INSIGHT AND SELF-DISCOVERY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF BEGINNER VIOLIN STUDENTS EXPLORING THE THIRD-POSITION APPROACH

by

Andrew Charles Baker

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I certify that this thesis is my own work and that all sources used have been acknowledged.

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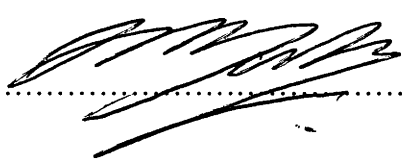
Signed…  ……

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative, practitioner-researcher study that compares the efficacy of the first and third position approaches to beginning left hand technique within a student-centred lesson environment.

The practice of violin teaching has evolved through a master-apprentice model, where technical achievement is the principal motivator for overall musical development. String pedagogical literature has evolved in two forms. Formal research literature investigates issues such as technique, skill, and performance practice, as well as the effectiveness of teaching methods. Experiential literature reflects the cumulative knowledge and experience of teachers: these texts, which include treatises, journal articles, blogs, and tutor books, are detailed, often idiosyncratic, and are usually not verified through formal investigation. A profusion of methods of instruction have emerged within the experiential paradigm, which has led most teachers to base their pedagogical approaches on their own experience and the influence of other teachers. These models of teaching aim to codify pathways that achieve a similar result through sets of varying, but equally inflexible, teacher-centred guidelines. Historically, the first position has emerged as the preferred approach for the teaching of beginner left hand techniques. At the same time, there has been scant inquiry into the efficacy of other approaches such as the third position.

The aims of this study were twofold. First, to compare the effectiveness of the third position approach to the first position; and secondly, to explore how students perceived this comparison in terms of their technical and musical progress.

Using action research methods within an embedded case-study design, the experiences of the five students were documented during the initial stages of their tuition. As they progressed through a range of technical exercises and songs, they were

allowed to take the lead in exploring a range of technical options, and their opinions were recorded. These choices ranged beyond the first or third position to include other aspects of their technique. The student responses were noted during the lessons, then 'critical incidents' were coded into choice types relating to first and third position and other facets of their technique. These critical incidents were collated into a narrative that detailed the 'story' of each student, focusing on these preferences.

Through a synthesis of these events, it became apparent that their experiences and overall preferences were unique and context-based. It also became evident that the process of making decisions about the way they played led to the emergence of other concepts that significantly affected their levels of engagement within the lessons. These concepts include technical self-awareness, self-discovery and ownership, which in turn influenced their technico-musical progress. As these themes emerged, they were explored and discussed more deeply.

In examining the overall pattern of choices made by students, neither first nor third position emerged as being significantly more efficacious than the other. However, it became clear that the inclusion of student-led choice within the lessons became more important than the idea that one approach may be more advantageous than the other. Hence, this thesis argues that a student-guided pedagogical path may offer greater benefits to the overall lesson experience and progress than any particular set of 'rules' about how to play the violin.

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INTRODUCTION

The tradition of violin teaching follows a master-apprentice model where a focus on technical achievement is the primary driver in advancing overall musical development. The appearance of the earliest treatises in violin playing (c. 1650) mark a point in which centuries of refinement of playing styles converged into a basic set of principles. For instance, these ideologies indicate that the optimum position for the violin is on the shoulder and against the neck, rather than against the belly, ribs or on the knee. Additionally, theorists of the seventeenth century advocate the overhand grip, as opposed to an underhand bow hold. In the twenty-first century, these primary attitudes remain at the core of the violinist's set-up.

However, the detail regarding *how* a violinist should craft their playing around these fundamental codes has evolved considerably, resulting in the emergence of different 'schools' or 'methods' of teaching. Each method aims to achieve a similar result through diverse, though equally rigid, pathways. The emphasis placed on the detail within these routes has increased to the point that, in most cases, technico-musical achievement is often measured by the student's ability to adhere to the rules required within that particular method or by a specific teacher. While there may be a convincing rationale supporting the superiority of one method over another, such justifications are – paradoxically – not often detailed or focused on in pedagogical literature. Furthermore, any justification for the pre-eminence of a particular teaching method is rarely backed up through formal investigation. Consequently these rationales represent an addition to a cumulative, multi-generational, pool of idiosyncratic literature.

From this traditional standpoint, the first position has emerged as the default entry point for beginner left hand technique. Formal or informal commentary upon why this phenomenon exists is scant, and comparative studies of alternative approaches (such as the third position) are negligible. It is also interesting to note that the

commentary regarding each pedagogic style pertains *entirely* to the perspective of the teacher; that is, the teacher decides what is in the student's best interests. During this research project no literature, teaching method, or recorded opinion has emerged to advocate a student's preference of playing position.

Aims

My personal experience as a violinist was within the traditional master-apprentice model of instruction, and my teaching practices are grounded upon those of my teachers and mentors. My own approaches to teaching have recently included informal experimentation with the third-position approach as an alternative entry point for the left hand. Subsequently, the structure of this research project reflects my desire to formally investigate the third position as a point of commencement for beginner violinists.

The primary aim of this project was to compare and to evaluate the third-position approach against that of the first position. Given that violin pedagogy has evolved to favour the first position, the project's second aim was to view the effectiveness of both methods through the experiential 'lens' of the student. By allowing students within the sample the choice of which position they prefer to play in, the focus of the data collection is sharpened. Such a 'lens' is not a common approach to research in the field of violin pedagogy, as this project will demonstrate. As this study progressed, the effect of student choice grew in importance. The realization arose that this type of lesson environment was increasingly beneficial to the students' engagement, sense of ownership over their playing, and to their overall progress. As a result, the research directions in this project shifted towards exploring these themes more thoroughly.

Structure

Part One of this thesis outlines the contextual framework and research methods employed within the project. In **Part Two**, a review of the literature discusses the traditional paradigm of violin teaching in detail, with particular reference to the subjective nature of the literature. This section also discusses literature relating to the first and third position approaches. Using inductive research methods, **Part Three** compares the first and third position approaches through an analysis of lessons undertaken by five beginner students, and an in-depth discussion of emergent critical incidents.

The cross-case evaluation within **Part Four** compares and discusses themes in relation to the experiences of the five students. Part Four also explores concepts that emerged relating to enhanced student engagement – namely insights, discoveries, ownership and progress – and the effect of these notions on students' progress. Through the technico-musical choices made within their lessons, the five students were seen to demonstrate an acute awareness of their playing. Such cognizance in turn led them on a journey of self-discovery as they unearthed problems, created solutions, and progressed to the 'next steps' in their technical development. Such processes ultimately led these students to an increased sense of self-ownership pertaining to learning styles and capabilities.

PART ONE:

METHODOLOGY, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Part One outlines the methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation used in the project. This qualitative study investigated the experiences of five beginner violin students through a participant-researcher action research model using a case study design. The broad context used in this study is naturalistic exploration, the design of which "cannot usually be completely specified in advance of fieldwork ... a naturalistic design unfolds or emerges as the fieldwork unfolds" (Patton, 2002, p. 44). As will be demonstrated in the course of this study, initial coding of the collected data was arranged as a means of comparing both the first and third position approaches. However, as the data collection progressed, more codes were added to analyse connections between student choices and the concepts of awareness, discovery, ownership and progress.

This study draws upon four main texts in reference to the collection and analysis of data: Patton (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*; Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) *Research Methods in Education*; Miles and Huberman (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis*; and Yin (2009) *Case Study Research Design and Methods*.

Patton (2002) describes the contextual framework for a qualitative research project as "a well-conceived strategy, [which] by providing overall direction, provides a framework for decision making and action" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). The music education research undertaken in this study is framed in general terms by instrumental and string pedagogy and, within the teaching of a violinist's left hand technique, specific comparison of the first and third position approaches. The contextual framework of this study is described in Figure 1:

Music education

→ Individual instrumental pedagogy

→ String pedagogy

→ Beginner violin teaching

→ Instruction of left hand techniques

→ Comparison of first and third position approaches

Figure 1. Contextual framework

Research questions

In this naturalistic, inductive study, the research questions have been formulated to "impose at least some structure on the study in terms of the kinds of questions that are being asked, the focus of the research and the selection of field sites" (Gray 2009, p. 175). Punch (2009) outlines the formulation of research questions in both general and specific terms. He describes general questions as being "more abstract, and (usually) are not themselves directly answerable because they are too general" (Punch 2009, p. 60), whereas specific research questions "point directly at the data needed to answer them" (ibid.). The two research questions initially formulated for this project were:

1. How does the third position compare to the first position approach for the introduction of beginner left hand techniques on the violin?
2. How is this comparison perceived by the students in terms of their technico-musical progress?

As data collection proceeded and themes relating to student engagement became evident, a further question was formulated:

3. In what ways does the freedom to choose between techniques and playing styles affect the beginning student's engagement with the lessons?

These questions were deliberately framed to be more general in nature, which allowed analytical and interpretative evolution through the data collection process.

Chapter 1: Research methodology

Qualitative research methods are employed in this study. Within an overall case study design, methods such as action research, participant-research, unstructured interview and observation – both in situ and in retrospect via video and audio recordings – reveal data that allow for close examination of the experiences of the participant students and the practitioner-researcher.

1.1 A qualitative research model

As discussed in the review of literature (see Part Two), the only other study investigating the third position approach employs quantitative, statistical research methodologies. Through the isolation of many interrelated variables that make up the complete student experience, this study did not investigate students' perception of first and third position approaches. Eisner argues against the quantitative rationale, suggesting that applying "the methods of science to the study and explanation of social phenomena ... somehow [fails] to tell the whole story" (Eisner, 1979, pp. 11-12) as the fragmented nature of such methods distort the "picture of reality that we are attempting to understand" (ibid.). Eisner goes on to suggest quantitative studies overlook the "conditions, context and interactions" (ibid.) that influence results, and that results from these areas would be of great benefit to altering educational processes.

Qualitative research methods are ideal for this study as they "permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context and nuance" (Patton, 2002, p. 227). Limiting the number of student participants to five provides the opportunity to collect "a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases" (ibid.). As Patton explains, the "logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth ... one can learn a great deal about

issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (ibid., p. 230). This focused approach allows the teacher to individualize the teaching 'method' used for each student, because it includes 'responding' to the student while at the same time reflecting upon shifts in the teacher's own learning and thought.

1.2 Reviewing literature

The literature review undertaken in Part Two provides "an up-to-date understanding of the subject, its significance and structure" (Gray, 2009, p. 99). This review investigates "the previous research evidence and...determine[s] to what extent a coherent picture emerges from the evidence in answer to the question" (Punch, 2009, p. 95). The critical nature of the literature review is essential for building a rationale for the proposed inquiry and the research questions. Wallace and Poulson discuss a range of elements that constitute "being critical" including adopting an attitude of reasoned doubt, and questioning and scrutinizing claims to knowledge while remaining open-minded, respectful to people and constructive in approach. (Wallace and Poulson (2003:6), cited in Punch 2009, p. 104).

The arguments outlined in the literature review also aim to focus the research area in a way that "enables ... the researcher [to] immediately to connect [their] work to the literature" (Punch, 2009, p. 59). To keep the argument succinct, the literature review presented in this study aims to "concentrate on the literature that is most centrally and directly relevant to the topic and research questions. Less attention is paid to literature that is only marginally relevant" (ibid., p. 94). The literature relevant to this project includes quantitative and qualitative research in violin teaching; research investigating the student's perspective, schools of violin playing, treatises and method books pertaining to the violin; and literature relating to teaching left hand techniques specifically in the first and third position.

1.3 Case studies

This project is designed as an 'embedded case study' (Yin, 2009, p. 50). This particular design identifies and examines five violin students whose experiences are incorporated into a single-case design, adding "significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing the insights into the single case" (ibid., pp. 52-53). In this study, the 'case' constitutes the five students and one teacher as a group. Individually, each student is viewed as one analytical subunit. The rationale underpinning this design demonstrates "the representative or typical case. Here the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation" (Yin, 2009, p. 48). While each student is considered a representation representative of the average person, the stated aim in giving the students choice allows the opportunity for their individual experiences to differ from each other.

1.4 Action research

The collection of data in this project is best described as 'participatory action research' that "recognizes a role for the researcher as facilitator, guide, formulator and summarizer of knowledge, and raiser of issues (e.g. the possible consequences of actions, the awareness of structural conditions) (Weiskopf and Laske (1996:132 – 3))" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2006, pp. 230-31). Cohen et al. go on to describe a process that:

- is undertaken directly *in situ*
- uses feedback from data in an ongoing cyclical process…
- focuses on the problems that are of immediate concern to practitioners…
- frequently uses case study
- tends to avoid the paradigm of research that isolates and controls variables
- is formative, such that the definition of the problem, the aims and the methodology may alter during the process of the action research. (Hult and Lennung (1980) and

McKernan (1991) as cited by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2006, p. 228).

These authors also outline the context of action research as using "a variety of instruments for data collection: questionnaires, diaries, interviews, case studies, observational data, experimental design, field notes, photography, audio and video recording" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2006, p. 237).

Action research techniques were used by the teacher in the following manner: first, act (offer technical choices to the student). Secondly, observe (gather feedback from the student). Third, reflect (contemplate that feedback and consider ways in which student preferences may affect lesson plans and outcomes, including reflections upon perceptions of the two independent observers (see section 1.7.1) as well as my own experiences in the setting as practitioner-researcher. And lastly, plan: redesign the lesson structure in light of those reflections.

With regards to offering the student choices, Action Research was also deemed a relevant and appropriate technique, as student choice can be incorporated strongly within the action research cycle. As revealed in Chapter 11, this study explores the perceived benefits of student choice to the educational process, and thus reflects the investigative areas of student centered and self-directed learning. Gibbs (1992) states these areas give "students greater autonomy and control over choice of subject matter, learning methods and pace of study" (p. 23); hence student choice is most appropriately a heavily influencing factor within Action Research as used in this study.

1.5 The practitioner-researcher

The rationale for this project is underpinned by a deliberate interest in practitioner-based research, which allows the researcher to understand personally what is happening through personal experience (Patton, 2002). As the practitioner-researcher in this study, I have constructed this project upon methodologies undertaken within my violin teaching practice. Such a research process allowed me to learn from – and to

inform – my teaching processes, while generating new knowledge in the field of string instrument pedagogy.

Punch outlines the role of practitioner-based research as "the deliberate and organized collection of evidence about practice, as it goes on, in order to inform and improve practice" (Punch, 2009, p. 40). He further outlines four advantages and four disadvantages in researching in one's own classroom (ibid., pp. 43-44). The advantages are convenience, access and consent, relevance, and insider knowledge and understanding – which are all appropriate to this study. He outlines the disadvantages as being bias and subjectivity, vested interests in the results, generalizability, and the ethical conduct of the research. Although bias and subjectivity are addressed through the triangulation measures (see section 1.7), this issue was present throughout the data collection. Through reflecting on comments made by the independent observers, bias (such as leading questions) was always considered and addressed. Initially, my vested interests in the results extended to the notion that the third position approach was potentially better for students; however, as is revealed, my intentions shifted considerably to the transformative effects of a choice-centred approach to teaching. This study makes no attempt to generalise the results, but does reveal themes worthy of further exploration with a larger sample. Ethical issues are addressed below (see section 1.9.2).

Data pertaining to my own experiences as practitioner-researcher are also collected, analysed and discussed within the thesis. This data includes reflections written in the field notes (see Appendix C) during the lessons, reflective commentaries upon groups of lessons, ideas for future lessons, discussions between the practitioner-researcher and the independent observers, and regard for the transformative effect on my teaching.

1.6 Critical incidents

Critical incidents, as described by Miles and Huberman, refer "to some event or situation that marked a significant turning point or change in the life of the subject" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, cited in Tripp, 1994, p. 69). Tripp describes further the "analysis of critical incidents [as] an ongoing process in which new links can constantly be made, not only to current practice, but to how we see ourselves in relation to current and past selves and practices" (Tripp, 1994, p. 73). Critical incidents are relevant to the experience of the researcher, reflecting developments to the teacher's thinking and approach.

This thesis outlines emergent concepts relating to student engagement in lessons, as a direct result of the choices made by individual students. These incidents are critical in that they influenced the practitioner-researcher to consider the significance of student-centred technical self-awareness and discovery (as discussed in Parts Three and Four of this thesis). These critical incidents highlight the continuum of traditional violin teaching standpoints – that of imposing a technical approach upon students. The retrospective analysis of these events, either at the conclusion of the lesson or much later during the analysis of the data, allowed for elucidation of these concepts in an introspective and personal way. Such analysis reflects the commentary of Tripp who describes this kind of reflection as a way of "illuminating, understanding, and gaining control over our current professional practice and habits" (Tripp, 1994, p. 69). These acute episodes form an integral part of the action research cycle, specifically of reaction, planning and later interpretation.

1.7 Triangulation

In relation to qualitative research, triangulation is defined as "the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 112). Furthermore, such triangulation offers the

research a richer explanation of human behaviour as it is viewed from alternative standpoints (Cohen et al., p. 112). In this project, triangulation is achieved through the use of observation within the following two techniques: convergent validity and investigator triangulation.

Convergent validity is "one way of validating interview measures [by comparing] the interview measure with another measure that is known to be valid" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 121). Using this technique, the practitioner is able to compare verbal responses to non-verbal and behavioural feedback. For example, if a student indicates a preference for first position and they continue to play in first position at times when they are not asked to choose, then their behaviour confirms their verbal response.

Investigator triangulation refers to the inclusion of observers whose independent comment can lead to more reliable data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 114). In this technique, observations made by the two independent observers are compared to observations made by the practitioner-researcher.

1.7.1 Independent observers as a component of the study

Practitioner-research is subjective in nature given that the practitioner undertakes the role of the investigator while acting as a participant in a project researching his or her own practice. Two independent observers were included in this study to offer objective comment on issues such as the research methods employed, the bias and subjectivity of the teacher, the teaching methods and repertoire used, as well as aspects of the students' experiences and responses. The observers were sent video samples of the lessons and specific incidents were not indicated beforehand. The observers were asked open-ended questions and the interviews often became discussions. These discussions were considered when interpreting the data, and were

also used as part of the 'reflection' stage of the action research cycle.

1.7.2 Observation

Gray describes observation as being "primarily descriptive of settings, people, events and the meanings that participants ascribe to them" (Gray, 2009, p. 185). This study uses semi-structured observation, which begins with a set of issues but allows for the illumination of data in a less systemic manner (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000 p. 305).

1.8 Interviewing

Interviewing is a key method of data collection employed within this study. Patton proposes interviews as a means permitting "the observer to go beyond external behaviour to explore feelings and thoughts" (Patton, 2002, p. 306). Interviewing is used to explore the student preferences, as well as exploring what the independent observers had seen and noted. Interviewing also has its limitations, due to the possibility of distortion for reasons such as personal bias, emotion, or ethical or moral standing (ibid.). In this project, interviewing was used to seek responses from both the students and the independent observers.

1.8.1 Interviewing students within the context of lessons

Conducting informal interviews woven into the fabric of the violin lesson provided challenges for the researcher and the students. Using this technique became complicated when questions that offered choice were interspersed with directives. Accordingly, the students took some time to 'get used' to being asked their opinion while at the same time being required to follow some directions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) highlight the issue of power as significant because the interviewees find themselves 'under scrutiny' in a social or political situation. They go on to cite Simons (1982) and McCormick and James (1988), who outline issues that should be

taken into account when interviewing children. These issues include establishing trust and informality, and overcoming shyness, elucidating meaning from inarticulate responses as well as moving past what children think the interviewer wants to hear (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 122).

Leading questions also arose as an issue in this project. Cohen et al. (2000) describe a leading question as "one which makes assumptions about interviewees or 'puts words into their mouths', i.e. where the question influences the answer perhaps illegitimately" (p. 122). Cohen et al. (2000) go on to outline some of the sources of bias of leading questions including issues around the attitudes and expectations of the interviewer and interviewee and misconceptions and miscommunications (ibid., p. 121).

Furthermore, leading questions are used as a way to glean information that an interviewee may be withholding (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). However, as this study progressed, the challenges were not met through withheld information. It became apparent that the students lacked the vocabulary to effectively articulate their preferences. Therefore, leading questions were used as a tool in providing the student with some vocabulary and answer-options while an attempt was made to not influence their opinion. As outlined earlier, the first position and third position approaches cannot be compared equally since, traditionally, teachers use primarily the first position with beginner violin students. Therefore, the exploration of the lesser-used third position approach is based upon the biased standpoint that it may be more pedagogically and musically effective. In this sense, it was challenging to ask objective questions comparing the two methodologies, while avoiding giving students a sense that one position might be easier, better or more desirable than the other.

Interviewing students within their lessons was the most complicated part of the data collection process, while at the same time being the principal means of data collection. The challenges experienced within the interview procedures included

negotiating issues of power, formality, leading questions, misunderstandings and the choice of vocabulary. One key way to bypass these issues was to ask the same questions in different lessons and contexts, which furthered an overall sense of that student's opinions. Many contextual examples are provided in Part Three.

1.8.2 Interviewing the independent observers

Interviewing the two independent observers proved less challenging than interviewing the students. The observers, both experienced violin teachers and performers, have the vocabulary and insight necessary to articulate their observations clearly. Therefore, open-ended questions and unstructured interviews were appropriate as they allowed the interviewee more freedom. Several researchers discuss the significance of open-ended interviews as enabling "respondents to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world…[recognizing] that what is a suitable sequence of questions for one respondent might be less suitable for another, and open-ended questions enable important but unanticipated issues to be raised" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p. 121-22).

For practical reasons these interviews were conducted over the telephone and the observers were not able to be present in any of the lessons. By remaining 'outside' the lessons, the observers were able to maintain an objective standpoint. However, reducing interviews and lesson observation to just aural sensory cues "can be particularly problematical [as the] absence of non-verbal cues is significant, e.g. facial expression, gestures, posture, the significance of silences and pauses (Robinson, 1982) as interviewees may be unclear about the meaning behind words and statements. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, pp. 123-24).

These challenges were addressed through further in-depth discussion between the researcher and the observers as well as multiple viewings of relevant video samples to clarify points of discussion.

1.9 Outline of the teaching project

This qualitative practitioner-researcher project investigates what Patton describes as a 'homogenous sample' where sampling "typically involves bringing together people of similar backgrounds and experiences" (Patton, 2002, pp. 235–36). The students who participated in this project all live in the same region as the teacher and share an educational environment that is self-contained within its regional location. Patton (2002) describes the purpose of homogenous sampling as providing a focused sample, simplifying analysis and interviewing. He comments further, outlining that minimum designs can be specified based on reasonable coverage of the phenomenon (pp. 243–46). After considering these issues, six students was deemed a suitable number of students for this project, however one student withdrew from lessons early on in the project.

1.9.1 The setting

The project's data collection took place at the Orange Regional Conservatorium (hereafter referred to as ORC) located in Orange, New South Wales, Australia. Orange is a regional city with a population of approximately 40,000 people. ORC is a not-for-profit community-owned music education resource that provides individual and group music lessons, school music programs, ensembles, concerts and workshops to the Orange region. ORC was identified as an ideal place to run this project for a number of reasons:

1. I had been employed at ORC since 2005 as a violin teacher and performer, and as the head of the string department. Setting up this practitioner-research fitted easily within the string department's educational activities.
2. Access to a homogenous sample of students was easy by using ORC's usual student recruitment procedures.

3. ORC held current liability insurance and it had implemented the relevant occupational health and safety and child protection policies, thus providing a safe environment for the students and myself.
4. A project such as this was beneficial to staff and student development, as well as to the community profile of the organization.

1.9.2 Ethical issues

This music education research project was undertaken with unconditional approval from the ethics committee of the Australian National University. Since the violin is essentially taught the same way to students from varying cultural and social backgrounds within mainstream Western music education, it was anticipated that the research methods would be unlikely to give rise to any social or cultural considerations, and none arose during the collection of data. Although the written permission of the parents was received, the consent of the students (all under 16 years of age) was also sought to ensure they were enthusiastic to learn the violin and to take part in the project. Access to the video footage was only available to the researcher, the research supervisor, the two independent observers, and the participants recorded in those videos. Risks to the researcher and the participants were further minimized through the following measures:

- Parents were encouraged to be present at the lessons.
- The teacher had passed relevant working-with-children checks and worked within the child protection policies of the ORC.
- The consent of the parents and students and the independent observers was received before their participation began.
- The teaching methods used in this project were already well-established practices. Thus, participation in this project should either further benefit the students' tuition or, if not, be much the same as traditional teaching.

- The nature of this research encourages developments in the practices of the teacher and improvements in the educational experiences of the students.

1.9.3 The teacher

At the commencement of this research, I had been working as a violin teacher in individual and group settings for over ten years. I graduated with a Bachelor degree with Honours in violin performance, and I hold two other performance diplomas. In this project, my role was to give individual lessons to each student, to maintain the field notes, and to summarize the critical incidents within the contact summary sheets (see Appendix D). Audio and video recordings of most lessons were produced allowing for retrospective examination.

1.9.4 Boundaries

The gender of each student is excluded as a variable in this project; therefore each student has been assigned a gender-neutral name. Within the setting of individual instrumental instruction, it is possible that girls and boys will respond differently to a situation. However, for this project, this issue is taken out of the equation. For ease of reading, feminine pronouns and indicators are used for each student. Data, as recorded in the field notes and presented in this thesis, mostly refer to the introduction of aspects of left hand technique. These technical matters include preferences of first or third position, as well as positions of the arm, elbow, wrist, thumb, index finger contact and finger positioning, and choice of string.

1.9.5 The students

Five students volunteered to take part in this project, agreeing to have twelve weekly violin lessons, all 30 minutes in length. The students ranged from seven to eleven years of age and had their twelve lessons within a six-month period. The five students presented in this project are Charlie, Kelly, Jules, Kim and Ashley, and their

parents were invited to be present in the lessons where possible. In Chapters five through nine, the students are assigned the feminine gender allowing for consistency of reading and to eliminate gender as an influencing factor in the interpretation of the data. The students were introduced to a flexible range of technical exercises, songs and scales that were made available in both first and third position. The repertoire given to the students reflected a range of teaching methods and pedagogues (for example, Paul Rolland) and was used as a starting point for tuition. See Appendix B for a sample of repertoire used.

1.9.6 The independent observers

Two independent observers agreed to view a sample of lessons (or excerpts of lessons) for each student. The observers commented on the research methods, the effectiveness of the teaching methods used, and the students' responses to interviews. Both independent observers are identified as male to facilitate differentiation in reading between them and the students. They are assigned the title 'Mr'.

Mr Edwards works as performer and violin teacher in a not-for-profit music education institution similar to ORC, in another regional city of New South Wales. Mr Edwards also holds the degree Doctor of Philosophy in violin pedagogy from an Australian university, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in music from universities outside of Australia. Mr Edwards watched a sample of 17 lessons and participated in five interviews, each between 40 and 90 minutes in length.

Mr Quinn has an established and respected career as a performing violinist and teacher. Mr Quinn lectures in violin at an Australian university and performs as a permanent member of a professional symphony orchestra. Mr Quinn holds a Masters degree in violin pedagogy, with a focus in qualitative research methods. Mr Quinn watched video samples from 12 lessons and participated in three interviews, each

between 30 and 60 minutes in length.

While both observers watched the same lessons, Mr Edwards watched a small number of extra lessons. Observer comments were considered both individually and comparatively.

1.9.7 Incentives

The students who volunteered to participate in this research project enrolled as regular students of ORC. A nominal once-off enrolment fee of ten dollars was charged. The students were not required to pay for their violin lessons during the data collection; however, the normal tuition fees were applicable if they continued their lessons beyond the project. The students were made aware that they could withdraw from the project at any time. They were provided with an instrument free of charge if they did not have access to a violin. Although I taught these students at my place of employment, their lessons did not constitute part of my salaried duties. The two independent observers were paid a nominal honorarium for their time viewing the lesson videos and taking part in interviews.

In summary, this chapter outlines the design chosen for this project as a practitioner-researcher model in an embedded case study design. The 'case' here is the complete group of one teacher and five students. Each student's experience is viewed as a unit of analysis; thus, there are five 'units of analysis' embedded in this 'case'. Data were collected using action research techniques that included teacher reflection and reaction, observation by external observers, in-context interviewing of students, as well as interviews between the researcher and independent observers. Emerging data were then analysed and interpreted in an iterative manner through detailed summaries of each student's responses to interviews and teaching methodologies. Analysis and interpretation are discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Methods of analysis and interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of the data is achieved through rich descriptions of each student's experience of their participation in the project (see Part Three).

2.1 Interpreting and describing

Interpretation of the data is the way in which the researcher describes what has occurred and how it is significant. Interpretation explains the significance of findings through reflecting on themes and describing and linking concepts, and through imposing order on previously unordered events (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). Building the 'story' of each student is an ideal means of describing what has happened and takes into account the context and variables that influence that story. This approach makes "all the information necessary [accessible to the reader] to understand the case in all its uniqueness" (Patton, 2002, p. 450). Within these stories, incidents that emerged in the analysis of the lessons are discussed and explained in context and often in sequence, thus allowing the researcher to explicate deep-seated themes and to richly illustrate the case study under investigation.

Matrices were also used (see Parts Three and Four) as an aid in constructing the story of each student. These tables offered the researcher a bird's eye view of incidents in a chronological manner, from which deeper exploration and explanation could then occur. Bernard (1998), as cited by Miles and Huberman, explains this kind of description as "making complicated things understandable by reducing them to their component parts" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 90).

2.1.1 Field notes

Field notes were maintained as the central element of data collection (see Appendix C for a sample). Field notes were written during each lesson at the moment

that a critical incident occurred that. Field notes were kept brief, as "accurate, detailed and extensive field notes are difficult to write, especially when the researcher is busy observing in the field" (Gray, 2009, p. 185). At the conclusion of the lesson, the incidents were reviewed and summarized onto a contact summary sheet that "gave a perspective that combines immediacy with a reflective overview of what went on in the contact" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 52), allowing for an initial analysis of the basic information of that data. As incidents were written onto the contact summary sheet, they were assigned a five-digit incident number.

2.1.2 Coding

Once the contact summary sheets were complete, the next step was to generate a set of codes that best reflected the research questions. The method of coding used in this study is referred to as 'inductive coding', in which initial:

> ... data are collected, written up, and reviewed line by line, typically within a paragraph. Beside or below the paragraph, categories or labels are generated, and a list of them grows. The labels are reviewed and, typically, a slightly more abstract category is attributed to several incidents or observations. (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 59)

In order to best facilitate coding, the computer program *HyperRESEARCH* (2011) was used. The contact summary sheets were imported into *HyperRESEARCH* and the incidents were coded as shown in Table. After the initial coding, it became evident that other concepts were emerging from the incidents. These concepts can be broadly described as particular events experienced by students when engaged in the process of decision-making. The initial codes were then supplemented along the lines described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These authors offer three ways to supplement initial codes: 'filling in' adds codes that reflect new themes that emerge; 'extension' returns to existing data and examines them in new contexts; and 'bridging' creates new relationships between existing datum. The resulting coding is shown in Table 2.

Data codes			
chooses another position, chooses first position, chooses third position, no choice or chooses both,	choice with guidance, choice without guidance, needs to consider choice, reason for choice,	left hand plucking, finger stopping, elbow positioning, wrist positioning, wrist resting against the bout, thumb positioning, violin positioning, shifting, favourite string,	Ashley, Charlie, Kim, Jules, Kelly, pedagogical issues, question / choice issues, research method issues, general / other,
↓	↓	↓	↓
Code categories			
First and third position	Choice types	Left hand techniques	Observer comments

Table1. The initial list of codes and coding categories

Data codes				
chooses another position, chooses first position, chooses third position, no choice or chooses both,	choice with guidance, choice without guidance, needs to consider choice, reason for choice,	left hand plucking, finger stopping, elbow positioning, wrist positioning, wrist resting against the bout, thumb positioning, violin positioning, shifting, favourite string,	arrives at own solution, progress, self-efficacy, technical awareness	Ashley, Charlie, Dominique, Jessie, Jules, Kelly, pedagogical issues, question / choice issues, research method issues, general / other, awareness / engagement, ownership, discovery, perceived, student self-efficacy
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Coding categories				
First and third position	Choice types	Left hand Techniques	Emerging Concepts	Observer comments

Table 2. The revised list of codes and coding categories

2.1.3 Building the narrative

In order to observe emerging analytical themes, the stories of each student were ordered according to patterns in the coding. Miles and Hubermann describe matrices

and networks as formatting procedures that compare specific variables or, conversely, that isolate specific variables. They explain that these displays assist the researcher to summarize and compare data, both within and across units of analysis. However, they warn that such coding can be restrictive (Miles and Hubermann, 1994).

Manipulated frameworks, namely matrices and networks, have been used in the students' stories where they will most efficiently describe and explain events. In that sense, they make up the texture of the narrative. Display formats that are used, as described by Miles and Huberman, include 'event listings' that arrange incidents into groups, and 'time-ordered matrices' that order events chronologically (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The coded data were then assembled within a narrative describing the contribution of each case. These student 'stories' are designed to best "report 'scenes' – that is, accounts of researchers' engagements over time with informants in their surroundings" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 298). These scenes are voiced as "impressionist: personalized, atheoretical accounts, often storylike, aiming to link reality and the field-worker, and to enable reader reliving of the experience" (ibid., p. 300).

