A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF INFORMAL LEARNING PRACTICES AND PROCESSES WITHIN THREE HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL PROGRAMS

A Dissertation
Submitted to
The Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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by
Aimee D. Pearsall
May 2023

Examining Committee Members:

Dr. Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, Advisory Chair, Music Education
Dr. Rollo Dilworth, Music Education
Dr. Helen Shoemark, Music Therapy
Dr. Shana Goldin-Perschbacher, External Member, Music Studies

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ABSTRACT

Despite the repeated call-to-action to identify more inclusive and equitable approaches within school music ensembles, choral teaching and learning in the United States still favors practices that perpetuate injustices while limiting democracy and student autonomy (Bradley, 2007; de Quadros, 2015; Howard, 2020; O'Toole, 2005; Philpott & Kubilius, 2015; Shaw, 2012, 2016, 2019). In many ways, music teacher socialization surrounding best choral practices for teaching and learning has remained stable since the 19th century. Most choral teachers in the United States continue to center sequential patterns of teaching and learning with a singular trained leader, Western Art Music (WAM), and polished products of music (Conkling, 2019). These practices are best defined as Formal Learning (FL), or learning that includes a structured curriculum and instructional plan, sequential learning process, teacher in charge, and clear assessment plan (Mok, 2011c).

Though FL endures as the "default option" in large ensemble classroom settings such as bands, choirs, and orchestras (Conkling, 2019), Informal Learning (IL) in music education—learning that is "not sequenced beforehand" and contains components that are "self-chosen and voluntary" (Folkestad, 2006, p. 141)—has steadily gained popularity in the United Kingdom and the United States since its introduction in Nordic countries in the 1960s (Hallam et al., 2018). In the early 21st century, Green (2002) conducted a seminal study about how popular musicians learn using Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP). Since then, researchers and teachers worldwide have explored IL in elementary music classrooms (Davis, 2013; Moore, 2019), secondary music contexts (Bersh, 2011; Costes-Onishi, 2016; Evans et al., 2015; Gower, 2012; Green, 2008;

Hallam et al., 2018; Jones, 2015; Moore, 2019; Vasil, 2015; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2016; Wright, 2016), and collegiate settings (Finney & Philpott, 2010; Isbell, 2016; Karlsen, 2010; Mok, 2017).

Feichas (2010) called IL a "pedagogy of diversity and inclusion" (p. 57), because of the inherent choice involved, the minimization of Eurocentric musics, and the opportunity for all to access this way of learning. Jones (2009) claimed students' engagement with music in IL settings as one of the most promising indicators of musicking throughout one's life because of the student choice, informal skills, and self-regulated learning involved. Despite these benefits, research related to IL within high school choral contexts remains scarce. The purpose of this multiple case study was to investigate Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three public high school choral programs. A qualitative multiple case study design guided me toward purposive sampling (Patton, 2015; Stake, 2006). In total, I selected and studied the experiences of three teachers and 59 total student participants, ages 14-18. Data sources and types at each site included choir teacher and student interviews/transcripts, observations/field notes, recordings from concerts and rehearsals, course materials, and other artifacts. In total, I conducted six individual interviews with the teachers and 89 individual/focus group interviews with the students. Additionally, I conducted approximately 104 total hours of observations, split among all three sites.

Upon completion of data collection, I engaged in a within-case analysis by first constantly comparing the data with the emerging conceptual framework, The IL-FL Continua, and next open-coding the data and grouping the codes into themes. I subsequently completed the cross-case analysis, first by forming types/families of

learning practices and processes (Miles et al., 2020), and subsequently by constructing nine explanations (Yin, 2018) that captured the essence of the quintain: student and teacher perspectives of ILPP in choral programs (Stake, 2006). To ensure trustworthiness, I employed triangulation, peer coding, and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The within-case data analysis revealed a wide variety of benefits related to ILPP in choir including musical validation and growth, musical self-efficacy, bolstered community, creative freedom, feelings of ownership, enhanced life skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, independence, social-emotional skills), and a more relaxed environment. Challenges of ILPP in choir that emerged included musical setbacks, navigating open-ended and independent tasks, social dynamics in group work, unequal contribution, and limited time. The three teachers each held different values that prompted them to center ILPP in choir. For instance, one teacher centered ILPP because he valued student voice and democracy, while another teacher centered ILPP to foster lifelong music-making.

The Informal-Formal Activities Continuum which emerged from the cross-case data analysis (see Figure 3), features four types of learning practices and processes in high school choirs: (a) teacher or student led rehearsals, (b) large group creative activities, (c) small group creative activities, and (d) non-compulsory performance opportunities. Further analysis revealed two models of integrating IL and FL in choral contexts: mutually-supportive and additive. A mutually-supportive model of IL-FL refers to a pedagogy of practice whereby students experience learning on all parts of the IL-FL Continua which contributes toward shared outcomes and goals. An additive model refers to a pedagogy of practice whereby some students may experience shared outcomes and

goals. While additive and mutually-supportive models resulted in similar benefits such as student enjoyment and motivation, strengthened community, life skills, and recruitment/program advocacy, the mutually-supportive model promoted greater musical and communal outcomes.

This study holds implications for developing and centering a new choral philosophy for inservice and preservice choral teacher education. At the core of this philosophy lies a mutually-supportive IL-FL model, facilitated by decentralized power and a democratic classroom environment. By engaging students in varying learning styles, decentering power in the classroom, and encouraging students to make choices to support their own learning, teachers may foster student lifelong and lifewide music-making.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was truly a labor of love made possible by so many. I could not have forged this path without the support from my advisor, committee members, friends, family, and students.

To my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Parker: thank you for your relentless dedication to my academic journey over the past five years. Your support, time, energy, and expertise has been invaluable to me and has meant the world. Perhaps most significantly, thank you for inspiring me as I pursue my career as a female in academia; you embody everything I hope to become, and I'm truly so honored to have learned from you.

To my committee members—Dr. Rollo Dilworth, Dr. Helen Shoemark, and Dr. Shana Goldin-Perschbacher—thank you for teaching me, challenging me, and for helping me to hone this dissertation. Your expertise has been truly instrumental in my journey, and I could not have hoped for a more caring, kind, and knowledgeable group of people with whom to have worked. To the graduate cohort—Lauren, Whitney, Peter, and Jenny—it has been such a pleasure to walk alongside you on this journey. Thank you specifically to Dr. Lauren Ryals for peer coding for me and serving as a sounding board not only on this project, but throughout the program.

To Peter: thank you for your unrelenting support and for teaching me what it means to be there, no matter what. You are the reason for my sanity. I'm grateful to you for your countless hours of editing and emotional support. To all of my best friends and closest colleagues: thank you for inspiring me daily through your teaching, kindness, and loyalty. Finally, to my mom: thank you for encouraging me from day one to reach for the stars.

Most significantly, thank you to all of my students—past and present—for teaching me about the importance of mutual respect, community, vulnerability, and following your heart. Thank you for teaching me to believe that *adolescents can do anything*. My heart bursts with emotion and pride when I think of how you have all changed my life for the better.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many colleagues, peers, former professors, and friends congratulated me on my first middle school teaching appointment because of the school music program's positive reputation that included polished formal choral performances of difficult repertoire, high student enrollment, and a supportive administration. Armed with this information, I took an ambitious approach, programming high school level repertoire for each choir, and even adding pieces that I sang in college. The students in my advanced groups excelled, bounding into the room day after day with seemingly endless enthusiasm, and with a readiness to work hard as I taught them to align vowels, read music, blend their tone, balance their sound, and sing with precise articulation. However, students outside of the advanced groups reacted differently; they seemed to enjoy choir, but often asked questions such as, "Why can't we sing songs we like?" and "Do we have to sing the same thing every day?" As a beginning teacher, I ruminated over these questions, pondering how I could best serve all students in my choirs, not only those in advanced ensembles.

I began integrating "Informal Learning days," and stomached the guilt I felt for taking time away from rehearsing our choral repertoire, practicing reading Western notation, and focusing on vocal technique. These "Informal Learning days" started on rare occasions, and then morphed into an every-other-day experience for students. We started simply as I provided prompts for open-ended projects that students could tackle in friendship groups, such as (a) make a rhythmic composition with found sounds, (b) write and rehearse a parody, (c) create your own jingle and record a commercial, or (d) arrange

an *a cappella* cover of a chorus from the song of your choice. During that time, I also conducted informal Google polls, asking students to provide feedback about what they found motivating and would like to learn. Almost unanimously, students across ensembles noted that they enjoyed mixing up the format of the rehearsal and engaging in Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP). Students explained that they loved singing songs they knew, engaging in creative activities, and working with their friends—not in place of the formal choral rehearsal, but in addition to the formal choral rehearsal.

After hearing the students' perspectives, I decided to expand the ILPP footprint of the program. I wrote and received a grant from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and designed a GoFundMe proposal to buy a set of ukuleles, which the custodian kindly helped me to hang in the back of the choral classroom. By the end of my second year of teaching at the school, each student had written an original song accompanied on ukulele or keyboard and had the opportunity to perform at a local coffee shop in a Coffee House Performance, surrounded by their friends and family who sipped hot chocolates and munched on snacks.

Those students from my first two years of teaching will always hold a special place in my heart, because they taught me that my goal as a choir teacher is not to replicate my collegiate choir experience, but to provide a rich, place-based music education that meets their needs and builds upon their already-existing musical identities.

Statement of the Problem

Choral educators have continued to center many of the same values and practices in today's music classes as early North American music educators proposed in the 1830s: reading Western music notation (often referred to as music literacy), programming

Western Art Music repertoire (WAM), preparing polished performance products, and prioritizing formal instruction with a singular leader (Conkling, 2019; de Quadros, 2015; Gould, 2012; Gustafson, 2008; Howard, 2020; O'Toole, 2005; Philpott & Kubilius, 2015). While formal practices still take a central place in most music classrooms, music teachers have increasingly experimented with ILPP since the 1960s (Hallam et al., 2018). Accordingly, researchers have sought to investigate ILPP in varying musical contexts. In studying students of all ages, researchers have proposed that when teachers use ILPP, they validate students' out-of-school musical lives in the classroom, which facilitates student feelings of motivation, ownership, and autonomy (Evans et al., 2015; Feichas, 2010; Green, 2008; Varela et al., 2016). Additionally, students can gain musical and extra-musical skills when engaging in ILPP (Evans et al., 2015). Along with positive outcomes that derive from ILPP, students and teachers experience challenges. Teachers have indicated an apprehensiveness to engage students in ILPP because they have developed a schema of so-called "good choral teaching," which centers direct instruction and sequential patterns of instruction (Howard, 2020; Shaw, 2019; Wright, 2016). Additionally, students have reported social challenges related to working with cohorts of their peers (Ballantyne & Lebler, 2016; Bersh, 2011; Butler et al., 2021).

