstream psychology continues to be widely challenged. However, in spite of what is considered to be a fundamental clash of epistemological perspectives between mainstream and discursive psychologists, recent developments in music psychology suggest that discursive research is increasingly seen as a useful adjunct to mainstream research on the musician. Indeed, John Sloboda and Patrik Juslin, recognised internationally as authorities on music psychology, have

²² See Hargreaves & North (1997, 1999).

²³ See O'Neill (2002).

²⁴ See Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald (2002).

signalled the need for discursive research in music psychology (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001). While I do not want to minimise the fundamental differences between mainstream and discursive approaches to psychological research, I do want to suggest that, in line with the suggestions of mainstream researchers such as Juslin and Sloboda, there is room for a consideration of the fruitfulness of discursive work in music psychology. As I mentioned above, this thesis does not attempt to reconcile the gap between mainstream and discursive psychology, nor does it present a synthesised version of the two approaches. What it does do is to present an alternative language-focussed approach to examining musicians and musical performance and, while remaining aware of the difference in epistemologies, to consider the worthwhile use of discursive work *in addition* to – rather than as a replacement of – mainstream research in music psychology.

It is hoped that the research here helps to contribute to the move towards consideration of the social and discursive aspects of music, and to generate debate surrounding the place of discursive work in music psychology. I would suggest that future psychological research focusing on musicians' talk might consider the variability of the themes deployed, as well as ways in which this variability functions in differing conversational contexts. Finally, future research in music psychology might conduct more intensive examinations of the ways in which performers talk about their successful performances

than was possible in the analysis presented here. The close analysis of musicians' talk about their own successful performances may generate some interesting, and potentially useful, findings for musicians wishing to achieve consistently high levels of performance.

2.2 *For discursive psychology*

Chapter 2 of this thesis considered the (often heated) debate between discursive researchers as to which contexts should be taken into account when conducting analysis. Some researchers claim that analysts should only consider the contexts worked up and made relevant by participants in the local interaction, whereas others suggest that any analysis of discourse must take into account the discursive history that made the particular interaction possible. In this thesis, I used an eclectic approach to discourse analysis, examining the talk in terms of its local, sequential orientation to action, as well as in terms of the broader historical notions drawn upon by the speakers. The consistency with which the participants employed popularly available notions of work and fulfilment in accounts that functioned, at a local level, to justify decisions, to mitigate responsibility, to police group membership and so forth, suggests that an eclectic discourse analysis – with its consideration of both the established and constitutive aspects of talk – may be a profitable analytic approach for discourse researchers.

Another debate raised in Chapter 2 concerned the definition of appropriate data sources for discourse analysts. Discursive psychology is increasingly moving towards the analysis of naturalistic talk²⁵ (i.e., talk that has not been 'got up' by the researcher). Some analysts, however, continue to espouse the benefits of analysing interview data, suggesting that interview talk provides an opportunity to rehearse the taken for granted.²⁶ In the materials analysed in this thesis, several normative features of the interview talk also appeared in the naturalistic forum of a choir's future directions meeting, notably:

- 1) the use of contrast structures in descriptions of performance as fulfilling and enjoyable, and of performers as motivated by higher ideological concerns than 'other workers' or 'other performers';
- 2) the use of an 'either/or' organisation to present fulfilment and financial gain in opposition to one another.

Constructions of the 'fulfilled performer' that were organised in remarkably similar ways, and that appeared in both interview and naturalistic data, may suggest that the dismissal of interviews as an appropriate data source for discourse analysts is, perhaps, not entirely justified. I propose that, when interviews are analysed with a particular

²⁵ See Potter (2003).

²⁶ Seymour-Smith, Wetherell & Phoenix, 2002: 265.

focus on the interactive contexts surrounding the production of the talk, the resulting analyses can produce findings that are as useful and 'valid' as analyses of naturalistic data.