As the units of analysis are built iteratively, concepts emerged through the comparison of similar incidents within the student experiences. These comparisons are necessary in recognizing abstract concepts that lie behind the empirical data (Punch, 2009). These concepts then lead to generalized explanations and conclusions that emerge from the identified issues and connections (Denscombe, 2007).

2.2 Conceptualising and explaining

Researchers describe 'explanation' as "making complicated things understandable by showing how their component parts fit together according to some

rules" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 90). Yin adds that, in most case studies, explanation occurs in narrative form (Yin, 2009). In this study, data are examined in a way that brings concepts to light regarding the student's position choices. Themes concerning student engagement that emerged later in the data analysis are also examined in this way.

2.3 The overall case: Comparative analysis and cross-case synthesis

This study provides a qualitative in-depth analysis of the experiences of five violin students. Cross-case synthesis, or qualitative synthesis as described by Patton, is a way to 'build theory' and can "identify and extrapolate *lessons learned*" (Patton, 2002, p. 500). The comparative analysis conducted in Part Four of this thesis follows the ideas of Miles and Huberman who suggest that comparative analysis looks for "similarities and constant associations ... [comparing] cases with different outcomes" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 174) leading towards more general explanations. In this sense, the aim of this inductive research is not to generate theory, but to provide insights into – and an explanation of the experiences of the participants.

As described earlier, this single 'case' is in fact an examination of five separate cases, or units of analysis. This approach allows the researcher to "not only pin down the specific conditions under which a finding will occur but also help ... form the more general categories of how those conditions may be related" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Comparative analysis is therefore significant in this research, albeit not the central focus.

To assist in viewing general concepts across the units of analysis, this project uses 'case-ordered displays' (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which analyse differences between certain variables.

In summary, the data were analysed and interpreted primarily through building a

story of each student's experience, with emerging concepts and incidents described and contextualized. The first step for building these stories was to maintain field notes that were subsequently summarized onto contact summary sheets. Data were then coded into categories in reference to the research questions, with more codes added as the data collection progressed. Manipulation of the data into matrices provided a framework for narrative explanation. A comparison across the five units of analysis was then made to provide an overall picture of the students' experiences.

Summary of Part One

This thesis presents data, analyses and conclusions drawn from a qualitative study that investigated beginner-violin teaching. A single case study model was used with five units of analysis. Practitioner-researcher methods including action research, observation and interview were used to document the experiences of five beginner-violin students, with triangulation occurring through observation and comment from two independent observers. Data were coded and analysed, then moulded into narrative form that contextualised the experiences of the students. A cross-case synthesis was then conducted to elucidate similarities and differences between the units of analysis. The analysis of these data is presented in Parts Three and Four of this thesis. Part Two will explore the literature relating to violin teaching and left hand techniques.

PART TWO:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Part Two contains two chapters: Chapter 3 discusses research and experiential opinion within violin teaching, highlighting a lack of qualitative investigation as well as a tradition of teacher subjectivity; Chapter 4 explores writings on left hand technique, outlining how the first position is by far the preferred approach for beginner violinists and how little (by contrast) the third position is used.

Chapter 3: Violin pedagogy: The traditional paradigm

Writings on violin teaching and playing are here divided into two categories: 'experiential literature' and 'formal research'. These two categories are most easily discussed side by side, as "practical concerns from those 'in the trenches' do not always rate inquiry by academics, and the philosophical inquiries of academics do not always make it into the day-to-day work of teachers" (Davis, 2009, p. 49).

Formal research into violin teaching emerged in the early twentieth century and was undertaken predominantly through the quantitative paradigm as a means of investigating the effectiveness of teaching methods. Kantorski has since analysed 252 doctoral dissertations relating to string education written between 1930 and 1992. His research shows that approximately 62 per cent of the dissertations surveyed cover the topics relating to technique and skill, information resources and performance practice, while just 20 per cent of dissertations concern methods, curriculum, instructional strategies and teacher education (Kantorski, 1995, p. 294).

Experiential literature, also referred to as 'experiential approaches' in this thesis, has traditionally evolved through a range of media including journal articles, treatises, methods and tutor books, collegial discussion as well as – predominantly – the teacher's own experiences within the 'master–apprentice' lesson environment (Paige, 2007; Mishra, 2000).

This literature review will demonstrate that a far greater amount of experiential literature is available to the violin teacher, as compared to formal research. Historically, this literature has had a closer connection to the 'classroom', being a more easily accessible pool from which teachers can inform their own practice. However, there is often a lack of attention given to this body of work in formal research enquiries, as the latter wishes to employ modern research methodologies. Therefore while

acknowledging the significant contribution formal research makes to violin pedagogical development (to which this project also intends to contribute), this study attempts to outline the area of formal research more generally while focusing more closely on experiential literature.

3.1 Formal research

The volume of published research into violin teaching grew exponentially during the mid-twentieth century in the United States of America. Kantorski's *A Content Analysis of Doctoral Research in String Education, 1936–1992* (1995) reveals a jump from a mere six theses produced prior to 1950, to 154 theses between 1950 and 1980 (Kantorski, 1995, p. 291). This research focused particularly on class-based string teaching as a response to "the sad situation of our school orchestras" (Reisman, 1945, p. 28)[1]. These theses addressed the low standard and slow growth of string orchestra programs during the early twentieth century, as well as the lack of qualified teachers (Waller, 1942; Reisman, 1945; Klein, 1952; Mihalyi, 1953; Kish, 1960; Kendall, 1963; Boney, 1967). Kish offers an amusing, but poignant, metaphor describing the state of string education at that time:

> One might draw a comparison between string players and the buffalo, two vanishing though noble creatures, and the same reason or reasons might be ascribed to the extinction of both – the loss or disappearance of suitable pasture and the right fodder. (Kish, 1960, p. 68)

A focus on improving the quality of teaching practices was embedded within this research activity. Significant research projects such as those undertaken by Cowden (1969) and Rolland (1974), the emergence of the Suzuki method (ca. 1960) in the United States, as well as the publication of Ivan Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing*

[1] Sollinger (1970) notes the introduction of school-based string classes in the United States of America began between 1912 and 1918.

and Teaching (1962) offer research contexts for the investigation of teacher development. The foundation of the American String Teachers Association in 1946 aided the dissemination of these research outcomes. Kantorski observes that "methods and curriculum designs/instructional strategies categories are closely related in that they provide string teachers at all levels a wide variety of pedagogical content and sequence alternatives" (Kantorski, 1994, p. 295). However, it is interesting to note that Kantorski found that only 16.54 per cent of research activity was dedicated to these categories.

Research studies in violin teaching and playing tend to fall into distinct categories in both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The overwhelming majority of documented studies are examples of quantitative research, including Brammer (1954), Zomzely (1954), Grover (1960),Wikstrom (1960), and Crockett (1960). Although this surge of scientific activity was a large leap forward for violin playing and teaching, Neumann argues that the quantitative approach and its nature of isolating variables has its limitations. He suggests some researchers

> ... failed because they did not properly take into account the close interlinking of all the elements of the skill, their organic interplay ... [B]riefly, isolation was applied where isolation was inadmissible ... [and] ... in some cases science will be able to settle disputes and thereby achieve a measure of unification. But that such could be the case for the whole field or even for a substantial part of it can hardly be expected ... (Neumann, 1969, p. 3).

Quantitative studies, including Bergonzi (1997), Carey (1979), Charles, Fitzgerald and Coyle (2004), Colpritt (2000), Cowden (1969), Salzberg and Salzberg (1981), Smith (1995) Stone (1994) and Zelig (1967) included experimental designs comparing teaching methods and lesson strategies, while placing a focus on the achievement of technical outcomes. Cross-sectional surveys, such as Paige (2007), Sievers (2005), Kahn (2000), Frost (1997), Jenkins (1996) and Heaney (1994) often

combine quantitative and qualitative data to cover issues including teaching effectiveness, choices of teaching materials and methods, and factors pertaining to the advancement of school-based orchestras and string programs.

The literature reviewed in this project suggests that qualitative research in violin teaching playing is scant. Kantorski argues the case for qualitative investigation, commenting "[d]issertations in which ethnographic and other qualitative research methods are used might be especially useful for investigations concerning string programs" (Kantorski, 1994, p. 296). These inductive studies generate theory about aspects of violin playing and teaching that lead to reformulated pedagogy, from both teacher-centred and student-centred perspectives. The focus of these studies is directed towards pedagogical processes and lesson environments, rather than technical outcomes (Calissendorff, 2006; Gholson, 1998; Kuutti, 1979).

Another area of string pedagogy research is comparative literature studies. These detailed analyses of pedagogical texts collate the differing opinions of writers into technical and musical categories, while highlighting areas of consistency and divergence. The current research suggests Paul Rolland, Sinichi Suzuki, Kato Havas, Ivan Galamian, Leopold Auer and Carl Flesch are the most reviewed pedagogues (Arney, 2006; Lee, 2003; Perkins, 1995; Schlosberg, 1987). Schlosberg's review presents eighty-seven 'behaviours' with nineteen areas of agreement between pedagogues. Regarding left-hand technique, the fifty-two entries in the comparative index by Arney each compare specific teaching techniques of Galamian, Auer and Flesch. Lee provides a good example in his comparative study of the way in which reviews exhibit dissimilarities in technical detail.

Other researchers, including Davis (2009), Kahn (2000), Mishra (2000), and Neumann (1969) focus their attention on a much broader range of pedagogues. Neumann (1969) offers an extensive discussion of the use and positions of the left hand

and arm. Davis (2009) presents a differing focus, investigating the evolution of the 'self-instructor' and related methods, while categorizing the presented texts into two categories she labels the 'recreational' and the 'achievement' models. Through presentation of the consistencies and differences in approaches to technique, these literature studies also highlight the level of detail that each teacher requires their students to master. These pedagogic elements are unpacked in section 3.2.

Analysis of the prevailing themes within the literature suggests the majority of studies use quantitative research methods. The research studies examined in this project veer towards two main perspectives: the teacher's viewpoint and the student's perceptions. The following sections discuss these outlooks in more detail.

3.1.1 The teacher's perspective

Much of the research available in violin pedagogy investigates the *teaching* of the violin: for example, how the teacher can reform their practice to result in better technico-musical outcomes for students. Common research methodologies in this area include surveys, interviews, teaching observation and comparative trials of teaching methods (Barnes, 2000; Bergonzi, 1991; Charles, Fitzgerald and Coyle, 2004; Gohlson, 1998; Kahn, 2000; Lee, 1992; Moss, 2006; Núñez, 2002; Salzberg and Salzberg, 1981; Schlosberg, 1987). Investigating the teacher's perspective aligns with the traditional model of string instruction. Neumann advocates:

> ... [the] excellence of a master's playing is accompanied by a pattern of attitude and movement, and his interpreters believe that only a faithful copying of this pattern in all its outer detail can show the way to the same excellence. (Neumann, 1969, p. 5)

Paige proposes the most efficient methods for teachers to strengthen and diversify their pedagogy are through the observation of other teachers, reflection upon feedback pertaining to their teaching given by supervisors, and interaction with their

colleagues (Paige, 2007). The other avenue of research examines the phenomenon of the insight of the violin student.

3.1.2 The student's perspective

There is a small pool of research providing analysis on student insights within the lesson environment. Kantorski and Stegman found that only 5.88 per cent of qualitative doctoral dissertations in the broader area of music education completed between 1998 and 2002 focused on the learning process ($n = 14$) (Kantorski and Stegman, 2006, p. 69). Teacher-centred learning has been compared to student-centred learning through investigations of student responses within lessons, the implementation of strategies involving student consultation, comfort levels, student leadership, incorporation of student input and curriculum co-creation by teachers and students. Such a focus often results in a transformation of the curriculum and positive alterations in pedagogical direction (Scruggs, 2009; Waldron, 2006). Davis argues that self-directed learning in adult beginner violin tuition "seems so obvious ... the fact that choice needs to be mentioned as an option is an indication of just how deeply embedded the idea of 'teacher knows best' is in music education" (Davis, 2009, p. 237).

Research examining the perspective of student responses within violin lessons is scant. In exploring the extrinsic benefits of tuition, Kuutti's study investigated the reactions of adult beginner string players. These advantages included the effects on their families, community involvement, and attitudes towards the level of difficulty in their instrumental study (Kuutti, 1979).

Studies such as these seek to understand how the participants experience their learning; however, a distinction can be made between projects that investigate student opinions in order for teachers to work out what is best for students, as opposed to studies that allow the student to decide what is best for them. Calissendorff undertook a grounded theory study of young children learning the violin. Based on the analysis of

empirical data, this study produced 'a theory of *learning style*' (Calissendorff, 2006, p. 83) that solicited responses from students and parents upon their individual learning processes. Her investigation followed lines such as joy, pleasure, concentration, enthusiasm, tiredness and motivation (Calissendorff, 2006). Among her conclusions, Calissendorff found "there was very much of a master–apprentice relation" and the "children's first spontaneous description of how they learnt was along the lines of 'Teacher says do this and I do it' (ibid., p. 93). In Calissendorff's study the students are asked their opinion, which indicates the teacher's willingness to base their teaching practices around the insights of the student. However, in this model, the feedback leads to conclusions made about students' experiences that create the mould for future students.

One recent study (West, 2007) investigates the influence of student feedback on the course of the lesson. The classes given in this study place emphasis on "the individual and group choices that develop musical Identity; and demonstration of the ways in which this paradigm may contribute to voluntary, rather than enforced, Involvement" (West, 2007, iv). West's action-research project focused on student-centred learning. The following quote gives substance to such processes through the discussion of:

> … [a] flute student, Angela, [who] walked in and said: 'Actually I feel like learning the violin' (Journal 24) … next lesson I had a violin teacher there and the student played the violin. After the violin lesson … Angela expressed no further need to try it again. This was despite the fact that she has parents who would have been happy to add violin to her list of instruments, which now includes clarinet and saxophone and piano, beside flute and singing. However after the one violin lesson her interest in flute playing intensified and she moved ahead significantly in a short space of time. Possibly, having been allowed to explore her fantasy of being a violinist she realized it did not do for her what she thought and found flute did more than she had imagined. (West, 2007, p. 179)

West explains further that, although this example may raise the importance of long-term commitment to an instrument, this educational environment may have had "a positive effect on her commitment to *music-making*" (ibid., p. 180).

Traditionally, formal research into violin teaching has been carried out in quantitative contexts and pertaining to the experiences of the teacher. However, as shown in this study, a small number of studies investigate the experiences and insights of the students with a view to pedagogy being guided instead by student opinion. The next section explores literature on violin playing and teaching that forms the conventional core of pedagogical development.

3.1.3 Self-directed learning

The title of this area of study in education research seems self-explanatory. However, researchers acknowledge a range of definitions including: autonomous learning, open learning, independent learning, as well as self-study and self-teaching to name a few (Candy, 1987). Brockett & Hiemstra (1991) refer to the personal qualities that enable the 'self-directed learner' to exhibit a "desire or preference for assuming responsibility for learning" (p.24). Garrison (1992) explains the external and internal dimensions of self-directed learning: while external dimensions refer to the use and control of educational tools and processes, internal dimensions refer to the responsibility of the learner for constructing meaning.

As seen in the formal research just reviewed and as will be seen in the following sections, self-directed learning has rarely (if at all) been implemented into violin pedagogy. While this study did not originally intend to focus strongly on this area, the student experiences (Chapters five through nine) do reflect these educational models.

3.2 Experiential literature

Experiential literature is a term used in this thesis to describe the pedagogical thoughts, attitudes and traditions that constitute the majority of the literature available to violin teachers. These opinions are continuously developed within the master–apprentice model of tuition, and passed on through media such as treatises, journals, tutor and method books, as well as master-classes, collegial discussion and teacher observations. Experiential approaches may also describe the experience and responses that underpin an individual teacher's particular pedagogic approach. Where formal research aims at objective outcomes, experiential literature and the manner through which it is developed is innately subjective.

As discussed earlier, the proliferation of teaching methods could provide teachers and students with a range of options. However, this section of the literature review proposes that this long and idiosyncratic tradition of pedagogical development has left violinists with many slightly differing versions of instruction, with a strong focus on technical detail that leaves little room for deviation. The noted violin pedagogue, Leopold Auer, describes the idea of experiential approaches in the following quote, where he expresses pedagogical views based upon extensive empirical reflection. Such deliberations "have all been verified by years of experiment and observation" (Auer, 1921, vii). In this section, experiential approaches will be discussed through the evolution of early literature concerning violin pedagogy; in particular, treatises. Literature relating to schools of violin playing, pedagogical lineage, and teaching methodologies are also surveyed. Finally, this chapter offers a detailed examination of the subjective nature of the literature.

3.2.1 Early literature and treatises

The earliest literature expressing subjective opinion are instrumental treatises of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The most influential of these documents

are those written by Geminiani (1751), Leopold Mozart (1756), Spohr (1832) and Baillot (1835)[2]. In Neumann's view, treatises are "concerned with the basic doctrine on *how to play* in finished performance but not with the procedure of acquiring the skill step by step" (Neumann, 1969, p. 10). Paige explains that, although these treatises are aimed at improving violin playing, they are in fact aimed at the teacher and advanced player:

> Pedagogical material in the twentieth century has included further analytical works designed for the development of virtuosity in advanced performers such as Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, as well as memoirs and advice written by eminent players and teachers based on their own experience of playing and of teaching. Such teachers have generally honed their skills working with advanced students and this is the intended readership of such works, along with their teachers and professional players in general (Kolneder, 1972/1999). (Paige, 2007, p. 13)

Such treatises set the standard for the evolution of analytical pedagogy focusing on high achievement (Davis, 2009). Treatises paved the way for an increasingly detailed focus upon rules concerning the application of technical principles, as well as the implied imperative that students and teachers are required to adhere to these rules. Describing this focus in a historical perspective, and taken:

> ... in the light of the fragmented evolution of both stringed instruments and the manners of playing them, it is perhaps not surprising that there were many differing views on what constitutes good playing. (Paige, 2007, p. 17)

Through an authoritative manner, and at times without rigorous justification, treatises often present a dictatorial methodological process. In general, the status of the performer was enough to justify the efficacy of the approach.

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[2] Treatises by later writers such as Flesch and Galamian are discussed in more detail in the sections following.

Providing an ideal example of authoritative opinion, the title page of Geminiani's treatise reads: "The Art of Playing on the Violin containing all the rules necessary to attain to a perfection on that instrument" (Geminiani, 1751). As a further example, Geminiani comments on the use of the thumb when shifting:

> ... in which Care is to be taken that the Thumb always remain farther back than the Fore-finger; and the more you advance in the other Orders the Thumb must be at a greater Distance till it remains almost hid under the Neck of the Violin. (ibid., p. 2)

Given that Geminiani's treatise is one of the earliest accepted works of its type, it can be understood that a rule such as this one would be accepted as universal.

However, the inherently subjective nature of such opinions is exemplified in the following examples on bowing. Mozart suggests, "one endeavours to take the first note of each bar with a down stroke, and this even if two down strokes should follow each other" (Mozart, 1756, p. 74); this is argued in order to assist in keeping time in dance music (Careri, 2012). However, Mozart is contradicted by Geminiani, who cautions:

> ... the Learner against marking the Time with his Bow ... if by your Manner of Bowing you lay a particular stress on the Note at the beginning of every Bar ... you alter and spoil the true Air of the Piece. (Geminiani, 1751, p. 9)

It is notable that these two equally valid though contradictory opinions are delivered in an authoritative manner that may lead a beginner to assume that each is an indisputable rule.

Regarding finger extensions[3], Louis Spohr offers another example of a firm and imposing opinion. Spohr notes that if "the extended note is to be slurred with the note that lies next to it, the two should not be more than a semitone apart, as to draw the finger for an interval of a whole note produces an unpleasant whining" (Spohr, 1832,

[3] An extension is when a finger reaches a note that sits outside the position of the hand; often used instead of shifting the whole hand to a new position.

p. 92). Although Spohr's suggestion is intended to assist musical advancement, the authoritative and non-negotiable nature of the statement is accompanied by the threat of 'unpleasant whining'. Dating from the twentieth century, Elizabeth Green's comments on the thumb and wrist position present a similar manner of instruction. Green notes:

> *After* the wrist has acquired the habit of its good, straight alignment with the arm, the thumb will almost invariably seek out a position closer to the scroll end of the neck. But this should not be permitted to happen if the wrist still collapses. To straighten the wrist, push the thumb forward. (Green, 1966, p. 7)

These few examples, written by those who are revered as leaders in the field, set the scene – at least in writing only, for a tradition of idiosyncratic experiential approaches delivered in an authoritative manner. While it is acknowledged that these few books do not necessarily represent actual teaching in any given situation, one could not expect it to be considerably different. These detailed instructions, be they in a book or passed verbally from teacher to student, are set in the context of the historical development of 'schools' of violin playing. These schools may be defined by the intricacies of one particular teacher or teachers, college or institution, or the geographic region.

3.2.2 Schools of violin playing

Schools of violin playing initially emerged in geographical centres of compositional and pedagogical activity specific to the development of violin playing. Paige refers to "the somewhat haphazard evolution of both stringed instruments and the manner of playing them [leading to] many different approaches to playing technique generally, and to the development of differing 'schools' of playing" (Paige, 2007, p. 17). The following paragraphs discuss the evolution of schools of violin playing and teaching, in which many significant violinists are mentioned.

The violin emerged as an expressive, virtuoso solo instrument in Italy during the early seventeenth century through the compositional and performance activities of violinists such as Corelli (1653-1713), Geminiani (1687–1762), Tartini (1692–1770) and Vivaldi (1678-1741), as well as through the renowned violin making by makers in Brescia and Cremona (Boyden et al., 2014).

The 1782 Parisian debut of the Italian violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824) pinpoints the beginning of the French School (Schueneman, 2004). Viotti and his students, or disciples Pierre Rode (1774–1830), Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831) and Pierre Baillot (1771–1842, who later produced a treatise titled *L'Art du Violon* in 1835), defined this school through the composition of numerous concertos, sonatas and études that explored the expressive bowings and virtuosic techniques that were possible with the Tourte[4] bow (Schueneman, 2004, p. 757).

The Franco–Belgian School collectively defines the continuing activity in Paris as well as the emergence of Brussels as a centre of violin virtuosity. Charles de Beriot (1802–1870) is considered the first significant violinist of the Franco–Belgian School (Schueneman, 2004), representing "a marriage of the older French School of Viotti and colleagues and the new technical innovations of Paganini (though Beriot wrote in a more virtuosic style before he heard Paganini)" (Schueneman, 2004, p. 765). This school's development continued through the work of modern violinists such as Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–1881), Henryk Wieniawski (1835–1880) and Charles Dancla (1817–1907), and later Jeno Hubay (1858–1937) and Eugene Ysaye (1858–1931).

One of the players who signified the German School was Louis Spohr (1784–1859). Spohr lived and studied in Germany, and the most notable of his teachers was Franz Eck (1774–1804) (Brown, 2013). Spohr quickly established his reputation as a violin virtuoso; his most significant contribution to music, however, came through his

[4] François Tourte modernized the baroque violin bow by lengthening it, adding weight to each end, and adding the screw and spreader wedge at the frog end. He was also a contributor to the refinement of the concave shape of the bow; a move away from the previous convex and straight shapes.

compositions. These diverse works ranged from violin concertos (influenced by Parisian composer Pierre Rode), violin duets and string quartets, operatic, choral and symphonic works, as well as his treatise, *Violin-school* (1832) (Brown, 2013).

A significant contributor to the development of violin technique, whose development and career sit aside from these schools of playing, was Italian violinist Nicolo Paganini. His own tuition was from his father and a local professional violinist, and his career as an independent performer and composer was soon launched to global acclaim (Neill, 2014). Although he influenced many composers and violinists he encountered in his travels, he was not engaged in any significant activities as a pedagogue, and hence no identifiable school of playing can be linked to him.

Pedagogical activity in Vienna and Hungary is often referred to as the Austro–Hungarian School. Josef Boehm (1795–1876) is considered the founder of this school (Schwarz, 2013). Although Rode was his teacher, he is strongly linked to the French School. Boehm was appointed Professor of Violin in Vienna, and was the teacher of players such as Heinrich Ernst (1812–1865), Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), Jakob Dont (1815–1888), Eduard Remenyi (1828–1898) and Joseph Hellmesberger (1828–1893) who all made significant contributions to the violin repertoire (Schwarz, 2013).

In the early twentieth century, violin virtuosity "became an end in itself" (Stockhem, 2012) through the playing and teaching of those violinists previously mentioned as well as others such as Pablo de Sarasate (1844–1908). Auer (1845–1930) is considered the next major figure in the progression of violin pedagogy. A student of Dont and Joachim, he founded the Russian School in St Petersburg (Schwarz, 2012). The Auer style of playing is defined by the:

> so-called 'Russian' bow grip (ascribed to Auer by Flesch in his *Kunst des Violin-Spiels*) "[which] consists of pressing the bow stick with the centre joint of the index finger; the result is a richer tone, though at the expense of some flexibility" (Schwarz, 2012).

Auer's principles are passed on in his treatise *Violin Playing As I Teach It* (1921) along with a series of graded method books.

Until approximately the time of Auer, schools of violin playing have been defined by geographic region and/or personality. However, with Auer, a shift to a technique or style-centred definition of a school can be identified. Violinist Aaron Rosand (1927–) offers a description of the French and Russian schools that captures this shift to a technique-centred definition. In a radio interview he discusses two of his teachers, Sametini (Franco-Belgian school, student of Ysaye) and Zimbalist (Russian school, student of Auer). He attributes the Russian school of playing with a "thick sound" and the French school with a "lighter approach", both of which he can incorporate into his playing depending on the repertoire he is performing. He also comments that these are "the dominant schools in violin playing … today" (Rosand, 1999).

After Auer, the geographical significance of schools of violin playing diminished with the exodus of many Russian and European violinists to America around the time of the First World War. However, two significant pedagogues, Flesch (1873–1944) and Galamian (1903–1981), carried on the tradition of schools of teaching themselves. A student in Vienna and Paris, Flesch's playing "developed through constant analysis and self-criticism. This diagnostic ability made Flesch into one of the greatest teachers of our time: he approached technical and musical problems in a rational way" (Schwarz and Campbell, 2012). Flesch's pedagogy is recorded in *The Art of Violin Playing* (1923) among other pedagogical texts. Galamian, appointed to the Curtis Institute and then to the Juilliard School of Music, produced a list of world-class students who "were among the laureates of every major international competition" (Schwarz and Campbell, 2012). Galamian wrote two texts published in 1962: *The Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (with Elizabeth Green) and *Contemporary*

Violin Technique (with Frederick Neumann). Many examples from both Flesch and Galamian's texts are cited and discussed in the following chapters of this thesis. Schools of violin pedagogy continue to date in the manner exemplified by Flesch and Galamian.

The development of virtuoso violin technique and compositional style moved through various regions and influential players, each with a certain distinct approach to technique and teaching. This evolution sets the stage for the further development of playing style and technique through a master–apprentice model where success is marked by the student's ability to emulate the teacher.

3.2.3 Pedagogical lineage

Alongside the progression of schools of violin playing, the previous paragraphs make reference to the manner in which techniques and traditions are passed on from teacher to student. This section will discuss and develop themes based upon these methods and customs.

Researchers agree that, in the studio lesson environment, the inherent role of the student is that of an apprentice. Hence the development of a teacher's expertise is influenced by their own learning experiences (Gholson, 1998; Hallam, 1998; Paige, 2007; Persson, 1994b, 1996). For an instrument traditionally associated with difficulty and elitism, it is interesting to ponder that to play the violin well "has historically been considered sufficient to be able to teach it as well" (Paige, 2007, p. 1). Paige shows further evidence to support the theory that excellent playing equals excellent teaching, as a background in advanced performance "was found to be advantageous for such players when working later as teachers of advanced students" (ibid., p. 114).

The notion that excellent playing equals excellent teaching is further explored by Davis who, when discussing the emergence of music institutions in the 1860s, suggests the "students who patronized the institutions learned in the European style with

its expectations of achievement, and those who became teachers likely taught in the way they themselves had learned, which involved the same experiences of achievement" (Davis, 2009, p. 208). Although forming the mainstay of violin pedagogical development, the tradition of 'teach how you were taught' is undermined by the scant investigation into *why* pedagogues teach the way they do, as "teachers who relied solely on their instrumental backgrounds for the development of pedagogical skills exhibited some gaps in their knowledge" (Paige, 2007, p. 116).

If approaches to violin teaching appear to be idiosyncratic 'moulds' to which students adhere, what then is the most appropriate scenario for the student? Flesch, as summarized by Paige, idealises the perfect scenario for learning the violin as being "a progression from elementary instruction with a specialist who establishes a secure technical basis to a pedagogue who teaches the pupil how to learn and finally to an artist teacher who develops real artistry" (Paige, 2007, p. 29). It is hard to imagine that the majority of students have access to such a carefully and perfectly planned path. If they did, however, then such a route would appear to be another version of an authoritatively delivered experiential approach. An additional issue that is raised here is that of 'hidden curriculum' (Davis, 2009). These are the aspects of a teacher's method that are inferred: notions that are not verbalised or notated. Davis proposes:

> ... it is very rare for authors of violin texts to write clearly or at any length about their beliefs and attitudes. Indeed, one aspect of the argument presented here is that the authors themselves may not be fully aware of the underlying philosophical position they are adopting; that some aspects of music education are socially embedded in a way that is unconsciously recognized and accepted by teachers and students without deep thought or analysis. (Davis, 2009, p. 17)

Hence, it appears that a student's ability to successfully fit to the approach of the teacher not only requires adherence to the delivered teaching method, but also to

negotiate and understand the hidden curriculum in an environment that does not usually accommodate much enquiry by the student.

3.2.4 Violin teaching methods

The increasing abundance of violin teaching methods and tutor books offers teachers a wide range of pedagogical insights and options. These texts provide a logical sequence and structure that Davis describes as a "focus on aspects of violin playing that prioritize the development of technique and accuracy" (Davis, 2009, p. 235). Currently, the number of step-by-step methods for beginners far outweighs the number of advanced player-based treatises. For example, the *Zephyr Music* catalogue offers approximately two hundred and sixty texts (by approximately one hundred and fifty separate authors) available for the beginner violin student (Zephyr Music, Sydney, 2007, pp. 5–9).

In his book entitled *Violin left hand technique; a survey of related literature*, Neumann refers to the significant number of beginner texts that were available in the mid–1960s, suggesting it "has become somewhat of a tradition to start a book on violin playing with an apology and an explanation of why one felt impelled to add a new volume to the large number already published" (Neumann, 1969, p. 4). However, other scholars support the placement of the method book firmly within the context of subjective experiential literature, as argued by Knocker (1952):

> I do not like the word 'method'. It means a 'systematic and orderly mode of procedure', and suggests a bundle of hard and fast rules which have to be broken whenever a pupil's hand or idiosyncrasies do not fit in with them. Principles and essentials, yes – but not *method*! (Knocker, 1952, p. 25)

Literature that attempts to define 'method' is negligible. For the purposes of this

study, the following four categories will be used to discuss teaching methods[5]:

- *Comprehensive methods*: Methods that provide structure and sequence from beginner to advanced level, generally with higher pedagogical intensity.
- *Beginner methods*: Methods centred on initial instruction for beginners only, generally with less intense pedagogical requirements.
- *Heterogenous methods*: Texts written for beginner string classes that include violin, viola, cello and double bass instruments in the one class.
- *Technique-specific methods*: Books that offer the advanced player exercises and studies that focus on improving specific areas of technique.

Comprehensive methods

Comprehensive methods offer the student step-by-step guidance from beginner to advanced levels. These texts are offered in the form of graded books that contain pieces or songs, exercises and other technical work, often with accompanying texts that outline the underlying pedagogy. The two approaches that are considered 'comprehensive' in this definition are those of Sinichi Suzuki (1969) and Geza Szilvay (2010)[6], which are also designed for use in teaching children.

The Suzuki method is revered globally, arguably being the most influential individual violin method of the twentieth century. Suzuki's principles have grown and evolved through years of interpretation in the literature (Zelig, 1967; Suzuki et al, 1973; Starr, 1976; Churchill, 1990; Lee, 1992; Colprit, 2000). Suzuki's principles are embedded within the *talent education* philosophy: talent and ability can be taught at an early age in the same way that language skills are acquired – through immersion and

[5] Another category of methods not discussed here is the 'self instructor' text. Written for amateurs and for use in social situations, these texts began to disappear as elitism and virtuosity became the focus of modern violin playing in the early twentieth century. For further information, see Davis (2009).

[6] For the purposes of this thesis, *The New Approach* by Kato Havas is considered an 'approach' as opposed to a method. Havas's approach is discussed on page 73.

imitation. In this sense, it is relevant to all students, regardless of their perceived aptitude.