Though researchers have discovered musical, personal, social, psychological, and external benefits to adolescent participation in formal choral settings (Adderley et al., 2003; Arasi, 2006; Bartolome, 2013; Durrant, 2005; Parker, 2010, 2011, 2014; Sanal & Gorsev, 2014), researchers, teachers, and leaders of prominent choral organizations have recently identified several areas of growth for the profession. These areas of growth include (a) centering culturally and socially relevant and responsive choral teaching and

learning, (b) developing varied musicianship skills, and (c) encouraging lifelong involvement in music (ACDA Diversity Initiatives Committee, 2017; Arasi, 2006; Campbell et al., 2014; Conkling, 2019; de Quadros, 2015; Shaw, 2012, 2016, 2019). Though many of these same leaders cite lifelong musical involvement as one of the primary goals of music education (ACDA, 2023), choral programs often do not accomplish this goal (Arasi, 2006; Woody & Lehman, 2010).

Jones (2009) claimed students' engagement with music in Informal Learning (IL) settings as one of the most promising indicators of musicking throughout one's life because student choice, informal skills, and self-regulated learning are all implicit. Yet, many students do not experience ILPP in their choral programs (Conkling, 2019; Finney & Philpott, 2010) and most studies about ILPP in school music have taken place in a general music setting. The most closely related studies to this inquiry were conducted by Haning (2021) and Abrahams et al. (2017). Haning (2021) explored collaborative learning in the choral rehearsal with four themes emerging, including collaboration and connection, growth and learning, accomplishment, and conflict. Abrahams et al. (2017) explored ILPP in a secondary choral ensemble and found that co-creating an arrangement positively impacted peer-directed learning, autonomy, group cooperation, and leadership. Additionally, the culture of the ensembles improved when students perceived improvement in their musical skills and abilities. Even with these studies related to collaborative learning and ILPP in choral ensembles, the music education community does not know enough about how teachers facilitate and how students experience ILPP in the context of a school choral classroom. This deficiency in the literature prompted me to initiate this multiple case study of ILPP in three choral programs.

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this dissertation, I used the following definitions:

Formal Learning (FL): Learning that feels compulsory and includes a structured curriculum and instructional plan, sequential learning process, power centered around one or a few individuals, and clear assessment plan (Mok, 2011c). In a FL situation, the teacher typically sequences the activity beforehand and leads the activity, though the leadership "position does not need to be static," and the person organizing and leading the task could be a student (Folkestad, 2006, p. 141).

Informal Learning (IL): Learning that is "not sequenced beforehand" and contains components that are "self-chosen and voluntary" (Folkestad, 2006, p. 141). In an IL situation, no singular leader sequences the activity beforehand and scaffolds student learning. Instead, learners share ownership, mutually making decisions.

Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP): For the purposes of this dissertation, ILPP refers specifically to practices and processes related to informal music learning. To define ILPP, I embrace Green's (2008) five main characteristics of informal popular music learning practices which include, but are not limited to students (a) choosing music for themselves; (b) singing and playing songs by ear; (c) learning by themselves, with peers, and with teacher-as-facilitator; (d) obtaining knowledge and skills in haphazard ways, not necessarily linear or simple to complex; and (e) integrating listening, performing, improvising, and composing.

Paradigm and Philosophical Assumptions

A researcher's philosophical assumptions inform their approach to research, which begin with formulating the problem and research questions and continue with

selecting a design and method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, my paradigm centers multiple realities. My understanding of the world is that people construct their own realities from their lived experiences, which hold validity and truth. These realities are not constructed in a vacuum, but rather within the context of existing societal constructs, including political, religious, and cultural. Thus, I acknowledge that knowledge is not neutral, and knowledge and understandings instead reflect power dynamics and social relationships. For these reasons, I chose to embrace a transformative paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertens, 2007). The transformative paradigm implies one central tenet: "power is an issue that must be addressed at each stage of the research process" (Mertens, 2007, p. 213).

Mertens (2007, 2012) developed the transformative paradigm to address inequality and injustice, and thereafter organized a set of philosophical assumptions to address ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. When considering ontology, or the nature of reality, adoption of the transformative paradigm assumes "multiple realities that are socially constructed . . . [with an] explicit . . . [focus on] the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, racial, gender, age, and disability values that define realities" (Mertens, 2007, p. 216). The transformative paradigm's ontological assumption also propels researchers to think critically about how privilege can affect one's reality. When considering epistemology, researchers ponder questions about whose knowledge is valid and how claims are justified. The epistemological assumption of the transformative paradigm is that "knowledge is socially and historically located within a complex cultural context," and therefore, the researcher and participants in the study must form an interactive relationship that centers awareness of culture and power dynamics.

Methodologically, the transformative paradigm can lead to any approach: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. No matter the research approach, “methods should be adjusted to accommodate cultural complexity, power issues should be explicitly addressed, and issues of discrimination and oppression should be recognized” (Mertens, 2007, p. 216). Axiology, the final philosophical assumption necessary to define the transformative paradigm, can be defined as the role of values, ethics, and moral behavior in research. On the topic of the transformative axiological assumption, Mertens (2012) wrote:

> The transformative axiological assumption includes the importance of respecting cultural histories and norms in interactions in order to conduct research that has the potential to increase social justice. Researchers need to be cognizant of the pervasiveness of discrimination and oppression and to understand communities sufficiently to effectively challenge the status quo and provide a basis for social change. (p. 804)

In summary, researchers who employ the transformative paradigm seek social change, viewing power as an issue to address throughout the research process.

IL in classrooms directly challenge typical teacher-student power dynamics by altering students’ learning styles, ownership, and intentionality of the learning at hand (Folkestad, 2006; Wright, 2016). Because I sought change in music education practices and my research topic grappled with issues of power dynamics in the choral classroom, I approached my design, data collection, and analysis with a transformative paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertens, 2003). When designing the study, I embraced how the students and teachers socially constructed their knowledge and understandings within and outside the cultural context of their school building, leading to their experience of multiple realities based on their identities and unique circumstances. A transformative

paradigm led me to select a qualitative research approach and design that prioritized data collection in a natural setting. Through this research, I also acknowledged the privileges that certain students brought into the classroom with them, taking care to notice who benefited from different types of instruction. I sought to remain aware of the many power dynamics at play, including those visible between teacher to student, student to student, teacher to researcher, and student to researcher. Before beginning this study, I considered how the research was saturated with my values and influenced by my positionality. My philosophical assumptions permeated every aspect of this research, including the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Miles et al. (2020) described a conceptual framework as “the current and evolving version of the researcher’s ‘map’ of the qualitative territory being investigated” (p. 15). Researchers employ conceptual frameworks to better understand the data that they collect (Miles et al., 2020). In addition to laying out a conceptual framework at the beginning of a study, the researcher should remain open to a conceptual framework developing during data collection and analysis, “ground[ing] itself in the local elements of a particular, unique study” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 15).

My research purpose and questions relied on my ability to identify, name, and describe ILPP in three choral settings. Because ILPP can manifest in many ways, I began by defining IL so that I could recognize it in the field and compare varying IL interactions across cases. I also adopted an existing model to serve as an inductive framework, which was initially proposed by Folkestad (2006) and later adapted by Wright (2016).

Folkestad (2006) identified four distinct ways to define and use FL and IL terms, including the situation, the learning style, ownership, and intentionality. The situation equates FL and IL with physical context such as formal with institutional contexts and informal outside of institutional contexts. Learning style describes the "character, the nature and quality of the learning process" (p. 141). Ownership relates to questions of didactic teaching as opposed to self-regulated learning, including who "owns the decisions of the activity" (p. 142). Finally, intentionality clarifies if the focus of the musicking lies in how to make music, or in the act of music-making itself (p.142). Arguing that learning can shift rapidly from formal to informal, Wright (2016) adapted Folkestad's framework, depicting Folkestad's (2006) four types of learning on continua and proposing the "mixed polarities of real-life learning" (p. 212; see Figure 1; see Appendix A).

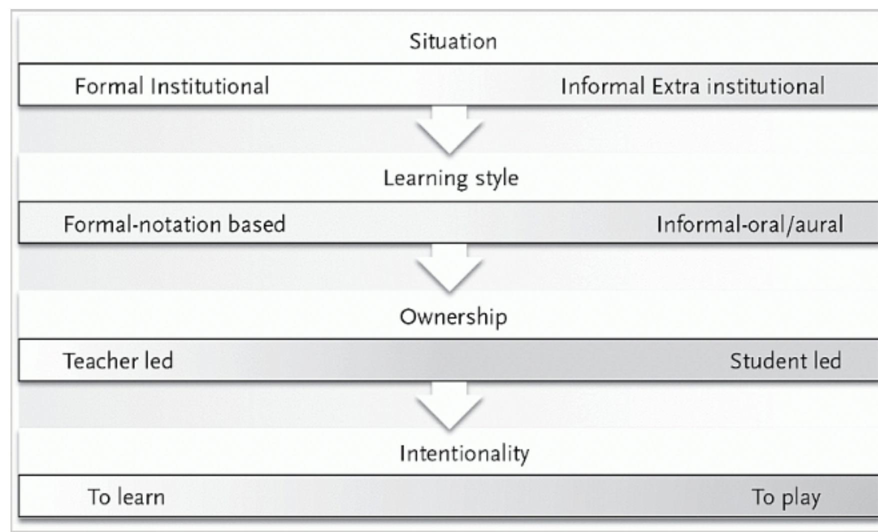

Figure 1. *Mixed Polarities of Real-Life Learning (Wright, 2016).*

Folkestad (2006) claimed that one may employ multiple definitions when describing IL (situation, learning style, ownership, and intentionality) because they are

“not contradictory” (p. 142). Thus, for the purposes of this study, I decided to use learning style, ownership, and intentionality of musicking to distinguish types of learning (informal/formal) within school contexts. Notably, I eliminated the situation continuum, because all instances of ILPP in this study took place in institutional contexts, specifically schools, and “it is far too simplified, and actually false, to say that formal learning only occurs in institutional settings and that informal learning only occurs outside school” (Folkestad, 2006, p. 142). As I entered the field, I interrogated the conceptual framework and remained open to modifications, as suggested by Miles et al. (2020). I describe the modifications I made and the revised conceptual framework in Chapter 3.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to investigate ILPP within the context of three public high school choral programs. The research questions included:

1. How are ILPP evident within the context of three public high school choral programs?
2. How do high school choral teachers and students describe the benefits of ILPP in the choral program?
3. How do high school choral teachers and students describe the challenges of ILPP in the choral program?
4. What beliefs and values lead teachers to make space for ILPP within the high school choral program?