Having said that, I also believe that the examination of the working up of a decision in naturalistic talk through the construction of identity categories raises some interesting possibilities for future research. In particular, I suggest that future studies could conduct multiple, detailed analyses of the ways in which organisations make decisions in forums such as meetings (e.g., board meetings, committee meetings, annual general meetings), considering how the talk is designed rhetorically to perform particular discursive business, and the implications for organisational culture and/or performance.

2.3 *For musicians*

Chapter 3's examination of some historical contexts that make available acceptable identities for the musician noted the presence of dominant construction of the performer as 'eccentric'; as somehow removed from 'normality'. This construction of the performer was also observed in the analysis of commonplace maxims drawn upon in newspaper articles about performers examined in the Introduction. The cultural availability of constructions of the musical performer as 'mad', 'fragile', removed from normality, and so forth, could be seen to require musicians to work fairly hard when

justifying their taking up of a performing career. Just this kind of justificatory work was demonstrated in the interview extracts presented in Chapter 3. The interviewees' talk worked to justify the reasons to perform via descriptions of the performer as choosing performance to find fulfilment, rather than choosing 'other' forms of work which were constructed as necessarily unfulfilling. As mentioned in the section above, the similarity between this particular form of interview response, and the construction of the 'authentic ensemble singer' in Chapter 6, is marked. The deployment of the subject position of the 'fulfilled performer', in conjunction with a use of contrast structures that worked up a number of 'either/or' constructions, might be seen as potentially problematic for musicians. In presenting themselves as faced with a two-set, dichotomous choice between fulfilment and financial gain, musicians effectively achieve the discursive business of accounting for their choice of career (and their lack of financial stability). However, the organisation of fulfilment and finance into opposing classes may constrain musicians who might want to receive payment for their musical services – as illustrated so cogently in the examination of a dissenting voice in the choristers' meeting in Chapter 6.

While discourse researchers note that language is often organised in terms of dichotomous categories, the presence of a 'fulfilment vs. financial success' dichotomy in talk about work or career seems to be drawn upon more readily in interactions

concerning careers that, generally speaking, are not particularly well-paid (e.g., volunteer workers, legal aid workers, unsponsored athletes and so on). The use of such a dichotomy, while effective in the justification of a lack of financial success, also has the effect of binding those musicians wishing to claim 'authenticity' as members of such groups to a fairly unstable financial position. Further research in this area could perhaps consider the constructions of identity drawn upon by government workers (in particular, those who work in arts organisations) in discussions about allocation of funding for musicians.

The consideration of musicians' interview accounts of performance anxiety and of successful performances raised several possible implications for performers. First, the variability of the talk suggests that performance, rather than being a process of *either* a focus on the self *or* a letting go of the self, can involve both approaches to the performance of music. Second, the suggestion that 'flow performances' are so intrinsically enjoyable that they are rewarding in and of themselves²⁷ raises similar concerns to those outlined above in regards to financial compensation for performance. While not wishing to be prescriptive, I suggest that performers may do well to be aware of the broader implications of comments – heard regularly throughout the interviews – such as “I love music and I love singing and I mean, I'm standing up there playing with

²⁷ Csikszentmihalyi (1990); Roland (1997).

really great musicians, singing music that I really like, I'm getting paid for it, you know, I mean it's almost ridiculous"; and "my first engagement where I got my first pay packet, I couldn't believe they were paying me for something that was so much fun". Finally, I note that, while interviewees' accounts of their experiences of performance anxiety variously constructed musical performance as involving both a focus on and a letting go of the self, accounts of the interviewees' *successful* performances typically only drew on the 'letting go of the self' repertoire. Very cautiously, and with an awareness of the flexible, action-oriented and dynamic nature of talk, I make the suggestion that constructing performance as a letting go of the self may potentially be a fruitful approach for those musicians who find that performance anxiety hinders their ability to perform well.