The book *Nurtured by Love* (Suzuki, 1969) outlines Suzuki's philosophy. However, much of the detail of what to teach, how to teach it and when to teach it – particularly in regards to left hand technique – is not included in this book. After the launch of the Suzuki method in the United States of America, a group of American Suzuki teachers joined Sinichi Suzuki in contributing to *The Suzuki Concept: An introduction to a successful method for early music education* (Suzuki et al, 1973). An in-depth examination of pedagogical applications in Suzuki's philosophy, this book presents technical detail in the form of detailed rules. Examples of these guidelines include Suzuki's philosophy regarding "a very firm left hand position – that is, a very firm hold on the shoulder. He even advocates slightly raising the left shoulder to hold the violin" (Suzuki et al, 1973, p. 68). Suzuki goes on to say:

> ... the teacher must exercise extreme care in teaching the blocked finger position. Finger independence, flexibility and suppleness must never be sacrificed. Some children learn to place all three fingers simultaneously on A string for the 'twinkles' and then the need develops to unlearn this crippling habit. (Suzuki et al, 1973, p. 45)

At the same time, however, this book offers room for teachers to adapt the method to their own teaching styles. For example, one of the contributing writers, Behrend, advocates teaching vibrato "when the child's hand is positioned well and is strong enough ... It depends on the child's physical readiness and not just on emotional readiness" (Suzuki et al, 1973, p. 81). Regarding wrist positioning in third position, Behrend and another contributor, Jemplis, advise the teacher to assess whether the left hand should rest against the ribs of violin depending on the hand and the length of the arm (p. 79).

These examples demonstrate two facets of the Suzuki method. On one hand, the Suzuki approach represents a subjective opinion delivered through a detailed set of rules. On the other, these directions may change as interpretations vary between teachers. The inference is that student progression is measured in either one, or both, of two ways: first, the student's ability to adhere to the method itself; and secondly, the student's capacity to follow that particular teacher's interpretation of the method. Furthermore, by using language such as "extreme care", "must never be sacrificed" and "this crippling habit" (Suzuki et al, 1973, p. 45), these examples highlight the level of significance placed on adherence to the rules.

Another thought-provoking aspect of the Suzuki method is its association with morality and social standing. In the preface of *Nurtured by Love,* Suzuki discusses the development of a student's skill, in which:

> ... a mediocre child was turned into a noble human being and excellent musician. Using examples, I explain how to change a person lacking in ability into a talented one, a mediocre person into an exceptional one. (Suzuki, 1969, pp. 7–8)

The embedding of musical education within sociocultural development can be traced back to Lowell Mason (1792–1872), who is best known for "persuad[ing] the Boston School Committee to include music as a curricular subject in 1838" (Mark, 2002, p. 45). Mason maintained that "enjoyment of any type of music was not enough ... music had a role in educating, civilizing and uplifting individuals, largely through European art music" (Davis, 2009, p. 189).

In this sense, the principles that underline the Suzuki method align with theories proposed by Carlin (1997), Hash (date missing), and Mark (1982, 2002) within a broader discussion of the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of music education. The argument developed in this thesis does not question connections between learning the violin through a particular method and sociocultural development. However, in the case

of the Suzuki method, it brings to light the idea that advancement – either in violin playing or social standing – is only possible through strict adherence to these particular guidelines.

The Colourstrings method (Szilvay, 2010) is described as "a Kodaly based, child centered approach to music education that has been in existence since the early 1970's (sic)" (The Szilvay Foundation, 2011). Aimed at young children, this philosophy requires students to play the same melodies in varying positions on the fingerboard, which links finger placement to solfège syllables (Goldberg, 1999). This approach also introduces shifting to higher positions from the outset of their tuition.

Szilvay is one of the few writers to expand upon the theoretical reasoning underpinning his pedagogy. That is, the presentations of reasons *why* certain rules should be followed. For example, Szilvay claims that Colourstrings is "the first method to use natural harmonics in a systematic way to develop the beginner's technique. Similarly, the use of left hand pizzicato is executed by all fingers of the left hand" (Szilvay, 2010, p. 2). Such a technique is possible because "the curved and light placement of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers on the strings establishes an ideal position for the future left hand stopping movement in the fingerboard (in 1st position)" (ibid., p. 30). However, like the other writers discussed, his method also presents examples of subjective detail, as demonstrated in the following example:

> It is generally observed that the position of the head on the violin and intonation have a connection. If the player leans his or her head on the violin too much, then the left ear is too close to the source of the sound (violin); the right ear is then too far away and because of this imbalance of the position of the ears from the instrument, intonation cannot be sufficiently controlled. (Szilvay, 2010, p. 7) ... A common mistake is that the little (4th) finger, and sometimes even the 3rd finger, 'falls down' under the neck of the violin and creates tension in the left hand. To avoid this mistake, incorporate left hand

pizzicato using the 4th or 3rd finger. (ibid., p. 36)

Embedded within a pedagogical philosophy, both the Suzuki and the Colourstrings methods provide a step-by-step process of learning process from beginner to an advanced level. Both these commercially successful models offer a broad philosophy centred on engaging young children in technical and musical advancement. In critiquing both these approaches, this study does not intend to suggest that they are ineffective or philosophically unsound. It is interesting to note, however, the similarity with which each method promulgates its approach through adherence to a tradition of subjective opinion, high levels of technical detail and a rigid manner through which those details are taught.

Beginner methods

Beginner methods are similar to the comprehensive methods in that they provide a step-by-step guide to tuition. However, these books only cater for the beginning student. Within these texts, differing levels of pedagogical intensity are apparent. *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* (Rolland, 1974) is an approach that offers more intensive pedagogical requirements. In describing Rolland's pedagogic philosophy, Eisele (1980) notes he:

> ... wanted to teach each student to play with a beautiful tone and with such ease that technique became the tool of good musicianship and not simply an end in itself ... The child needed also to be taught what to do with his bow arm, left hand fingers, all of the technical elements that produce a good tone. (Eisele, 1980, pp. 1–2)

Rolland's method and philosophy are presented through *Action Studies*, each one centred upon a physical action that underpins the required technique. From this end, the student is required to master each action – that is, the achievement of a specific natural and balanced physical movement. The comfort of the student is a decisive element in Rolland's approach. However, he, like the other writers, embeds rules within

the instruction on how and what to play, as the following statement suggests:

> Beginners play better if their eyes are kept on their instrument. Hence it is wise to teach by rote at the very beginning. ... It is a good principle to concentrate on but one problem at a time. Thus it will be beneficial to teach the following factors separately at first: The functions of the left hand, that of the bow, and note reading. (Rolland, 1947, p. 36)

Other beginner methods demonstrating less intense pedagogical philosophies include those by Allen (1994), Givens (1987) Meyer and Phillips (2002), Dillon, Kjelland, and O'Reilly (2002), Allen, Gillespie, and Hayes (1994), and Thorp (2002). Although this literature provides some general pedagogical principles, the 'how-to' is left up to the discretion of teacher. Thorpe's *A Flying Start for Strings* provides teaching material in the form of rhythmic exercises, scales and pieces. It introduces one finger at a time (sequentially from open string to fourth finger) and one string at a time. The only pedagogical guidance is some sketches indicating posture, bow hold and pizzicato (Thorpe, 2002, p. 3). This kind of book allows the teacher to apply his or her own pedagogical approach to specific techniques.

In *Strictly Strings*, Dillon, Kjelland, and O'Reilly outline technical issues that extend as far as holding the violin, left hand positioning and holding the bow (Dillon, Kjelland, and O'Reilly, 2002, pp. 14–25). In a similar way to Thorpe's text, this method relies mostly on pictures to tell the story, with the addition of a few written directions. These guidelines are very succinct, and provide a starting point for the student. However, this resource is reliant upon a teacher capable of filling the void. For example, some of the instructions regarding holding the violin include, "make sure your shoulder pad is placed on your violin correctly" (Dillon, Kjelland, & O'Reilly, 2002, p. 14). However, a description of the *correct* placement of the shoulder rest is not forthcoming, apart from the vague notion that if "your position is correct, you should

feel comfortable" (ibid.).

Beginner methods such as those discussed are designed for use in the individual lesson studio. The following section discusses approaches that are designed for group tuition.

Heterogeneous methods

The result of extensive research into the development of school-based (string) orchestra classes in the United States of America (Rotili, 1950; Wikstrom, 1960; O'Neal, 1968; Fink, 1973; Wasson, 2002; Scruggs, 2009), heterogeneous teaching methods are tutor books commonly used by teachers. These resources cater for class string tuition, where violin, viola, cello and double bass can be taught at the same time. These publications offer more thorough pedagogical detail, in order to assist the string teacher when teaching instruments they may not play.

Green was one of the first to publish such a method, offering broad principles catering for different students' needs. Such principles include her advice that students should experience flexibility right from the start of their tuition (Green, 1966). However, instructions such as, "the hand must be set well to the right side of the instrument so that there is a straight line from the elbow to the base of the middle finger" (p. 76) show that Green follows the tradition of teacher subjectivity through the required adherence to rigid rules. Examples discussed in this thesis, such as this instruction of Green's, highlight the constant tension between the ideal of student comfort and the frequently rigid rules that 'teach' students how to be comfortable.

Technique-specific methods

Technique-specific manuals may be defined as "an easy and direct way to build, one at a time, the simple actions that together are called 'technique' … an effective and time-efficient way to work on specific areas" (Fischer, 1997, vi). These texts, such as

those by Fischer (1997), Dounis (1921), Sevcik (1880 and 1905) and Schradieck (1900) differ from the other methods discussed in that they are used to refine aspects violin playing by breaking down particular techniques into individual actions and elements. Valuable examples include 'Positioning the thumb' (Fischer, 1997, p. 89), 'About fingertip placement and base joints' (ibid., p. 93) and 'Hand position' (ibid., p. 98). Dedicating many pages to copious fine details, the guidelines presented in these books also follow the tradition of subjectivity. For example, Fisher instructs:

> ... the main movement of the fingers should be from the base joint, which could be called the 'shoulder' of the finger ... Do not *lift* the fingers from the string: pull them back from the base joints without changing their shape. (Fischer, 1997, p. 106)

Another issue that arises within treatises, tutor books and other such texts is 'universality'. Although this thesis presents examples in which authors demonstrate contrasting ways of achieving a similar result, such writers also discuss technical approaches that are accepted and standard across all methods.

3.2.5 Universal principles

Flesch introduces the term 'universal principles' into this discussion, referring to an agreed set of conditions that would ideally be accepted generally within violin pedagogy. Flesch comments that "great violinists tend to acquire and cultivate habits based on his specific personal idiosyncrasies ... [that] are developed by the next generation to a tradition – a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs, for any school should be based on principles that are *universally* valid" (Flesch, 1923, vi). Here, Flesch attempts to differentiate subjective habits with objective and universal principles. However, Arney implies a philosophical contradiction on Flesch's part, as she outlines "a universal issue is a fact applicable in all situations by outlining the result. By defining each step, Flesch cannot help but cloud the generality of the principles with his own technique, teaching style, and playing style" (Arney, 2006, p. 19). This

contradiction may suggest that universal principles and idiosyncratic playing styles are effectively the same thing for many authors, since it is widely acknowledged that there are a large number of aspects of technique on which may pedagogues do not agree.

Galamian refers to the teacher-centred nature of these instructions, in that they "should be made for the good of the students rather than using the students to glorify the rules" (Galamian, 1962, p. 1). Neumann goes further, highlighting a paradox that occurs where the student may play well regardless of the rules. He outlines that this paradox:

> ... is met by admitting fine results *in spite* of a wrong approach. The right to break rules is reluctantly conceded to the genius and to him alone ... how much better he could play if he would only do it the *'right'* way. (Neumann, 1969, p. 1)

The insistence upon subjective rules is also followed by Paul Rolland who "had a medication for a 'disease' of violin playing, and one which cured naturally ... prevented any illness if a student progressed according to his principles" (Eisele, 1980, p. 2). Therefore, in the quest for objectivity, subjectivity rules through its solid grounding in idiosyncratic detail. Subjective principles, delivered in a manner that suggests universality, are shown in Figure 2. This diagram raises some issues that may be common to traditional approaches to violin teaching. First, it implies the student cannot move on to the next level until they have mastered the current stage; the pupil is required to grasp these principles regardless of whether it suits their ability or progress. Secondly, there are thirteen aspects of technique below ground level on the diagram that highlight the issue of difficulty, which imply there are many tools to acquire before being considered able to play.

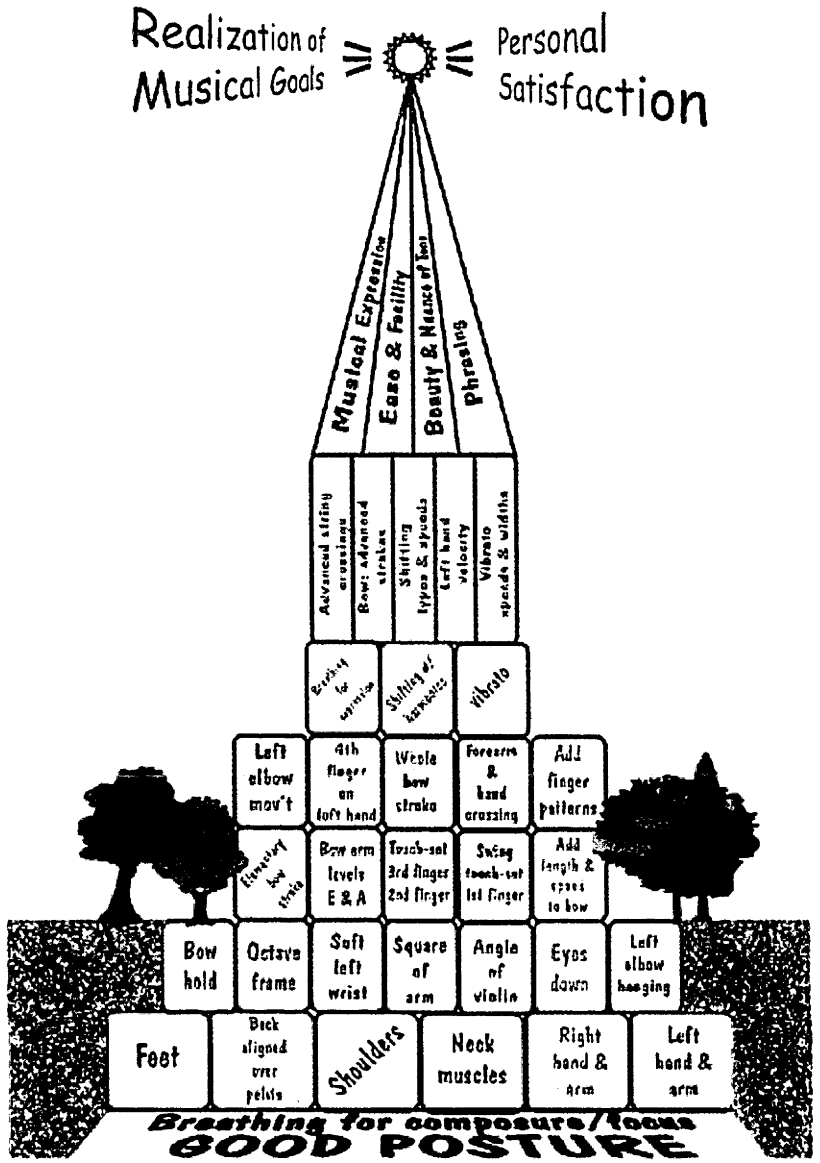

Figure 2. 'Building a Student' diagram (Klempter, 2003, p. 7)

Thirdly, reaching the top – "Realization of Musical Goals" (Klempter, 2003, p. 7) – implies that intrinsic components of music, such as phrasing, nuance and beauty, can only be experienced after acquiring all the required skills; not to mention, *only* when the student procures the expertise outlined within the methodology will they attain "Personal Satisfaction" (ibid., p. 7). It is interesting how this diagram mirrors the *Virtuosic Mountain* (see Appendix E) and *The Road to Success* (see Appendix F), published nearly100 years earlier.

As the founder and author of the *Colourstrings Method*, Szilvay is one of few authors who occasionally offer students technical options. For instance, he suggests the "guidelines for the ideal position of the violin leave room for variation with different individuals" (Szilvay, 2010, p. 7). In the following example, he presents alternatives for the use of the second finger:

> The use of the 2nd finger may be taught in three different ways:
>
> - the 2nd finger stops the string without the 1st finger
>
> - the 2nd finger stops the string together with the first finger (useful for future double stopping)
>
> - the 2nd finger stops the string and the 1st finger merely touches it (for future left hand legato and future changes of position (ibid., p. 40)

Although the author proposes three different approaches it is interesting to note that each option is specific and detailed, suggesting that little room for variation exists outside this range. Furthermore, by applying the phrase "may be taught in three different ways" (as well as the fact that this example appears in the *Handbook for Teachers and Parents*), Szilvay is, in effect, asking the *teacher* to choose, rather than the student. In reality, this example suggests Szilvay's method presents room for variation in teacher subjectivity.

Online forums present another context within which to discuss teachers and their differing experiential approaches. The website http://www.violinist.com offers forums for the discussion of violin pedagogy and performance. The first example, entitled *Locked wrist and playing on ONE string. Please and thank you for advice!!!* is posted as follows:

> *Poster of comment:*
>
> Posted on August 26, 2011 at 04:49 PM
>
> Hey guys.

I am teaching an adult to play violin.

Her previous teacher taught her NO posture whatsoever, therefore she has developed incorrect posture.

One of the areas we are working on is correcting her bow hold. She grabs the bow and plays.

We're starting to develop a more proper bow hold, but she is having problems having a flexible wrist (her wrist is always locked).

Besides making mountains and valleys with her wrist as an exercise, what are other exercises I can use to help her develop that flexibility in her wrist.

As well, what exercises can I give her to minimize accidently playing on two strings when she's only trying to play on one.

Any help would be very much appreciated. (Farnand, 2011)

This post's mention of "NO posture" and incorrect bow hold fit into Neumann's general opinion that "any change from a teacher of one school to a teacher of another invariably subjects the student to a complete revision of his playing habits" (Neumann, 1969, p. 1). The following is one of the responses to the post:

Response:

Posted on August 26, 2011 at 05:30 PM

One exercise for a relaxed right wrist is: start with good posture and relax the entire right arm, particularly the deltoid (top of shoulder). Hold the upper and lower arm mostly stationary and use the wrist to make short bow strokes. Work at the frog, mid, and tip of the bow. Go to the next string – etc. After some flexibility appears in the wrist, work on circular motions of the wrist. Have her work on moving her right fingers, also, to loosen other muscles of the hand / wrist. (Farnand, 2011)

While the response does not claim to adhere to any one particular school, text or teacher, these comments represent an example of complex rules that a student would be required to follow in order to attain the teacher's requirements. This response continues:

> Since she is essentially a beginner, I would not obsess about string crossing. It will come in due time as she gains flexibility and control in the bow arm. One thing you could point out is that there are not 4 places for the bow to hit the string – there are at least 12. For example, it's not just "on A", it is "on A leaning towards D", "on A" and "on A leaning towards E". At some point, she should practice this, but it may be too soon at the moment. (Farnand, 2011)

An explanation is missing from this opinion as to the necessity for the learner to play with a loose wrist (at least according to that particular teacher's version of a loose wrist). Why not let the student offer input into what feels comfortable for them? Why not allow the pupil to explore ways to loosen their wrist? Why not offer them a range of other ways to play and see which option is preferable?

The second example, entitled *Positioning of the thumb on the bow*, was posted as follows, with two selected responses:

> Poster of comment:
>
> Is there a "official" place for your thumb to rest on the bow, or is it a matter of preference?
>
> Posted on September 29, 2011 at 06:28 PM
>
> I personally like my thumb on the outside of the frog, but a lot of violinists I've seen/played with play with their thumbs inside the bow between the frog and the stick. Do most of you play with your thumb inside or outside?
>
> *Response 1:*
>
> Posted on September 29, 2011 at 06:51 PM
>
> The "beginner" bow hold places the thumb on the metal next to the hair outside of the frog. Initially it is easier for some students to form an appropriate hand shape to hold to bow in this manner, as it forms a wider and more stable "base" with the fingers.
>
> In order to execute the wide range of professional bow strokes however, it is necessary

to reduce the size of the rotation point held in the hand, thus the placement of the tip of the thumb at the inside edge of the front of the frog. The angle placement here varies depending on the size of the player's hand and/or desired bowing.

Response 2:

Posted on September 30, 2011 at 04:22 AM

Greetings,

What [responder 1] is describing is pretty much universal and I am not by any means going to say it's wrong. However, in recent years I did abandon this practice. I noticed that some really knowledgeable people were actually putting the thumb directly on the thumb leather not in the gap between leather and frog. I decided to experiment with this. At first it felt strange but once I became accustomed to it I felt it was superior, at least for me (and I do teach this way now). The reasoning behind it is that there is a tendency for the tip of the thumb to become a little over anchored by the leather stick and frog contact. It is, I feel, less adaptive and free, generating unnecessary tension in the hand. The thumb is freer and more adaptable when resting only on the leather. Also, there is no damage to the stick as, over the years the thumbnail inevitably begins to cut a groove in the wood. (Seifert, 2011)

The first responder's subjectivity is clear regarding thumb placement. Employing terms such as 'rotation point' and 'angle placement', he or she conveys the opinion in such a manner that it would be difficult to question. The second responder's comment can be linked back to Flesch's point on universality with the suggestion that the first responder's detailed and technical description is 'universal'. However, the latter goes on to reveal their experience and thoughts on the subject as specific and complex instructions. Ultimately, in this example, the reader is left to deal with what appear to be two idiosyncratic opinions.

In general, approaches to violin teaching mirror Klempter's diagram of 'Building' a student (see Figure 2), in which progress is primarily focused on attaining

technical achievement. These methods "differ so widely from one another that … hardly a single aspect can be found upon which there is universal agreement" (Neumann, 1969, p. 1). Such attempts, however, reflect the experiential opinions of teachers. The ensuing discussion of natural violin playing also highlights the subjective nature of pedagogical thought.

Subjectivity highlighted: 'natural' violin playing

One intriguing concept that emerges in violin teaching is 'natural' violin playing. As the following paragraphs discuss, there are two opposing definitions of natural: one, a natural style of playing is achieved through mastery of set principles; or two, the adaption of technique to one's own convenience. Paul Rolland's description of naturalness as important in students' playing suggests the overriding significance of:

> … a well balanced stance, balanced right and left arms, and a balanced hold … Good balance is the key to efficient movements … A small child can be taught to play with a beautiful tone and sonority by the use of good balance of the body and by avoiding static tensions in his movements … Stressed is freedom of movement; trying to inculcate the pupil with a feeling of kinesthesia, a feeling of lightness, both with the bow and the instrument … naturalness, naturalness, naturalness … (Eisele, 1980, p. 1)

However, the definition of naturalness in violin playing is questioned by Galamian (1962) and Green (1966). Although Galamian comments " "Right" is only what is natural for the particular student, for only what is natural is comfortable and efficient" (Galamian, 1962, p. 1), his instructions regarding the contact of the index finger are very specific:

> From the fourth position upward, the hand itself contacts the body of the violin and, thus, replaces the index finger in forming the second point of contact. Here, the side of the index finger can and ought to be separated from the instrument, because a triple contact is not useful. The triple contact does not add to the orientation and it is apt to

immobilize the hand too much, especially in vibrato. (Galamian, 1962, p. 21)

While Galamian aims to achieve a natural state for each individual student, his methods aim to achieve such a characteristic through detailed guidelines. Green (1966) gives the instruction first, suggesting the "end of the neck of the instrument is placed on the first finger just forward of the big base knuckle, at a point that is *opposite* the web that connects the first finger to the second" (Green, 1966, p. 5). To ensure naturalness, Green advises that moving the left hand "on and off the neck several times quickly will usually give a cue as to what is natural" (ibid.).

Since violin teaching methods are based on subjective opinion and experience, it would be logical for a player to believe that what feels natural for them must be made natural for their students. In one sense, this approach could be considered student-focused, since detailed direction aimed at reducing the student's discomfort is a way of helping. However, 'habit'– a settled or developed tendency that is either correct or incorrect – interrogates the definition of 'natural' in these contexts.

Natural violin playing is the central principle that runs through Kato Havas's approach. Schlosberg reveals her method aims at achieving "a style of playing that is effortless … She claims the 'New Approach' will achieve this result, because it is based upon … natural gestures" (Schlosberg, 1987, p. 127). Havas's approach to wrist posture provides a good example. In that author's view:

> It may be difficult to keep the left wrist loose … The best way to counter-act any possible stiffness is to 'buckle' the wrist very slightly towards you … it will ensure flexibility for the later, more difficult, and eventually virtuoso technique. (Havas, 1964, p. 35)

Perkins refers to this bent-in wrist posture as the 'gypsy' or 'giving hand', (Perkins, 1995, p. 78). Therefore, from Havas's perspective, a slightly bent-in position of the wrist will be more natural. However, Schlosberg's review of Havas's philosophy

questions the definition of natural, particularly in relation to the amount of training required:

> The Havas student is trained in natural awareness by the teacher's asking him to consider separately how each part of the body is involved in violin playing ... This requires an intensive amount of mental work and development ... unless a student is prepared for and capable of hard mental labour and prolonged concentration, he should not attempt to master such a complicated instrument as the violin. (Schlosberg, 1987, p. 128)

This idea of achieving some kind of natural or organic state through a 'boot-camp' style approach is discussed on a more general level by Hash, who discusses the extrinsic and intrinsic benefits of music education. Hash advocates that this type of approach to education "viewed the mind as a muscle that could be strengthened through cognitive exercises ... [that] resulted in an excessive use of interval drills and sight singing with little attention to the pleasurable aspects of music making (Birge, 1937; Smith, 1904)" (Hash, p. 9). As evidenced by the literature, traditional paths to achieving a natural state of violin playing appear to align with this point of view.

Perkin's reference to Havas's 'gypsy' left hand position (above) – which also reflects her Hungarian upbringing and early Gypsy influences – brings to light an interesting context for the discussion of natural violin playing: the comparison made by pedagogues between classical and Gypsy violinists. On the one hand, they describe the classical players as developing a love-hate relationship with their instrument while working to attain a natural approach to technique (which generally is through adherence to the guidelines of their teachers). The Gypsies, on the other hand, are characterized by the joy and pleasure they display when playing, through self-discovered approaches to aspects of posture and technique that have led to different and often unorthodox playing styles. For example, these styles include the bent-in wrist position, positioning the

violin lower on the chest, turning the violin clockwise to a more vertical position, as well as varying approaches to using the bow (Havas, 1973; Lee, 2003; Rolland, 1967). Two co-existing definitions of naturalness are now evident. One: you can acquire a natural technique through intense training in implementing a particular teacher's guidelines; or, two: you can adapt your technique to suit your own comfort and convenience, even if this means developing a distinct and individual style. Further, it is interesting to note that Havas connects the self-developed playing styles of the Gypsies with 'unadulterated pleasure'. It is also worth considering whether there is a link between naturalness and the visual appearance of conventional, or orchestral violin playing.

In summary, violinists all have their own, equally viable approaches to violin playing. The intricacies of their technique have been developed through input from various sources over the course of their careers. However, while the literature demonstrates to some degree that teachers remain attentive to alternatives, playing principles are passed to the student in a manner that offers little room for variation, and are often claimed to be universal or best-practice. A rationale attesting to the authority of the teacher's approach is rarely given, which is understandable in the master–apprentice lesson environment where it is often considered courteous to not question the teacher. Further, with so many differing sets of teaching methods, it is interesting to note the lack of critique between schools. Neumann proposes "… for the most substantial area of violin technique one has to expect that in the future, in theory as well as practice, different approaches will have to be considered equally valid on general terms" (Neumann, 1969, p. 4). However, as shown in the examples above, the only approach that is considered valid is the one that is being delivered in each teaching studio at any given moment. While writers such as Galamian and Flesch (detailed above) are conscious of the fact that 'one size will not fit all' and use their knowledge

and experience to inform the best path for each student; there still remains little evidence – at least in the literature available – to strongly counter arguments surrounding teacher-centered, idiosyncratic pedagogy.

The following chapter of this review will explore how left hand technique is addressed in the literature, with particular reference to the third position approach.

Chapter 4: Left hand technique

The use of the left hand in violin playing is discussed by pedagogues in a manner which focuses heavily on the individual components of playing and movement, as well as the interactions between those individual aspects. This chapter explores contributions made to the literature in this area focusing on entry points for the beginner's left hand, including a discussion of available literature regarding the first and third position approaches.

Violin pedagogy divides the teaching of the right hand (bowing) and the left hand (fingering) techniques. Such practices are evident within the content of many publications including Arney (2006), Fischer (1997), Green (1966), Klempter (2003), Kuutti (1979), Schlosberg (1987), Spohr (1832), Flesch (1923), Lee (2003) and Galamian (1962). Rolland proposes "it will be beneficial to teach the following factors separately at first: The functions of the left hand, that of the bow, and note reading" (Rolland, 1947, p. 36).

The technical introduction of the left hand to the violin is considered from various detailed perspectives within the literature. Galamian categorizes several fundamental issues in left hand technique, including '"(1) the fingering of the notes and (2) the vibrato" (Galamian, 1962, p. 12). Through comparative literature studies and texts such as technique-specific methods, aspects of left hand technique are reduced to their most essential elements. These include elbow positioning, wrist posture, thumb placement, index-finger contact and finger action – which are further dissected into areas such as directions of movement on the finger board, the lifting and dropping of the fingers, the generation of movement of the fingers as well as the angles and shapes of the fingers (Fischer, 1997; Neumann, 1969; Lee, 2003).

Neumann (1969) goes further, discussing aspects of left hand technique as

'static' and 'dynamic' (Neumann, 1969, p. 10). Static positions are described as the freeze-framing of the arm, hand or fingers in a particular position that can be used as a point of reference. Neumann further divides static positions into extreme and compromise positions. Rolland shows an example of extreme positions when discussing the 'fingertip' or 'flat' placement of the finger on the string. The compromise position is a generalized middle point between two extremes, from where, logically, the player has easy access to each end of the continuum. Neumann uses the straight wrist posture as an example of a compromise position. He suggests that by remaining in this position, the player has quick access to either the 'bent-in' or 'bent-out' positions when the music demands (Neumann, 1969, p. 43).

Neumann's dynamic technique describes an interaction between aspects of playing when in movement. As other writers affirm, he argues that all facets of the left hand usage should be considered as one integrated unit (Fischer, 1997; Galamian, 1962; Neumann, 1969). Fischer provides an example of dynamic technique when discussing thumb positioning. He advises the "thumb does not stay in one fixed position, but constantly changes with the actions of the fingers and hand" (Fischer, 1997, p. 89), after which he presents exercises to practice flexibility and movements of the thumb.

This kind of scrutiny of violin playing is usually done within the context of refining the skills of advanced violinists. For the beginning student, the teacher must consider how the left hand is first introduced to the violin. The next section will discuss this issue further.

4.1 Introducing the left hand to the violin

As evidenced through this review, methods and tutor books from the eighteenth-century to the present day reflect the traditional approach of introducing the left hand through the first position. Geminiani's treatise decrees: "from the first Order [position]

you are to begin to play" (Geminiani, 1751, p. 2). Other examples of the literature reflecting this approach include Allen, Gillespie and Hayes (1994), Anderson and Frost (2008), Auer (1980), Dillon (1992) Doflein (1932), Givens (1987), and Thorp (2002) to name a few. Alternative entry points for the left hand include all-position approaches such as Rolland's *Action Studies* and Szilvay's *Colourstrings*, as well as the third-position method books of Angus and Dinn (see section 4.2). Both Rolland and Szilvay's first instructions ask the student to place the left hand against the bout in approximately third position. They suggest that this approach aids the positioning of the violin and assists in developing a good hand shape (Rolland, 1974; Szilvay, 2010). The intensity of the guidelines offered by these writers varies from indistinct (Dillon, 1992; Thorp, 2002) to very detailed (Rolland, 1960; Suzuki et al., 1973; Szilvay, 2010). All of these examples, however, show that pedagogues differ in their approaches but that all require specific actions to be undertaken by the student, regardless of their individualities.

For the stopping of the strings in the first position, the fingers are traditionally introduced to the strings in varying sequences according to particular scales or tetrachords. Commencing on the corresponding open string, the most common keys (and tetrachords) introduced are G major, D major and A major, beginning on the corresponding open string. Rolland suggests that introducing scales in an order that suits the left hand is more appropriate than accommodating the study of key signatures (Rolland, 1947, p. 36).

In their study of muscular activity in violin playing, Szende and Nemessuri look at what's best for the hand from a purely muscular point of view and suggest "in an effort to refine muscular coordination in the shortest time possible, any teaching of the violin ought to begin by introducing concurrently the usage of all four fingers" (Szende and Nemessuri, 1971, p. 59). Rolland supports this suggestion, saying, "In preparatory rote studies it is best to introduce all four fingers at once. This establishes the correct

left hand position" (Rolland, 1947, p. 38). He contrasts this left hand function with what he calls the 'finger-after-finger' method.