Overview of the Method

A qualitative multiple case study design emerged as most appropriate approach to explore ILPP within the context of multiple choral programs. I considered naturalistic

inquiry, an emergent design, and purposeful sampling—all central components of qualitative inquiry– critical to investigating the research questions (Patton, 2015). Because teachers center ILPP in choral classes in multiple ways, I chose to explore several contexts using a multiple-case study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). To begin, I articulated and defined the quintain, or "the object or phenomenon or condition to be studied" (Stake, 2006, p. 6) as student and teacher perspectives of ILPP in school choral programs. To gain an understanding of each case, I interviewed choral students and teachers, conducted observations, collected artifacts, and triangulated the data throughout the data collection. In addition to triangulating the data, I increased trustworthiness by varying data source and types, conducting member checking with participants, and engaging in peer coding with an experienced music education researcher. Finally, I conducted a within-case and cross-case analysis of the data, which resulted in explanations that served to illuminate the quintain (Yin, 2018).

Site and Participant Selection

To better understand student and teacher perspectives of ILPP in school choral programs, I selected three single heterogeneous cases to exemplify the variations of ILPP across multiple sites (Yin, 2018). I began case sampling in spring 2021 by contacting music education and choral professors who demonstrated expertise in ILPP through publications and/or presentations, asking them to nominate high school choral teachers whose students engage in ILPP. After confirming teacher interest and receiving

Institutional Review Board (IRB) and school district approvals, I confirmed Davis High School, East High School, and Morris High School as the three sites for this study.[1]

Teacher participants at two of the schools, East High School and Morris High School, invited every student in their choral program to participate, while the teacher at the third school, Davis High School, invited participation of the students in the advanced ensemble, Cantamus. In addition to the three teacher participants, 59 students—ranging from 14-18 years of age—participated in this study, including 18 students from Davis High School, 17 students from East High School, and 24 students from Morris High School. Using a secure, HIPAA-Compliant online system entitled RedCAP, I obtained parent/guardian consent and student assent from each student participant, as well as consent from the teacher participants.

Positionality and Role of the Researcher

Researchers must not underestimate the importance of situating themselves in the research (Frierson-Campbell & Froehlich, 2013). As a teacher who has facilitated IL in choral spaces with elementary, middle, high school, and collegiate students, I brought an emic, or insider's perspective to the study (Campbell, 2003). I also embraced an etic perspective as an unfamiliar outsider to these three communities and choral cultures. I acknowledged that the "'emic' and 'etic' always work in tandem," and embraced the idea that "the duality of insider-outsider can be a particular strength of qualitative research" (Frierson-Campbell & Froehlich, 2013, p. 148).

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[1] All proper names, including, but not limited to schools, teachers, students, ensembles, and activities in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

Because of my transformative worldview, I sought to remain aware of the many power dynamics at play. I acknowledged the power dynamic that I brought as an employee of a university and as a professional music teacher. Though I situated myself as an observer, hoping to remain as unobtrusive as possible, students and teachers may have changed their behaviors based on my presence. Because of the informed consent process, the teacher and student participants understood that I valued IL; this also may have influenced their interview responses, leading them to answer more positively to please me as a professional.

I also acknowledged how the demographic aspects of my positionality, including my race, gender, and SES, may have impacted the data collection process. My race (White) and social class (middle SES) could have given me an unearned image of authority. Simultaneously, the intersectionality of my identity as a young, female professor, could have helped me present as less intimidating.

My positionality and experience working as a former middle school music teacher helped me to connect with students, who appeared relatively comfortable during their interviews. In addition to making small talk, joking, and exercising sarcasm to establish rapport, I purposefully sought to use simple language when referring to research constructs, even avoiding the term “informal learning.” Instead, I asked students about their experiences learning without their teacher, learning by ear, making music with friends, and more. Mostly, I centered questions around their experiences with activities specific to their school choir.

Many aspects of my positionality impacted how I approached my data interpretation and analysis. Because my lived experiences have led me to value IL in

choral settings, my former positive experiences with IL could have skewed my interpretation and analysis of the data. Though I sought to remain open-minded during the data collection and analysis, the possibility exists that I placed greater value on benefits as compared to challenges or drawbacks of ILPP in these three settings. On the other hand, reflecting on my own positive formal choral experiences helped me to bring a balanced perspective to the analysis.

In addition to informing my interaction with participants, my transformative worldview impacted my analysis. My worldview leads me to seek social change, which may have influenced me to place unearned value on the benefits of IL. Again, I sought a balanced analysis by reflecting on my own positive formal choral experiences and remaining open to what emerged in the field. Next, because I embrace multiple realities, I aimed to place equal emphasis on teacher and student perspectives, striving for a balanced analysis. I did this by primarily analyzing teacher and student-identified benefits and challenges together, instead of separately. In conclusion, my positionality interacted with all aspects of the data collection and analysis process, which I sought to acknowledge and unpack throughout the study.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the topic and problem and provided a brief introduction of the literature review before defining key terms. Next, I outlined my paradigm and philosophical assumptions and conceptual framework, before presenting the purpose and research questions, and providing an overview of the method and my own positionality. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature related to school choral music and informal music learning. Chapter 3 features the method of the study,

while Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings of the within-case analyses. In Chapter 7, I describe the results of the cross-case analysis, which resulted in a series of explanations and implications for teaching and learning, before proposing suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

For centuries, people from all walks of life have joined voices to celebrate, mourn, worship, and express a wide range of emotions through song. Perhaps because of the innate humanity of singing, choir exists as one of the most popular musical course offerings in North American secondary schools (Elpus & Abril, 2019). Historically, American choral directors and leaders who are trained in Western Art Music (WAM) have embraced unified practices of choral teaching and learning, including a focus on reading Western notation, efficient choral rehearsals achieved through sequential patterns of instruction, and an aim of "high-quality" music-making in schools (Conkling, 2019; de Quadros, 2015; Gould, 2012; Gustafson, 2008; Howard, 2020; O'Toole, 2005; Philpott & Kubilius, 2015). These practices are rooted in centuries-old traditions, such as singing masters leading singing schools, music reformers promoting "good" music, and ministers admonishing sub-par singing (Campbell, 2000; Gould, 2012; Mark, 2008).

Though American teachers have embraced these practices, they do not necessarily reflect the diverse ways that people learn and make music. Today, many choral teachers and leaders recognize the importance of adapting and changing choral practices in North America both to address emerging and continuing concerns related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) and to adapt to the ever-changing needs of 21st century learners. To understand the state of the choral profession and artform in America now, we must understand its origins. In other words, we must examine the beginnings of school music education in the United States.

Choral Music in North American Schools

From the time of the Ice Age, Indigenous American peoples engaged in vocal music-making, primarily an aural art-form (Tomlinson, 2015). Despite the ubiquity of singing and chanting across the many Indigenous American tribes, Native aural traditions were not adopted by the Pilgrims and Puritans, who colonized Northeast America in 1620 and 1630. The settlers brought their own songs and music-making practices from England, including folk music and sacred music, such as psalters, hymnals, and two methods of singing psalm tunes: (a) the Old Way, singing by rote; and (b) the Regular Way, singing by note (Mark, 2008). Also called lining out, the Old Way allowed all people, even those who could not read sheet music, to participate in music-making during worship. This method involved the deacon or precentor singing each line of the psalm, which was subsequently imitated by the congregation (Mark, 2008). As a result, most people learned psalms by rote, which they sang in meetinghouses and during prayer services in their homes.

Learning by rote was commonplace not only for Native peoples and the White colonists, but also for those enslaved, who brought music-making traditions from Africa, including singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments (Southern, 1997). In America, those enslaved continued making music in ways they knew, while also learning psalms with the Puritans and Pilgrims at meetinghouses as members of the congregations (Howe, 2013; Southern, 1997). As a result, Black people who were enslaved included psalm tunes as part of their own meetings, which eventually gave way to hymn singing in Black churches (Southern, 1997).

Over time, ministers in New England grew increasingly frustrated with the low-quality singing in their congregations, blaming many of the shortcomings on the parishioners' lack of ability to read Western music notation (Mark, 2008; Southern, 1997). By the early 1700s, the ministers had produced pamphlets and manuals that outlined rules for singing, with a particular emphasis on the necessity of music instruction to improve skills related to reading Western musical notation, and thus, congregational singing. The ministers' aim was simple: to promote the Regular Way and to maintain musical standards similar to those in Europe by singing notes on the page with precise pitch and rhythm (Mark, 2008). One particularly impactful leader in this movement was Reverend John Tufts, who wrote *An Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes* (Lowens, 1954).

The emphasis on high-quality congregational singing gave rise to the Singing School Movement, which began in the 1720s and concluded in the early 1900s. Singing schools, held outside of school hours, offered participants both social and musical benefits, such as the opportunity to learn how to read music and sing psalms and secular songs. Singing masters led the singing schools, using self-compiled tune books that contained instructions for music reading as well as notated pieces such as hymns, psalms, and often music composed by the singing masters themselves (Howe, 2013; Mark, 2008). After attending singing school, students performed either a singing lecture, which included a performance and a sermon delivered by a minister, or a singing assembly, which consisted solely of music-making (Howe, 2013; Mark, 2008). The singing schools yielded singing in churches that ministers deemed as higher in quality while also giving way to the first public school music teachers (Mark, 2008).