The mention of 'anxious performers' brings me to one final consideration. It could, perhaps, be argued that all I have done in the analyses presented here is to reveal stereotypes of 'typical' musical performers (e.g., the 'fulfilled performer', the 'good performer', the 'authentic performer' and so on), but this suggestion misses the point. Dominant ways of talking about the self are potent because they set the boundaries of what can reasonably be claimed or contested within particular contexts. Recall, for instance, the interactive trouble surrounding a singer's request for payment in the context of a group discussion that worked up the identity of 'the authentic ensemble

singer' as someone who sings for love, not money. Identities are *productive*; they work to allow certain behaviours and to constrain others. This thesis, then, rather than examining *what* identities are 'held' by musicians, considered *when* and *how* identities for the musical performer were invoked in particular conversational contexts, and to what effects.

3 MANY MORE RIVERS TO CROSS

"The view from here is like reaching the top of a mountain.

You can see that the mountain you have climbed is part of a whole mountain range.

A new perspective emerges, a new sense of orientation— just as well,

since there are so many more mountains to climb".

(Bleby, 2004: 86)

For me, the end of any journey is often accompanied by an awareness of the potential for further travel. Finishing this thesis has a similar feel to coming back home after a long trip away, but it brings with it a slightly wistful sense of the possibilities that could have been; the mountains that remain unclimbed, the rivers that, for now, are uncrossed. My future travel plans – research-wise – undoubtedly involve delving deeper into the historical and discursive working up of organisational culture (staying true to my chosen method of an eclectic approach to analysis!) Like all good journeys,

my PhD has been an exploration of terrain – far from exhaustive and, in some ways, only the beginning.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Interview Schedule

A. Discourses of selfhood, Self-expression through performance:

- What do you think is the role of the performer?
- What does one need to be a brilliant performer?
- How have you grown through being a performer?
- When you're on stage, what do you give to the audience?
- When you step on to stage, does any part of you change?
- Do you think that performing has shaped the person you are, or do you think the person you are led you to perform?
- How has performing shaped the person you are?

B. Constructions of the audience:

- In a performance, what do you think is the role of the audience?
- What does the audience give you?
- Just imagine you're on stage, and you're thoroughly enjoying yourself. You finish the last note of your performance and the audience reacts amazingly. How do you feel?

C. Vocation and identity:

- Can you tell me about the ideas or events that led you to become a performer?
- Describe how performance is different from other career choices.
- How do you feel about the financial situation for performers?
- For what reasons am I sitting here talking to Annie* the performer as opposed to Annie the accountant/baker/ environmental officer?
- I want you to imagine that five years have passed. You're at a dinner party, and everyone is going round the table introducing themselves and saying what they do for a living. Amidst the lawyers, teachers and management consultants, you announce that you are a performer. How do you feel when you do this?

D. Self-fulfilment through performance:

- What do you get out of performing?
- How does performing reward you?
- Tell me about one of the most amazing moments you've had on stage, and how it made you feel.
- If you had the option to go back and not become a performer, would you? Why/Why not?
- How does performing challenge you?
- What are your thoughts about the phrase "performing is a drug"? (*N.B. leave this until last, as the phrase is more than likely to come up of its own accord*).

APPENDIX 2: Transcription Conventions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987)

The first-level orthographic transcription notation used is a simplification of the conventions set out by Potter and Wetherell (1987: 188-9).

- A full stop in brackets indicates a pause in the dialogue
e.g. (.)
- Underlined dialogue indicates that it was uttered with emphasis
e.g. all I can say is “that was fantastic” and “oh, that was just magic”
- Square brackets indicate that some of the transcript has been omitted to protect anonymity
e.g. [my instrument] affects my self esteem so much, I’m not enjoying it at all. I suffer incredibly bad stage fright with [my instrument]
- Round brackets indicate either a body movement or an emotional reaction
e.g. (laughs)
(places hand on heart)
- A dash indicates an interruption in the dialogue
e.g. But that’s when I go to my parents or to somebody who, like, who has - say for example, um, I’m singing an aria about a mother who’s lost her children.
- A colon indicates a clarification of the previous statement
e.g. I wanted them to be more similar than they were: they were very apart.
- Squiggly brackets indicate an utterance made by the interviewer during the participant’s talk, or vice versa
e.g. And if I can’t see faces at all it’s a comfort, because it’s like, like in the Catholic booths at, at – what do you call them? {Confessionals?} Confession, that’s right