Finger placement markers (stickers, tape or other fret-like markings) are commonly used to assist the student in both the development of intonation and hand shape. Hayes (1926) makes reference to pre-Baroque pedagogues who advocated the use of finger markers, by suggesting "John Playford had advocated this use of frets for learners in the famous violin section of his 'Introduction to the Skill of Musick' [1655]" (Hayes, 1926, p. 224), and "In 'Musica Teusch' ... we read: No man knows at first how to find and sound the stops. One should put on frets, and when one is quite sure of the stopping, they may be taken off again" (ibid., p. 224). More recently, Dolmetsch (Hayes, 1926), Rolland (1974), Suzuki (1969) and Szilvay (2010) all suggest the use of finger placement markers to aid their students in the initial stages; however, Szilvay advises that "such aids can mislead the child into 'looking for' intonation, instead of listening for it" (Szilvay, 2010, p. 34). Louis Bergonzi (1991) undertook a quantitative study to explore the usefulness of finger placement markers as a reference in improving intonation skills in beginner violinists. Bergonzi intended to explore whether these markers assist in developing correct left hand posture. He found that finger placement markers to assist in improving the intonation skills, however his results did not support the viewpoint that finger placement markers assist in developing left hand posture.

As discussed, the most common method for introducing the left hand to the violin is through the first position. In comparison, there has been scant investigation into the efficacy of the third position approach.

4.2 The third position approach

The earliest writers to vouch for the use of the third position claim that it is easier for the beginning student to hold the violin in this manner, rather than in first

position (Rolland, 1952; Morphy, 1918; Cavallaro, 1950). The key reason is that the left hand naturally rests against the ribs of the violin, offering support to violin positioning (Angus, 1950; Dinn, 1966; Rowland-Entwistle, 1967; Whistler, 1944). Writers also advocate that, in this position, pupils can attain the ideal shape and strength of the left hand and arm (Angus, 1950; Dinn, 1966), but Neumann highlights disagreement between writers on this point (Neumann, 1969).

Tutor books published that begin tuition in third position are those by Angus (1950), Dinn (1966) and Keller (1990). Dinn's method does not comment on aspects of technique but presents exercises, scales and pieces written in a sequential manner in third position. Angus's method also presents a sequential collection of scales and short pieces, and delves into technical detail describing aspects like finger action, thumb and wrist position as well as detailed pictures of the bow hold.

Cowden is the only researcher that trialled the third position against the first position and is the only person to bring any sort of critical analysis to the issue. Aside from the hand supporting the violin, Cowden outlines other advantages including the distances between tones being closer together, the immediate use of the fourth finger, easier adaption to intonation as the first finger being an octave higher than the open string below it, and that the tonic of the key falls on the first finger (Cowden, 1972, p. 505). He also summarizes disadvantages for beginning in third position, including a reduced string length (which leads to difficulties in tone production), the potential for rigidity to develop in the left hand, and the scant availability of teaching materials (ibid., p. 506). In this study, Cowden compared the first and third position approaches by quantifying the intonation and rhythmic accuracy of each student. His results concluded "within the limitations of this experiment, it made no difference in intonational and rhythmic achievement whether a subject began violin study in the first or the third position" (Cowden, 1972, p. 508).

In his rationale, Cowden makes reference to the potential advantages and disadvantages that the third position may offer the beginning student, but he does not provide any data to substantiate these issues. To name a few of his outlined advantages: he did not investigate whether students found it easier to hold the violin in third position, whether students found that the body of the violin helped remind them where the third position is, or whether they found it easier to place their fingers on the right places since the notes are closer together.

It is therefore the aim of this present study to compare the two approaches by asking the *students* such questions. This type of data will foster insight into how the students perceive their learning through these two positions, as opposed to documenting the *outcomes* of their learning as perceived by the teacher. As outlined in Chapter 3, there is very little literature that investigates learning in this qualitative manner.

Summary of Part Two

Literature relating to violin pedagogy is clearly divided into two fields: *formal research* and *experiential literature*. Research activity arrived on the scene in the early 1900s as a means of verifying existing teaching methods, exploring and introducing new methods as well as disseminating pedagogical developments to the broader community. Experiential literature is made up of a variety of influences including method books, treatises, journal articles and collegial discussion. These texts are presented in a manner that promotes a continuing tradition of subjectivity and idiosyncrasy through the medium of the teacher.

Treatises have been produced throughout the development of violin playing from the early baroque period to modern times. In comparing these and other texts, areas of agreement and disagreement between writers are brought to light. Although these opinions are based on varying degrees of experience, thought, and

experimentation within the teaching studio, there are fewer occasions where such viewpoints have been verified through formal research. Media such as journals and conferences have provided opportunities for research literature to permeate the teaching studio. However, traditionally, experiential opinion requires the student to adhere to a detailed set of rules that are particular to their teacher. This traditional pattern has resulted in a field comprised of many varying sets of rules where universal agreement would be ideal but is seldom achieved.

Left hand technique has been examined by pedagogues in detail, with individual aspects of technique discussed in both static and dynamic states. The static techniques refer to the shapes and angles of the arm, hand and fingers, where as the dynamic techniques describe the movement and interaction between aspects of technique while playing. The first position approach is traditionally the most common way that teachers advocate, with a small number of recent methods taking an all-position approach. Investigations into the third position approach reveal potential benefits to the beginner, however the only formal attempt to investigate these benefits shows, through quantitative measures, that there is no difference between the two methods. Part Three of this thesis compares the third position approach to the first position through choices offered to students in varying technical and musical circumstances.

PART THREE:

STUDENT EXPERIENTIAL LENS

Part Three introduces each of the five students who participated in this research project, detailing their experiences within a period of twelve violin lessons. See Chapter 1 for a full summary of methodologies used. In brief, the events discussed in these chapters were recorded in point form on field notes, with relevant incidents transcribed from video and audio samples onto the contact summary sheets. These occurrences are defined as critical incidents (hereafter simply as 'incidents'), and each assigned a unique incident number – such as 30804. These numbers assist the researcher and reader by indicating when during the course of the lessons the event occurred. The first digit identifies that particular student. The second two digits identify the lesson number, and the last two digits identify the incident number within that lesson. For example, incident number 30804 is interpreted as the third student (3), the eighth lesson (08), and the fourth incident (04). The order in which incidents are presented and discussed in the following chapters is deliberately not the same for each student. Instead, these events are grouped in a way that best illustrates their experiences, as well as facilitating the flow of the narrative.

A sample of the field notes and contact summary sheets are available in appendixes C and D. These sheets show transcripts of incidents that related to the research questions. Lesson tasks that did not relate to the research questions were not transcribed or included on the contact summary sheets. In collating these documents, bias and subjectivity in interpretation were reduced through cross checking the incidents with audio samples and video footage, as well as with observations made by the independent observers.

A 'position choice matrix' accompanies each of chapters 5 to 9 (see appendixes G to K), displaying in which lesson each incident occurred, and in which code category. These tables offer a general overview of that student's data. The 'position choice overview' in these appendixes summarizes the reasons given for the choices made. The reader is encouraged to refer to these tables when reading the following chapters. The code categories in these matrices are labelled accordingly:

- *no difference*, where the student could not find any difference between first or third position.
- *chooses another position*, the student identified a position other than first or third as more preferable.
- *1st – guided*, the pupil chooses first position when asked to make a choice.
- *1st – unguided*, the pupil chooses first position without being asked to choose.
- *3rd – guided*, the student chooses third position when directed to choose.
- *3rd – unguided*, the student chooses third position without being asked.

Table 3 shows an extract from a position choice matrix. In this example, incident 30201 occurred in the second lesson, and in that incident the student could not find any difference between first and third position. In the third lesson, there were two incidents when the student chose first position when guided to make a choice.

Lesson	**No difference**	**1st guided**
1		30101
2	30201	
3		30302 30306

Table 1. Extract from position choice matrix

For ease of reading and interpretation, all five students have been assigned the feminine gender and the two independent observers have been assigned the masculine. As the teacher of these students, I refer to myself in the first person. My reflections upon the pedagogic process are interspersed in the context of the lesson experiences. In

sections where dialogue has been transcribed, the student's initial identifies the individual student. For example: 'C' for Charlie and 'K' for Kelly. Mr Edwards and Mr Quinn are identified as 'ME' and 'MQ' respectively.

Chapter 5: Charlie

Chapter 5 details the significant incidents experienced in Charlie's lessons. At the time of the project Charlie was eleven years old and in year five at school. Other than learning trumpet in a beginner band at school, she had had no other instrumental tuition. By the end of her twelve lessons, Charlie was able to play one-octave scales and arpeggios in both first and third positions, various simple songs within the compass of an octave, and, in her final lessons, she explored a two-octave G major scale that required shifting from first to third position. Alert and focused, Charlie was comfortable offering introspective insights during her lessons and interviews. Mr Edwards watched Charlie's fourth, sixth and ninth lessons, while Mr Quinn viewed excerpts from Charlie's first, sixth and ninth lessons.

Charlie's position choice matrix (Appendix G) shows that, in the first three lessons, her preferences varied between first and third positions, finding no difference between the two, and even discovering second position as an alternative. These events will be examined first in this chapter. From the fourth lesson her consistent choice of first position emerges; these events will be discussed second. Overall, Charlie chose the first position on 18 occasions. She chose third position in five incidents, and could find no difference, or preferred another position, three times.

5.1 The first three lessons: a wide range of preferences

Lesson One

In the first incident (30101), Charlie chose to support the violin in the first position:

> AB: The next thing is the way you hold this [the left] hand … there's two common places that you could choose – depending on what you feel is easiest: one is up here

[third position] with your hand against the violin … and the other way … is with your fingers down the end here … does anything feel better or worse for you?

C: this one feels a bit better [indicates first position].

AB: Down there in first position?

C: Yep.

AB: Good. Ok, so what we'll do is, we'll start our learning with your hand down there …

After initially choosing first position as the most comfortable for the left hand, Charlie held the violin in third position of her own accord while exploring plucking with the right hand (30102). In both first then third positions, I asked Charlie to pluck on all strings within this lesson. When I asked, "plucking up here [third position], is that easier or harder than plucking down there [first position]?" she replied: "It's easier here [third position] … because it's like longer, so probably I can reach a bit more" (30103). By stating "it's like longer", Charlie provided a reason using her own language, hence it was difficult to understand what she may have meant. In this instance, however, her preference of third position is clear. Commenting that the sound is louder, Charlie also made a connection between third position and the volume of tone in this example. Mr Quinn observed "she tweaked very quickly, I thought: if you pluck in the higher position you get a better sound … because she was having trouble getting a decent sound out of first position but then it was much easier in third position".

In the final incident in the first lesson (30104) Charlie chose to pluck the strings (using the left hand) in the first position, with her wrist collapsed resting against the neck. Mr Quinn noted "the other interesting thing … was that she preferred to have her hand rest in third position … because she had something to rest on".

In the first lesson Charlie's initial position preferences became broad and considered. Having tried both options, Charlie chose first position for left hand

plucking. Later, her choice of third position for the same technique indicated that she found both positions satisfactory at different times. At another point, Charlie also compromised between the two positions by plucking the strings in first position while bending the wrist in to support the violin.

Lesson Two

In the second lesson (30201), Charlie began in third position:

AB: Do some plucking of all of the strings – right across all of them [Charlie plucks the strings] … now try it down in first position [Charlie plucks again] … Can you feel any differences between doing that in first or third position?

C: With the third position it's harder for my pinkie [fourth finger] to reach … and it's easier if it's up in the first position – but, in the third position it's easier to pluck.

AB: Yeah, why is that?

C: Because it's a little bit higher

AB: What's a bit higher?

C: The strings.

In this example, Charlie discovered a benefit for each position. That is, while it was easier for her fourth finger to reach across the string when in first position, it was more manageable to pluck the strings in third position since they are higher above the fingerboard. What is more intriguing here is the idea of 'discovery'. Through exploring her choices, Charlie has become aware of issues such as string height, the reach of the fourth finger, comfort and sound quality, without the teacher 'telling' her to think about them. As a practitioner-researcher, this incident instigated the beginnings of a major shift in the way I structure my own teaching: that students do not necessarily need to be 'told' something in order to 'know' it. They can develop an acute awareness of their technique through the exploration and consideration of their own playing. This

realization became apparent even though Charlie was in only her second lesson.

In the next incident (30202), Charlie plucked the open string part of 'Jingle Bells' with the left hand in first position. I noticed that she was having trouble plucking with the fourth finger and asked:

AB: How did that piece go?

C: I think my pinkie had a little bit of trouble … couldn't really get to the D [string]

AB: Is it because the strings are closer together there?

C: Yeah.

AB: So, if we're going to pluck that song, with the fourth finger again, what can we do to make that a bit easier?

C: Maybe I could use second position.

AB: Ok, so where would that be?

C: Maybe around here? [indicates second position with left hand]

AB: … try it in second position then [Charlie plucks the song again] easier?

C: Yeah.

Charlie was aware that she was having trouble hitting the correct strings with her fourth finger and she was able to articulate why. My question regarding the strings being closer together was a leading question, and although intended to offer vocabulary to Charlie, it is hard to know whether her agreement was a genuine indication of her thoughts, or simply being led. However, this event resulted in the development of her personal awareness of new technical aspects of playing. In reference to the realization of discovery (see incident 30201 above), it is this kind of incident that influenced me to begin thinking differently about my approach to teaching; that instances of student self-discovery may lead to solutions not prompted by the teacher.

In this example, I predicted that Charlie's solution would be to try the third position. However, she chose second position, despite never having been introduced to the concept. Charlie's discovery of this solution suggested to me that while the teacher and / or student cannot be aware of every possibility at every given moment; giving the student instruction without allowing room for their own exploration may place limitations upon their capacity for technical development. While these concepts are explored in greater depth in Part Four, they are important to canvass here, as they indicate a shift in my pedagogical approach that carried throughout this project.

In the final incident in this lesson (30203), Charlie was introduced to bowing on open strings.

> AB: Do some bowing with your fingers just up here in third position … [Charlie plays open strings] … now do the same just with your hand back here in first position … [plays open strings again] … Does either of these feel more comfy?
>
> C: I feel more relaxed here [indicates third position].

This feeling of comfort in third position mirrored her experience in incident 30104 (above). Namely, when using the left hand only to support the violin, the third position is more comfortable.

In this second lesson, Charlie began with left hand plucking and identified benefits for both first and third position. In first position, it is easier to reach across the strings with the fourth finger. While in third position, it is easier to pluck the string since the string is higher off the fingerboard. Then, continuing with plucking, she discovered the strings were closer together in first position, which made it harder to pluck the D string. Her solution to this problem was to try second position, which worked better for her. Finally, when practising open-string bowing, Charlie found it more comfortable to rest the left hand in third position.

Lesson Three

Charlie begins this lesson with a left hand plucking exercise (30301) and chooses third position:

AB: You started with your hand down there [first position] and you moved it up there. Why did you do that?

C: Because my finger couldn't get around the string.

In her second lesson (discussed above), Charlie had chosen both first and third position at different times for left hand plucking, and in this instance she chose third position again. During the next incident (30302), Charlie practised the 'Grandfather Clock' exercise in third position, followed by an attempt in first position:

AB: Is it any different?

C: It's easier in first position.

AB: Yeah, why is that?

C: Maybe because I have more space...

AB: ... space for your hand to swivel around?

C: Yeah.

Charlie indicates that the first position allows her arm more room to move. In order to clarify her meaning, I have included a leading question. This type of questioning walks a fine line between giving the student an answer and clarifying more succinctly what the student is trying to say. This issue was noted in Part One.

The next task in this lesson was to practice 'Grandfather Plucking'. This is the same exercise played in the previous incident, but this time with the fingers also plucking the strings as the elbow moves underneath the violin:

AB: Now, you said to me, 'it's easier to pluck up here in third position'; and you said to me 'Grandfather Clock' is easier down in first position. So when we combine the two, what are you going to do?

C: I'll use second … [plays the exercise in second position]

AB: That's a nice compromise.

As noted in lesson two, Charlie compromises between the two positions in order to experience some of the benefits that each provide her in this exercise.

Previously, Charlie identified third position as beneficial, since it allowed her to rest her hand against the ribs of the violin. Over the next three incidents, her wrist positioning is examined further. In incident 30304, Charlie chooses to play in third position without guidance from the teacher. During the exercise, she changed the position of her wrist:

AB: When you started that one, your hand wasn't resting against the violin … then as you went through the song, you gradually rested your hand against the violin there.

C: Yeah.

AB: Is there any difference between the two?

C: I don't really know.

AB: OK. Try a few plucks not touching [Charlie plays] … now try a few with the wrist touching there [Charlie plays].

C: I think that I like it touching.

AB: Do you think it's just slightly better, or heaps better?

C: Just slightly.

AB: And what would be better about it?

C: Well, there's more space for me to pluck.

In this example, Charlie's awareness of the range of available wrist postures led her to change it to an easier position. Furthermore, Charlie identified the reason without the need for leading questions. This example highlights the student's awareness and discovery as potentially significant concepts in the development of her technical

proficiency, although at this stage these themes had only been experienced a small number of times.

In the next example, when practising left hand finger stopping, Charlie placed her hand in first position with the wrist bent-in underneath the neck. I asked her about it and she did not know why she was doing it. In the next moment, I asked her preference on first or third position for her finger stopping. She replied, "First … I feel more relaxed" (30306). From this small sequence of incidents, Charlie compromised again by choosing her favoured first position for left hand plucking, while resting her wrist against the neck and ribs of the violin for support. When reflecting on the popular pedagogical idea that a bent-in wrist is 'bad' technique, my instinct was to 'fix' the problem. However, given that themes surrounding awareness and discovery had begun to emerge, I was interested in letting Charlie continue playing like this to see where it led.

5.2 Lessons four through twelve: a first position preference

From the fourth lesson to the conclusion of the sampled lessons Charlie demonstrated her preference for first position. Section 5.2 examines some of the key incidents that emerged in these lessons.

In incident 30403, Charlie practised a finger stopping exercise using the open string and first finger. She chose first position with a bent-in wrist posture:

AB: Now just another thing about when you are playing in first position … you had your hand right up underneath the neck there. Some people say you should have it down with some space there … is that [wrist straight] better, or is this [wrist bent-in] better for you? What do you think?

C: Probably this is better actually [indicates wrist away from the neck] …

AB: Why might that be?

C: It's a little bit more free.

AB: Do you know why you did that [indicates wrist bent-in] in the first place?

C: Probably if it had been like that [indicates straight wrist] it would have been harder to reach the G and D [strings].

In this instance, Charlie not only discovers that the straight wrist position is better for her, but is able to articulate why she was initially inclined to play with the bent-in wrist: that it is easier to reach the G and D strings. Mr Edwards's comments indicate that many knowledgeable teachers have experienced these types of student responses, and "we've also been taught particular things, particular ways … the fact that somebody – without all that training – can come up with that idea is pretty astonishing, isn't it?".

The example in which Charlie offers insights into the application of her technique – in ways not anticipated by the teacher – is another illustration of an incident that questions the traditional approach to the teaching of technical principles.

In the following moment, Charlie plucked the exercise on all four strings and subsequently confirmed that the hand feels freer when the wrist is held away from the neck. However, when the wrist is bent-out on the G string, she claimed it felt more 'twisted'. This example highlights the consequences of student choice. Charlie's initial preference was to play in first position, and to play with the hand supporting the neck, while the resulting behaviour is a bent-in wrist (normally associated with playing in third position). Although offering easier reach to the lower strings, this bent-in position of the wrist creates less freedom of the hand. Furthermore, Charlie discovered this outcome through her own exploration. Hence, the overall decision became more complicated: whether to play with a bent-in or a straight position of the wrist when in first position. The concept of discovery is again highlighted in this example. It may not be so significant that Charlie has made one choice over another, but it may be more

important that she was able to discover the advantages and disadvantages of each option for herself – even if a clear path is not yet obvious to her.

In her eighth lesson (30802), Charlie played 'Burnt Hot Cross Buns'[7]. She chose first position on the E string and was asked:

AB: What would you like to do with your thumb and your wrist position to make it comfy and to make it work nicely?

C: I want my thumb to go on the side [lying back pointing towards the scroll].

AB: Yep, and what about your wrist?

C: I like it like this [collapsed in against the neck].

I noticed, however, that while she was playing the song, Charlie moved her wrist away from the neck to a straighter wrist posture.

AB: Was your wrist the same as when you did it just before? Or did you change positions?

C: I think I changed it.

AB: What did you do with it?

C: I think I just went like that [moves wrist away from neck].

AB: Could you explain that more, in different words?

C: I loosened it a little bit more.

Although initially favouring the bent-in wrist position, Charlie's preferences was changing to favour the straight or bent-out posture, as this offered her left hand more freedom.

After trying 'Burnt Hot Cross Buns' again, Charlie advised that she was having trouble with the low third finger (30803). Despite repositioning the elbow, wrist and

[7] 'Hot Cross Buns' played in a minor tonality, using the first finger as tonic and introducing the low third finger.

thumb helped, she was unable to find a comfortable position. I then asked, "would it be easier or harder on a different string?" and Charlie responded, "it will also have to change my wrist". She then played on the A string with the wrist bent-in against the ribs, and with a higher position of the thumb (sitting above the level of the fingerboard). Charlie noted, "It's good like that, with my thumb there … and my wrist is like this". After continuing to practise the low third finger position on the D and G strings, Charlie commented on her confusion between the "E string and the A string … I didn't feel uncomfortable, but the D string, I didn't feel as comfortable as the E and A, but then when I went on the G it's like the best one – the D was the worst". It is interesting to note here that Charlie is identifying aspects of playing she does not like. Within the common teacher-led convention, the student would most likely be required to 'get used to' something less desirable since it is part of the method they have to adhere to.

Charlie had not felt comfortable changing her wrist, thumb or elbow position, but found that playing the piece on different strings led her to the conclusion that, in this instance, playing on the G string with the wrist bent-in was preferable. Mr Edwards noted Charlie's evident "preference for the G string … and she clearly likes the first position more than anything else". Here, Charlie also drew a connection between the effect of a change of wrist position and the operation of the fingers. It is clear that Charlie was exploring her way through a range of technical choices in order to discover what 'fits' her best. Furthermore, these types of incidents regarding increased technical self-awareness and discovery became regular features of her lessons.

Despite her stated preference for the bent-in wrist position on the G string, Charlie proceeded to play with her wrist bent-out in her next lesson (30903 and 30904). Here, Charlie played a one-octave scale on the G string (beginning on the first finger). In order to adjust the intonation, she was asked to stretch her third finger further, and

subsequently she placed her thumb lower, with the elbow more to right-hand side, and the wrist in a bent-out posture. I asked:

AB: Have you got your wrist position in the most comfortable position?

C: No.

AB: Not very comfortable … Can you experiment with that?

C: I think I found it [bends wrist slightly inwards].

In the tenth lesson (31002), I observed that Charlie was playing with the wrist bent-out and was struggling to reach with the third finger. I asked Charlie to consider other parts of her left hand technique. Charlie responded through elbow and wrist positioning, moving her elbow more towards the right-hand side. Charlie said she did not think about her wrist, but had inadvertently moved it from a bent-out position to a straighter position. Still, it seemed this exercise was a struggle and I asked, "what if you did it in third position?" Charlie found the exercise was not significantly easier or more difficult in third position. While she showed an awareness of her elbow and wrist positioning in this example, such cognizance did not lead her to discover a solution.

In her final lesson (31205), Charlie changed her opinion from that of an earlier lesson. I reminded her that she had previously chosen to play on the G and D strings with the wrist bent-in, and that today she had done the opposite (wrist slightly bent-out). Charlie responded that the way she played today was more comfortable:

C: If I put it too close [wrist bent-in] … all my fingers go over the neck; so if it's out, I try to get it out so it actually … lands on the string.

AB: So you're finding a position where the finger …

C: … so it doesn't bend because that makes it squish … just like a perfect fit.

Through increased awareness, Charlie adapted her hand positioning to aid her technical ability.

Summary of Charlie's position choices

When first studying left hand plucking, Charlie found that both first and third position offered benefits regarding the support of the violin, the sound quality, and the ease of plucking. She also found that playing in first position with the wrist resting against the bout (usually a third position attribute) was her preference. Traditional pedagogy would maintain this position to be undesirable; however, given that this study intended to seek student opinion, I decided to see where this path led. In later lessons, it became clear that first position was her ideal option. Her choices led her to consider several issues such as the positioning of the wrist, thumb, and elbow. She generally favoured the bent-in posture in the early lessons, and her opinion changed to favour the straight (or slightly bent-out) posture in the later lessons, as this position offered her a feeling of relaxation and freedom. It is notable that the 'problem' of the bent-in wrist fixed itself without it being raised as a problem in the first place, as Charlie eventually discovered its restrictions for herself. It appeared that Charlie's overall preference is for first position, but it is clear that she was quite comfortable playing in both positions and was happy to reconsider her choices in later lessons.

Chapter 6: Kelly

Kelly was eight years old and in year three at school. Kelly had previously learned piano in a group beginner class, and had had no prior string tuition. By the end of her lessons Kelly was able to play one-octave scales and arpeggios in both first and third positions, various simple songs within the compass of an octave, and at the end of her tuition was exploring two-octave G and A-major scales shifting between first and third position. Kelly was a keen participant in the project, taking a considered and objective approach to choices she made. Mr Edwards commented on Kelly's second, fourth, eighth and tenth lessons, Mr Quinn commented on excerpts from Kelly's second, sixth and ninth lessons.

During the course of her lessons Kelly's preferences covered the full range of available options. The position choice matrix (Appendix H) shows that Kelly chose first position 17 times, third position on 13 occasions, and there were eight incidents where Kelly found no difference. As with Charlie, Kelly had explored first and third positions in both guided and unguided contexts by the end of her second lesson. In the first half of her tuition, a consistent preference for third position emerged, whereas the overall pattern of choice in the second half of her lessons was for the first position. There was, however, a late resurgence of the third position in lessons eleven and twelve. Another consistent pattern that surfaced was Kelly's conclusion that, at times, there was no significant difference between the two positions. Key incidents in Kelly's lessons are examined in the following manner: first, the second lesson; secondly, her third position preferences (lessons one through six, eleven and twelve); thirdly, her first position preferences (lessons five through eleven); and finally, events where no significant difference was found (lessons two through nine).

6.1 The second lesson

In the first incident of her second lesson (60201), Kelly was asked to play 'Skip to my Lou' (left hand plucking on open strings). Without being asked, Kelly placed her hand in first position with the wrist collapsed inwards. In the following moment (60202), Kelly found that holding the violin caused discomfort in her arm. When asked whether first or third position was preferable in this situation, Kelly responded, "When I play down here [indicates third position], it hurts up here [indicates left shoulder] … and when I play down here [indicates first position], it hurts a bit more down here [indicates left bicep]". Kelly noted different discomfort with each position, but does not recognise one as being better than the other. Upon further questioning she was able to choose which version of 'uncomfortable' she preferred:

> AB: So, that again says we need to find the most comfortable position that we can. But something else that might be making it a bit worse – I reckon, if your violin sits a little higher on the shoulder – ok, if the violin's further down there [teacher moves student's violin down towards the chest] … your arm sort of has to reach out in front and around. If it's more up there [teacher moves violin back up onto the peak of the shoulder], it doesn't have to do that so much. So can you try those two [first and third positions] again now?
>
> K: [student tries left hand plucking in both positions again] Still hurts … that still hurts a bit.
>
> AB: Out of those two uncomfortable situations, which is the most comfortable at the moment? Or is it, are you not sure?
>
> K: This one [chooses third position].

Mr Edwards noted that "something was bothering Kelly in either place, but I think she's the one that felt … third position actually was a bit more comfortable … her reason was 'it hurts here and it hurts here but this was still better' ". This overall feeling

of discomfort could be considered fairly common for a beginner violinist, since posture and violin positioning are inherently unnatural for the human body. What may be worth considering is whether the teacher asks the student to 'grin-and-bear-it' or solicits the opinion of the student in order to discover the best possible solution.

However, in the next incident (60204), Kelly's preference became clearer. Kelly was playing an open A string ostinato to 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and had placed her hand in third position without being asked. This automatic choice might give some idea as to which she felt was the better option.

In incident 60205, Kelly could not decide which position was more ideal for finger stopping. Kelly was introduced to both the first position and third position with her first finger as follows:

AB: So there are two places that you can press. This sticker is first position, this sticker is third position ... we're going to do third position and first position both again and then I'm going to ask you if you can feel any difference, if one feels easier than the other.

K: [tries both positions]

AB: Any difference between first and third?

K: um ...

AB: It may be that there's no difference, but anyway, what do you think?

K: I don't really know.

AB: Can't really tell? OK.

Kelly compared them again, this time choosing first position. She claimed having the arm further away from the body was more comfortable. I asked:

AB: Does either position feel more comfortable than the other?

K: This position feels a bit more comfortable [indicates first position].

AB: OK, why do you think that ... first position feels more comfortable?

K: Because it's not as close to my body.

AB: And why would that be more comfortable? Is it more comfy to stretch further?

K: Yeah.

AB: Great. And does that one also feel the easiest?

K: This is a bit easier, because up here it vibrates a bit more.

Mr Edwards picks up this occurrence, noting "she puts his hand in third [position], but is talking about preferring more space when the hand is out [first position]".

This sequence of events brings into question the reliability of these data collection methods. The often ambiguous responses young children offer can make interpretation difficult. In this example, it is hard to ascertain whether Kelly felt she could answer questions freely and openly, whether she needs more time to consider her response, or whether she is able to find the right vocabulary to articulate her meaning. The challenge extends further, to checking whether Kelly's responses have or have not been influenced by leading questions. Mr. Quinn suggested leading questions be considered carefully:

MQ: You have to be really careful in a situation like this not to ask leading questions because … they will try to agree with you.

AB: Yeah, that's what I found in the beginning.

MQ: I noticed it more with [Kelly] … because she didn't have quite as much to say … and so you probably talked a little bit more about how you might make the choices and of course … that's when you've got to be more careful, I suppose, of not having anything that leads them one way or the other.

With regards to Kelly, Mr Quinn did not think "she had quite long enough to make up her mind … It might help to have longer for them to decide". Mr Edwards added further weight to Kelly's indecision by noting her behaviour while I was talking

to her mother:

> She was plucking in both third and first … she was sitting there having a wonderful time plucking in both positions! What's really interesting about that is, even though when she's not on task to you, she's *still* not making a preference [my italics].

For this particular example, Kelly's initial response – her indecision between the two positions – is most likely the appropriate interpretation of her intentions. Although the questioning appeared to lead her to make a decision, her behaviour in between tasks also indicated uncertainty.

In her second lesson, Kelly elected both first and third position in various contexts. At certain times, she also found that she could not identify any notable difference between one or the other. In the following section, Kelly's third position choices will be explored.

6.2 Third position preferences

Kelly opted for the third position in lessons one through four and six, eleven and twelve. In her first lesson (60102), Kelly plucked 'Skip to my Lou'. Notably, Kelly placed her hand in third position despite having not been introduced to the idea of positions. Kelly was then offered the position choice for the first time (60103):

> AB: Doing your plucking, you have the choice of either plucking up here in third position or down here in first position. So let's do maybe the first line of our song … and try it … down in first position, and let's play that first line.
>
> K: [Plays first line of song in first position]
>
> AB: Now let's go up to third position … so this is where your hand is resting against the violin.
>
> K: [Plays first line of song in third position]
>
> AB: So there are the two versions. Tell me, what do you think?
>
> K: I think I like this one [third position] the most because it was all spread out …

and I had more of my finger without accidentally playing another note.

Kelly has found third position more effective since the strings are wider apart, which offered her more space to apply her finger to the string. She asserted a similar reason again in incidents 60302 and 60305 while practising some exercises, and as well in the fourth lesson (60401). In this lesson, she stated, "I think it's a bit more spaced out in third".

In the following instance (60402), Kelly played the bow game 'A and D waves' and without guidance supported the violin in third position. I noticed that she again chose third position and asked her to compare the exercise in both positions. She responded, "I think it's more uncomfortable up here ... in first position". Kelly's mother, who was present in the lesson, asked what the "more uncomfortable one" looked like. Kelly answered, "I think it's because my ... arm is closer to my body [indicates third position], whereas here [first position] it's stretched out but it's not going all the way out". Kelly indicated that holding the violin in third position, with the wrist resting against the ribs, was the better option for relieving arm discomfort.

The remaining third position choices in Kelly's tuition were incidents 60604, 61103 and 61204. In each of these, Kelly chose to play these exercises in third position without being guided. On the whole, Kelly found this position preferable as the strings are spaced wider apart, and it offered greater comfort for the left arm. The following paragraphs detail Kelly's first position experiences.

6.3 First position preferences

From the fifth lesson, a consistent preference for first position emerged. Kelly began her fifth lesson (60501) by practising the *A and D Waves* exercise, making her own decision to play in first position. In the next incident (60502), she began a finger stopping exercise in first position with the wrist bent-in against the bout. I noted that her hand moved to a sharper pitch while playing. In order to explore this event, I asked

Kelly to play the exercises on the E string with the bent-in, straight and bent-out postures. I asked "did you feel much difference? What works best for you?" and she responded "I didn't really mind". After further consideration she commented, "it feels a little bit more comfortable when resting on there [indicated hand against the ribs]". In this example, Kelly had initially decided to play with the wrist against the ribs. When asked her opinion again, her response remained consistent. In this verbal response, it is noted that she required more time to consider her answer, as Mr Quinn had indicated earlier.