In the 1730s, a movement called the “Great Awakening” occurred, from which emerged a new tradition of singing hymns from religious poems instead of scriptural psalms. During this time, Methodist and Negro hymnody grew in popularity, and soon, people neglected psalms in favor of hymns (Southern, 1997). Scholars refer to this time between 1780 and 1800 as a “Golden Age” for choral music in New England (Howe, 2013). During the Golden Age, choirs focused heavily on learning to read Western notation (what many now refer to as music literacy) and performing music written by singing masters. Simultaneously, Black Americans engaged in social music-making: singing songs of narration and social commentary, work songs, and other recreational music (Southern, 1997). In the early 1800s, Black Americans added religious folksongs to their repertory, which they developed in “independent black churches, segregated camp and bush meetings, and ‘invisible churches’ on the plantations” (Southern, 1997, p. 181). By the second half of the nineteenth century, folk music of Black Americans had developed a characteristic style. On the topic of Black folksongs, Southern (1997) wrote:

> Rarely is it possible to identify the author of a folksong or to pinpoint its original form. Typically, folksongs are created by nonprofessional musicians, altered by other singers and passed along from one generation to the next by oral transmission. In the process, the music is adapted to the taste of both those who sing and those who listen. The changes that take place become a part of the original song and inevitably the music takes on a different form than it originally had. Over the span of years the authors’ names are forgotten. (p. 184)

These religious folksongs, in which aural transmission and improvisation were implicit, were later referred to as Spirituals, a rich body of choral music still learned and performed today.

In addition to Americans making music in social, religious, and singing school contexts, American education reformers in the first half of the nineteenth century began

to advocate for music education in American schools. One such reformer was William Woodbridge, who, in 1830, suggested music as an integral part of the public school curriculum (Jorgensen, 1994; Mark, 2008). Woodbridge and other reformers such as Lowell Mason did not advocate for the Regular Way practices, but rather for new principles, heavily influenced by a Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (Mark, 2008). In 1831, Mason and Ives published a book entitled the *Juvenile Lyre*, in which they laid out compelling utilitarian reasoning for the inclusion of music education in all schools. Inspired by Pestalozzian principles, they claimed that music education develops children's moral, physical, and intellectual capacities. In response, tune books were rewritten, integrating suggestions for pedagogy with the musical notation. Though these new versions of tune books still included practices for improving music reading, the pedagogical suggestions for achieving notational literacy dramatically shifted based on suggestions from Pestalozzi. For example, one of Pestalozzi's principles included that children learn sounds before signs, which guided early music educators to teach songs before notation.

Public schools began adopting music as a curricular subject in the 1830s which lessened a public need for singing schools (Mark, 2008). Despite the beginnings of school music instruction, the primary driver of choral music remained the church (Jorgensen, 1994). As the number of denominations and churches expanded, so did the need for singers and choral directors (McCray, 2011). Likewise, as demand for music teachers increased in public schools, so did demand for instruction in music pedagogy. In response, Lowell Mason organized conventions to teach conducting, harmony, voice, and pedagogy, which included sight singing. By the mid-1800s, the conventions gave way to

both choral organizations and the Normal Institutes, the predecessor of music conservatories (Mark, 2008). Normal Institutes offered courses in theory, voice, piano, and pedagogy. Choral leaders emphasized singing works of art, or singing "high quality" music (Gould, 2012). Simultaneously, Black congregations continued to sing hymns derived from psalm tunes, beginning the development of gospel music, one of the most important traditions in black churches, and one of the only traditions rooted in American rather than European culture (McCray, 2011). Additionally, Spirituals remained an important cornerstone of American choral history growing in notoriety in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Fisk University established their choir, *The Fisk Singers,* which toured America, England, and many other European countries. It is worth noting that "in collecting, preserving, and transmitting black song during the immediate postbellum period . . . whites often ignored work songs, love songs, and other secular material in order to valorize the spirituals they already knew and loved" (Schenbeck, 2005, p. 13). Trends in concert programming reveal that even today many choral directors pass over non-idiomatic musics by Black composers in favor of performing spirituals, gospel, or jazz (Garrett, 2020).

As jazz and ragtime grew in popularity during the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century, a group of people interested in promoting "good music" formed an unnamed coalition (Campbell, 2000). This group of music reformers, made up of professional music teachers, composers, journalists, social workers, women's club leaders aimed to spread the word about the value of "good music," which included Western Art Music (WAM) and excluded jazz and ragtime (Campbell, 2000). Seeking to elevate the moral values of the working class, especially Black Americans, members of

this group advocated that educators and choir directors use music education to assimilate immigrants into White, Christian, American society (Gould, 2012). These music reformers gained a widespread audience, presenting at public schools and at music teacher conferences such as the Music Teachers' National Conference (MTNC), the National Education Association (NEA), and the Music Supervisors' National Conference (MSNC), the precedent of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) and the National Association for Music Education (NA*f*ME). For the most part, school leadership invested in this narrative, agreeing about the importance of hiring music teachers trained in "good music" to teach music appreciation classes, choruses, bands, and orchestras.

By the mid-twentieth century, the primary justification for music education shifted from a mainly utilitarian emphasis to an aesthetic one (Jorgensen, 1994). This was primarily brought forth by publications by Langer (1953) and Meyer (1956), who wrote about the virtues of studying music for its intrinsic, as opposed to extrinsic, benefits (Jorgensen, 1994). In 1959, a group of 35 choral directors at an MTNA conference established the American Choral Director's Association (ACDA). Beginning in 1960, ACDA first held conferences in conjunction with MENC conventions, before growing large enough to start their own conventions in 1971. From its original 111 charter members, ACDA has now grown to include tens of thousands of members worldwide, serving as America's flagship choral music education association. Mathis (1994), former ACDA President, wrote:

> We grow because we have never strayed from our prime belief that good music attracts the conductor, the singer, and the audience. If we ever forget this, we place our organization and future generations of singers and conductors in peril (p. 37).

While ACDA grew in the middle of the twentieth century, choral conductors in the United States also cultivated wide followings (Decker & Herford, 1973). Those who gained popularity were those whose choirs produced blended and polished products. Furthermore, directors became interested in how they could replicate the sound of popular choirs with their own ensembles which led scholars to analyze conductors' rehearsal processes and practices, demeanor, and techniques. In their influential text, Decker and Herford (1973) identified six choral schools that developed in the first half of the twentieth century, each of which can be traced back to one or more individuals: (a) School A: John Finley Williamson; (b) School B: Father William J. Finn; (c) School C: F. Melius Christiansen and followers; (d) School D: Joseph J. Klein, Douglas Stanley, and John C. Wilcox; and (e) School E: Robert Shaw. While each choral leader elicited a different sound from their choirs and used different techniques, they all favored WAM. In their text, Decker and Herford (1973) also outlined the "mode of procedure" for how each school could aid choral directors in "building [their] own choral instrument" (p. 44). Though the schools differed in the outcome of the choral tone and director's approach, all schools paid great attention to running "effective" rehearsals, defined as efficient. To this end, Decker and Herford's (1973) text provided suggestions for seating arrangements, procedures, group dynamics, and even humor—all intended to help directors run effective rehearsals.

Scholars' classification of different choir types reflects the perpetuation of revered choral practices and repertoire, and ways that choral institutions developed and have been reproduced over time. Still today, teachers flock to listen to "excellent" choirs, scholars write about them, and preservice teachers and PreK-12 inservice teachers study how to

train students to reproduce this esteemed sound. Frequently, teachers focus on high-quality music-making instead of on participatory musicking, while all instruction leads to a singular concert featuring carefully polished repertoire. Moreover, sequencing, a Pestalozzian principle promoted by early music educators such as Lowell Mason, remains important today in ensemble classes (Conkling, 2019; Eyerly, 2007; Mark, 2008). Gould (2012) noted:

> . . . performance-based classes at both elementary and secondary levels usually utilize a diagnostic teaching approach by which the teacher (conductor) leads a student ensemble in singing or playing instruments, diagnoses performance errors, prescribes remediation, and checks for 'understanding', which is to say, accurate performance. (p. 75)

Choral textbooks continue to emphasize voice-building, blend and balance, direct sequential patterns of instruction, and music reading of Western notation (often referred to as music literacy). Conkling (2019) elaborated on today's practices of direct instruction, summarizing that "music teacher effectiveness research continues to be based on a model of direct instruction, and findings continue to recommend rehearsals that are fast-paced, have limited teacher talk, and inspire student attention through high-magnitude or high-intensity delivery" (p. 728). Though many vocal styles do not rely on music reading, dominant choral practices emphasize learning to read Western notation as an esteemed goal, often ignoring other aspects of musical traditions. For example, gospel music remains an extremely popular vocal style, rooted in the aural-oral tradition that is mainly found in Black churches (Covalle, 2022). However, when integrated into school contexts, teachers who have been socialized to teach and prioritize reading Western notation might find themselves teaching gospel music inauthentically, using written sheet music, filtering the teaching of a Black art form through a White lens.

While some choral teachers rely on centuries-old principles, many others diversify their choral practices (Jorgensen, 1994). Diversity in choral classrooms takes many forms including welcoming a more diverse body of students, increasing representation of composers, programming global music, and including student-centered creative projects, like composition and improvisation. In the next section, I describe one type of learning in which students engage in music classes today: Informal Learning (IL).

Informal Learning

Historically, choral music practices reflect a space of FL, learning that includes a highly structured curriculum and instructional plan, sequential learning process, power centered around one or a few individuals, and clear assessment plan (Mok, 2011c). Furthermore, FL endures as the "default option" in general classroom settings (Roche, 2017, p. 298) and large music ensemble settings such as bands, choirs, and orchestras (Conkling, 2019). Despite the ubiquity of FL in schools, most formative educational experiences occur informally, including through play and social interactions (Roche, 2017). IL "is nothing new; it is almost older than formal learning" (Jenkins, 2011, p. 180). Communities such as African villagers, Bulgarian bagpipers, and Balinese gamelan players have learned informally for hundreds of years (Blacking, 1973; Brashier, 2013; Rice, 1995; Small, 1996).

IL, learning that occurs naturally without prior planning and direct instruction (Folkestad, 2006), began gaining traction in worldwide educational discourses in the 1960s before entering the educational policy arena in the 1990s (Roche, 2017). Music teachers began embracing IL in the Nordic countries in the 1960s (Hallam et al., 2018). Since then, music researchers and teachers worldwide have explored IL in a variety of

contexts to better understand best practices in schools, student and teacher perspectives on IL in the classroom, and processes associated with IL. Most notably, Musical Futures—a curriculum based on Lucy Green's research on how popular musicians learn—has gained a large following, operating as a curricular base in Canada (Wright et al., 2012), the United Kingdom (D'Amore, 2014; Hallam et al., 2017), Ireland (Moore, 2019), and Australia (Jeanneret, 2010).