APPENDIX 3: Transcription Conventions (Jefferson, 1985; in Edwards, 1997)

The following transcription notation was used throughout the thesis:

[]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech.
↑↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement.
<u>Underlining</u>	signals emphasis; the extent of underlining within individual words locates emphasis, but also indicates how heavy it is.
CAPITALS	mark speech that is obviously louder than surrounding speech.
°↑I know it,°	Raised circles ('degree' signs) enclose obviously quieter speech.
(0.4)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses in seconds (in this case, 4 tenths of a second)
(.)	A full stop in a round bracket shows a pause.
she wa::nted	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound; the more colons, the more elongation.
hhh	Aspiration (out-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
·hhh	Inspiration (in-breaths).
y'know?	Question marks signal stronger, 'questioning' intonation, irrespective of grammar.
Yeh.	Full stops mark falling, stopping intonation, irrespective of grammar.
bu-u-	hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
>he said<	'greater than' and 'lesser than' signs enclose speeded-up talk.
(...)	This shows where some talk has been omitted from a data extract.

APPENDIX 4: Information for interviewees

Research Project **Musicians and Musical Performance**

This research project is concerned with what musical performance means to musicians. Participation involves an interview in which you will be asked to discuss your experiences of performing. There are no right or wrong answers. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of why musicians perform and how performance contributes to their lives.

The Interview

The interview will last approximately one hour and will occur at a time and place convenient to you. In this time you will be asked to talk about your memories of performing and what they mean to you. You are welcome to stop the interview if you wish, and if there is a particular issue you would prefer not to discuss, that is fine too.

Confidentiality

The interview will be tape-recorded but will be entirely private and confidential. The only people to have access to the tapes will be the two researchers, mentioned below. Your name will be changed to ensure anonymity. At the end of the year, once the study has been completed, no further use of the tapes will be made without your permission. If you are interested, I can send you a copy of the research project at this time.

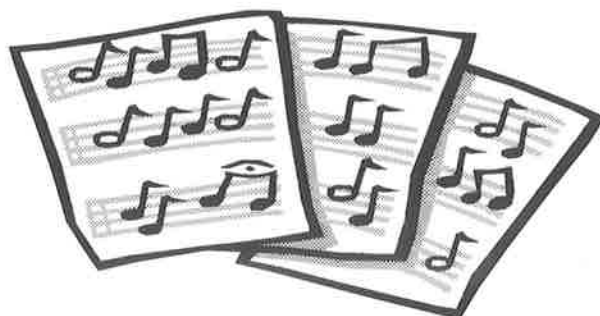
The Researchers

This study is being conducted at the University of Adelaide by Gemma Munro, a PhD candidate, and supervisor Dr Amanda Lecouteur, a Senior Lecturer with the Department. If you are interested in participating, you can reach me on 8303 3856 or via email (gemma.munro@psychology.adelaide.edu.au). Please feel free to contact me (or Dr LeCouteur: 8303 5777) if you would like further information about the study.

Thankyou for your time and consideration,

Gemma Munro
PhD candidate
University of Adelaide

Collaborative Practices in Ensemble Singing Information for NCA Members



What's this all about?

The research will investigate the ways of talking about collaborative practices, or working as a group, that are drawn on by choristers in discussions about ensemble singing. Specifically, it aims to examine talk about identity in accounts of choral performance.