In the following occurrence (60503), Kelly chose third position to play 'Hot Cross Buns'. I noticed her fingers were not pressing the strings down all the way to the fingerboard. I pointed out that there is a difference in string height in each position, and asked Kelly to try the song again in each position. She responded, "I think it doesn't sound more fuzzy up here [indicating first position]". She commented further that it is a "little bit harder" to push the strings down in third position. Kelly was guided to compare the two positions and found that it sounds better, and is a little easier to play, in first position. It is important to note that for Kelly, as well as for Charlie, achieving a higher tonal quality was a significant influence in her position choices. This considered preference led Kelly, in the next lesson task (60505), to play 'Hot Cross Buns' in first position with the wrist bent-in.

In her sixth and seventh lessons (60603 and 60704), Kelly played 'Ride Ride' and chose first position. I noted that her thumb was lying in a horizontal position, pointing towards the scroll. The positioning of her thumb in this way marked a critical moment in the research. It became evident that choices the students were making with regard to one aspect of their technique resulted in a consequence, or after-effect, in another facet of their playing. In Kelly's case, her bent-in wrist in first position had led her to hold her thumb in the horizontal posture, a shape that she had not yet explored.

Hence, freedom in one area may lead to restrictions in another. This 'butterfly-effect of choice' is explored in greater detail in Chapter 11, section 5.

In her later lessons it became evident that, when in first position, Kelly preferred to play on the G string. In her seventh lesson (60705), I asked Kelly to play 'Go tell Aunt Rhody'. As she prepared to play it on the G string, I asked, "you choose to play on the G string a lot. Is there any reason why that is?"" She replied, "I don't really know, it's just a louder clearer sound, and that one's a bit screechy [indicates E string]". This preference is also confirmed in incident 60802:

AB: How did the A string compare to the G string?

K: I think the A string was a bit higher and more screechy.

AB: Which sound did you prefer?

K: I think I preferred the lower G string.

Kelly also played her songs on the G string in incidents 60706, 60801, 60803, 60903, 60905, 60906, 61001 and 61101. In her ninth lesson (60902), Kelly adds further weight to this preference. When playing a song on the G string, she indicated that the first position produced the ideal tonal quality:

AB: Do you think when you played both they were as good as each other? Do you think you played one better than the other?

K: I think I played first position a bit better than third.

AB: In what way – what was a bit better about it?

K: I don't really know. It just sounded a bit better.

Mr Edwards observed "she plays everything on the G string … that's her string of choice … she says she doesn't really prefer one over the other, but nine times out of ten she picks the lower string".

In this series of events, it is clear that Kelly's preference was to play on the G string in first position. However, in the previous section (6.2), it is also clearly evident that Kelly preferred to play in third position on a number of occasions. The following section will explore an array of incidents where Kelly could not find any significant difference between the two positions.

6.4 No difference between first and third position

Despite showing some preference for the first position, Kelly could not find any notable difference between the positions on a fairly regular basis. In her third lesson (60301) Kelly revised left hand plucking and tried both first and third position. Having noted that, when playing in first position, Kelly bent her wrist in with the hand resting against the ribs of the violin, I asked:

AB: I wonder if you can just do it without your hand touching the ribs … try that.

K: [tries again with the wrist straight]

AB: Does it matter which is which to you?

K: No, not really.

AB: Does one feel particularly easier or harder?

K: This feels more comfortable [indicates wrist bent-in]

AB: … why is that?

K: Because it sort of hurts my [upper arm] a bit [when playing with a straight wrist] and when I rest it here [against the ribs] it doesn't hurt as much.

In this occurrence Kelly decided that the wrist resting against the ribs was preferable.

In a later incident (60306), Kelly was asked for a position preference when practising with her first finger. She replied that she "couldn't really feel any difference". Mr Edwards noted "she doesn't seem to really express … a particular preference at this

point – consistently, anyway'. In her fifth lesson, when I asked Kelly whether she wanted to continue in just one position, or both, she answered: "I'm happy to keep learning in both" (60504).

In the sixth lesson (60602), Kelly had just played a major scale in both first and third position. I asked, "was it easier to stretch in one position or the other?" She replied, "no, not much difference" to which I responded, "to me, it looked that you had it covered … that it was pretty comfy". Kelly's stated opinion here was consistent with my observation. In the eighth lesson (60802), Kelly played 'Ride Ride' on the G string in first position. After playing this piece, I asked an open question: "Well done. What now?" to which she immediately replied: "I'll play it in third position". This response is interesting as it indicates that she is now willing to try both options without being asked to. She plays the song on the A string and I ask:

AB: How did third position compare to first position for you?

K: Not really much difference.

AB: How did the A string compare to the G string?

K: I think the A string was a bit higher and more screechy.

AB: Which sound did you prefer?

K: I think I preferred the lower G string.

AB: Which string did you prefer in terms of comfort?

K: This one [indicated G string] was much bigger so it vibrated, it doesn't really hurt but it is a bit harder to play than the A string … well they're both very easy to play.

In this example, Kelly declared no identifiable difference between the two positions. She can clearly articulate her thoughts on the differences between the G and A strings, but there is no significant difference for her; again, the tonal qualities of each string are important to Kelly.

In the following lesson (60902), Kelly chose to play a minor scale on the G string. She chose first position after what appeared to be some deliberation:

AB: Just before you played that, you got your hand ready in first position, you then moved it up to third, and then you took it back down to first again. What was going through your mind – what were you thinking?

K: I couldn't really choose, I didn't know which one I wanted to do first.

K: [plays the scale in third position]

AB: OK. So today, what do you feel the difference is between first and third position?

K: Still not very much difference.

AB: Great. Anything you prefer?

K: [Indicates 'no']

AB: Do you think when you played both they were as good as each other? Do you think you played one better than the other?

K: I think I played first position a bit better than third.

AB: In what way – what was a bit better about it?

K: I don't really know. It just sounded a bit better.

Kelly was again happy to play in both, and only when asked specific questions could she note even a minimal difference.

In the events described above we see that Kelly shows no particular preference for either first or thirst position, but is happy and comfortable playing in both.

A contradicting preference

In the final incident in the fifth lesson (60506), Kelly tried using the fourth finger in both first and third position. She indicated, "it doesn't have to stretch so far up here [indicating first position]", finding that first position was easier for stretching her

fourth finger. I also noted that her finger placement was in tune. However, in her twelfth lesson (61102), Kelly was learning 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and had chosen to play in first position. It was clear to me that she was struggling to stretch the fourth finger to reach the correct pitch. She then played it in third position and, consistently, the fourth finger was in tune. Kelly confirmed this experience, commenting, "I think it's a bit easier in third position". This same event also occurred in incident 61202.

Looking at these two examples side by side, they contradict each other. In the first, Kelly finds it easier to stretch her fourth finger in first position. Then in the second, she finds the third position simpler for the same task. Such a distinct contradiction is an issue if the aim is to try to determine a consistent pattern of choice. However, in each example, Kelly has arrived at her preference through the process of exploration and discovery that was also experienced by Charlie. Hence, this kind of occurrence illuminates two layers of investigation. First, whether first or third position proves to be a more efficacious approach; and second, what other effects such choices might have on the learning experience of the student. It was through reflecting upon the latter that led to the formulation of the third research question. These themes are discussed in more detail in Part Four.

Summary of Kelly's position choices

Three main patterns of preferences emerged from Kelly's lessons. First, Kelly consistently preferred third position in the first half of her tuition. Secondly, she preferred first position in the latter half of her tuition; and thirdly, alongside these preferences was a fairly consistent number of incidents where she could not decide between the two options. Although one of the positions has not emerged as more favourable to Kelly, her preferences and opinions are unambiguous in the majority of circumstances. While, on one hand, she has been inconsistent in her choice, she was nevertheless consistently clear about each choice she made. This clarity of decision

differs from Charlie, who was at times less convincing with her answers. Furthermore, the concepts of increased technical self-awareness and self-discovery continue to emerge as significant factors, although the manner in which students may process and respond to these decisions seems to vary.

Chapter 7: Jules

Jules was seven years old and in year two at school. The violin was the first instrument she learnt. Jules's musical experience began when she joined a youth choir six months prior to this project. Mr Edwards observed Jules's seventh and eleventh lessons, Mr Quinn observed excerpts from the second, seventh and eleventh lessons.

As data collection proceeded, it became apparent that Jules was not gravitating towards one particular pattern of preference. Appendix I shows that there were eleven occasions where Jules preferred third position, nine choices of first position and seven where no difference was found. During most lessons, Jules opted for both first and third position at different times, as well as regularly finding no notable distinction between the two. Jules's first position preferences will be discussed first, followed by the third position incidents, and finally the occurrences where Jules indicated no clear preference. Within each area, the incidents are reported chronologically.

7.1. First position preferences

Jules was introduced to holding the violin in her first lesson (10102). She decided first position was more ideal because she felt her hand would get tired in third position. In her second lesson (10203), Jules explored finger stopping for the first time. She tried the exercise in both positions and I enquired if she felt there was any difference:

J: Well, the vibrations changed.

AB: Do you know how it changed?

J: Not sure.

AB: Can you remember, out of those two places, down here or up there, which you think is best for you?

J: I like that one best [indicates first position] ... because it's really high.

In these early instances, Jules responded with a confidence that did not reflect any indecision. It is interesting to note the reasons why she made her preference, because the "vibrations changed" and "it's really high". This feedback shows another example of the discrepancy in vocabulary between the teacher and student. From Jules's perspective these answers clearly articulated her intentions; whereas, from the teacher's perspective, there could be a variety of interpretations. On this particular occasion, Jules was not asked further about the issue.

Jules chose first position of her own accord in the following incidents. In her third lesson (10301), Jules was practising the 'Elephant Arms' exercise with the left arm swinging underneath the violin. Jules was asked to hold the violin again, and she did so in first position. In the fifth lesson (10502), Jules practised the 'Star Jumps' exercise placing her hand in first position with the wrist bent-in against the neck of the violin. In the following lesson, Jules was asked to do the 'Thumb Flexes' exercise (10602). In this incident, she played the exercise in third position, then exclaimed "I keep on bumping into this [indicating the ribs] ... I like doing it here [indicating first position] because I don't like bumping into things". Her response here was delivered with the level of confidence seen in her second lesson, indicating that, in this moment, her preference was clear.

In her ninth lesson (10902), Jules was practising 'Hot Cross Buns' in third position on the G string. I asked her to place her three fingers on the string; she responded:

J: They hurt a bit ...

AB: Is that because you're pushing down so hard?

J: Yep.

AB: When you're up here in third position, do you notice that you have to push the

string down a bit further than when you're down here in first position? ... Do you think maybe if you push the string down in first position it might not hurt as much?

J: [nods]

In this example, I perceived the issue as being over-pressing of the fingers on the string. Hence, it is difficult to determine whether this was actually the case for Jules. I led Jules to the first position alternative, as the lower string height may have allowed her to apply less pressure on the string. Although I was seeking her opinion here, this form of questioning aligns with the traditional model of violin teaching, where the student is guided to play in a certain way. Jules tried 'Hot Cross Buns' again in first position. Although she did not mention whether it was easier or not, she did not complain further about her fingers hurting.

Jules practised 'Grandfather Plucking' in her tenth lesson (11001) and finds there is more room for the hand to move when in first position:

AB: When you're doing 'Grandfather Plucking', does it work better for the exercise to do it in third position, or in first position?

J: [indicates first position].

AB: Great. Why is that?

J: Because I got more room.

Following this incident, Jules was asked to practice the 'Star Jumps' exercise and chose to play it in first position. Again, noteworthy is the fact that she was able to articulate what it was that she liked about first position. In the final first position incident (11004) Jules was again asked to play 'Hot Cross Buns' and I asked, "What position do you want to do it in?" She responded, "First, please".

This section examined a variety of incidents where Jules chose the first position. As with Charlie and Kelly, it is intriguing for myself, as the teacher, to consider the intuitive reasons the students give for making their preferences. This insight not only

shows that they are *aware* of what they are doing and *how* they are doing it, but also expresses how they are thinking. The following section examines instances where Jules chose third position.

7.2 Third position preferences

In her first lesson (10104) Jules practised left hand plucking. She started the exercise in first position and her hand slowly moved towards third position while she was playing. She tried both positions again and subsequently chose third position as the easiest. This change of preference while playing occurred again in her third lesson (10302), where she practised left hand plucking on open strings. I asked:

AB: So I see you've moved up to the middle again?

J: [Nods]

AB: It feels a bit better there?

J: Yes.

In the following incident (10303), Jules was introduced to the 'Grandfather Plucking' exercise and tried it in both first and third position. I enquired:

AB: Which do you think *sounds* better?

J: [indicates third position]

AB: Which do you think *feels* better?

J: [indicates third position]

In the following moment (10304), Jules practised a finger stopping exercise. She initially chose first position with a bent-in wrist position. I then asked her to play it in third position to compare with first:

AB: How does that [third position] feel compared to down there [first position]?

J: I think I should try the new one.

AB: Why do you want to try the new one?

J: Because I think it feels much better.

In her fourth lesson (10401) Jules played an open string plucking exercise. After plucking in both positions she commented that third position "makes less accidents". In the following lesson (10501), Jules practised the 'Grandfather Plucking' exercise and began in first position. She complained "my hand's getting tired". I asked her to try both positions again:

AB: Any difference between the two?

J: This one [indicates first position] makes my arm … this one's [indicates third position] is more better.

AB: Yeah, why?

J: Because, I like the smooth outing on this [indicates the ribs near the bout of the violin]

AB: Yeah, does that help you in some way? … How does it help you?

J: Because I like feeling smooth stuff and it calms my hand down.

AB: Does it do anything to your arms, shoulders or neck, like make that feel different, or …

J: Yep…It makes my hand feel relaxed.

Jules's clearly articulated reasons shed light into what aspects of playing are most relevant to her. The comment, "feeling smooth stuff and it calms my hand down" indicates that the tactile sensations within her playing emerge as most significant.

Jules began the sixth lesson (10601) with the 'Star Jumps' exercise in first position:

AB: You're doing it in first position, now do it up here in third position … is there any difference between first and third position?

J: Well, when I move it up here … I wanted this moved up a bit because it keeps on hurting … [refers to discomfort of violin resting against chest, playing position is

subsequently adjusted so the violin is high up on the shoulder]

AB: So up here, or down here, is there any difference to you?

J: I like it here [indicates third position]

AB: Yeah, why?

J: Because, I like being up high.

AB: What do you mean, 'up high' … is there anything you feel different than the other one?

J: I get bored of the other one very quickly.

Although Jules was not able to articulate her reason for making this preference in pedagogical terms, this example shows that Jules was aware, in that moment, of what was best for her. The next section will investigate moments where Jules found no notable difference between the two positions.

7.3 No difference found between first and third position

Jules made an interesting decision in her second lesson (10202), when she was about to practice left hand plucking:

AB: All right, let's put your violin back up in playing position, like that, and put your hand up to the violin. Now where would you like to put your hand; would you like to put it up here [indicates third position] or back there [indicates first position]?

J: I'll have it here [indicates first position] to start with and when it gets tired I'll go up there [indicates third position].

As seen in Kelly's lessons, Jules associated position choice with physical comfort. This example again highlights a considerable level of technical self-awareness and intuition that a student is able to express, even within the early stages of tuition; not to mention the importance of the child's perspective of physical comfort when learning an instrument. Mr Quinn interpreted this incident as a preference for third position,

observing, "she said she likes to start in first position and when she gets tired she moves up to third position. In other words, third position is the more comfortable one". This change of preference occurs again in the sixth lesson (10603) when Jules was practising left hand plucking. Having begun in first position, her hand gravitated to third position while playing.

The next no-preference incident occurred at the beginning of the eleventh lesson (11101). Jules was about to play 'Hot Cross Buns' and I asked which position she would like to begin with:

AB: So, you've got both positions, you've got first and you've got third position for this song. Which one are we doing first?

J: I think that one [indicates first position].

AB: Would you like some assistance with bowing, or would you like to do it yourself?

J: I'll do it by myself.

Interestingly, although she had just indicated that she would play in first position, Jules began to play in third position (11102). I mentioned:

AB: At the beginning you said you'd like to do this one in first position, but ... you actually played it in third position.

J: Third position?

AB: You played on this sticker, and that's the third position sticker.

J: Oh yeah.

In this case, Jules's stated preference contradicted her behaviour. Mr Edwards observed:

ME: She was going to start in first [position], on the G string – her choice – but then she ended up in third somehow ... you guys had a discussion about the differences with that, and she didn't really seem to be quite concerned ...

AB: I've noticed that a few times with her; she's very confident in giving an answer,

but often then what she does doesn't actually reflect the answer … perhaps in reality … she doesn't really care, but she's just giving an answer because that's what she thinks she's supposed to do.

ME: And whether there's confusion or not, she picks something in stark … I don't know whether she's really confused about … her choice because she's giving you conflicting information.

This incident, although not so significant as far as Jules's tuition is concerned, brings to light some of the challenges in attaining reliable data. One can only speculate whether it was a mindless moment that led Jules to play in the position opposite to the one she had stated; or whether there was some degree of intention present. Mr Edwards interpreted these moments further:

ME: She sort of aimlessly picks which position she was in; and it doesn't really matter … regardless of what she answers, she sort of seems to like to be in third position because her hand just seems to go there, whether it's because she can rest her hand against the instrument, that wasn't clear to me … she seems quite happy to go along with whatever occurs to her at the moment.

Later in the eleventh lesson (11104), Jules was working on the stretch between her fingers:

AB: We've got to practice spreading our fingers further apart … here's one you can do on the violin. You can put your second finger on and slide it up, then slide it down [demonstrates exercise].

J: [tries exercise with wrist bent-in against the ribs in first position]

AB: Do you want to try it again with your wrist sort of out like this [straight position] … so try it now with your wrist out and let's see if that makes it easier.

J: [plays exercise with wrist in a straight position]

AB: Good try. Is any one of them easier or harder, with the wrist in or wrist out for

that?

J: I can't tell, but I can say, I've never learnt that before ... I didn't even expect it.

As seen in earlier examples, when guided to try an alternative position, the student may be more likely to agree with the teacher. Jules's response may be less clear here (to her as well as to me) since she was given the choice on some issues but not others (as were the other students in this study). In this instance, she clearly stated that she could find no significant difference between the two positions although, in earlier incidents, she chose to play with her wrist resting against the ribs. Therefore, Jules's overall preference on wrist position cannot be completely established at this stage. Mr Quinn notes Jules's awareness in this example:

> She was thinking about what to do with her wrist ... in that she reaches out with it. She's more aware, I think, becoming more aware of the cause and effect of different placements of the hand and so on. And she talks about changing her hand position to help the finger position, which I thought was quite interesting because that's a concept we usually struggle to get across and they don't even listen. She found it out for herself.

This interpretation of Jules's actions again resonates with the concepts of technical self-awareness and discovery. Although she did not prefer one position to the other, perhaps this indecision is actually a *decision*, as Mr Quinn suggests, based on her awareness of more complex 'cause and effects'. Maybe Jules's decision is that she is happy playing in both positions.

The eleventh lesson concludes with Jules playing 'Hot Cross Buns' in first position on the E string (11105):

AB: So you've done both positions for that song.

J: Yeah.

AB: And you've done all the strings ... do you prefer any strings over other strings?

J: [indicates 'no']

AB: Do you prefer any position over the other position?

J: [indicates 'no']...I just like doing it because I enjoy it.

The incidents in Jules's eleventh lesson (discussed above) suggest that one position is not necessarily more preferable than the other. Jules's mother sums up this lack-of-preference as an indication of Jules's overall experience (11202):

AB: Did you, as mother, pick up whether first or third position was more useful or preferable to her; whether she said so or whether she happened to do it in any particular way?

Mum: She kept going back to first position, but she seemed to find it easier in third position, which is interesting, because I don't know if it's just the way she was holding it, or what, but she seemed to find fingering much easier in third position, but she always started in first position.

Summary of Jules's position choices

Throughout Jules's lessons, she consistently chose both first and third positions in varying situations. She also demonstrated that she is comfortable playing in both positions. Jules seemed very sure about the choices she made, although at times it was difficult interpreting her responses. Overall, no consistent pattern of either first or third position emerged, but the consistent pattern that did emerge was that she was happy playing in either position.

Chapter 8: Kim

Kim was aged seven and in year two at school. Kim had previously learnt cello but had ceased lessons prior to taking part in the study. She was heavily involved in other musical activities such as the school choir and stage productions, following in the footsteps of her older brother who was equally immersed in school music groups. Mr Edwards watched Kim's sixth, ninth and eleventh lessons; Mr Quinn did not watch any of her lessons.

Kim's overall preference was undoubtedly for third position, as seen in Appendix J. She chose this position on twenty-three occasions as compared to only three occasions for first position. There was also one incident where she could not make a choice. The critical incidents emerging from Kim's lessons will be examined chronologically in the following categories: first, the three first position preferences; secondly, the no-choice incident; and finally, the third position choices.

8.1 First position preferences

Kim preferred the first position on only three occasions: two in the sixth lesson and one in the tenth. The first incident in the sixth lesson (40601) saw Kim make her own decision to play 'Hot Cross Buns' in first position on the E string. In the following moment (40602) I asked her to play a one-octave scale. Kim decided to play it in first position on the A string. Mr Edwards watched video footage of this sixth lesson and confirmed, "everything she chose, she chose in first position". This was the first lesson that Mr. Edwards watched, so at this point had not witnessed Kim's consistent preference for third position in earlier lessons.

In her tenth lesson (41002), Kim was asked to play 'Hot Cross Buns' on the D string:

AB: All right. D string please.

K: [prepares to play in first position, then plays the song]

AB: You just played that one in first position; you had done the other one in third position before …

K: I have a reason.

AB: Yeah, what's that?

K: I spent the whole week making it up … The only reason I do it in first position, if I'm on the G or D string, is because it's easier to get to … because that bit's thinner [indicates the neck].

Kim discovered that it is easier to reach the lower strings when playing in the first position. Although, until this point, she had chosen third position most of the time, her weeklong consideration of the issue highlights the validity of her decision. This example is also another example of technical self-awareness leading to her discovery of the reason why she made that preference. The significance here lies in the fact that Kim veered from her usual pattern of choice in order to achieve a better technico-musical outcome.

This section has examined the three examples where Kim preferred to play in first position. The next section will outline the one incident when Kim could not decide between first and third position.

8.2 No difference found between first and third position

Kim's only no-position preference occurred over two successive incidents in her second lesson, 40201 and 40202. This sequence began with Kim being asked to play the 'Grandfather Clock' exercise, where she initially chose first position:

AB: Now with 'Grandfather Clock', try down in first position … good, try it up in third position … is [sic] any of those positions more preferable or does it not matter?

K: That one [indicates first position].

AB: Why?

K: Because with that [indicates third position] you have to bend your arm.

AB: Does that mean the ribs are getting in the way a bit?

K: Yeah.

Kim indicated that the ribs of the violin were getting in the way of the swinging motion of the left elbow. After watching this incident again on video, it is clear that Kim is bending her arm in order to avoid touching the ribs of the violin. In this situation, she was able to vocalise the reasoning behind her preference, highlighting her developing awareness of her playing. Throughout these lessons, one further point of reflection for me was the extent to which the student might have opinions and feelings that they learn not to vocalise, since so many other educational settings do not require it.

The next point in this lesson expounds Kim's indecision over her position preference. I asked Kim to play the 'Grandfather Plucking' exercise (combining swinging the elbow with left hand plucking) while I wrote in the field notes. Kim played this exercise in third position without being asked to choose:

AB: Just a moment ago, you chose first position for 'Grandfather Clock', right, and then when you did 'Grandfather Plucking' just then; you actually did it in third position. Now that's absolutely fine … but why didn't you do it down in first position?

K: I wasn't really sure.

AB: OK, try them both then tell me what you think.

K: [tries 'Grandfather Plucking' in both first and third position]

K: That one [indicates third position].

AB: So why is it easier up there?

K: I don't really know.

This previous example showed clearly that Kim, in this instance, did not prefer one position to the other. In the next lesson task (40202) I noted that, without being asked to choose, Kim was holding the violin in third position:

AB: I notice that you're holding the violin up here in third position … is that feeling comfortable holding it there at the moment?

K: [indicates agreement] … I'm confused in that way.

AB: Pardon?

K: I don't know where I'm going.

AB: What do you mean?

K: I don't know … what position to be in.

AB: When you're doing this bowing, you're confused … what position you should be in?

K: Yeah, I don't, like, care … does anyone?

AB: In terms of which position you're going to choose, how about you … decide like this: Which do I feel more comfortable doing? Or / and, which feels easier. That's it … you just choose for yourself.

When Kim had played both the 'Grandfather Clock' and 'Grandfather Plucking' exercises in this second lesson, she changed her preference from first to third position, and upon further questioning, indicated a lack of interest in the choices. I reflected that the amount of questioning Kim received is far more than would normally occur within traditional tuition. Kim may be feeling frustrated that she is being asked a great deal about something that does not seem very important to her. It may also indicate that she is to some degree uncomfortable with this kind of choice being part of the lesson environment. Conversely, the frankness of her opinion may indicate a degree of comfort with choice being part of her lesson experience. This example also highlighted the importance of asking the question again in future lessons, and in different contexts, in

order to get a better sense of the overall picture.

8.3 Third Position preferences

Kim found third position the ideal choice for the majority of her lessons. In this section, some of the more significant incidents are discussed. In her first lesson (40101), Kim practised the 'Elephant Arms' exercise and was given the choice of holding the violin in first or third position:

> AB: When you are supporting your violin … Do you notice where you've got your hand at the moment [third position], it's kind of up here in the middle; the other place you could hold it is down here [indicates first position]. You tell me which you think feels best for you. And tell me why you think that.
>
> K: That one [indicates third position] … because I don't have to stretch my arm as much.

In her first lesson task, Kim was able to express why she preferred third position. Later that lesson (40103) Kim practised left hand plucking. I suggested she start in the third position since that was where she had identified it was more comfortable. After playing, I ask her to try it again in first position:

> AB: Now, do the song again, but put your hand down here in first position, and let's pluck, and let's see how it feels. What's the matter?
>
> K: It's stretching my muscles [indicates left arm].
>
> AB: Is that feeling a bit uncomfortable, is it?
>
> K: Nah, it's fine [she plucks the song in first position].
>
> AB: Ok, so you did plucking in third position, and you did plucking in first position in that song; what was the difference between the two?
>
> K: That one [first position] stretches my muscle more – and that one [third position] wasn't as grabby.

AB: And for you, which is the best one for the moment?

K: [indicates third position]

AB: Ok, so what we'll do is continue what we're doing...up there in third position.

Physical comfort of the left arm was a key factor in Kim's progress, as was also the case in Jules' and Kelly's lessons. The concept of technical self-awareness emerges here again and is particularly noteworthy since this is Kim's first violin lesson. Her two statements "It's stretching my muscles" and "and that one wasn't as grabby" demonstrate the level of insight into what her arms are doing and how they feel.

Kim practised finger stopping with the first finger in her second lesson (40203). She tried the exercise in both first and third position, and identified that third position was easiest:

AB: I want you to do them both and I want you to come back next week and tell me which position you prefer to do.

K: I already know which one.

AB: Which one?

K: That one [indicates third position]

AB: Why?

K: Because ... it's just easy.

In the following lesson (40301 and 40302), the question was revisited after her week of practice:

AB: We had two ways we could do it – we had doing it in first position, we had doing it in third position. Which one did you do at home? Or did you do both?

K: I did both.

AB: Did you remember, when you were practising at home, any difference in feeling between first and third position?

K: Well, first was like – you had to reach more … your arm's more straight. It's like it's almost going to the end of [the violin].

AB: Is that good or bad? Or nothing?

K: Good … just a bit annoying. Just a bit.

AB: OK, now tell me about third position.

K: Third is easier … you don't have to stretch your arm as much.

Over the course of her first three lessons, Kim compared the first and third position. At this stage, the most noticeable difference was that her left arm felt more comfortable in third position.

In the fourth and fifth lessons (40401 and 40501), Kim elected third position without being asked for her left hand exercises. In her sixth lesson (40604), she had just played a scale in first position:

AB: Today you've played all the time in first position, and we've been doing finger stretching. I want also [for] you to play fingers in third position … and I want you to tell me whether you think doing fingers in third position is easier or harder than doing fingers in first position.

K: First!

AB: You think first is better? Ok, let's do it in third and try again, and see what you think.

K: [plays half of the scale on A string]

AB: Is that easier or harder than first position?

K: Easier.

AB: OK, so keep going.

K: [starts the descending half of the scale] I can do this really fast! Ready? [finishes the scale quickly]

Kim quickly indicated a preference for first position; however, she had only been playing in this manner up to this point in the lesson. After guiding Kim to try the third position again before making up her mind, she then indicated that third position was easier. The issue of leading questions is raised again here. Kim may have been just agreeing with me because she was being asked to give an answer. However, in this case, her realization that she can play the scale fast adds some weight to her claim that the third position was easier. Mr Edwards confirms the reliability of Kim's response, commenting "you're doing better with bias, not leading the witness quite as much". This comment indicates the development of my approach as a teacher, where my own level of comfort with the student-led pedagogy was growing, and I felt more inclined to let the students run with their ideas, even if they challenged my initial position.

Kim practised 'Hot Cross Buns' in her eighth lesson (40801). She chose third position on the G string and initially played with her wrist bent-out. I asked her to compare the bent-out to the bent-in posture (bent-in is referred to as 'touching', bent-out as 'not touching'). I asked, "Which do you prefer, touching or not touching?" She responded, "Not touching" (bent-out). A similar incident occurred in the ninth lesson (40902) where I asked Kim to explore why she played with the wrist bent-out. She responded, "It's just comfy. I didn't actually realise." Kim then considered it further and stated "it sort of hurts" when the wrist is resting against the ribs. A discrepancy is raised here between Kim's point of view and the traditional perception of what the student experience should be, as cited in the literature review (see section 4.2). It is clear that her preference was to play with her hand not resting against the ribs of the violin; however, the literature suggests the wrist resting against the violin is more comfortable for the student. In Chapter 6, Charlie initially chose to position her wrist resting against the bout, but in her later lessons found that the hand felt more free and relaxed when not

touching. Kim, now in her ninth lesson, may have found a similar result; that resting the wrist against the bout is not helpful.

Following are three examples where string choice is explored further. In incident 40903, the song 'Au Claire de la Lune' is introduced:

AB: All right. Let me give you this song. It's called 'Au Claire de la Lune' ... first of all, what position and what string?

K: Third position.

AB: And what string?

K: I've just got to test all the strings. [Kim proceeds to pluck each string in turn] ... which one do you think would sound better?

AB: I don't know ... I've got an idea. How about we play this song on all the strings, then you can tell me which you think sounded better.

K: [is guided through the song on each string]

AB: We've tried all the strings, ... which string did you prefer for the sound?

K: E.

AB: Any reason why?

K: Yes ... because it didn't hurt my arm then.

At first, Kim wanted to make a string choice based on sound quality. Having played the song on all strings, left-arm comfort became more apparent, influencing her choice for the E string. Mr Edwards observed Kim's focus on comfort. He stated, "she was very clearly choosing third position ... had no qualms about letting you know that she wasn't comfortable".

In the remaining third position incidents (40802, 40803, 41001, 41004 and 41201), Kim chose the third position on the E or A string to play the exercises.

Summary of Kim's position choices

Throughout her lessons, Kim made a clear preference for playing in third position. When exploring first position, Kim found playing on the lower strings easier since the neck is thinner. Her second lesson was the only lesson where she could not find any significant difference between the two positions, as had been the case with Charlie, Kelly and Jules. In this same lesson, she demonstrated frustration with the questioning, noting she did not find the issue very important. Kim's early choices for third position emerge in relation to the comfort and feeling of the left arm. It is interesting that Charlie, Kelly and Jules initially liked the third position as their hand could rest against the violin, whereas Kim preferred the bent-out wrist posture. Kim indicated a preference for the E and A strings when in third position, and it is fascinating to note that her preference for the higher strings in third position is quite opposite to Charlie and Kelly's choice of the lower strings in first position.

Chapter 9: Ashley

Ashley was eight years old and in year two at school. Ashley had not learnt a musical instrument before taking part in this project. She was a keen participant who had a natural aptitude for posture and violin positioning, and by the end of her tuition was able to play songs within the compass of one octave in both first and third position. Mr Edwards observed Ashley's second, fourth, sixth and eleventh lessons. Mr Quinn observed excerpts from the second and sixth lessons.

The matrices in K show that the pattern of position choices that emerged from Ashley's lessons was quite different from that of the other students. In her first seven lessons, Ashley exclusively preferred to play in third position. One critical incident in the seventh lesson led her to change her mind and choose first position for the remainder of her lessons. This chapter will examine Ashley's experience chronologically in the following categories: First, the third position preferences. Secondly, the critical incident where her choice changed; and finally her first position preferences.

9.1 Third position preferences

The first time that Ashley chose third position was in her second lesson (50202). In this incident she practiced left hand plucking and found that she favoured her hand resting against the bout:

> AB: Let's do 'Jingle Bells'. This time could you pluck down in first position – yep, that's it, whatever finger works best down there – and after we've done this I'll ask you what you think about plucking up in third position versus plucking [in first position].
>
> A: [plays]
>
> AB: So now, you've plucked in first position and you've plucked in third position,

which do you prefer?

A: This one [third position].

AB: Tell me why.

A: Well, it sort of feels more comfortable

AB: Yep. More comfortable? And what about easier versus harder?