Though IL continues to grow in popularity within the field of music education, researchers note that the field lacks a consistent definition of the term itself (Kastner, 2014). For the purposes of this study, I embrace Folkestad's (2006) conception of IL. In its simplest terms, IL is defined as learning that is "not sequenced beforehand" and contains components that are "self-chosen and voluntary" (Folkestad, 2006, p. 141). I refer the reader to Chapter 1's Operational Definitions for FL, IL, and ILPP descriptions. Additionally, in Chapter 1, I share my beginning conceptual framework, which reflects an adaptation of Wright (2016) and Folkestad's (2006) models of FL and IL. In this study, I aligned with Wright (2016), rejecting the formal-informal as a singular dichotomy, and embracing the "messy reality of real-life learning," believing that learning can shift rapidly between formal-informal (pp. 211-212). While many music researchers and teachers utilize the term Informal Learning Practices (Green, 2002, 2008, 2014; Vasil, 2019), others adopt the term Informal Learning Processes to refer to similar or identical characteristics (Davis, 2013; Feichas, 2010; Kastner, 2020). Additionally, some researchers implement the terms interchangeably (Folkestad, 2006). For the purposes of my study, I use the term Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP), aligning with Green's (2008) five main characteristics of informal popular music learning

practices which include, but are not limited to (a) learners choosing music for themselves; (b) students learning to sing and play songs by ear; (c) students learning by themselves and with peers, with a teacher as a facilitator instead of as a director; (d) learners obtaining knowledge and skills in haphazard ways, not based on careful scaffolding from simple to complex; and (e) students deeply integrating listening, performing, improvising, and composing. Green's (2008) five characteristics are not limited popular musicians' uses of ILPP, they can also be used to identify ILPP in multiple situations and with diverse musical genres.

Researchers and teachers have studied participants engaging in ILPP within a variety of musical settings, such as (a) teenagers in garage bands (Abramo, 2011; Campbell, 1995; Davis, 2005; Jaffurs, 2004b; Rodriguez, 2009); (b) children at play (Campbell, 2010; Harwood, 1994, 1998; Harwood & Marsh, 2012; Marsh, 1999, 2008); (c) vernacular or popular adult musicians (Cope, 2002; Dunbar-Hall, 2016; Green, 2002; Mok, 2011a, 2011b; Rice, 1996); and (d) individuals learning music using the Internet (Schmidt-Jones, 2017; Waldron, 2013a, 2013b, 2016; Waldron et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers have investigated ILPP in schools—in elementary music classrooms (Cope, 2002; Derges, 2022; Green, 2002); secondary music contexts (Allsup, 2003; Baker & Green, 2013; Bersh, 2011; Butler et al., 2021; Costes-Onishi, 2016; Evans et al., 2015; Gower, 2012; Green, 2008; Hallam et al., 2018; Jones, 2015; Moore, 2019; Vasil, 2015; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2016; Wright, 2016); and collegiate settings (Ballantyne & Lebler, 2016; Finney & Philpott, 2010; Isbell, 2016; Karlsen, 2010; Mok, 2017; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010).

Researchers suggest incorporating ILPP in music classes to welcome genres, practices, and methods typical to students' out-of-school lives into the school building (Green, 2008; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2016). Some teachers have used ILPP in schools as an antidote to low enrollment in secondary music programs, helping to attract students who may not enroll in music classes otherwise (Vasil, 2015). Researchers have called IL a "pedagogy of diversity and inclusion" (Feichas, 2010, p. 57), noting that instead of teachers transmitting legitimized knowledge, students choose the music with which they engage, as well as how they engage with music (Feichas, 2010; Narita & Green, 2015). In Derges' (2022) phenomenological study of 13 children learning informally in a general music class, freedom to choose and the subsequent feelings of autonomy emerged as one of the prominent aspects of ILPP. As a result, students who engage with ILPP in school music classes reported feelings of motivation and engagement in their music classes (Evans et al., 2015). Researchers posit that these positive feelings derive from the active role that students play in their own learning processes when engaging with ILPP (Feichas, 2010; Green, 2008). Often resulting in increased feelings of individual and collective ownership (Davis, 2010, 2013; Evans et al., 2015; Green, 2002, 2008; Jaffurs, 2004b), some scholars have even deemed the classroom environment in which ILPP are present as "democratic" (Allsup, 2003). In a collective case study of students ages 11-14 who participated in an ILPP-centered curricula in Wales (Evans et al., 2015), the researchers noted that students' responses conveyed increased feelings of ownership and autonomy over their own learning. Similarly, Bucura (2019) positioned ILPP as a way to empower learners, fostering greater personal connections with music (Davis, 2013; Evans et al., 2015; Green, 2008).

In addition to student ownership, autonomy, motivation, and engagement through ILPP, children and adolescents have reported learning new musical and extra-musical skills (Baker & Green, 2013; Evans et al., 2015). Skills included learning new instruments and learning music aurally, as well as improving critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, and social skills. Woody and Lehmann (2010) discovered that collegiate students who grew up engaging in ILPP developed different competencies than those students who identified as having had only formal musical experiences. As a result, the student participants with informal and vernacular musical experiences consistently encoded and sang and played back sample tunes in fewer trials than students with formal musical experiences (Woody & Lehmann, 2010). Researchers have also cited that students enjoy the social and communal benefits that accompany ILPP (Davis, 2008; Derges, 2022; Furiani, 2018; Green, 2008), noting heightened social and communal responses (Furiani, 2018), identity development through exploring relationships with peers (Davis, 2008), and peer learning (Green, 2008).

Researchers have also noted challenges for teachers and students of ILPP. Through socialization, many music teachers have acquired a schema of what is normal in a classroom setting (Wright, 2016). As a result, teachers may hesitate to relinquish control in the classroom, and they might feel apprehensive about their students exploring musical genres and styles that lie outside of their comfort zone (Wright, 2016). Teachers also encounter obstacles to ILPP at the school level, many of which arise due to rigid requirements of school effectiveness (D'Amore, 2009; Gower, 2012). Exploring “innovative territories” may feel too risky, with danger lurking, such as “[not meeting]

pre-determined goals and objectives, governmental mandates, professional expectations, [as well as] students' resistance, stereotypes and exclusions" (Gould, 2012, p. 83).

Some students, also accustomed to formal schooling contexts, may feel uncomfortable when asked to learn independently of the teacher (Ballantyne & Lebler, 2016). Other students may have difficulties voicing their opinions in their groups if they feel uncomfortable with the other student members (Bersh, 2011; Butler et al., 2021). Though several researchers have suggested the importance of teacher scaffolding or intervention when groups struggle to make progress in IL contexts (Costes-Onishi, 2016; Evans et al., 2015; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2016), some teachers may feel uncertain of how to motivate and support student groups (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010). When student groups forge ahead without teacher aid, students may produce what they view as less successful products, while teachers may feel a lack of control (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010).

When looking back on their experiences, musicians frequently cite the benefits of IL and FL. Hess (2020) interviewed adult activist-musicians who learned informally. Even though they valued IL, almost all musicians described craving FL experiences in school, which highlights the need for a "both/and" approach to the IL-FL continua (Hess, 2020, p. 441). With that in mind, in the next section, I present studies related to FL in choral contexts.

Choral Music Research

Many researchers have studied the benefits of adolescent participation in choral settings. Community choir singers cited personal, musical, social, and external benefits to their participation (Bartolome, 2013; Kennedy, 2002). One prominent musical benefit

cited by students was the opportunity to engage with music through singing (Bowles, 1988; Bridges, 1996), as well as the resulting feeling of accomplishment and of a musical high (Parker, 2011). Parents, teachers, and students also appreciated the musical training provided in choirs (Bartolome, 2013; Kennedy, 2002).

Commonly cited social benefits associated with choir participation include student feelings of belonging and social approval, as well as teamwork, socialization, and the opportunity to foster relationships (Adderley et al., 2003; Arasi, 2006; Bartolome, 2013; Durrant, 2005; Parker, 2010, 2014). Participants in a study by Parker (2011) described singing together as a way that they came to know their peers intimately, thus increasing their interpersonal relationships. Several researchers have conducted empirical studies to investigate the connection between a student's choir participation and their psychological development. In a study of 1315 adolescents, students who participated in choir and/or band scored higher than non-participants on a survey of emotional competencies such as emotional awareness, emotion regulation, autonomy, social competence, and well-being (Ros-Morente et al., 2019). Choral experiences have also been reported to positively impact psychological indicators of anxiety (Sanal & Gorsev, 2014). The following eight themes from Ramsey's (2016) study of adolescents' expressed meanings of choir aptly summarizes students' perceived benefits of choral participation, including (a) expression-awareness, (b) enjoyment-relaxation, (c) encompassing-unifying, (d) inspirational-transformational, (e) friendship-social value, (f) learning-understanding, (g) hard work-reward, and (h) priority-identity.

Conkling (2019) noted a recent shift in choral literature toward "socially relevant and socially just choral teaching and learning" including, but not limited to an emphasis

on supporting students' self-concept and a focus on teaching choral music while also considering the community's cultural values (pp. 729-730). Despite the repeated call-to-action to identify more inclusive and equitable approaches within the school ensemble model, many choral teachers in the United States continue to focus mainly on transmitting WAMs by implementing practices inherent to the Western classical canon, thus perpetuating injustice while limiting democracy and student autonomy (Bradley, 2007; de Quadros, 2015; Howard, 2020; O'Toole, 2005; Philpott & Kubilius, 2015; Shaw, 2012, 2016, 2019). Additionally, choral texts continue to encourage teachers to center "great repertoire" and musics of "great Western composers" (Holt & Jordan, 2008; Phillips, 2016). Researchers have suggested that this favoring of Western musical practices in secondary music classrooms in the United States perpetuates an overly narrow definition of legitimate musical knowledge (Bradley, 2012; Hess, 2015). When music teachers adopt pedagogical practices that do not align with students' prior experiences and knowledge, teachers may erect barriers that prevent student participation and access (Bradley, 2006; Carlow, 2006; Fuelberth & Todd, 2017; Shaw, 2012, 2016, 2019).