This particular study will eventually form part of my PhD in Psychology. My dissertation explores the relationship between musical performance and identity. I have just completed a study that examined discourses of vocation and self-fulfilment in the talk of solo singers. After presenting this study at two conferences, many interesting questions were raised about the differences between solo and ensemble performance. While many researchers in music psychology have examined the collaborative practices of the string quartet, none have investigated the choir. I hope the proposed research will go some way towards bridging this particular gap in the literature.

What am I letting myself in for?

If you choose to participate in the study, two things will occur. Firstly, I will obtain a copy of the NCA survey that you filled out in 2001 with your name and voice part erased. Secondly, I will be tape-recording the NCA meeting occurring on June 22. In the weeks following this meeting, I will transcribe the comments made by all consenting participants. Comments made by singers who have chosen to not participate will not be transcribed. It is important to note that consenting participants are not required to give any of their time to this research.

What about confidentiality?

As mentioned above, names and voice parts will be removed from the surveys, and the surveys will not be seen in their original form by anyone but me. The meeting taking place on June 22 will be tape-recorded, but any information will remain strictly confidential. I will be the only person processing the original tape. Occasionally, extracts are played in conference presentations. However,

this is done using a package called *Cool Edit*, which provides voice-altering technology. Female participants can become male participants, and the pitch of your voice can be altered, as can the speed of your talk. An identifying feature, such as the name of an organisation or a person, can be reversed or inverted so that it becomes unrecognisable to any listener. All names and identifying features will also be changed at the transcription stage.

What do I get out of this?

After I have analysed the data, I will write a report specifically for NCA. It is hoped that this will assist NCA in identifying some of the benefits and limitations of the organisation. Drawing on the data, I will discuss the collaborative practices that make up the organisational culture of NCA, and suggest some possible strategies to improve the functioning of the choir.

What will the research be used for?

I hope to publish a paper based on this particular study in the British journal *Psychology of Music*. I will also be presenting it at a conference at the University of Western Sydney in November 2002. As mentioned above, it will be included as part of my PhD dissertation, which I hope to submit in February 2004.

What do I need to do now?

If you have any questions, feel free to call me any time. My numbers are listed below.

If you decide to not participate, that's fine. You don't need to do anything.

If you choose to participate, please fill in the attached consent form and return it to me any time before the June meeting. You can do this by giving it to me in person or sending it to the address below. And thank you for helping me with my research.

Gemma Munro

Gemma's Contact Details

Home:

Work:

Mob:

c/o Psychology Department
University of Adelaide
Adelaide SA 5005

Supervisor's Contact Details

Dr Amanda LeCouteur

c/o Psychology Department

University of Adelaide

Adelaide SA 5005

Ph.

APPENDIX 6: Consent form for interviewees

CONSENT FORM

Participant's name (capitals): _____

Project title: Meanings of Musical Performance: Constructions of Identity in the Talk of Musicians

Responsible supervisor: Dr Amanda LeCouteur

Person who issues this form: Gemma Munro

1. I consent to participate in the above project. The nature of the project, including procedure, has been explained to me, and is summarised on an information sheet I have been given.
2. I authorise the responsible supervisor or the person named above to use these procedures with me.
3. I understand that:
 - (a) I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
 - (b) The project is for the purpose of research or teaching, and not for treatment.
 - (c) The confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
 - (d) There are no known adverse effects of these procedures.
 - (e) I can decline to answer any questions if I wish

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I, Gemma Munro, hereby guarantee to:

- (a) honour the above agreement
- (b) maintain total confidentiality of the information provided

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 7: Consent form for choristers

CONSENT FORM

Participant's name (capitals): _____

Project title: Collaborative Practices in Ensemble Singing

Responsible supervisor: Dr Amanda LeCouteur

Person who issues this form: Gemma Munro

4. I consent to participate in the above project. The nature of the project, including procedure, has been explained to me, and is summarised on an information sheet I have been given.
5. I authorise the responsible supervisor or the person named above to use these procedures with me.
6. I understand that:
 - (a) I am free to withdraw from the project at any time.
 - (b) The project is for the purpose of research or teaching, and not for treatment.
 - (c) The confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
 - (d) There are no known adverse effects of these procedures.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I, Gemma Munro, hereby guarantee to:

- (c) Honour the above agreement.
- (d) Maintain total confidentiality of the information provided.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 8: Coping strategies for the performer

Relaxation Exercises

Relaxation training for musicians usually involves listening to audio-taped progressive relaxation exercises, implementing a pre-performance routine, and/or developing a 'quietening response' (Salmon & Meyer, 1992), in which the performer consciously relaxes by breathing and 'letting go' of anxiety. Relaxation exercises are generally used to manage the build-up to a performance and to unwind afterwards and, as Roland (1997: 23) reports, have been shown to reduce heart-rate, breathing-rate, metabolic-rate, sweating, muscle tension and adrenalin secretion. Developing a reliable pre-performance ritual is also said to lessen the potential of experiencing performance anxiety by reducing excessive stimulation, enhancing concentration, and draining excess physical energy (Salmon & Meyer, 1992: 115).

Cognitive restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a wide-ranging concept which encompasses a variety of psychotherapeutic techniques aimed at encouraging self-awareness through identifying how thoughts contribute to actions and feelings (Salmon & Meyer, 1992). This awareness is then utilised in order to alter attitudes and beliefs which are seen as causing psychological distress.

Music psychologists who advocate cognitive restructuring to anxious musicians suggest that performance anxiety is always brought about by 'negative self-talk' on the part of the individual musician (Lloyd-Elliott, 1991; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). Cognitive

restructuring for musicians who suffer from performance anxiety generally involves the identification of this negative or task-irrelevant self-talk about a performance, and the substitution of positive and task-relevant self-statements (Kendrick *et al.*, 1982). For instance, musicians may teach themselves to perceive an upcoming performance as a challenge rather than a threat, replacing negative thoughts such as 'I want to avoid it', 'I feel like giving up', and 'I mostly think negatively about myself' with positive self-talk such as 'I'm choosing to take it on', 'I feel I am the one in control', and 'I'm prepared and willing to overcome obstacles' (Roland, 1997: 14-15). Performers are also taught techniques such as 'thought stopping' (Salmon & Meyer, 1992: 44), which involves the conscious termination of negative thoughts.

Stress Inoculation Training

Stress inoculation training (Meichenbaum, 1985) comprises a set of procedures to help those experiencing anxiety to develop, implement and monitor effective coping skills (Salmon & Meyer, 1992). Specifically, the training involves the identification of sources of stress, the teaching of stress management techniques such as relaxation exercises and mental rehearsal, and daily individual practice and monitoring of these techniques (Salmon & Meyer, 1992). Performers are also taught to develop realistic expectations of performance anxiety; to learn to expect symptoms of anxiety and to use them constructively by, for instance, conceptualising symptoms as a sign of excitement, a normal response to the situation, or an indication of a good performance (Wilson, 1997).

APPENDIX 9: Additional extract: reimbursement for NCA members

148 Leo [so: (.) um] [(.)]how (.) do you feel that
149 NCA [general comments and laughter]
150 Leo we've (.) my: impression is: (.) with professional [(.)]
151 Singer [(cough)]
152 Leo i- issue is that (.) people (.) are not (.) not ↑really
153 concerned about (.) about whether the group goes
154 professional the (.) ↑by: and large people are not
155 concerned (.) that they get ↓paid (.) they'd like ↑not to
156 be out of poc↑ket [(.)] am I right in saying that people
157 Singer [mm]
158 Leo ar:e (.) are ↑happy with the current situation [(.)]
159 Singer [(cough)]
160 whe:re (.) as much as possible you're not out of pocket
161 (.) a:nd (.) we: build up reserves to subsidise for ↓tours
162 that's [(.)] that's the current way we do things.
163 Singer [mm]