A: Well it's sort of easier because my hand sort of gets to rest [against the ribs].

After examining this lesson Mr Quinn noted, "she is plucking in the middle position because the hand gets to rest on the violin". He goes further, observing, "there was a lot more in her case about choosing which finger to pluck with … that was very effective I thought".

Ashley's discovery highlights how individual student experiences have developed with such context specificity. She agrees with Charlie, Kelly and Jules who also enjoyed resting their hand against the violin most of the time; however, she does not agree with Kim, who preferred third position but found hand contact restrictive. Later that lesson (50203), Ashley practised finger stopping for the first time, finding third position more comfortable:

AB: So, we've done it in first position and third position.

A: Yep.

AB: When we're doing fingers like this [demonstrates finger stopping] … Do you prefer one [position] over the other?

A: I thought this one [indicates third position].

AB: Why would that be the case? … Was it more something you felt rather than something you were thinking about?

A: Yes ...

AB: What did it feel ...

A: It felt more comfortable.

Mr Edwards observed, "clearly at that point Ashley prefers third … I don't think you were telling her where to pluck … it seemed to me that she pretty consistently went to third position just automatically … It goes with what she's also saying, that she prefers that".

By her third lesson (50301), Ashley had practised finger stopping for the first week at home, and I enquired how she progressed:

AB: How did you go with these putting-your-finger-on things?

A: Yeah. I figured out that this [third position] was more comfortable because I don't have to, like, reach as far … I get to lean on there [the ribs of the violin]

AB: So, would you like to then just continue on just doing third position then … if you find it more comfortable then we can learn in that way?

A: OK.

Having had time to consider the differences at home, she again identifies that resting the hand against the violin is better for her, and that her arm does not have to reach as far.

During her fourth lesson (50401), Ashley practised the 'Grandfather Plucking' exercise. I asked her to compare both positions:

AB: Now tell me, for doing that exercise well, does any of those two positions feel better?

A: Third, because I didn't have to reach out as far … when the hand's out further it's harder to pluck the strings.

For swinging her left elbow underneath the violin while plucking the strings, Ashley found third position more ideal. For the same exercise, the other students also found third position more preferable since the higher string height was more practical for plucking the strings. In terms of stretching the arm, Ashley agreed with both Kelly

and Kim that less distance is more favourable. Following this incident, Ashley had just practised 'Shuttle Slides' where she slid her fingers up and down the full length of the strings (50402). I enquired as to where along the string length she felt most comfortable:

AB: You've moved your arm through all the positions. Can you tell me, along this line of positions, where it feels most comfortable, where it feels least comfortable ...?

A: [tries the exercise again on each string] E and A ...

AB: ...felt most comfortable?

A: Yep

AB: And, in terms of whether you were in the low position, the middle or the very high position, what do you think?

A: Probably about here [indicates middle position near the bout].

Mr Edwards suggested Ashley's response did not clearly indicate a position preference, because:

> Her hand [was moving] up and down and you asked her where she was most comfortable, but it wasn't really clear to me where she actually was on the fingerboard. It sort of looked like she was lower than third ... somewhere around second position or high first or something. I wasn't quite sure about that. I don't know whether I just couldn't see it clearly enough.

It is also worthy to note Ashley's interpretation of the question: she expressed which *string* she preferred, as opposed to which *position.* After observing Ashley's comment on string choice, Mr Edwards raised the issue of the interconnectivity of various aspects of technique. The question he raised is whether other variables may influence the position choices students are making. We discussed these points:

ME: I don't know ... make sure that [string choice is] also related to exactly what you want to talk about ... you can make note of those things which may or may not be

significant, in terms of relating it to the first position and third position divide.

AB: I think at the moment it's all interesting because if there's a student, say, who only chooses to play on the G string – that's if they're given a blank choice – and they always choose first position, maybe their choice of first position is sullied slightly by the fact that it's on the G string … so I think that the choice of string plays a part and I think that it makes them feel that they really are choosing the most comfortable place for them.

After further discussion, Mr Quinn, Mr Edwards and I agreed that extending the technical choices to other areas of their playing would be beneficial, so that first and third position choice would not be so different from what is already occurring in the lesson.

The issue of interconnectivity is explored further in this fourth lesson. Ashley practised open string songs (50403) and I asked her to consider where she would like to hold the violin. She opted for third position with the hand resting against the ribs of the violin. After viewing a video footage this lesson, Mr Edwards suggested that Ashley's preference of third position may be related to the positioning of the violin:

ME: I wonder if there's any correlation between the kind of shoulder rest they're using and 'preference'.

AB: Yeah, I've thought about that too, it's a good red herring …

ME: Clearly, one of the things I've noticed is that Ashley didn't feel real stable … when you're in third [position] you can help hold the violin up by bracing your hand against the neck …

AB: That sort of issue also extends to other things that have come up too, for example … do they have the right size violin compared to each other … if they're choosing positions and someone's playing on a violin that is slightly too large for them, does that affect their choice? ... it's a variable … In those first violin games like the 'Elephant Arms', where they swing their arms and they're holding the violin with their

chin, that's the point where you determine whether it's working for the student – their setup and stuff like that – if they can't do that exercise, for example, then you're not going to get them doing anything comfortably beyond that anyway … by cutting out a lot of that stuff you're cutting out a lot of the indicators of success, comfort or self-efficacy … and then you've got issues like shoulder width and shoulder slope and chin – it just keeps going on and on.

This discussion with Mr Edwards raises some of the challenges with this investigation. There are countless variables that make up the 'butterfly-effect' of a student's experience that ultimately affect their choices. In a scientific sense, isolating such variables can allow the researcher to examine one particular issue more clearly. However, the interplay between these variables sheds light on the complete experience of the individual.

In the fifth and sixth lessons (incidents 50501, 50502, 50601, 50602 and 50605), Ashley chose to play a variety of exercises in third position. During these lessons, I asked both Ashley and her mother about her preferences (50503):

AB: In the last few lessons, I had asked you a lot which – first of third position – which you liked best, and basically you said you liked third position best, and then you said to me last week you're just happy to keep learning in third position … are you still comfy with that decision?

A: Well, I hadn't really tried the first …

AB: At home with practising and stuff … did that ever come up at home in practice, was it ever explored?

Mum: No, not really, she'd just been doing third … I think Ashley was having trouble working out actually which one [to choose] so I said, 'He's going to ask you next time so have a think about it,' she said: 'This one's more comfortable but I don't know why'.

Up until this point, her preference is clearly for third position. Mr Edwards comments on "her commitment to third position; her hand is always in third position

whether you are doing the bow games…her hand is just up in that area, she's just quite happy there".

Ashley chose third position in three further incidents. The first of these is in her eighth lesson (50801), where she chose the A string in third position to play 'Hot Cross Buns'. The second occurred in the tenth lesson (51003). I reviewed her previous position choices, outlining that she initially had preferred third position and then quite distinctly changed her mind, preferring the first position (discussed further in section 9.3). She commented, "This one [third position] does feel better than first, I don't really know why; it's just more comfortable for me". The final incident arose in her twelfth lesson (51202). I asked Ashley to play 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', and she elected the G string in third position. Her reasoning for this choice was "just to have another go at third".

Ashley preferred to play in third position consistently in her first six lessons. She articulated that it felt more comfortable, as she could rest her hand against the violin. However, in the transcript seen above Ashley is asked whether she is still comfortable with her decision, and comments, "I hadn't really tried the first". In considering this statement, her choice of third position is questionable if that is the only position that she has been playing in. As will be seen in the following section, this comment led me to ask Ashley to reassess the first position approach.

9.2 The critical moment: A change of preference

At the commencement of her seventh lesson (50702), it occurred to me that if Ashley only ever plays in the one position, then her ability to objectively compare the two positions is lessened. In this incident, I guided her to play in first position:

AB: For most of the time, you have been playing in third position …

A: Yeah.

AB: And that's really really cool. But as we go on and it gets harder …

A: I can use both.

AB: Later down the track we will, but as we get a new thing like a fourth finger or a string crossing, sometimes it's good to just nip back to first position and just try it once.

A: OK.

AB: And just to make sure that your choice of third position is still the most comfortable.

A: OK.

AB: So can we just try this scale in first position and have a think about whether you still prefer third, of if there's no real difference.

A: [Plays the scale]

AB: Did you notice any difference?

A: Well since I've got used to this bit [third position], my arm's starting to feel a bit too close to my body. This one [first position] actually feels a bit more better. [Ashley then plays the scale again in third position and then again in first position]. Yeah.

AB: First position?

A: Yep.

There is a risk that my guiding her to play in first position may influence her to agree with me. However, the fact that she is able to provide a reason – that her arm feels "a bit too close to my body" – without having that reason suggested to her, adds weight to the legitimacy of her decision. She then continued to use first position (50703) to play 'Mary had a Little Lamb', where she chose the G string. After playing it successfully, I asked her to try it on the D string. Immediately she moved up to third position:

AB: Now you're back up into third position, is that what you'd like to do?

A: I'm just more used to third position.

After this answer, she repeated the song in both positions:

AB: That's very very good. Ok, just because today it seems we're playing the two [positions], play 'Mary had a Little Lamb' again up in third position and then we'll ask the question again – does it feel any different.

A: [plays on D string in third position]

AB: Any difference?

A: I think still first position because I have more space to ... because here [third position] I'm sort of like squished up and I don't have much space.

AB: Are you talking about space for your hand?

A: Yeah.

AB: And when you say 'squished' up there, are you talking about [demonstrates the hand resting against the ribs].

A: Yeah.

Ashley was able to delve further into her realization that first position was more ideal, finding that her left hand had more room to move. After observing this lesson, Mr Edwards noticed, "she's got that clear preference for first position, which … seems to be a switch. At the beginning when she started I think she had a preference … for third, and now she's sort of gone to this clear preference for first".

In the following two incidents in this seventh lesson, Ashley considered both positions in her own time, moving back and forth in differing tasks and on different strings. Through this exploration, she found that resting her hand against the violin in third position restricted her movement, as Charlie and Kim had also discovered. In her earlier lessons when she was less familiar with holding the violin, supporting the violin with her hand may have been useful. However, this hand contact became prohibitive in facilitating her left hand technique. From this point on in her tuition, Ashley preferred to

play in first position.

9.3 First position preferences

After the critical moment in the seventh lesson, Ashley continued to play in first position. Up until now, Ashley had rested the wrist against the bout to help support the violin, and in the seventh lesson she found the bout contact confined the movement of her left hand. In the eighth lesson (50803) Ashley chose to play 'Mary had a Little Lamb' on the E string in first position, and bent her wrist in against the neck of the violin:

AB: When you were playing that in first position, which you don't do that often, you had your wrist up under there (bent-in against the neck). Did you choose that on purpose?

A: Well, it's sort of just like holding it here [indicates third position, wrist resting against the bout] but here [third position] it's just a bit too squashed.

AB: So it helps to support the violin?

A: Yeah.

I then asked Ashley to play it again with the wrist straight (not supporting the neck of the violin) in order to compare the bent-in and straight wrist postures. I asked her how the straight wrist posture felt:

A: Well this one sort of feels better because pretty much my chin's holding it and my hand, and here it's sort of like making sure because then there I can just do that.

AB: Can I use some different words and then you tell me if this is kind of what you meant; when you're wrist is away from the violin, then your chin was the only one supporting the violin; and then when that's up there and the wrist was touching, it was also helping to support and it wasn't the chin so much?

A: [indicates agreement]

In these incidents, Ashley found a compromise (as Charlie had done) by playing

in first position with the hand bent-in supporting the neck of the violin. In the following incident (50804), I asked Ashley to play 'Go tell Aunt Rhody' and she chose first position on the G string. I noticed that she had positioned the thumb in a high and upright position, quite the opposite from when she was playing in third position. I asked her why this was the case:

A: It's probably because ... up here [indicates first position], my hand sort of has to go further away and down here [third position] my hand sort of goes up, and then there's like lots of space down there [when in third position] ... it's sort of hard to explain ...

AB: Are you telling me that ... having the thumb lower down in third position gives you more space between your hand and the violin to get around the ribs of the violin?

A: And it's a bit quicker to change strings.

AB: When you were down on the G string, what's better about that 'thumb up' position?

A: It's sort of like easier ... [Ashley considers and retries the positions] It's actually easier for the [thumb position when playing on the] A string to be up not down, because your hand sort of moves around [indicates fingers and hand being closer to the string].

Through the process of changing her position preference, Ashley has reconsidered and become more aware of her thumb positioning. I found it difficult to interpret her responses, so I sought to clarify her meaning by reflecting back to her what I believed she was attempting to convey.

At the time of this incident, I realized this self-awareness that Ashley exhibited may be more significant to the development of her playing. Ashley became aware of what her thumb was doing in each position, leading her to discover benefits or hindrances of certain postures. As evidenced within traditional violin teaching (see Part Two), this level of self-insight is not usually present in violin lessons. Furthermore, the

greatest significance could lie in Ashley's ability to articulate how her thumb positioning affected the speed of changing strings, as well as the proximity of her finger to the strings – in only her eighth violin lesson.

In her ninth lesson (50901), Ashley played 'Mary had a Little Lamb' and decided to use the G string in first position. Similar to Charlie and Kelly, the choice for the G string in first position emerged as a consistent pattern. She suggested the G string is her favourite "because it's most low and it's most over the side [indicates G string side] because … on E you sort of have to squish up your arm [indicates bow arm position], and also, the middle ones [strings] are real hard to do". In the next lesson task (50903) I asked Ashley to play 'Burnt Hot Cross Buns' in third position, to make another comparison with first position. After playing in both positions she chose "First ... because there is more space", which was similar to her finding in the seventh lesson.

In the tenth and eleventh lessons (51001, 51002 and51101) Ashley again chose first position on the G string. In incident 51101, I asked her why she liked the G string:

A: Because it sounds best.

AB: Just out of curiosity, could you play what you just played in third position on the G string?

A: Yep [plays the song].

AB: Which is your preference out of the two positions? Or, does it not matter?

A: I like first best … because it's easier to play.

Mr Edwards confirmed Ashley's choice, observing "she really likes the G string, for sure, because it sounds good, and she's quite happy playing in third and in first, like she doesn't put up a fuss". In the following incident in the eleventh lesson, Ashley again makes the same preference when playing 'Twinkle Twinkle'. Mr Edwards noticed that she enjoys "starting with the G string because she really seems to quite like the low notes … generally she seems really happy to play her instrument and say what she

wants to do".

At the end of her final lesson, Ashley, her mother and I summarize her overall position preferences:

AB: Overall, do you have one preferred position, third or first?

A: First ... It's more comfortable and my arm doesn't have to come right up to here [indicates third position].

AB: What's it been like having the choice between positions?

A: It was actually a bit weird because for that whole time I was doing third and then I changed to first.

AB: Did the choice ever come up at home?

Mum: Don't think it's been an issue really; she'll just do whichever ...

AB: Where there any positives or negatives from having the choice?

Mum: Maybe at the start she was probably confused about why she had to have the choice between first and third, rather than just learning; I suppose coming from not having any lessons, normally you'd go in I suppose and you'd say 'this is the position' rather than having a choice.

The final comment made by Ashley's mother (above) raises the issue of the student's expectations of traditional approaches to teaching, where the student receives instruction from the teacher with less opportunity for feedback. Hence, being given the choice is unexpected and confusing, and the student needs to become accustomed to this approach. Furthermore, if the student had been involved in previous musical tuition of any kind, this may have influenced how they initially responded to me.

Summary of Ashley's position choices

In her first six lessons, Ashley chose to play in third position. She found that resting her hand against the bout helped her support the violin. Ashley's first position

choices began after a critical moment where I guided her to reassess first position. She then discovered that holding the hand further away from the violin gave her hand more room to move. When in first position, she displayed a preference for playing on the G string, as she liked the lower tonal qualities. Critical incidents relating to insight and discovery also emerged in Ashley's lessons. In a similar way to the other students, examined in this part of the thesis, Ashley displayed heightened technical self-awareness in moments when she was asked to consider aspects of her playing. Making routine decisions about which position she was playing in required her to reflect on why she employed certain postures of her hands and arms. This type of analysis led her to consider the implications of her decisions, as well as to the discovery of alternative approaches to her playing.

Summary of Part Three

Part Three explored the initial lessons of five violin students whose perceptions were used to explore and compare the first and third position approaches.

Charlie's overall preference for the first position emerged after objectively comparing the two positions during her first three lessons. Her choices extended to a liking of the tonal qualities of the G-string, the bend-in wrist position and, later, a straighter wrist posture. **Kelly** showed a stronger inclination for the third position in her earlier lessons, and for the first position in her later lessons. However, there were consistent occasions where she could not find any significant difference between the two positions. No overall pattern of preference appeared for **Jules**. She was comfortable playing in both positions regularly throughout her lessons. It was obvious that, for **Kim**, the third position was the most comfortable approach. Interestingly, playing without the wrist touching the violin was more ideal for her, and she clearly liked the higher strings. **Ashley** also showed a definite preference for third position, but only in her first six

lessons. She re-evaluated her choice in the seventh lesson, discovering that playing in first position offered her left arm greater freedom of movement.

The experiences of the students are condensed and summarized further in Part Four. Although similarities, differences and inconsistencies are evident, the most significant observation is the *uniqueness* of each student's pedagogical path. It is apparent that these individual patterns of decisions are context-specific, each choice being influenced by a range of interconnecting variables that were particular to the student: the lesson, the day and the moment in which they occurred. The pupils had direct involvement in shaping their tuition, which led to indications of increased levels of engagement and ownership, evidenced through intriguing moments of technical self-awareness and self-discovery. It is palpable, therefore, that tuition according to one fixed method would restrict the opportunity for experiencing the benefits that choice-led learning may provide.

PART FOUR:

ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

The final part of this thesis will discuss two key areas. Chapter 10 will analytically compare the critical incidents emerging from the five students' violin lessons, discussing emerging patterns and themes. Chapter 11 will explore further critical incidents relating to the concepts of insight, discovery and ownership with regard to their effect on student progress.

Chapter 10: Comparative analysis

This chapter details a cross-case analysis of the five students' position preferences by highlighting common themes and patterns. Since this qualitative study focused on a small number of detailed case studies, it does not seek to make significant general or cross-sectional conclusions. However, this research has and will influence actual teaching practice and therefore may have a wider effect beyond these few students, necessitating careful consideration and ongoing regard for individual needs. In this way alone, the research diverges from well-trodden paths in violin pedagogy where individualization is rarely the goal.

The comparative analysis will be approached in two ways. First, the five cases are condensed and compared, with emphasis placed on the reasons given by the students for their preferences. Secondly, the position choices are collated and discussed chronologically, offering an overview of emerging patterns which are intended to inform further teaching and research.

10.1 Summary and comparison of the student experiences

As discussed in Part Three, the position choice matrices (Appendixes G to K) summarize the choices made by the students. Two more tables were used to assist in the cross-case synthesis: the combined position choice matrix (Appendix L) and the common reasons matrix (Appendix M). It would be beneficial to refer to these tables while reading this chapter.

Charlie

Appendix G confirms Charlie's overall preference for first position. It also showed that her third position preferences occurred in the first three lessons, where she also found no difference on two occasions. She chose third position because she could

support the violin and pluck the strings more easily. She also found that she could produce a louder sound when plucking in third position. First position offered her a relaxed feeling for the left hand, as well as greater freedom of movement. On two occasions Charlie suggested playing in second position, in which she found a suitable compromise between first and third positions.

Initially Charlie liked to rest her wrist against the violin, which offered greater support. This posture meant that her wrist was often bent-in, which also assisted her in reaching the lower strings (although on one occasion she felt 'squished' in this position). However, she found that a straighter position of the wrist offered greater freedom of movement. Charlie also clearly preferred to play on the G and D strings.

Kelly

The summary of Kelly's experiences in Appendix H shows that there were consistent choices of first and third position throughout her lessons, as well as regular occurrences where she found no significant difference. By the time she was comfortably playing songs with all her fingers, Kelly found less difference between the two positions. Contradictory incidents also occurred where, at different times, she found both positions more ideal for finger stretching. This type of discrepancy suggests the notion that these choices hold greater relevance to student development when considered in the context of that particular lesson, rather than on a more general level.

Like Charlie, Kelly found that there was greater freedom of movement for her left hand in first position, and that it was easier to press the strings down. The tonal qualities were also less 'fuzzy' in first position, possibly due to the lower string height. Kelly also preferred the bent-in wrist posture to aid in supporting the violin and, unlike Charlie, never changed her preference to a straighter wrist. The G string was the preferred string, offering a louder and clearer sound for Kelly. She found that third position offered less discomfort to her left arm than first position. She also found that

the strings being further apart assisted with left hand plucking.

Jules

Appendix I affirms that Jules chose either position, or found no significant difference between the two, consistently throughout her lessons. This pattern resembles the experiences of Kelly. When in first position, Jules agreed that it was easier to press the strings down, and her hand was less restricted. Overall, her left hand felt 'better' in first position. For Jules, plucking and finger stopping felt and sounded better in third position. At times, Jules found the wrist support against the violin useful, as this contact led to a feeling of relaxation for her hand.

Contradictory incidents also emerged from Jules's lessons. On different occasions, she found that her hand was less tired in both first and third positions. Furthermore, she stated she could change between positions if the hand got tired while playing – although this never occurred in any incident. The independent observers noted she 'aimlessly' picked a position when asked, indicating an indifference to either position. This claim was evident in one incident where she began playing in a different position to the one she had verbally chosen. However, she clearly stated that she enjoyed both positions. When fingering, Jules did not express any notable difference between the bent-in or straight wrist postures, nor did she indicate a preference for one particular string.

Kim

Charlie, Kelly and Jules's experiences were similar in that they were all willing to play in both positions and at times could not find any significant difference between the two. Kim's experience, however, was very different, as seen in Appendix J. Aside from a small number of differing choices, the majority of Kim's tuition took place in third position. Her reasoning was clear: that her arm did not have to stretch as much, and third position was easier for finger stopping. Interestingly, Kim did not prefer her

wrist resting against the ribs when in third position which led her to play with a straight, if not slightly bent-out, wrist position. This result both agrees and disagrees with the other students. It agrees with the idea that the left hand is freer when not resting against the violin; and disagrees with other students' finding that resting the wrist against the violin when in third position was useful for support. This disparity again highlights that giving these students choices has led to individualized results, even when common themes emerge. The more general point that reformed my own teaching practices is that by giving students choice intriguing progress was made.

In the few moments that she chose first position, Kim (like Charlie and Kelly) found that it was easier to reach the G and D strings. It is interesting to note, however, that most of her playing was done on the E and A strings, which eased arm discomfort. So the opportunity to use first position as an aid for playing on the lower strings seldom arose. Kim also notes that her hand had more space to move in first position; however, this discovery did not translate into further incidents.

Ashley

Ashley's experience was cleanly divided into two halves: third position in her early lessons and first position in her later lessons. Appendix K dictates that Ashley found third position easier for finger stopping and left hand plucking. She also found this position generally more comfortable, as she could rest her wrist against the violin. Like Kelly and Kim, Ashley found that her arm did not have to stretch as much when in third position, but a contradictory incident emerged later in her lessons where she found playing in third position made her arm feel too close to her body. It was also noted that she was having some trouble finding a comfortable playing position and, hence, decision to hold the violin in third position may have been beneficial to her.

Once her preference had changed to first position, Ashley, along with the other students, found that her arm had greater freedom of movement. Having the wrist bent-in

in first position also helped to support the violin; however, she did not always use this wrist posture. Ashley found the tonal qualities of the G string were more to her liking in first position (as did Charlie, Kelly and Kim), where she also claimed her hand felt less 'squished'. Along with Kim, the E and A strings were more comfortable for her in third position.

Having examined patterns and themes that arose, and the reasons for their position choices, the following section uses numerical measures to further analyse the incidents.

10.2 Analysis of combined position choices

This section refers to the combined position choice matrix (see Appendix L) the reader will benefit from viewing this matrix alongside the following discussion. This matrix is a collation of the position choice incidents of all five students, and is ordered vertically (in columns) by lesson number and horizontally (in rows) by position category. Each student is identified in the matrix by the first digit in the incident number. For example (in order of presentation in this thesis): 3 is Charlie, 6 is Kelly, 1 is Jules, 4 is Kim and 5 is Ashley[8]. In the following paragraphs, this table is interpreted in two ways: first, a choice-ordered analysis (according to the columns); and secondly, a lesson-ordered analysis (according to the rows). *Guided* choices describe events where the student was asked to choose between, or compare, the positions. *Unguided* choices occurred when the student chose a position when not specifically asked to do so.

Analysis according to position-choice category

The total number of position choices for both first and third position was fairly similar, with 59 for first and 67 for third position. There were only 18 occasions where no difference found, as compared to 126 choices of either first or third position; which

[8] There was a sixth student who was assigned the number '2' who withdrew from the project.

shows that, in the majority of cases, the students preferred one over the other.

The guided first position choices occurred consistently during the twelve lessons. Out of a total of 20 incidents, Charlie made the most number of guided first position preferences with nine. Jules and Kelly made six and three choices respectively. Ashley made only two and Kim made no preferences. A slight increase in intensity of incidents is also noted in the ninth lesson.

An unguided choice for first position was made in every lesson, with a total of 39 incidents. This figure is approximately double the amount of guided choices. Kelly made the most choices in this category with 14, Charlie and Ashley made nine each, Kim four, and Jules three. There is a particularly strong concentration of these incidents, representing all five students, between the fifth and twelfth lessons. This result suggests that, in the latter half of their lessons, all students were willing to play in first position of their own accord.

The majority of guided third position preferences occurred in the first half of lessons. Kim made seven choices, Jules made six, Kelly four, Ashley three, and Charlie two. There is a larger concentration of incidents appearing in the first three lessons, and when compared to the first position guided choices, it is clear that the students were more likely to prefer the third position in their earlier lessons. This is not surprising since four of the five students found the wrist contact helped support the violin. The overall number of 22 guided third position incidents is a very similar amount to the first guided first position choices. An absence of these incidents is noted in the eighth, ninth and tenth lessons.

For unguided third position preferences, 45 incidents are recorded, which is only slightly more than the number of unguided first position incidents. This number is also nearly double the number of guided third position incidents, and these incidents occur consistently throughout all 12 lessons. Kim and Ashley made by far the most number of

choices with 15 and 13 respectively. Kelly made nine choices, Jules made five, and Charlie three. There is also a significant increase of the number of choices that Kim made between the eighth and twelfth lessons, confirming her stated preference for the third position.

The least number of incidents appeared in the 'no difference' category, with 18 incidents. The highest occurrences of these incidents were in Kelly and Jules's lessons, with eight and seven respectively. Kim made two, and Charlie one. Ashley is not represented in this column. There is also an increased intensity of no-difference choices by Jules in the eleventh lesson. This was the lesson where she initially stated she would play in first position, but inadvertently played in third and proceeded to indicate no preference when asked again.

Chronological analysis of position choices

The incidents seen in the combined position choice matrix (Appendix L) are viewed and discussed here in groups of four lessons: lessons one through four, five through eight, and nine through twelve.

Across all students, lessons one through four show a predominance of third position choices. There were 30 preferences for third position, compared to 12 for first. No difference was found on seven occasions and most appear in the second lesson. Notable trends within each case include Kelly, who made eight third position preferences as compared to two for first position. Kim and Ashley only made third position preferences, on six and five occasions respectively. Charlie's first and third position choices were fairly even, and Jules's preferences were spread evenly between first, third and no difference.

During lessons five through eight, first position emerged as the most preferred with 26 incidents, as compared to 19 third-position incidents. No difference was found

on five occasions. Of the students, Charlie chose only first position, and on seven occasions. Kelly predominantly chose first position (10 incidents) as compared to third position (one incident). Ashley and Kim both made roughly double the number of third position over first position choices, and Jules's preferences were again evenly spread between first, third and no difference.

In lessons nine through twelve, the first and third position preferences were fairly even: 21 in first and 18 in third. There were only six occasions where no difference was found. Charlie again only chose first position, and Kim chose third position ten times as compared to only one first position choice. Kim's result sways the balance here. Without including her large number of third position preferences, the first position emerges as the preferred position overall for the other four students in the later lessons. Ashley preferred first position on seven occasions and third on two. Kelly chose both positions fairly evenly and Jules again showed consistent preferences for first, third and no difference.

Summary of comparative analysis

This chapter has summarized the five student experiences, comparing the choices and decisions they made. Attention was given to patterns and themes that emerged from their decisions, highlighting areas of agreement and contradiction. Chronological analysis of the critical incidents showed that neither first nor third position emerged as the preferred approach. However, these analyses make apparent the uniqueness of each student's path. In my personal experience in this project, the interplay between the student decisions and the teacher reflections appears to be a key ingredient affecting the progress of that pupil's tuition.

Chapter 11: Exploring insight and discovery

This research project initially set out to investigate how the third position approach compares to the traditional first position approach, as perceived by students through the technical choices they made. While making their decisions the students displayed increased self-awareness and insight into their own playing, which in turn affected their levels of engagement and ownership. Furthermore, the developing self-awareness of the students had a transformative effect on my teaching practices and on my own interpretation of string pedagogical principles. The incidents discussed in this chapter highlight these transformative experiences, but also bring to light the value of student-led action research to the experience of young violinists. Although these themes were present throughout the tuition of all students, only the major critical incidents are included in this chapter. The following events are discussed under four headings: insight, discovery, ownership and progress.

11.1 Insight: Technical self-awareness

Throughout the data collection discussed in Part Three, the theme of 'technical self-awareness' became apparent. When asked to decide between different approaches to playing, the students became acutely aware of what they were doing. This awareness was the starting point of their path to discovering solutions.

Charlie's fourth finger

In her final lesson, Charlie was playing 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' on the A string in first position. In this excerpt, she practised putting her fourth finger on to the string independently of the other fingers. Charlie tried the technique after my demonstration and commented that "I might need to actually put my wrist in, so they [the fingers] could go over the string because when I had them out [the wrist bent-out]

they were sort of laying on the string". Charlie then demonstrated this point for me, showing that when her wrist was slightly bent-out, her fingers were straighter and could not quite reach over to the A string. When bending the wrist in towards the violin, the fingers created a curled shape and reached over to the A string. In traditional violin pedagogy, subtle variations made to wrist position and finger angle are usually discussed in advanced settings. For example, this technique is often used in complicated triple or quadruple stopping. For a beginner like Charlie these approaches would not normally be advocated; however, the fact that she discovered this 'advanced' technique and its benefits *on her own* holds great significance for her progress. The acute awareness of her wrist positioning, as well as the intuition she exhibited in discovering her solution, is tangible evidence of progress; of the furthering of her skill and understanding.

Ashley's third finger

I asked Ashley to play 'Burnt Hot Cross Buns' (using the 1-23-4 finger grouping) in her eighth lesson. As she had done with most of the exercises in her later lessons, Ashley chose the G string in first position. She then played 'Hot Cross Buns' (using the 1-2-34 grouping) and I sought her preference between the low and high third finger grouping. She liked the high third finger position "because when it's squashed up [low third finger] it's harder to hold because there's not much room and then when it's out [high third finger] it's better". The significance here lies within her explanation. She clearly discovers what her hand is doing, how it feels, and knows which state will be easier for her. It is also interesting to note that her choice contradicts the general principle in violin pedagogy that the 1-23-4 finger grouping is easier for the beginning student.

In the following lesson, Ashley again explores the differences between the high and low third finger positions; this time, in the context of the use of her fourth finger.

Firstly, I asked her which she would prefer. She responded that the high third finger is moved on and off the string more easily as "it has room to take off", while when using the low third finger, the second finger "is slowing it down because it's like that [touching against third finger]". I then asked Ashley which finger grouping allows for easier use of the fourth finger. She decided that the high third finger is better because "if [third] finger wasn't there, it [fourth finger] would slide down a bit, so this finger [third] is stopping it going in the wrong spot".

If I was to follow conventional teaching practices, I could have instructed her to use the high third finger to aid the fourth finger, outlining the same reason she discovered herself. However, by allowing her to develop her own self-awareness, Ashley's discovery will no doubt further her ability to repeat the process in the future.

11.2 Discovery: Personal solutions

In the events discussed above, the students showed increased awareness and insight regarding aspects of their playing. It is also apparent that their awareness is closely followed by the 'discovery' of the next step in their playing.

Charlie's fourth finger within a one-octave scale

As described in the previous section 11.1, Charlie bent her wrist in towards the violin allowing her fourth finger to stretch further. In a following incident, Charlie was practising a one-octave scale and the stretching of the fingers was explored further:

AB: We've done a lot in first position right now, with stretching [the fingers]. Just for the sake of comparison let's try that same scale in third position, and I want you to tell me very honestly, is it no different, is it easier …

C: I think it's going to be harder for my pinkie.

AB: Ok, why might that be harder for your pinkie?

C: Because it's bigger … it's wider [indicating the width of the neck].

AB: OK let's try that and see if that's the case.

Charlie then played the scale in third position and declared "It was harder". I followed on, asking:

AB: If you had to play in third position for some reason, and you had to use your fourth finger and you knew it was going to be a bit of a struggle, what could you do to make that as easy as possible?

C: Put my thumb down?

AB: And what does that do?