Choral teachers' reluctance to adapt their practices, repertoire, and beliefs may be due to music teacher socialization (Howard, 2020; Shaw, 2019). A participant in Howard's study (2020) exemplified the strong pressures of socialization in the choral profession when they stated that they felt a need to "fit a certain mold" as a choral director (p. 13). This fear of not being proficient enough to support students as they learn diverse genres of musics or explore varied vocal timbres highlights the struggle that music teachers face when attempting to diversify their practices and repertoire.

In spite of the aforementioned teacher feelings of uncertainty and discomfort, national and regional singing organizations have begun to take steps to be more socially and culturally relevant and just. For example, ACDA created the ACDA Diversity Initiatives Committee in 2017, whose mission is:

> . . . to foster diversity and inclusivity in our membership, ensembles, and repertoire through active engagement with underrepresented choral musicians and potential choral participants. As a result of this inclusivity, the committee plans to bring about a broader definition of choral excellence to maintain relevance through the expansion of both the reach and impact of our profession and its musical scope. (ACDA Diversity Initiatives Committee, 2017)

Furthermore, ACDA conducted a study of diversity in 2020, demonstrating their commitment to socially relevant and socially just choral teaching and learning. The organization also made the commitment that upcoming conferences would embody the "beginning of a new paradigm, a better way, and a concept of choral excellence encompassing musical artistry and the principles of inclusion and radical hospitality" (ACDA, 2023, Diversity in the work of choral musicians section, para. 1). This commitment by the leading choral organization in America represents great progress in the field of music education.

As a part of increasing social and cultural relevance of choral music education, Conkling identified another area of growth in choral music education: expanding the overly narrow focus on sight-singing as the primary form of musical literacy and focusing instead on developing a variety of musicianship skills (Conkling, 2019). After finding that specific musical understandings and knowledge, such as the ability to sight-sing, rarely carries over to an adult's musical life from the high school ensemble experience, Arasi (2006) urged choral music educators to "consider an alternative or

additional approach" (p. 199). Likewise, the Task Force for the College Music Society recommended that music departments and schools consider new possibilities for large ensembles to accommodate the needs of the "21st century improviser-composer-performer" (Campbell et al., 2014, p. 61). Jaffurs (2004a) enumerated skills inherent to the practices of "non-traditional musicians" who engage with music-making outside of schools, including their ability to learn aurally (instead of reading Western notation), improvise and compose, and make music in a wide variety of genres/styles that contain distinct timbral qualities. Though policy documents such as the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS; State Education Agencies Directors of Arts Education, 2014) include musical creativity as a main tenet of music teaching and learning, many choral teachers struggle to incorporate musical creativity into their instruction (Hickey, 2012; Langley, 2014). Aligning with NCAS standards, scholars have suggested that choral teachers implement a wide variety of musicianship skills to increase the potential to foster lifelong and lifewide musical involvement for a greater percentage of students (Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2004a; Woody & Lehman, 2010).

The final area of growth for choral programs that I identified in the literature relates to structuring choral programs that encourage lifelong involvement in music. Interestingly, many in the choral profession already believe that one main goal of choral music education is to foster lifelong music involvement. For instance, the mission of ACDA (2023) is to "inspire excellence and nurture lifelong involvement in choral music for everyone through education, performance, composition and advocacy" (Mission section, para. 1). However, research by Arasi (2006), Jones (2009), and Woody and Lehman (2010) claim that choral programs often do not succeed in their attempts to foster

lifelong music involvement. For example, participants in Arasi's 2006 study viewed their high school choral experiences as something they "did then." As a result, Arasi (2006) and Jones (2009) urged educators to envision an alternative approach to choral music education. Jones (2009) suggested turning to the musical activities with which students engage outside of school to understand how adolescents develop dispositions, habits, and skills for lifewide musicking: music-making and learning that "takes place across the full range of life activities including academic, personal, social and/or professional, at any particular stage in life" (Jones, 2009, p. 205). Furthermore, Jones (2009) claimed that students' engagement with music in IL settings is one of the most promising indicators of musicking throughout one's life. Though Arasi (2006) and Jones (2009) published their recommendations more than 15 years ago, little has changed with regards to norms in the choral education profession since then, especially regarding ILPP in choral settings. In the next section, I will describe the few studies related to ILPP in choral programs.

ILPP in Choral Programs

Choral programs in the United States often reflect many tenets of FL, including (a) a predetermined and structured curriculum, (b) an instructional plan and sequential learning process, (c) a clear assessment plan, and (d) power centered around one or a few individuals (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010). In a content analysis of recent choral studies, literature reviews, and choral textbooks, Conkling (2019) noted that choral researchers and directors associate choral teacher effectiveness with models of direct instruction, favoring teachers who focus on careful scaffolding and instructional sequencing. Perhaps as a consequence of the prominence of large ensembles as the primary form of secondary school music education, many students graduate high school without experiencing ILPP

and developing associated competencies. In a study of 20 student teachers in music, Finney and Philpott (2010) discovered that university students engaged in post-graduate work had either never participated in ILPP in music, and/or had never acknowledged the legitimacy of their IL music experiences. When writing about university music programs, Feichas (2010) noted that " . . . teaching methods at the music school tend to squeeze all the students into the same mould" (p. 57). In many of the same ways, PreK-12 school music programs mimic teacher preparation programs, leaving little room for students to experience ILPP and accept practices and processes as legitimate ways of coming to know and understand music.

In a study of social capital in community choir, Langston and Barrett (2008) discovered that members of a community choir valued a multitude of learning experiences, including IL experiences, highlighting the practices and values of communities, because they serve as "indicators of social capital, as they provide a form of informal social control" (p. 122). Gould (2012) emphasized that adolescents develop parts of their identities through music-making, writing that " . . . music itself is becoming, and so are we through it" (p. 83). Thus, students who do not experience ILPP in their choral ensembles may form practices and attitudes that subvert informal knowledge and experiences (Finney & Philpott, 2010). Parker (2011) proposed that adolescents "compar[e] and refin[e] their ideas of what music-making is" in choir and other school ensembles (p. 306). If students do not experience ILPP in their school choral ensembles, their ideas of what counts as legitimate music-making remains limited to those processes and practices associated with FL.

Because competencies developed by musicians in IL settings differ from those in FL settings, researchers have recommended incorporating ILPP into school music programs to build capacity and possibility for future lifelong learning (Green, 2008; Jaffurs, 2004a; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). In an article about uprooting music education pedagogies, Gould (2012) specifically highlighted IL as one way to respond to diverse student populations. She also warned that teachers should not use creative thinking or creative activities as a "hook" to move students to "good" music (p. 82). Instead, Gould (2012) argues teachers should integrate a variety of musical genres, including popular music, genuinely.

Researchers have also noted long-term benefits of ILPP. Evans et al. (2015) noted the transferability of the skills acquired by students who engage with ILPP, showing how ILPP helps students beyond the immediate classroom setting. Similarly, Woody and Lehman (2010) imagined the benefits that students may enjoy as they grow into adults who must forge on as their own musical directors:

> Without published arrangements of large ensemble pieces, a director to rehearse them, and regularly scheduled (and usually mandatory) rehearsal times, young instrumentalists may be unequipped to engage in music making. However, with developmental experiences in ear playing, composing/ arranging, and peer small group collaboration, school music graduates may be poised to enjoy the rewards of active music participation for the entirety of their adult lives. (p. 113)

ILPP research in a choral context remains scarce. Even though ensemble classes exist as the most common course offerings in secondary schools in the United States (Abril & Gault, 2008), most studies about ILPP in school music have taken place in a general music setting. The few studies that have focused on ILPP in school ensemble contexts mostly took place in instrumental settings, including band classes (Allsup, 2003;

Bersh, 2011; Davis, 2008, 2010; Jones, 2015), jazz band groups (Furiani, 2018), and steel band ensembles (Guzzetta, 2020). A few researchers have studied ILPP in extracurricular singing groups, including an adult amateur choir (Mok, 2020) and collegiate *a cappella* ensembles (Haning, 2019; Paparo, 2013), and very few researchers have explored ILPP in curricular secondary choral contexts (Abrahams et al., 2017). Though not specifically labeled as IL, Haning (2021) studied student and teacher perceptions of a collaborative, student-directed approach to learning a piece of musical repertoire in a beginning-level choral ensemble. In this study, 29 high school students selected, from a list of six pre-determined pieces, a piece of repertoire which they learned, and performed independently of the teacher. Four themes emerged from data analysis, including collaboration and connection, growth and learning, accomplishment, and conflict. Haning (2021) noted that many students who were not typically engaged in teacher-directed portions of the rehearsal seemed "more engaged and active" (p. 21).

While Haning (2021) explored collaborative learning in the choral rehearsal, Abrahams et al. (2017) specifically explored ILPP in a secondary choral ensemble. In this study, the conductors of four high school choirs each chose one of their ensembles (N=80) to break into small groups. The students were instructed to create an arrangement of a Christmas carol either by copying a recording or by audiating. Co-creating an arrangement positively impacted peer-directed learning, autonomy, group cooperation, and leadership. Data analysis also revealed that the culture of the ensembles shifted in a positive way as students perceived that they gained musical skills and abilities.

Though these studies illuminate ILPP understandings and potential in music education, scholars have called for further research into student-facilitated learning and

ILPP in formal school choral contexts to develop "new pedagogical models for ensemble music teaching" (Paparo, 2013, p. 35). Put simply, music education, as an institution, does not have enough research on ILPP in choral music. Furthermore, given popular musicians' expressed desires to gain musical knowledge and basic skills on their instrument/voice (Hess, 2020), one rich context to study would be the choral classroom, in which choral teachers provide students with formal and informal processes and practices.

In summary, teachers need not choose between formal and informal processes and practices in the choral classroom (Costes-Onishi, 2016; Hess, 2020). Instead, one can view informal and formal as complementary, allowing the flexibility to shift between the two. In my literature searches, I was unable to find any one study which investigated teacher and student perspectives of ILPP within the context of a choral program that also features FL. Additionally, while researchers have explored one-time IL projects in high school choral contexts (Abrahams et al., 2017), I have not uncovered student and teacher perspectives of ILPP in choral programs that incorporate opportunities throughout the school year.

The purpose of this multiple case study was to investigate ILPP within the context of three public high school choral programs. For this study, teachers (N=3) and their students (N=59) served as participants. Because there is no one way of infusing ILPP into choral classes, I chose to explore multiple cases instead of only one, binding my data around student and teacher perspectives and interactions with ILPP (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). In short, I sought to better understand and to "catch a glimpse of something real, connect to it, and reconfigure. . .how [I] see" (Allsup, 2017, p. 16).

Research foci included the exploration of the values, benefits, and challenges when engaging with ILPP in a choral context, and the research questions were as follows:

1. How are ILPP evident within the context of three public high school choral programs?
2. How do high school choral teachers and students describe the benefits of ILPP in the choral program?
3. How do high school choral teachers and students describe the challenges of ILPP in the choral program?
4. What beliefs and values lead teachers to make space for ILPP within the high school choral program?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within and across three public high school choral programs, and to understand the values, benefits, and challenges of teachers and students when engaging in ILPP. This chapter begins with a rationale for a qualitative research approach and multiple case study design. After, I detail the sampling and participant selection, and share each case profile. I conclude by noting the data collection procedures, including data sources and data types, and describe the study's qualitative data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

Three core design strategies comprise qualitative research, including naturalistic inquiry, emergent design, and purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). Because I considered all three design strategies critical to the study, a qualitative design emerged as most appropriate. I deemed naturalistic inquiry as critical to gain an insider's perspective about the happenings in each high school choral program. By observing adolescents in a real-world context (their schools), I could develop an in-depth understanding of how students engage in ILPP within their day-to-day lives. I embraced an emergent design because I would be working with teachers, students, and schools with shifting curricula and differing schedules. I sought to remain open to new ideas, understandings, and possibilities throughout the data collection and analysis. Because of my relativistic

ontological understanding centered around the belief in multiple realities that are socially constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), I focused on participant meanings. I deemed purposeful sampling a necessity because of my interest in specific circumstances (ILPP in choral contexts) and my desire to investigate information-rich cases. Throughout the process, I strove to remain reflexive, seeking to uncover personal biases, my role, and the ways in which I engaged with participants and they engaged with one other. In summary, my paradigmatic assumptions, purpose, and research questions propelled an inductive, holistic, reflexive, and emergent qualitative research design that foregrounded participant perspectives.

Multiple Case Study

Case studies investigate a bounded system and center around particularities, yielding an in-depth understanding of a person, site, setting, or issue of particular interest. Because there are numerous ways to center ILPP in choral classes, I chose to explore multiple contexts instead of only one, using a multiple-case study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Patton (2015) noted that "case studies provide rich data for teasing out what cases have in common and what sets them apart" and that "comparisons illuminate the enormous diversity of humanity even as we seek and find patterns across that diversity" (p. 13). Stake (2006) suggested that multiple case study researchers begin by defining the quintain, that is, the "object or phenomenon or condition to be studied" (p. 6). For the purposes of this dissertation, I defined the quintain as student and teacher perspectives of ILPP in school choral programs. To better understand the quintain, I selected three single heterogeneous cases to exemplify the variations of ILPP across

multiple sites (Yin, 2018). For this study, three teachers and 59 students, representing three different public high school programs, served as participants.

The analysis began with a within-case analysis as I analyzed the individual cases, learning about their complexities and unique qualities. After, I performed a cross-case analysis to better understand the quintain. By performing both a within-case analysis and cross-case analysis, I sought to understand the similarities and differences in the three participating choral programs while also developing a better understanding of ILPP in choral classes more broadly (Stake, 2005). The analysis yielded a thick, rich description of each case, as well as a general explanation of ILPP in adolescent choral classrooms (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 2005). By including multiple cases, I sought transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and a better understanding of Informal Learning (IL) in choral settings by "catch[ing] a glimpse of something real" (Allsup, 2017, p. 16).

Case and Participant Selection

Stake (2006) suggested three criteria for selecting cases in multiple case study research, including cases that (a) are relevant to the phenomenon of interest, (b) provide diversity across multiple contexts, and (c) give the researcher opportunity to explore the complexities of the phenomenon in various settings. In spring 2021, I began case sampling by contacting music education and choral professors with demonstrated expertise in ILPP through publications and/or presentations. I provided these professors with a basic description of the study and asked them to nominate high school choral teachers whose students regularly engage in ILPP in choir. After receiving several replies, I contacted the nominated individuals via email, and subsequently by phone call or Zoom meeting to investigate how they incorporate ILPP in their teaching and to

ascertain their interest in participating in the study. I set out to choose the teacher participants and sites using maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2015) with the following criteria: (a) geographical variation, (b) size of school and music program, (c) gender identity, (d) race/ethnicity, (e) stage in career, and (f) length of years teaching at their current school. Most teachers did not meet all maximum variation criteria for participation. For example, some taught middle school instead of high school, general music instead of choir, or they did not regularly engage their students in ILPP. Because of limitations in participants who met the selection criteria, I was not able to achieve a diverse sampling in some of the previously listed criteria, which I address in the limitations and delimitations section in Chapter 7.

After identifying research sites and interested teacher participants, I sought school district approval to conduct this research study. Once I secured permissions from each school district, I distributed the teacher consent forms to the three teacher participants by sending a link to an e-consent form using REDCap, a secure, HIPAA-Compliant online system (see Appendix B). Table 1 includes a complete outline of school and teacher-participant characteristics. Note that pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation for all participants, schools, and other identifying information.

Teacher Participant Sampling

I initially spoke with Mr. James Cohen[2] in April 2022. Mr. Cohen teaches choir, guitar, and songwriting and digital beat-making at Morris High School, a small public

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[2] All proper names, including, but not limited to schools, teachers, students, ensembles, and activities in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

Table 1. *Teacher Participant & School Profile*

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Teacher	Mr. James Cohen	Mrs. Calista Wilson	Ms. Christine Evans
School	Morris High School	Davis High School	East High School
Demographic Profile	White male, Bachelor's degree 35 years old	White female, Pursuing doctorate, 51 years old	White female, Bachelor's degree 35 years old
Number of Years Teaching	12	17	14
Number of Years at Current School	11.5	11	10
Geographical Region	Northeast	Midwest	Northeast
Population Density of County (Per Square Mile)[a]	403.8	164.4	1,773.5
Number of Students in School[b]	494	821	824
Percentage of Students who Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch	37.4	22.0	15.3
Number of Students in Choir Program	31	121	100

Table 1. *(continued)*

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Race/Ethnicity of School Population[b]	10% Asian 3% Black 12% Hispanic 62% White 12% Two or More .8% Other	.5% Asian .6% Black 15% Hispanic 83% White 1.5% Two or More	22% Asian 1.2% Black 3% Hispanic 73% White 11% Two or More .4% Other

[a] Census.gov (2020); [b] The National Center for Education Statistics (2021-2022)

high school in the Northeastern United States. During our first conversation via Zoom, he immediately emerged as a teacher dedicated to centering ILPP in his choral classes. At this time, I gauged his interest in participating, and he expressed enthusiasm for the study and suggested that I reach out again upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. After receiving IRB approval through Temple University in Fall 2021 (see Appendix C), I sought and received approval from Morris School District in January 2022 and confirmed Morris High School as a site for this multiple case study.

I met Mrs. Calista Wilson in person at a national music education professional development training in summer 2021. During this time, I received a participant referral from a professor who knew Mrs. Wilson personally. Mrs. Wilson teaches choir at Davis Middle and High School in a small district in the Midwestern United States. After informally conversing over coffee, I gauged her interest in the study. She described her school district as research-friendly and encouraged me to reach out after receiving IRB Approval. After receiving school district approval in December 2021, I confirmed Davis High School as a site for this multiple case study.

Ms. Christine Evans was referred by a high school choral teacher and PhD student in music education in spring 2021 and added to the participant sample in March 2022. Ms. Evans teaches choir and piano at East High School, a relatively small high school in the Northeastern United States. I spoke with Ms. Evans on the phone in March 2022 to assess her interest in participating. She confirmed immediately, and soon after, I applied to her district. Once I received confirmation from East High School's principal at the end of March 2022, I established this school as the final site.

Student Participant Sampling

After Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Wilson, and Ms. Evans consented to the study, I sought to delimit the data collection by asking each teacher participant to suggest the choir most actively engaged in informal music learning to serve as the focal point in this study. I intended to begin second tier sampling for student participants after the teacher selected the focus choir from each school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As I learned more about each teacher's program, I realized that focusing on one choir per school might not provide me with the richest understanding of how ILPP functions in the choir programs at large. Patton (2015) noted that sample size can be emergent and flexible, writing that "the size and composition of the sample can be adjusted based on what is learned as fieldwork is conducted and the inquiry deepens" (p. 313). Therefore, after more time learning about each school's program, I asked teachers to include students from all choirs in the study. At Morris and East High School, I invited all students in the choral programs to participate in the study (N=31 & N=100). However, at Davis High School, the principal identified an ethical concern, describing that students might perceive a relationship between their report card grade and their participation in the

study. Thus, the principal and Mrs. Wilson asked me to limit my invitation to students who do not receive a grade for choir. As a result, I delimited participant recruitment to the Davis High School students enrolled in the advanced extracurricular choir entitled "Cantamus," (N=28).