C: If it goes down my hand has to go up and my pinkie can reach [demonstrates, showing her fingers sitting higher above the strings]

AB: And it looks to me that you've done something with your elbow as well.

C: It's sort of on my waist [demonstrates moving it towards the E string side].

Charlie's perceptive awareness of her fourth finger is firstly evident in her immediate prediction that playing third position would be less advantageous. This awareness led her to discover that changing her thumb and elbow position would facilitate a more helpful finger placement. Again, I could have simply told her to do that; however, the thought processes and problem solving involved show that her knowledge and understanding of her violin playing is greater than that normally expected from a beginner. Mr Quinn summarizes:

> … asking all the time which is the more comfortable … puts them on a path to thinking about it … so she's discovered for herself what you might have taught her till you were black in the face and not got across.

Kelly's left hand plucking

Kelly provides a particularly insightful example of discovery in her first and second lessons. In her first lesson, we began with left hand plucking and I asked Kelly which finger she felt was easiest or strongest:

K: This one [indicates fourth finger].

AB: Why is that?

K: I think it's the way ... my hand's pointing.

AB: So does that mean, given that the way your hand's pointed, with that finger it's a bit easier to move and a bit easier to pluck?

K: Yep.

Left hand plucking was used initially with all of the students, as is commonly done in traditional beginner instruction. In this example Kelly has chosen the fourth finger on her own and, more significantly, displays insight into the way her hand is pointing. During the second lesson I noticed that she was using her third finger to pluck the strings instead of the fourth. She commented, "I like both of these I think ... it's just ... this one [third finger] is a bit easier to play than this one [fourth finger]". Kelly's discovery, which spanned her first two lessons, allowed her to practice with both fingers and gain further insight into how her hand works on the violin.

When considering the implications of technical self-awareness and discovery, another theme became obvious to the independent observers and to me: through discovering their *own* pedagogical path, the student is taking a greater 'ownership' over their playing. Mr Quinn suggests, "when they discover something for themselves they have sort of an ownership of the concept rather than it just being imposed. It's more likely to stick, I think".

11.3 Ownership: Actively engaged

The concept of ownership emerged in discussions with Mr Quinn, who said, "I've got a little comment: discovery equals ownership". Further reflections upon this thought led to a greater realization that, when students are encouraged to negotiate their own path – to reflect on the implications of their conscious and unconscious decisions –

they seem to take greater ownership over their violin playing.

Charlie's pinkie reflexes

An example of ownership emerging from student-led awareness and discovery is seen in revisiting Charlie's fourth finger development. During her ninth lesson, Charlie is again working on reaching her fourth finger on to the string. I asked:

AB: What was difficult with that [exercise]?

C: Somehow my fourth finger again … probably my fourth finger doesn't have the strength to press as much.

AB: What do you think we can do to strengthen our fourth finger?

C: 'Pinkie reflexes' [demonstrates straightening and bending her fourth finger in a circular motion away from the violin] … probably do it on the violin.

AB: Show me [she proceeds to alternate placing her fourth finger on the G and E strings].

AB: Wow! Well done. Well there's a really good exercise, why don't you give that one a name?

C: Pinkie reflexes … or pretty much 'finger reflexes'.

Charlie appeared to be excited by her invention of a finger-strengthening exercise. She continued to do so with another that she named 'bounce', where she placed her first, second and third finger on the G string and proceeded to lift and place her fourth finger on all the other strings. Charlie's ownership over her discovery is illuminated by her exclamation that these exercises "should be on the violin games!"[9].

In this example, Charlie showed insight into her playing by observing that her fourth finger was not strong enough. Her discovery (and consequent ownership over her finger-strengthening exercises) was raised by Mr Edwards, who:

[9] The violin games sheet was used by all students at the beginning of their tuition, see Appendix B.

> ... thought [it] was really fascinating was when you moved her over to the higher strings for the fourth finger, and all these games that she came up with ... to help strengthen her fourth finger ... that she was quite happy to spit these things out at you.

Mr Quinn also reflected on this event, connecting technical self-discovery to the student's overall engagement and commenting:

> But then she's come up with the Pinkie Reflexes ... then I've got a question to myself: How does this process of self-discovery affect the student's willingness to learn? She's engaged in the process rather than just passively receiving it, isn't she?

By this stage in the research, my own philosophical position on my teaching practices had shifted to the realization that student-led teaching is worthy of further exploration, with potentially greater implications for violin teachers and students. Mr Quinn and Mr Edwards's observations regarding discovery and ownership confirmed for me the relevance of questioning traditional approaches to string pedagogy along these lines, and that further exploration of these themes is necessary.

Jules's wrist position

As seen in Part Three, the physical feeling in the left arm emerged for Jules as the main driver behind her position preferences. Although she did not find either first or third position more beneficial, she demonstrated that she clearly preferred to have the wrist touching the neck or ribs of the violin. In this particular example, Jules played a finger stopping exercise in first position on the E string:

> AB: What you did then was, when you played in first position, you had your hand resting up against the violin.
>
> J: Yeah.
>
> AB Does that feel better that way, or not? Why did you do that?
>
> J: I like it because it's cold.

AB: Because it's cold? So that means it feels …

J: … feels nice.

I then asked her to compare that manner of playing with the wrist not touching the violin:

AB: I want you to try something now. Back to first position again, but now I want your hand away from the violin [straight wrist].

J: Oh … [indicates disappointment]

AB: Just to try once, just to try …

J: [plays with a straight wrist, but looks uncomfortable]

AB: Does it matter which one? Did one feel particularly more comfortable?

J: I like that one. The one resting there [indicates the ribs of the violin].

Jules's preference is clear, that she prefers playing hand resting against the violin, and she is not really interested in exploring the other way of playing. Her ownership over her choice is indicated by the disappointment she expressed in my requirement of her to try the exercise with the wrist not touching the violin. As far as traditional tuition goes, she may not have expressed any disappointment – let alone even considered which one she preferred – if she had just been told to play a certain way. Jules's mother observed:

> … giving her the choice gave her more control, and for her that's an important thing. I think she was able to play with that and feel like she was having some input, and that seemed to be a way of getting her involved in the lesson more, which is very important for her.

Kelly's overall engagement

Mr Edwards connected Kelly's engagement in her lessons with her behaviour between tasks. In the following interview extracts, Mr Edwards noted that Kelly

continued to engage with her violin playing while I was busy with other matters:

> ME: And you can actually see [student engagement] with Kelly, because you were doing something and she actually was picking up her bow and doing more with the bow … completely independently of anything. You did not steer her to do anything … and she kept going. You could say, perhaps, that that is a sign of interest, and I think that's valuable, and perhaps progress.
>
> AB: That might give weight to the fact that she's engaged … if it's ever asked: "Ok, they may have been given choice but is the student actually engaged; do they actually want to be there in the lesson or are they just following what you are doing …'
>
> ME: Yeah, so when you were writing notes, she was off actually making sound, and working on some balancing and things like that, and having quite a good time with that, and didn't obviously feel that she was disturbing you in any way.

In a later interview, Mr Edwards made further comment regarding Kelly's engagement:

> I think she's really really engaged with stuff; and the whole thing about trying to decide whether the violin was in tune, she just kept plucking and kept listening, you were doing all sorts of other stuff and she just kept plucking away, trying to determine what was going on with it … and I think it's quite good about the choice in a lot of ways; she's quite happy to make her opinion known.

In perceiving Kelly's elevated engagement in her lessons, Mr Edwards speculated whether this type of commitment forms part of her progress. The connection between engagement and progress can be explored by looking at what Kelly is actually doing in those moments. Given that she is trying some of her bow-balancing exercise, or trying to tune her violin as Mr Edwards noticed, then she is in fact *progressing* her playing on her own. Mr Edwards went further, suggesting "she's quite clear that … she is in charge of a certain portion of the lesson … she's not sitting there waiting for you to tell her what to do". It is this feeling of control over their lesson – rather than just 'receiving' the lesson – that indicates the theme of ownership.

11.4 Progress: Technico-musical outcomes

To varying degrees, the critical incidents discussed throughout this thesis show examples of the student 'progressing' by virtue of the fact they have negotiated their way further down the path of their learning. For example, in Kelly's left hand plucking (see section 11.2), she has achieved – in her first lesson – plucking with the third and fourth fingers. In Charlie's 'pinkie reflexes' (see section 11.3), she achieved a stronger fourth finger. As discussed in Part Two, the achievement of specific goals, levels or techniques, through the adherence to specific sets of rules, is the usual marker of progress within violin teaching methods. Therefore, this section outlines two further examples where students have clearly achieved a technico-musical milestone as a result of their decision-making processes.

Kelly's two-octave scale

During her tenth lesson, Kelly is asked to explore an A major two-octave scale, having previously learnt A-major one-octave scale (beginning on the G string). Given she had already been playing in third position throughout her tuition, the logical approach to this scale included a shift to fourth position for the second octave (repeating the same fingering pattern as in first position). Although she had only explored first and third position, she quickly discovered for herself that she would require fourth position for the second octave. Mr Edwards observed:

> ME: She's just so quick … so if you're doing the two-octave scale starting on A, she figures out that it's fourth position, and not third.
>
> AB: And what I realised after that lesson was that … the whole technical area of shifting is not there … doesn't exist. Like she's done a two-octave scale with a shift in position …
>
> ME: … which is usually introduced much much later …
>
> AB: … and she's done that; but the whole idea of shifting hasn't been touched …

Ok she left his thumb behind, but also … this is a girl who, whenever playing, most of the time liked her thumb lying down like that anyway.

Mr Quinn also observed this incident, saying:

you did a scale with a shift … no hesitation about shifting, she just simply did it … to stop them having a 'thing' about moving into a higher position and thinking it's hard … in that respect it's worked like a charm.

The issue here that questions traditional teaching methods, as well as reinforcing my own changing philosophy, was that the 'advanced' technical area of shifting has not been introduced to Kelly, but that she was able to negotiate it without much trouble. In essence, the consequence of her consistent decision to play in both first and third position is that she did not have to be taught to 'shift'; it just happened.

Kim's bowing

In her eleventh lesson, Kim had just finished playing 'Go tell Aunt Rhody', and expressed her frustration with hitting the other strings with the bow:

D: [clearly frustrated] I keep going on a different string.

AB: Yeah. Is that disturbing you?

D: [nods in agreement]

AB: Would you like us to practice that then? Can you invent some sort of way for us to work on that little disturbing problem?

D: [proceeds to play four bows on each open string with the left arm hanging down by her side]

AB: Wow …

D: … hand off? [plays the same exercise with her left hand hanging down by her side]

AB: Yes, hand off. What a fantastic way!

In this example, Kim identified one of the challenges associated with bow control and discovered her own way to practise this technique. She then made the exercise more challenging by removing her left hand from the violin. Through exploring the challenge and discovering her own solution, Kim achieved that technical milestone. I was again led to reflect upon how this incident challenges the general philosophical position of violin pedagogy. First, I could have simply identified the challenge and set some tasks for her to practice. However, I would not have thought of her idea of taking the left hand away from the violin which, being more difficult, led her to achieve the result more quickly and thoroughly. Secondly, the student provided *me* with another exercise to use in this situation with other students, and is one that can clearly be offered as coming from another student. Thirdly, Kim is more likely to continue addressing that issue in other situations, given that she has found her own solution. Lastly (and perhaps most importantly), Kim was clearly proud of herself, again highlighting the themes of engagement and ownership.

Although this study does not attempt to measure overall achievement and progress in any significant way, it was interesting to compare the progress made and milestones achieved in these few examples with what would be considered the 'usual' progress made in traditional teaching settings. It is evident to me as their teacher that they certainly did not progress any slower than normal, and in some circumstances (such as Kelly's successful two-octave scale without having learnt shifting), their progress may be faster than through traditional methods – and possibly may even be considered a different *type* of progress.

11.5 The choice trap

Over the course of Charlie's lessons, an interesting paradox occurred which is best described as 'choosing yourself into a corner'. Like the other students, Charlie was offered a range of ways to approach certain aspects of her playing. On the one hand,

these choices provided a wider path of exploration of her technique; on the other hand, however, it emerged that every decision made by the student led to a restriction on available options for subsequent choices. The following example best illustrates this concept.

Choosing yourself into a corner ...

During most of her tuition, Charlie regularly chose to play in the first position with the wrist bent-in against the neck. In this example, Charlie practised a finger-stopping exercise and I raised the issue of thumb positioning that had been discussed in a previous lesson:

AB: We were talking about where your thumb should go.

C: Yep.

AB: And I think you said that you've got super-long fingers and if you brought your thumb down here a bit [demonstrates lowering the thumb and hand position], it brought your finger closer to the string, and it didn't have to reach as far to get to the string.

C: [indicates agreement]

AB: So that was about the height of the thumb – how high or low. The other thing you can think about is whether it's sort of back here [demonstrates lying back pointing towards the scroll], or more towards you up here ... and it depends entirely where you feel it is comfortable and where it works best. So do you want to do that little exercise again, and if you want to muck around with positions of your thumb, and see where you think it works ...

Mr Quinn, who observed this incident, first flagged the choice trap. He commented that it is hard to evaluate:

... what would be the most comfortable and the best thumb placement when the wrist is collapsed ... because you're not just assessing the interrelationship of the thumb and the fingers, because it's distorted by the fact that the wrist is collapsed. Had she had the

wrist in more conventional alignment, whether you would have got a different set of answers from her about the thumb …?

The sequence continued with Charlie playing the exercise with her thumb lying back, pointing towards the scroll of the violin:

AB: Good, now try the thumb more up near your second finger.

C: [plays again]

AB: What do you reckon?

C: Um … it felt sort of more higher than down here …

AB: OK, so in terms of comfort and making it work for you, do you think you know what position of the thumb feels better?

C: [indicates she is unsure]

AB: Not sure?

C: Yeah.

AB: We can keep looking at it as we go.

At this point Mr Quinn questioned the trialling of different thumb positions in light of the wrist position. He commented:

> … it's actually quite a lot of stress on your thumb; if you try to move your thumb forward to where your second or third finger is, there's actually quite a lot of stress on the thumb because of the [bent-in] placement of the wrist.

To paraphrase, Mr Quinn points out that the choices Charlie made regarding her thumb positioning were influenced by the decision she made about her wrist. Taking this line of thought further; if, for arguments sake, the bent-in wrist position was the first choice Charlie had made, then it could be considered a clean, or unsullied, decision. However, the subsequent decision she made about her thumb positioning – to point it backwards towards the scroll – is not as 'clean', as it was influenced by the

position of the wrist.

In moments following this sequence, Charlie's thumb was lying down, pointing towards the scroll, which confirms Mr Quinn's suggestion that the previously chosen wrist position led to that particular thumb position. Mr Quinn suggests, "you're trying to assess how they respond to a certain variable but you've got another variable in there that's distorting the result". I respond:

> AB: Are you sort of suggesting that … she may not be able to make a fair judgment herself?
>
> MQ: There's no way that putting the thumb higher up … with the wrist in that position that it's going to be anything other than less comfortable.
>
> AB: So … I'm just thinking about a crazy paradox here … that if they're given a choice at every step of the way on what they do with their left hand … that actually impedes their choice … If someone chooses one position and then they choose a particular wrist position they like, and then based on that they like a particular thumb position…
>
> MQ: Well yes, each thing will be based on the one before…
>
> AB: … so you get this sort of domino effect … so in a way, the further along they get, the less choice they have …
>
> MQ: They might have boxed themselves into a corner.

At this point in Charlie's tuition, I was concerned that she was actually boxed into a corner technically, and that I would have to 'repair' her playing by making changes to her technique. This instance may provide some insight as to why violin teaching has evolved in the way it has. A teacher providing the right answer, such as in this case, would be an example of good instruction: providing the 'long view' that would most probably elude the beginning student. However, this may also be one reason why teachers worry about deviating from their path.

...and choosing yourself out again

In her following lesson, Charlie practised a finger exercise for the fourth finger:

AB: Now, that's tricky to stretch, isn't it?

C: Yeah.

AB: Last week you said your thumb was better back down there.

C: Oh yeah.

AB: And what did that do to your wrist?

C: Made it up here [indicates bent-in position].

AB: So try it in that position now.

C: Now it's harder for my pinkie.

Based on her choices in the last lesson of playing with the wrist bent-in and the thumb lying back against the scroll, she now discovers the use of her fourth finger is impeded – thus, 'choosing herself into a corner'. I then asked Charlie what she could do to make it easier to stretch the fourth finger:

C: Um ... I think I need to just bring the thumb down [indicates lower vertically, rotating her hand and fingers higher above the strings]

AB: Yeah ...

C: Because that's making it [the fourth finger] longer – because here [the previous position] it's way more shorter.

AB: Ah ha ...

C: So now my pinkie could, like, probably touch my thumb [demonstrates reaching across the strings].

AB: OK, I see. So you've sort of made the distance smaller from the finger to the string?

C: Yes.

The result here is that Charlie has discovered a new thumb positioning – still with the bent-in wrist – that allows her fingers to sit higher above the strings so her fourth finger reaches the strings more easily. Charlie has 'chosen' her way out of the corner by reconsidering her previous choices in light of the demands of the new exercise.

In summary, this chapter explored the concepts of insight, discovery, ownership and progress that were embedded in the process of students' decision making. Although these themes were evident across the entire data collection, a small number of incidents were examined to illustrate these themes. When making a decision about how to approach their playing, the students had to consider their unconscious, or initial, decisions, which induced an acute technical self-awareness. This insight led them to explore and discover solutions to challenges and the next steps in their pedagogical paths, which included the invention of exercises or solutions that I as the teacher would not have thought of. These discoveries appeared to inspire a greater sense of ownership over their playing as well as a stronger engagement with the learning process. In this sense, the students are seen to progress their own learning as opposed to passively receive their instruction. Student-led progress is clearly evident as the student chooses their way from exploring the challenge to implementing their solution, with the potential to enhance the achievement of technico-musical goals. The interdependency of the various aspects of technique also became apparent, as decisions became increasingly influenced by previous choices.

The primary motive of this research project was not to investigate these concepts, and hence the aim here is not to offer any firm conclusions about their effect on the students and their learning. They did, however, make a significant impact on my own philosophical position as their violin teacher, in that the pedagogical approach that yielded these themes differs considerably from conventional approaches to teaching.

They also reinforced how these types of insights can emerge from this kind of approach to research.

Summary of Part Four

Part Four of this thesis analysed the experiences of the five students, comparing and collating their position choices. This analysis found that neither first nor third position emerged as being significantly more preferable to the students. The pupils were able to make their own decisions more of the time, particularly later in their lessons. Third position emerged as being potentially more beneficial in the early lessons, whereas first position was more popular in later lessons. This Part also discussed the common reasons the students provided for their choices, which extended to issues such as comfort and ease in various technical settings, support of the violin, and spatial issues as well as their preferred strings.

Part Four also illustrated examples of increased technical self-awareness the students exhibited when exploring aspects of their playing. These insights led to the discovery of their own solutions to their challenges. These developments resulted in positive impacts on their levels of engagement, with students taking greater ownership over their tuition. Chapter 11 also commented upon my own re-evaluation of the conventional paradigm of beginner violin tuition: I became increasingly convinced that student-led, choice-driven pedagogy is not only worthy of deeper exploration, but offers potentially greater benefits to the students' experience and ultimately their progress.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study a group of five children with me as the teacher-researcher took part in an action-research project where the students led the path of their tuition, with varying degrees of guidance, by making decisions about how to approach aspects of their left hand technique. A practitioner-research model was used within an embedded case study design, offering detailed insight into student preferences regarding first and third position as well as other areas of violin technique. Initially, the 'goal' was to compare the first and third position approaches; the 'path' was the consultation with the pupils and their empowerment to make their own decisions. In retrospect, the debate that continually reared its head throughout this project was whether the 'path' was more valuable than the 'goal'. In other words, discovering whether first or third position is the better option for beginner violinist is perhaps less significant than the benefits offered to the student within a consultative, student-led lesson environment.

Summary of findings

Three questions were formulated to guide the research:

1. How does the third position compare to the first position approach for the introduction of beginner left hand techniques on the violin?
2. How do the students in terms of their technico-musical progress perceive this comparison?
3. In what ways does the freedom to choose between techniques and playing styles affect the beginning student's engagement with the lessons?

The first two research questions can be addressed concurrently. From the analyses presented in this thesis, this study finds that for the overall group of five students, neither first nor third position emerged as more efficacious. On individual

levels, this study makes five separate findings: for Charlie, first position was preferred; for Kelly, third position was preferred in the early lessons and first position in the later lessons; for Jules, no significant difference emerged as she enjoyed playing in both positions; for Kim, third position was preferred; and for Ashley, third position was preferred in the early lessons and first position in the later lessons.

These five individual conclusions bring to light a finding of greater significance: that each student's learning path is unique. Although some patterns of similarity and disparity were seen as their lessons progressed, their individual choices did not appear to be indiscriminate, but seemed to be heavily influenced by their previous decisions. Although the pathways of the five students diverged, each could be considered equally valid as a means of mastering the instrument. As a result, the insights gained through this research lie in the understanding of how and why a particular student's path of learning evolved, and what benefits that path may have provided. What appears to be less meaningful is the attempt to glean from these five varied paths one specific approach that could be suggested to be 'best practice' for any future directions in the researcher's teaching – which, of course, this study originally set out to do. In other words, in the cases of the five students, the quality of the forward progression appeared to be more relevant to their learning process than the specificity of the path itself. In this particular study, the forward progression is defined more in terms of the student's self-awareness, discovery and engagement, with decreasing regard for whether that progression resembled that of any other violinist.

As data collection progressed, the third research question arose in order to investigate how student choice enhanced overall engagement and progress. Chapter 11 examined examples of technical self-awareness, discovery and ownership, as well as discussing the effect these themes appeared to have on the pupil's progress. Although the initial thrust of this study was to ask the students to assist in comparing the two

positions, these concepts illustrate the confidence they developed simply through the process of being consulted. One comment made Mr Quinn sums these findings succinctly. When discussing Kelly's discovery that the fourth finger makes the same pitch as the next open string, he asserted:

> Discovery equals ownership … she figured out octaves, then she said, 'well it's easier to start a piece on an open string' … They're much more flexible, these kids, than they would be if you'd done it the standard sort of way … wouldn't you wish that they were all like that!

The other point this finding raises is that these students do not necessarily know what they are, or are not, supposed to comment on. In essence, they can achieve more complex objectives than they should traditionally be able to do, both in terms of understanding and technique, because they have not been given the impression that the objective is difficult.

In this research, the student-led discovery has two sides: on the one hand, the student finds her own way of getting to where the teacher wants; and on the other hand, the student arrives at an unexpected but equally satisfactory outcome in terms of technico-musical progress. From the student's perspective, both scenarios achieve a result and confidence is gained in the process. However, from my own perspective as the teacher (and, on occasion, from the independent observers' perspective), these two scenarios have different effects. If the student discovers a result that the teacher predicted, then the teacher's own methodology is validated; however, the teacher may feel the achievement of that result took longer than it needed to. If the student discovers a different but equally satisfactory result, then the challenge for the teacher (as it was for me) is the acceptance of the student's discovery as a valid and technically sound means of playing, which will in turn require a modification of future pedagogical intentions for that student. If the student's solution varies from the teacher's plan, then

this insight offers the teacher an opportunity to broaden their pedagogical resources; in brief, to learn from the student. It was this realization that had the greatest transformative effect on my own approach to teaching, and may hold similar implications for other teachers.

Implications and recommendations for further research

As discussed in Part Two, string pedagogical inquiry that seeks student opinion on the teaching method is scant. Further development of this type of action research may have more global ramifications not only for other violin students, but even more for other violin teachers. Previous inductive research projects in string pedagogy would normally head towards generalizations that codify a method for other students, whereas this study could be capitalised upon by larger investigations into a 'method' that is an individualized, student-led, constructivist approach offering both the teacher and pupil a wider path of technico-musical resources to explore. The recommendation for further research extends to the exploration of how this approach may be applied not only to left hand technique, but also to all aspects of violin playing. This inquiry could also be broadened to encompass advanced students, adult beginners, ensemble and group teaching, and aspects of musicality and expression.

Implications for teachers and students extend to the following areas: teachers may be able to cater to a greater diversity of student learning styles (including implementing this kind of approach in group and ensemble settings), and workloads for teachers may increase due to the need to react to student choices (which includes searching for additional resources; however, this search will continually broaden their knowledge base, affecting teaching ability and self-efficacy). If teachers were to embrace a choice-driven approach such as this, then the practice of evaluating other playing styles as less favourable may shift to a greater acceptance of differing ways to teach and play. Practically, such a shift may allow students (and their teachers) to be

more comfortable having lessons with other teachers without the need for their playing to be undermined or, at the very worst, 'reconstructed' because it happens to be different.

For the students, there may be a positive effect on self-esteem as they feel a greater sense of ownership over their playing. Furthermore, through the discovery process, the student may feel they are progressing and achieving for more of the time. This kind of approach to teaching may further influence issues such as retention of information as well as the ability to progress during personal practice without the teacher present.

These findings also have significant implications on string pedagogical thought. This student-led discovery approach offers a different philosophical position alongside the differing mechanical positions. The key shift proposed here is for greater significance to be placed on the uniqueness of an individual student's pedagogical path, as opposed to the effectiveness and universality (as perceived by teachers) of teaching methods. Furthermore, this notion questions the value of testing the effectiveness of popular or alternative teaching methods, as has been the tradition in string research.

This study also provokes a re-evaluation of the definitions of 'progress' and 'achievement' in relation to string teaching. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines progress as a "course or process of a series of actions, events, etc., through time" and "movement towards an outcome or conclusion" (OED online, 2013), whereas achievement is defined as "The action of achieving something; completion, accomplishment, successful execution" (OED online, 2013). In short: progress is the journey, achievement the destination. In conventional string teaching, the path to student progress is through the achievement of technico-musical milestones. However, this research suggests a higher quality of progress should be the goal, with technico-musical achievements being outcomes, or even by-products, of that progress.

In my final interviews with Mr Edwards and Mr Quinn we reflected upon these lines of thought. Mr Edwards described the type of student progress that developed in this study in the following comment:

> If you think about the virtuosic mountain[10], that's up and up and up and up; this is more like around and around ... like exploring around a little bit on a level ... there's something to be said about expanding sideways ... and it doesn't mean you're not going up as well; it's a wider path, which may in fact, in some ways, be better ... That ability to be not so narrowly focused may actually produce something quite interesting ... to be allowed to sort of go off on some of these tangents and explore some of these other things that is encouraging them to think about what they're doing ... it's a bit more three-dimensional somehow.

Mr Quinn offered a similar commentary:

> I think the thing that came out, as I look back on them now, is that because the process you've gone through is one of ... allowing them to choose and asking them which they prefer instead of saying 'you must do this, you must do that'; is that they start to discover stuff for themselves. And so, how you position yourself on the instrument or whatever, they have a sense of ownership of it ... they're much more likely to do it that way than if they've been told 'you must'. Initially it's slower, because instead of just saying 'do this, do that' and giving clear instructions or whatever, initially the process is slower. But what I found interesting by the time you got to the end of this project is that the kids are quite different in the way that they're responding to learning than if they'd started the more conventional way.

Finally, providing an environment where student opinion on technico-musical matters is as important as, or even more important than, that of the teacher, may offer a very different, more nurturing and rewarding experience than conventional approaches currently provide. The revelation here is that *having the choice regularly* is more

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[10] See Appendix E.

significant in defining the student's overall experience than *what they actually choose.* In effect, through comparing positions, the research proposes an individualized approach that simply allows each student to do what works best for them, within a climate of encouraging guidance from the teacher.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Sample participant letters

ANU / ORC VIOLIN TEACHING RESEARCH PROJECT - INFORMATION LETTER

Dear

I would like to invite you / your child to participate in a research project in beginner violin teaching. This research is being undertaken by myself at the Orange Regional Conservatorium (ORC).

I am a Master of Philosophy student at the Australian National University, School of Music (Music Education) and the principal researcher for this project. I am also a violin teacher at ORC. This research will form part of a thesis that will be submitted for this degree.

I am asking you to participate in up to twelve 30-minute violin lessons, scheduled weekly. To take part, you will need to enroll as a student at ORC for which, for this project, there is a nominal $10 fee for insurance purposes. The actual violin lessons will occur at no cost to you. The lessons will take place at ORC (73A Hill Street) or any other appropriate location the ORC nominates.

If you wish to continue your lessons after the conclusion of this project, then you are welcome to do so as full-fee paying student enrolled at ORC.

Information obtained from the lessons may be published in several journal articles and the Masters dissertation. For your interest, published materials resulting from this research will be available to participants.

The teacher will take notes during and after each lesson, being information based on the content and outcomes of each lesson. Some of your lessons will be video recorded, however, names of participants will not be used. All notes and tapes from interviews will be securely stored in a locked cupboard, to which only the researcher has access, so far as the law allows. Any notes recorded on computer will not include names or contact details and will be password protected. Any video footage of your tuition will not be seen by anyone other than the researcher, the participant violin teachers and an external independent observer, and will not form part of any talk or presentation. Every effort will be made to ensure that no identifying features are used. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time.

All information emerging from your / your child's violin lessons will be treated confidentially. All data collected will be stored for a minimum of five years after the conclusion of the project.

The parent's written consent will be obtained before participation, and although not required by law, the consent of the child will also be sought.

This project has been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. For further information on ethical matters, please contact:

Office of Research Integrity
Research Office
Chancelry 10B, Lower Ground Floor
East Road
Australian National University
Acton ACT 2601
Tel: 02 6125-3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Further questions about the research may be directed to:

Susan West – research supervisor
School of Music
Building 100
ANU, ACT 2601
Tel: 02 6125-5776
Email: Susan.West@anu.edu.au

Feel free to contact me (see below) for any further information.

With thanks,

Andrew Baker
M. Phil student, Australian National University
Assistant Director and Head of Strings, Orange Regional Conservatorium
Tel: 6393 0611
Mob: 0431 881 918
Email: u4702751@anu.edu.au

Appendix A (contd)

ANU / ORC VIOLIN TEACHING RESEARCH PROJECT - PARENT CONSENT FORM

I,.....allow my child .....to learn the violin as part of a research project into beginner violin teaching undertaken by Andrew Baker, Master of Philosophy student at Australian National University. I agree that myself and my child will be interviewed regarding our experiences in the lessons, specifically regarding how my child is taught certain left hand techniques. I also allow the lessons to be video recorded. I have read and understand the following information:

1. This project will contribute to research about into violin teaching methods, particularly left hand techniques and student-centered learning.

2. Participation is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time.

3. The research will contribute potentially several journal articles and a Masters dissertation.

4. All raw data and video documentation will be securely stored in a locked cupboard to which only Andrew Baker has access.

5. Data transferred to computer will not include names or phone numbers and will be password protected.

6. Any video footage may be made available to either the other participant-teachers or an independent observer who will provide an opinion to inform the research.

7. Continuation of lessons after the conclusion of this project will incur tuition fees, as well as any relevant instrument costs.

Would you like to receive copies of published materials?
(Please circle one) YES NO
(If 'Yes' please include your phone number below so that you may be contacted for mailing details.)

Signed_____
Date_____

Phone No (if applicable) _____

Appendix A (contd)

ANU / ORC VIOLIN TEACHING RESEARCH PROJECT - INDEPENDENT OBSERVER CONSENT FORM

I,.....agree to act as independent observer in this research project into beginner violin teaching, which is being undertaken by Andrew Baker, Master of Philosophy student at Australian National University. I agree to view a sample of violin lessons, either in person or on video, and be interviewed regarding the teaching methods used and the degree of student consultation used. I have read and understand the information:

1. This project will contribute to research about into violin teaching methods, particularly left hand techniques, and student-centered learning.

2. I am participating in this project of my own free will and I am free to withdraw at any time.

3. The research will contribute potentially several journal articles and a Masters dissertation.

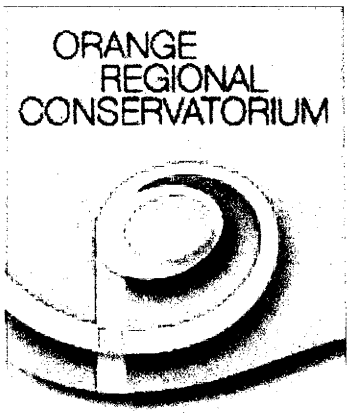
4. Data collected will not include names or phone numbers and will be stored in a locked cupboard and/or on a password protected.

5. I will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs.

Would you like to receive copies of published materials?
(Please circle one) YES NO
(If 'Yes' please include your phone number below so that you may be contacted for mailing details.)

Signed_____
Date_____

Phone No (if applicable) _____



Mr. Andrew Baker
12 Rosemary Lane
ORANGE NSW 2800

Re: your research project

Tuesday, 23 November 2010

Dear Andrew

In response to your application to the ORC for support in carrying out the research project "Beginner violin instruction: the third position approach and the student's perspective", I am pleased to inform you that the ORC is willing collaborate in the project by providing access to resources (teachers, students and facilities) for the data collection.
We do this on the condition that all participants in the collection sign the approved ANU participant consent form.

Yours sincerely

Graham Sattler
Director

Violin Games

(adapted from Rolland, 1974)

1. Feet

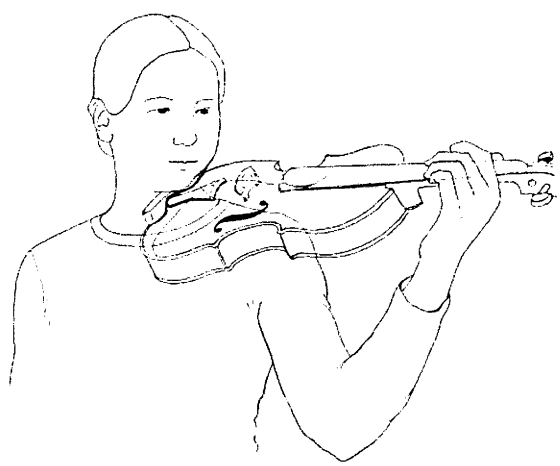
- Make a "V" with your feet, heels together
- Step your feet apart (shoulder width
  fingers over the red Dot
- Violin sits under right arm

2. Rest Position

- Hold violin under your right arm
- Hold the neck with your left hand

3. Playing Position

- Lift violin onto peak of shoulder / collar
- Tail button should point to throat
- Violin points out to the side (about 45 deg. From center)



5. Elephant Arms

- Student holds violin only with chin / shoulder
- Swing both arms (in turn) gently like an elephant

6. Plucking strings

- Playing position, left fingers above Dot
- Pluck all strings with left hand fingers (pull across strings)
- Make big circles with fingers

7. Grandfather clock

- Keep left hand over the red Dot
- Swing left elbow freely like a pendulum

8. Grandfather plucking

- While swinging elbow, pluck fingers across strings
- Elbow swings & plucking becomes one motion

9. Star Jumps

- Playing Position, place TIPS of fingers on strings
- Lift fingers up as fast as possible, making a 'star' with the left hand.

10. Thumb Flexes

- Place all fingers on a string, move your thumb up & down the neck as far as it will reach.
- Also tap thumb against the neck repeatedly

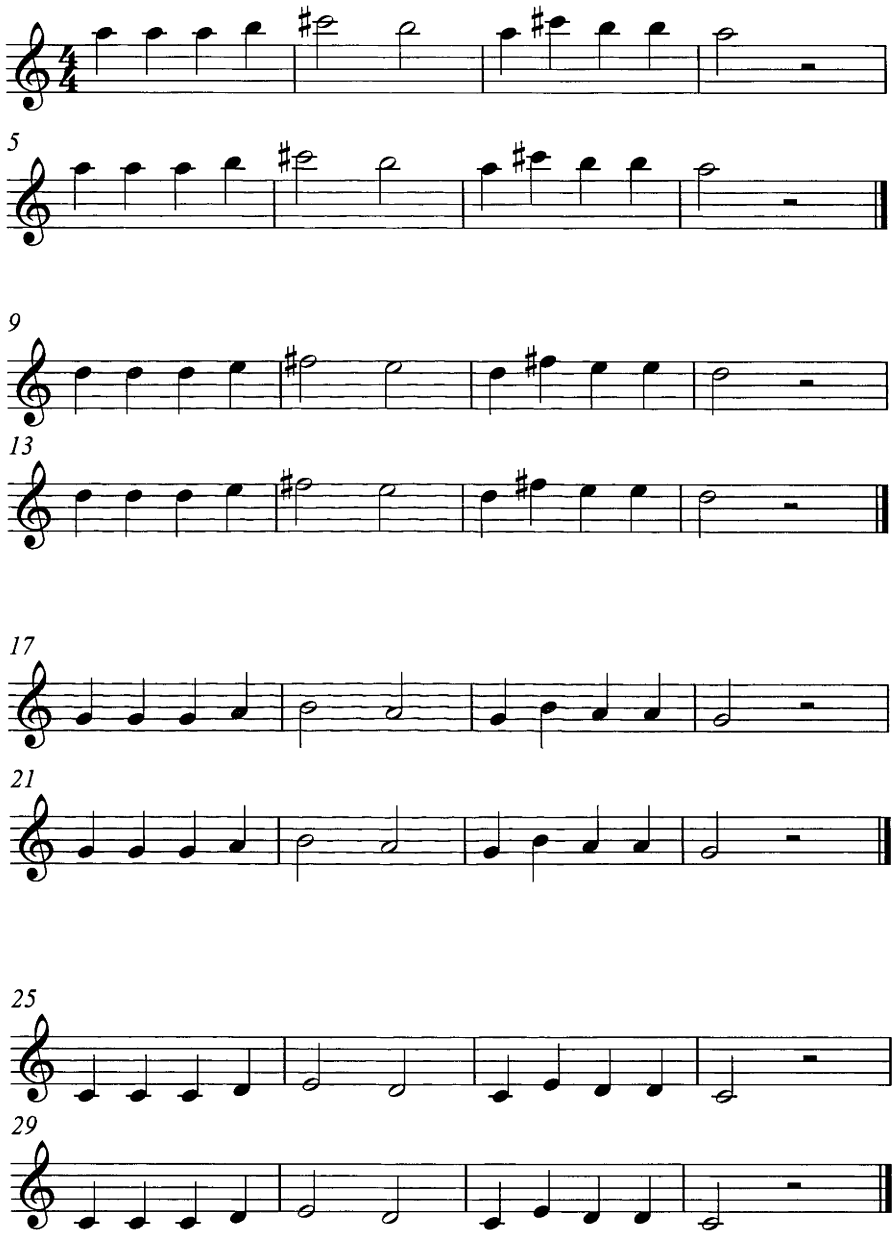
11. Shuttle plucking

- Pluck strings (like grandfather plucking)
- Move hand to low register, then to middle, then to high
- Repeat, plucking strings 3 times in each register

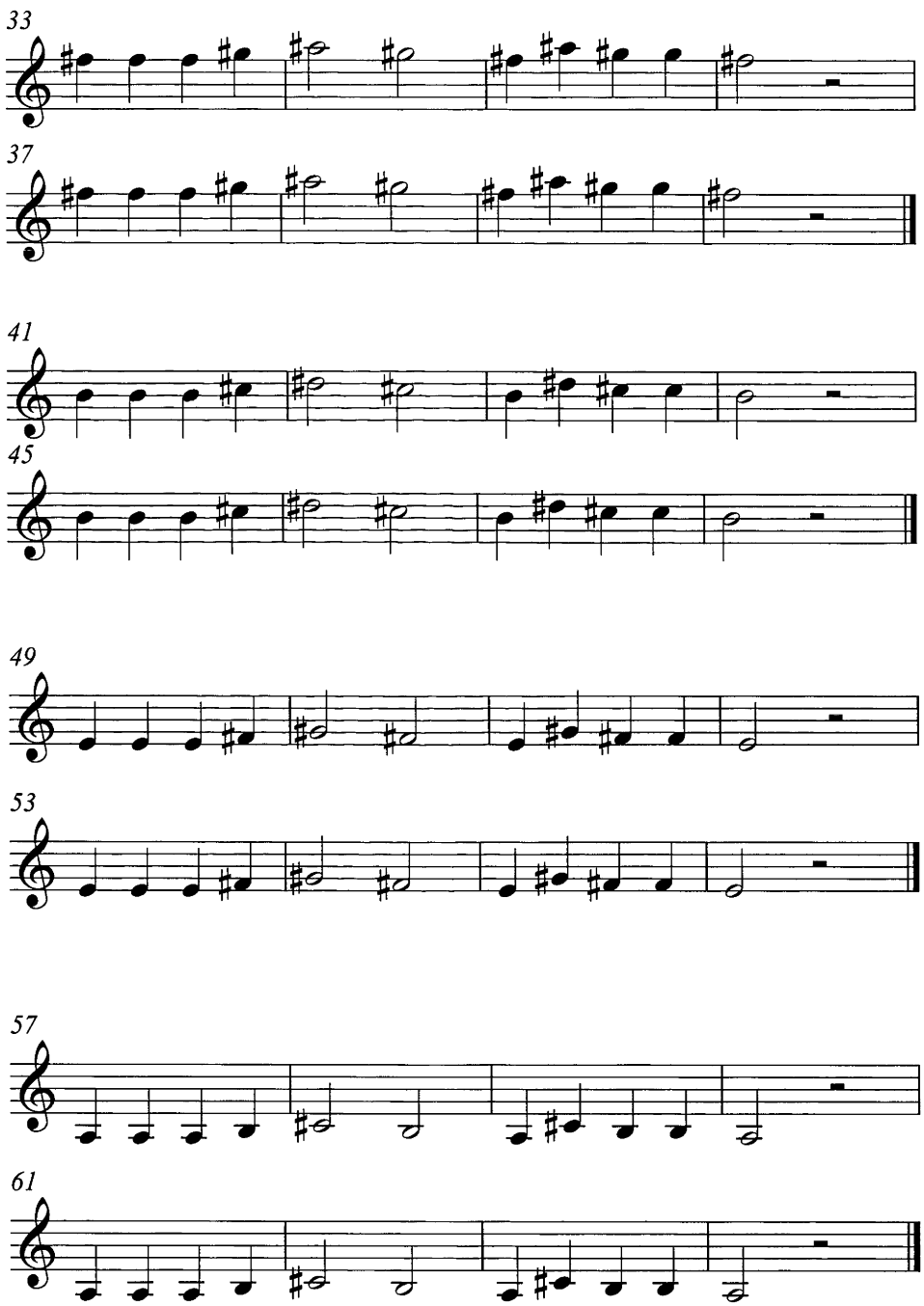
12. Shuttle slides

- Place all 4 finger TIPS on G string in low register
- Gently slide fingers up string to end of fingerboard.
- As you pass the Dot, thumb moves to other (front) side of the violin, sliding along "E string" edge of fingerboard.

Au Clair de la Lune - 3rd position



Au Clair de la Lune - 1st position



Appendix C: Sample of field notes

Teacher:	A. Baker
Student:	[redacted] Ashley
Lesson date: 18/10/11	Time: 4:45 pm Room: 11

Lesson Plan

Lesson proceedings / incidents

2:18 – hot cross buns – 3rd pos chosen by self

4:24 thumb below (vertically) and slightly behind thumb

5:30 – Burnit buns – chose 1st pos. – chose G string, thumb was higher

Teacher summary

7:00 – Low 3 vs high 3 – chose high position.

9:08 – Many – chose 1st pos. – had collapsed wrist.

11:00 – wrist in vs wrist out – chose wrist touching PTO

14 min – G fell chose 1st 101, G. string thumb was high

Appendix D: Sample contact summary sheet

Contact Summary Sheet - Kim

Lesson 401: 30/08/2011

Incident 40101 – 4'20"
Summary:
Student has just done elephant arms for the first time, then asked to put hand up to neck to support the violin, is being given the 1st vs 3rd option.
Student chooses 3rd position, reason is due to arm not having to stretch as far. Also comments that 1st pos is still ok too. So 3rd is a little bit easier.

Incident 40102 – 6'30"
Summary:
Choosing best finger for plucking. Student chooses 2nd finger as 'easiest' to use, but chooses 4th finger as makes the best sound.

Incident 40103
Summary:
Skip to my lou: teacher suggests starting in 3rd pos since this is where student identified hand is more comfy in the first place.
Then tries same song in first position. Student puts hand in first position, comments that her arm muscles feel stretched. Asked if that's a problem, says it's ok. More of an observation that is felt different.
Plucks song in 1st position, on recording, sound is clearly less resonant.
Asked difference between the 2 positions: suggested that 1st stretchd the arm more, and 3rd was "less grabby". Asked to choose one she liked, chose 3rd position. Teacher suggests continuing the plucking in 3rd position.

Lesson 402: 06/09/2011

Incident 40201 – 2'55"
Summary:
Grandfather clock. Did 1st position first, then tried 3rd pos. student chose 1st position because ribs of violin get in the way a bit. Again, student couldn't articulate it well, teacher had to offer clearer wording.
was then asked to do grandfather plucking. Having just chosen 1st pos, the student 'naturally' did the exercise in 3rd position. Student asked, not sure why they did it. Asked to try both positions with grandfather plucking, chose 3rd pos as better for plucking (as opposed to NOT plucking in grandfather clock).

Reflection:
the unconscious choice of 3rd pos for grandfather plucking matches with her choice in incident 40101 of 3rd position as the best for plucking.

Incident 40202 – 21'20"
Summary:
student was doing open string assisted bowing, not attending to the left hand. Teacher noticed student unconsciously held the violin in third position.

Teacher draws her attention to this event. Student confirms she is finding it comfy there. Then comments she is confused what position she should be in, then says she doesn't really care.

Reflection:
Noticed that the questioning the teacher is doing re these positions is more than would normally happen if it wasn't for the benefit of research. Student may be feeling they are being asked great detail about something that doesn't seem so important for them.

Incident 40203 - 26'10"

Summary:
Stopping. Did 1st position first. Then did 3rd position.
Student then asked to try both at home that week and consider during the week which position she prefers. Says she already knows which one; 3rd position, it's just easier. Couldn't say why it is easier.

Lesson 403: 13/09/2011

Incident 40301 – 3'00"
Summary:
Revision of LH plucking, reminded student of the choice between 3rd & 1st position. Again said 3rd is more comfy. Couldn't think of why. So this exercise was done in 3rd position.

Incident 40302 – 10'30"
Summary:
Revision of fingered stopping. Reminded we had 2 ways, student did both positions at home. Asked if there was any difference at home. Mentioned 1st pos had to reach further, which was just a bit annoying. 3rd pos was easier, didn't have to stretch as far. Does 3rd pos first. Asked if they want to try the exercise in 1st pos and does so.
Again, asked for more reasons. Couldn't think of any.
Given more sheets, again given the choice to continue in both positions or just a chosen one. Chooses to just continue in 3rd position.

Reflection:
Again, it seems that this choice only presents small differences for the student.
Teacher has saturated the questioning on this.

Quarterly Summary #1
Holding the violin:
Lesson 1: Asked to support violin after elephant arms: choose 3rd position, being a little bit easier since arm doesn't have to stretch as far.
Lesson 2: holds violin in 3rd position of own accord when doing open string bowing. Also says she doesn't really care what position she should be in.
Left hand plucking:
Lesson 1: finds 2nd finger is easier to pluck with, but using 4th makes a better sound.

Lesson 1: plucks in 3rd at teachers suggestion. Then tries in 1st position, says muscles feel more stretched. Observation, not complaint. Sound clearly less resonant in 1st position. Student asked to choose one, chose 3rd position.
Lesson 2: Grandfather plucking in 3rd position of own accord, was better for the plucking.
Lesson 3: offered choice of each position, chose 3rd. More comfy.
Left elbow positioning:
Lesson 2: grandfather clock, chose 1st position, ribs get in the way a bit.
Finger stopping:
Lesson 2: Tried both, asked to try at home and decide, but said immediately she chose 3rd position. Just easier.
Lesson 3: said in 1st position she had to reach further, a bit annoying, 3rd pos was easier.
Lesson 3: chooses to just continue tuition in 3rd position.

Lesson 404: 20/09/2011

Incident 40401

Summary:
Student warmed up with skip to my lou with the bow, and subconsciously she put her hand in 3rd position.

Incident 40402 – 11'45"
Summary:
Doing stopping, student is playing with the finger tip angled very much forward towards the bridge. Ie, the string is being pressed down by the finger nail. Asks student why that is happening, student doesn't know. Teacher suggests 'trying' other angles of the finger to see if they work better or not. Student put the finger on with the wrist not touching the ribs and in a collapsed out position. Naturally the finger angle was leaning forward. Teacher asks student what they need to do with their hand to make the finger angle lean back more, student ends up resting hand against the ribs (wrist more collapsed in) and the finger angle is then leaning back more.
Teacher then asks what it feels like to have the fingers angled back, says it feels funny, doesn't know why. Asks student to keep trying different angles at home.

Reflection:
Regardless of this change of finger angle, the student is still clearly struggling with 'getting comfortable' with stopping.

Lesson 405: 06/10/2011

Incident 40501 – 8'20"

Summary:
Singing see saw – student placed hand in 3rd position of their own accord

Incident 40502 – 18'10"
Summary:

Playing hot cross buns in 3rd position, asked to find most comfortable position for the thumb.
Chooses thumb right on the 1st finger sticker

Lesson 406: 11/10/2011

Incident 40601 – 7'30"
Summary:
s/he chooses hot cross buns. Chooses 1st position E string.
Sound is very scratchy. next part of lesson spent working on sound.

Incident 40602 – 18'17"
Summary:
Teacher asks student to play scale. Student picks 1st position on the A string.
Student having some trouble stretching the 3rd finger.

Incident 40603 – 18'50"
Summary:
Teacher addressing left hand comfort and ease. Teacher: "I want you to find, with your thumb and your wrist and your arm, the most comfortable position where you can reach that 4th finger. [student playing high 3rd as well]"
Student is in 1st position on the A string. Student collapses his/her wrist in. fingers appear curved and comfortable.
Student was unable to articulate exactly what they did – "didn't know" what they did. Teacher tells them they moved their wrist in, student agrees that that makes it easier to stretch.
When the scale was played again, the teacher had to remind the student to keep moving the wrist often. The fingers appeared to comfortably reach the right spots.

Incident 40604 – 23'30"
Summary:
Whole lesson has been played in 1st position. Teacher asks student to repeat the scale in 3rd position to compare to 1st.
Student felt that 3rd position was easier place to play that scale. While half way through the scale, student says "I can play this really fast, ready?" and then completes the descending scale quickly.

Lesson 407: 25/10/2011

Incident 40701 – 1'00"
Summary:
Student chooses Hot Cross Buns E string in 1st position
Sound quality is already better.
Student playing with fingers rolled overtly onto the finger nail – wrist is bent out.
Teacher asks student to play with the fingers rolled back a little, student plays hot cross buns again, this time in 3rd position.

Teacher: "That was certainly a different angle, wasn't it. Did it feel any different?" Student: "Yes. Because I was in 3rd position." Teacher: "So did that help things?" Student: "I don't know." Teacher: "Why did you do it in 3rd?" Student: "Not sure." Teacher then asks student to place a finger on the string, then to move the finger between leaning flat and rolled up on the nail, to find where is most comfortable. Then asks what they need to do with their hand and arm to get those fingers into that position. Student not sure how. Check field notes
Teacher makes student aware that their wrist position is affecting their finger angle, and that changing the wrist position can help.
Student chooses G string to play it again. Student gets fingers on the string and adjusts the wrist position to get a comfy angle for the fingers.

Lesson 408: 08/11/2011

Incident 40801 – 5'30"
Summary:
Student plays Hot cross buns: chooses 3rd position G string
Teacher mentions student had their wrist bent out, asks her to try wrist in and then compare. "Which do you prefer, touching or not touching?" Student: "Not touching." "Um… I don't really have any reasons for anything."

Incident 40802 – 8'30"
Summary:
Student plays hot cross buns 3rd position on E string. Said the sound was screechy.

Incident 40803 – 13'30"
Summary:
Burnt hot cross buns introduced, Low 3rd finger. Teacher asks student to try it. Student has preconceived idea that they will be better at this hand position. "because I'm good at close [fingers]."
Student plays it on the E string 3rd position. Student then played the major (high 3) version, and seemed to enjoy it more "Can I go again?"
Teacher then asks for another play at the minor version, student complains
"It's hard… because I just can't get used to it." Teacher encourages another go. Student struggled to get the fingers close enough together.
Asked which hand position they prefer: "Which feeling do you prefer?" Student: "[Indicates high 3 position] because it hurts in here [indicates 4th finger muscle on side of hand]" teacher: "when I do the squashy one?" student: "yeah"

Incident 40843 – 18'45"
Summary:
Teacher asks for mary had a little lamb. Student chooses 3rd position on E string.

Lesson 409: 15/11/2011

Incident 40901 – 5'00"
Summary:
Student chooses Mary had a little lamb in 3rd position on the A string

Wrist is bent in against the ribs. 3rd finger is flat.

Incident 40902 – 10'00"
Summary:
Student chooses hot cross buns on A string in 3rd position.
Wrist is bent out with finger angle up on the nails.
Teacher mentions that wrist wasn't touching the ribs "It's just comfy. I didn't actually realise." After thinking about it a little, student indicates that "it sort of hurts" when the wrist is touching.

Incident 40903 – 16'40"
Summary:
Student to play au clair de la lune chooses 3rd position. Can't choose which string, will play it on each to decide which sounds best. Chooses E string. "because it didn't hurt my arm then."

Lesson 410: 06/12/2011

Incident 41001 – 2'50"
Summary
Student is asked to play hot cross buns. Chooses E string 3rd position. Clearly improving.

Incident 41002 – 6'30"
Summary
Teacher asks for hot cross buns on D string. Student chooses 1st position. Asked why "The only reason I do it in 1st position if I'm on the G or D strings is because it's easier to adapt to." Teacher: " is that because when you're up in this position [3rd] you have to reach over the violin there, but down here [1st] you can just, get it a bit easier?" student: "[nods] because that bit's thinner."

Incident 41003 – 10'00"
Summary
Teacher asks for burnt hot cross buns, student chooses E string 3rd position.
Asked is she prefers either low 3 or high 3 hand position. She doesn't care.

Incident 41003 – 14'00"
Summary
Mary had a little lamb at teacher's request. Student chooses A string 3rd position.

Lesson 411: 07/12/2011

Incident 41101 – 1'00"
Summary
Go tell aunt rhody, student chooses 3rd position. Wrist is against the ribs.

Incident 41102 – 12'30"
Summary

Practicing bowing, student had come up with idea of playing 1-2-3-4 on each string. Teacher then asks to try in first position to see if it may be any better or easier. Says there is no difference.

Lesson 412: 08/12/2011

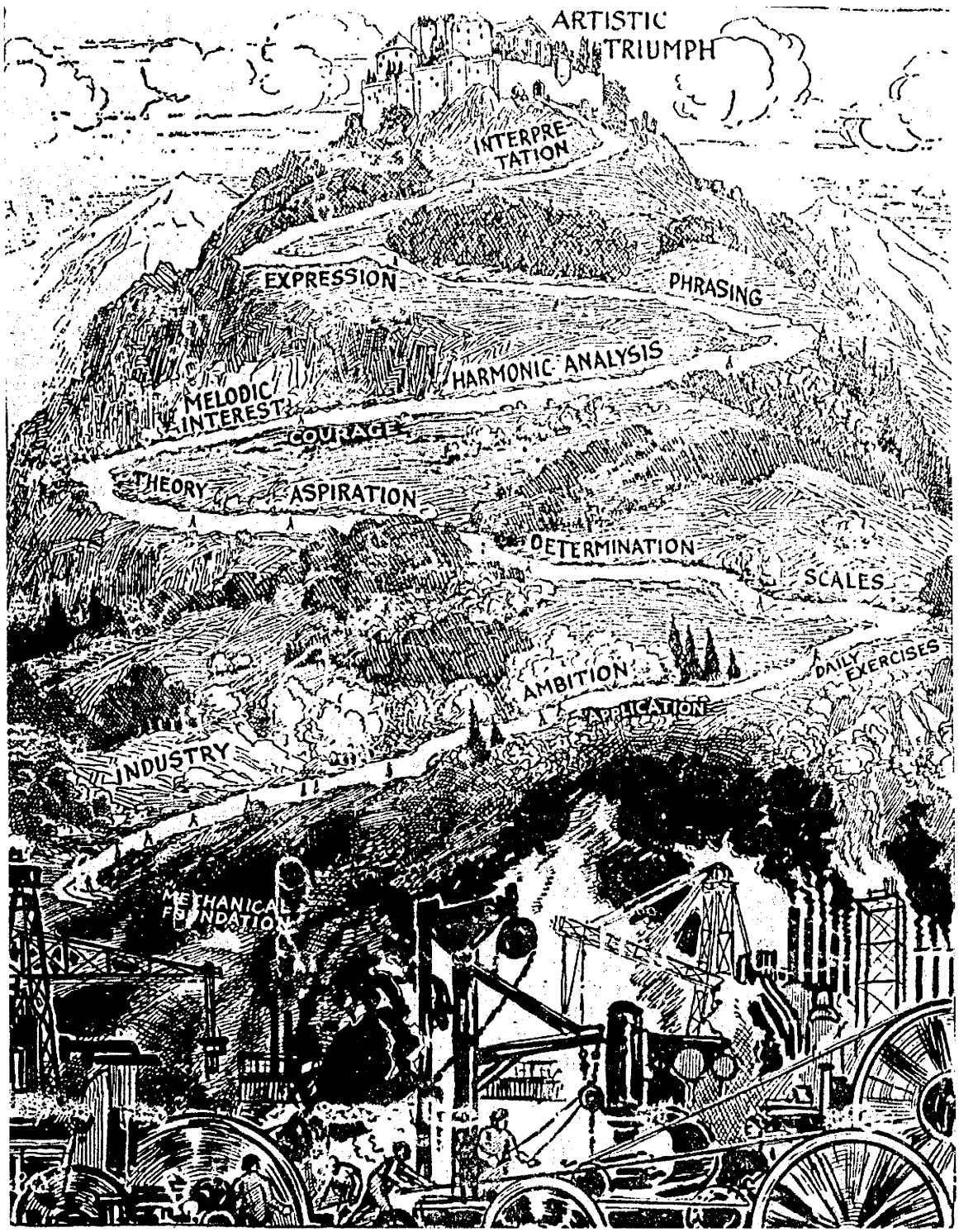
Incident 41201 – 2'40"
Summary
Teacher asks for au Claire de la lune. Student picks E string in 3rd position.

Incident 41202 – 4'20"
Summary
teacher asks for au Claire de la lune on G string in 1st position – opposite to where student mostly chooses.
"It's hard, I haven't done it before"
student finds bowing on G string much harder, and wants to play it in 3rd position.

Incident 41203 – 10'00"
Summary
student chooses hot cross buns, E string in 3rd position.
Teacher then asks for burnt hot cross buns, same position and string. Asks preference between low 3 and high 3 position. Student chooses high 3 position.

Incident 41204 – 14'10"
Summary
Teacher introduces scale, student chooses 3rd position on A string. "closest to E"

Appendix E: The virtuosic mountain



A woodcut by Aubertine Woodward Moore, entitled *From Mechanical Foundation to Artistic Triumph* that appeared in a mainstream American Music journal in 1918.

Appendix F: The road to success

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS.

This allegorical cartoon is adapted to musical education from an original drawing issued by the National Cash Register Company to point the road to business success.

The Etude (October, 1913)

Appendix G: Position choice matrices – Charlie

Position choice matrix

Lesson	No difference	Chooses another position	1st guided	1st unguided	3rd guided	3rd unguided
1			30101	30104	30103	30102
2	30201	30202			30203	
3		30303	30302 30306	30305		30301 30304
4			30404	30401		
5						
6			30601			
7			30704 30705	30701		
8				30802 30803 30804		
9			30903 30905	30903		
10				31003		
11						
12						

Position choice overview

Position choices	Lesson range	Reasons given	Wrist positioning	Favourite string
First	1-12	• More space to move hand around • Feels more relaxed	• Bent-in against neck: supports violin • Straight: feels more free and loose • Bent-out: feels twisted • Bent-in on lower strings, easier to reach strings • 1 rival: bent-in on lower string feels 'squished' in 10th lesson	• G & D
Third	1-3	• Strings higher, easier to pluck with LH • Sound is louder • Helps support the violin	• Resting against ribs, supports violin	
No choice	2	• 2nd position: combines higher string height with more room to swing elbow		

Appendix H: Position choice matrices – Kelly

Position choice matrix

Lesson	No difference	1st guided	1st unguided	3rd guided	3rd unguided
1				60103	60102
2	60202 60205	60205	60201	60202	60204
3	60306				60302 60305
4					60401 60402
5	60502 60504	60503 60506	60501 60502 60505		
6	60602		60603		60604
7			60704 60706		
8	60802		60801 60803		
9	60902		60903 60905 60906		
10			61001		
11			61101	61102	61103
12				61201	61204

Position choice overview

Position choices	Lesson range	Reasons given	Wrist positioning	Favourite string
First	1, 5-11	• More space to move hand around • Easier to press strings down • Sound less 'fuzzy' • Easier to stretch fingers (note, 1 rival incident)	• Bent-in against neck for bowing exercises	• G: louder clearer sound
Third	1-4, 6, 11-12	• Less arm discomfort than 1st position • Strings more spread out, easier to pluck with LH • More comfortable supporting violin when doing bowing exercises • Easier to stretch fingers (note, 1 rival incident)	• Resting against ribs eases left arm discomfort	
No choice	2-3. 5-9	• Finger stopping: no significant difference between first and third position		• G

Appendix I: Position choice matrices – Jules

Position choice matrix

Lesson	No difference	1st guided	1st unguided	3rd guided	3rd unguided
1		10102			10104
2	10202	10203			
3			10301	10303 10304	10302
4				10401	10402
5			10502	10501	
6	10603	10602		10601	
7				10702	
8					
9		10902			10901
10		11001 11004	11002		11003
11	11101 11102 11104 11105				
12	11202				

Position choice overview

Position choices	Lesson range	Reasons given	Wrist positioning	Favourite string
First	1-3, 5-6, 9-10	• Hand gets less tired (note: rival) • Arm / hand feels better • More space to move hand around • Easier to press strings down		
Third	1, 3-10	• Feels better LH plucking • Sounds better LH plucking • Feels better finger stopping • Hand gets less tired (note: rival) • Helps support violin better	• Resting against ribs makes hand feel more relaxed	
No choice	2, 6, 11-12	• Can change to the other if the hand gets tired in one. • Inadvertently played in third after verbally choosing first • Seems to 'aimlessly' pick a position • Enjoys both	• Couldn't find any difference between bent-in or straight wrist for finger stopping	No preference

Appendix J: Position choice matrices – Kim

Position choice matrix

Lesson	No difference	1st guided	1st unguided	3rd guided	3rd unguided
1				40101 40103	
2	40201 40202			40203	
3				40301 40302	
4					40401
5					40501
6			40601 40602	40604	
7					40701
8					40801 40802 40804
9					40901 40902 40903
10			41002		41001 41003
11					41101
12				41202	41201 41203 41204

Position choice overview

Position choices	Lesson range	Reasons given	Wrist positioning	Favourite string
First	6, 10	• Easier to reach lower strings: neck is thinner • More space to move hand around		
Third	1 - 12	• Don't have to stretch arm as much • Easier for finger stopping	• Prefers wrist not touching ribs	• E: arm hurts less
No choice	2	• No difference for LH plucking • Doesn't care which position		

Appendix K: Position choice matrices - Ashley

Position choice matrix

Lesson	No difference	1st guided	1st unguided	3rd guided	3rd unguided
1					
2				50202 50203	
3					50301
4				50402	50403
5					50501 50502 50503
6					50601 50602 50605
7		50702			50701 50703
8			50802 50803 50804		50801
9		50903	50904		
10			51001		51003
11			51101 51102		
12			51203 51204		51202

Position choice overview

Position choices	Lesson range	Reasons given	Wrist positioning	Favourite string
First	7-12	• Arm feels a bit too close to the body when in third • More space to move hand around • Easier to play (note: rival)	• Bent-in against neck helps support violin	• G: hand less squished • G sounds better
Third	2-8, 10, 12	• Easier • More comfortable • Easier for finger stopping • Easier for LH plucking • Don't have to stretch arm as much	• Hand resting against ribs more comfortable • Some challenges with shoulder rest, resting against ribs offers more support	• E & A more comfy
No choice				

Appendix L: Combined position choice matrix

Lesson	First (G)	First (UG)	Third (G)	Third (UG)	No Difference
1	30101 10102	30104	30103 60103 40101 40103	30102 60102 10104	
2	60205 10203	60201	30203 60202 40203 50202 50203	60204	30201 60202 60205 40201 40202 10202
3	30302 30306	30305 10301	10303 10304 40301 40302	30301 30304 60302 60305 10302 50301	60306
4	30404	30401	10401 50402	60401 60402 10402 40401 50403	
5	60503 60506	60501 60502 60505 10502	10501	40501 50501 50502 50503	60502 60504
6	30601 10602	40601 40602 41001 60603	10601 40604	60604 50601 50602 50605	60602 10603
7	30704 30705 50702	30701 60704 60706	10702	40701 50701 50703	
8		30802 30803 30804 60801 60803 50802 50803 50804		40801 40802 40804 50801	60802
9	30903 30905 10902 50903	30903 60903 60905 60906 50904		10901 40901 40902 40903	60902
10		31003 61001 41002 51001		11003 41001 41003 51003	
11	11001 11004	61101 11002 51101 51102	61102	61103 41101	11101 11102 11104 11105
12		51203 51204	61201 41202	61204 41201 41203 41204 51202	11202
Total	20	39	22	45	18
Grand Totals	First position = 59		Third Position = 67		No Difference = 18

G = guided choice UG = unguided choice

Appendix M: Common reasons matrix

Element	Common Reasons	Number of students
Position Choice		
First	More space to move hand around	5
	Generally easier and more comfortable	3
	Easier to press strings down	2
Third	Easier for left hand plucking	4
	Generally easier and more comfortable	2
	Helps support the violin better	3
	Easier for finger stopping	3
	Sound is better for left hand plucking	2
	Don't have to stretch arm as much	2
Wrist Positioning		
First	Bent-in against neck supports violin	3
Third	Resting hand against ribs more comfortable	3
String Choice		
First	G and / or D	3
Third	E and / or A	2