Each teacher set aside time for me to explain the research study to students. Mr. Cohen opted to play a video of me explaining the study for each of his choir classes on January 10 and 11, 2022. In the video, I read the recruitment script, provided the students with my contact information so they could contact me with questions, and distributed the assent form via QR code, which I requested that they return by Tuesday, January 18 (see Appendices B & D). On January 10, Mr. Cohen sent an email home to families informing them of our research collaboration and notifying them that they would be receiving a consent form from me in their email inbox. Shortly after, I sent the consent form to parents/guardians via an email generated by REDCap. Every two days, the system automatically generated email reminders to email recipients who had not yet responded. Without a Morris High School email address, I was unable to send email reminders to students. Therefore, Mr. Cohen provided in-person reminders to his classes during the week of January 10. On January 18, Mr. Cohen emailed parents whose children had assented, encouraging them to complete their forms. I closed participant recruitment on January 20, at which point I had recruited 24 total student participants, including 11 from Concert Choir, nine from High Voice Choir, and four from Low Voice Choir, representing 77.4% of the entire choir program at Morris High School (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Student Participants at Morris High School*

Name	Pronouns	Age	Grade	Years in Choir	Choir Enrollment
Allison	She/Her	17	12	9	Concert Choir; A Cappella
Andrea	She/Her	15	10	7	High Voice; A Cappella
Aubrey	She/Her	16	11	11	High Voice
Bentley	She/Her	16	11	9	High Voice
Blake	He/Him	16	11	7	Concert Choir
Cameron	He/Him	17	11	4	High Voice
Ian	He/Him	15	10	5	Low Voice
Jade	She/Her	15	10	5	High Voice
Jason	He/They	15	10	2	Low Voice; A Cappella
Jessa	She/Her	17	12	8	Concert Choir; A Cappella
Kayla	She/Her	14	9	4	High Voice
Kelsey	She/Her	17	12	8	Concert Choir; A Cappella
Kimberly	She/Her	16	11	6	Concert Choir; A Cappella
Leslie	She/Her	17	12	9	Concert Choir
Lisa	She/They	17	11	7	High Voice
Melissa	She/Her	17	12	7	Concert Choir

Table 2. *(continued)*

Name	Pronouns	Age	Grade	Years in Choir	Choir Enrollment
Micah	He/Him	14	9	4	Low Voice
Miles	He/Him	14	9	4	Low Voice
Naomi	She/Her	17	12	11	Concert Choir; A Cappella
Natalie	She/Her	17	12	8	Concert Choir
Olivia	She/Her	18	12	6	Concert Choir
Sumati	She/Her	15	10	5	High Voice
Sylvia	She/Her	17	12	7	Concert Choir
Tashi	She/Her	16	10	5	High Voice

At Davis High School, I visited Cantamus virtually via Zoom during a rehearsal on December 8, 2021. I read the recruitment script, answered student questions (see Appendix D), and shared a QR code for the students to scan, which linked to the REDCap student assent form (see Appendix B). Mrs. Wilson also provided me with access to Cantamus' Google Classroom, where I posted the assent form. I distributed the consent form via an email generated by REDCap to students' parents/guardians on December 8, 2021. While I initially provided the parents/guardians with two weeks to respond, I extended the deadline due to low initial response rate. After the holiday break in early January, I contacted the parents/guardians of individuals who completed assent forms but lacked a consent form. At the end of the recruitment period, I had recruited 18

total student participants from Cantamus, representing 64% of the total enrollment in the extracurricular choir at Davis High (see Table 3).

Similar to Mr. Cohen, Ms. Evans opted for a pre-recorded recruitment video. In that video, I explained the study by reading the recruitment script, provided my contact information, and distributed the assent form via QR code, which I initially requested that they return by Friday, April 15, 2022 (see Appendices B & D). Because of spring break during the week of April 11-15, Ms. Evans suggested that I extend the recruitment period to the end of April. To collect parent/guardian consent, I sent multiple emails via the REDCap system, including an initial email and follow-up emails. I concluded the recruitment period on April 29 with a total of 17 student participants, all enrolled in three different class periods of Concert Choir and an assortment of extracurricular choirs. In total, student participants represented about 17% of the student choral population (see Table 4).

In total, 59 students and their parents from all three schools both assented and consented to participating in this study, including 18 from Davis High School, 24 from Morris High School, and 17 from East High School.

Table 3. *Student Participants at Davis High School*

Name	Pronouns	Age	Grade	Years in Choir
Addison	She/Her	18	12	7
Aiden	He/Him	18	12	7
Brianna	She/Her	16	11	6
Brielle	She/Her	17	11	7
Eva	She/Her	16	11	6
Grant	He/Him	16	11	7
Jack	He/Him	17	11	2
James	He/Him	16	10	5
Kate	She/Her	17	11	5
Kendall	She/Her	17	11	6
Lillian	She/Her	17	12	7
Lucy	She/Her	15	10	5
Lyla	She/Her	17	12	8
Marcus	He/Him	16	10	5
Margaret	She/Her	17	11	5
Morgan	She/Her	16	11	6

Table 3. *(continued)*

Name	Pronouns	Age	Grade	Years in Choir
Rose	She/Her	15	10	5
Wade	He/Him	17	11	6

Note: All student participants represented in this table were enrolled in Cantamus and Concert Choir during the 2021-2022 school year.

Table 4. *Student Participants at East High School*

Name	Pronouns	Age	Grade	Years in Choir	Choir Enrollment
Annie	She/Her	18	12	10	Concert Choir (B)
Erica	She/Her	16	10	8	Concert Choir (A)
Ilsa	She/Her	16	11	9	Concert Choir (B), Bass Choir, Treble Choir
Jasmine	She/Her	15	9	4	Concert Choir (A)
Jerry	He/Him	15	10	6	Concert Choir (B), Bass Choir
Jessica	She/Her	15	10	8	Concert Choir (C), Bass Choir, Honor Choir, Treble Choir
Johanna	She/Her	17	11	7	Concert Choir (C), Bass Choir, Treble Choir
Kathy	She/Her	15	9	1	Concert Choir (C), Honor Choir, Treble Choir
Kelly	She/Her	18	12	10	Concert Choir (B)
Liam	He/Him	16	10	3	Concert Choir (A), Bass Choir, Honor Choir, Treble Choir
Lucia	She/Her	17	12	10	Concert Choir (C), Honor choir, Treble Choir
Mariana	She/Her	16	10	8	Concert Choir (C), Bass Choir, Honor Choir, Treble Choir
Mark	He/Him	18	12	6	Concert Choir (C), Bass Choir
Nylah	She/Her	15	9	5	Concert Choir (C)
Phoebe	She/Her	18	12	6	Concert Choir (C), Bass Choir, Honor Choir, Treble Choir
Ruby	She/Her	16	11	10	Concert Choir (C)
Wesley	He/Him	16	11	5	Concert Choir (B), Bass Choir

Note: The letters A, B, and C represent three different class periods of Concert Choir.

Data Collection

Data collection took place from December 2021 to November 2022, with the main data corpus collected during the winter and spring of the 2021-2022 academic year. Data sources and types at each site included choir teacher and student interviews/transcripts, observations/field notes, recordings from concerts and rehearsals, course materials, and artifacts. While I aimed to keep the method of data collection consistent between sites, the timeline varied for each school (see Table 5). Additionally, because I received permissions from the school districts at different times, I began data collection during different months of the academic year (see Table 5).

After institutional IRB approval and receiving permission to move forward with the study from each school district, I immediately set up an interview with the choir teacher. During this interview, the teacher and I designed a study timeline that worked with the district's academic year calendar and the choir's schedule and sequence/curriculum. Because I sought to interview students once before or during a project that invited IL and once after the project, the study timeline at each school depended heavily on the choir teacher's scope and sequence/curriculum for the school year. After each teacher and I created a rough timeline, I maintained an emergent design at each school. For instance, while I intended to interview students twice at each school, I interviewed students three times at Davis High School because I wanted to follow up with them after their performance. At the other schools, the second interviews took place after their performances of their IL products, so I maintained the original design of two student interviews at those schools.

Table 5. *Data Collection Timeline*

	Morris High School	Davis High School	East High School
Teachers and Program Recruitment	April 2021	July 2021	March 2022
IRB Approval	November 19, 2021	November 19, 2021	November 19, 2021
School District Permission	January 6, 2022	December 2, 2021	March 30, 2022
First Teacher Interview	January 11, 2022	December 9, 2021	April 11, 2022
Consent/Assent Form Collection	January 11-20, 2022	December 8, 2021-January 6, 2022	April 6-May 2, 2022
First Student Interview	January 24, 25, 28, 31, 2022	January 10-12, 2022 [all virtual]	April 27-29, 2022; May 11-12, 2022
Site Visit 1	February 23-24, 2022	April 20-22, 2022	April 26-27, 2022 [partial/virtual]; May 2, 2022; May 5, 2022 [partial]
Second Student Interview	May 23-25, 2022	April 20-22, 2022	June 2, 2022; June 6-7, 2022 [No seniors]
Third Student Interview	-	May 23 & 25, 2022	-
Site Visit 2	May 23-25, 2022	May 20, 2022 & May 21, 2022 [partial]	May 16, 2022

Table 5. *(continued)*

	Morris High School	Davis High School	East High School
Final Teacher Interview	October 7, 2022	November 14, 2022	November 11, 2022
Student Member-Checking	October 20, 2022	November 16, 2022	November 29, 2022

Next, I describe data collection procedures organized by data sources, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Informed by the study's purpose, research questions, and my knowledge of the literature, I developed three semi-structured interview protocols, including the first teacher interviews, the exploratory student interviews, and the second student interviews (see Appendix E). I created supplemental interview protocols during the data collection period, informed by the data and emerging findings from both the initial interviews and observations. The protocols that I developed later also included the second teacher interview protocols and the third student interview protocols for students at Davis High School (see Appendix E). The protocols for all student interviews included full questions, as well as probes and prompts, which were important because I was working with teenagers, who sometimes provided little detail, unclear explanations, or incomplete thoughts (King & Horrocks, 2010). By asking probes, informed by interviews with the teacher and other students at the school, I sought to help students to clarify, elaborate, and complete their thoughts, giving me a more in-depth understanding of student experiences.

I also changed the wording of the protocols based on the school and the student experiences, as I sought to use terms that made sense to the students based on their vocabulary and lived experiences. For instance, instead of asking students directly about IL (a term with which most were unfamiliar), I asked them about specific projects and activities in which they experienced ILPP. As I continued with data collection, the interviews informed further probes/prompts that became more relevant and specific to each school.

Teacher Interviews

Each teacher participated in an interview at the beginning of the data collection period, spring 2022, of about an hour in length (see Appendix E). During this interview, I sought to become acquainted with the teacher's background, their relationship to ILPP, and their choral program. This interview helped to clarify what I should observe and aided in determining probes to ask students during the exploratory student interviews. Later, during observations in the spring of 2022, I recorded casual conversations that occurred between myself and each teacher. These casual conversations occurred before or after rehearsals, during lunch periods, and during planning periods. In these conversations, I asked questions to clarify and verify what I observed. After completing all observations, student interviews, and the first round of data analysis, I interviewed the teacher participants a final time, for a duration of an hour, in the fall of 2022. After conducting the interview according to the protocol, I presented emerging themes to the teachers, seeking feedback. Thus, this second formal teacher interview also served as a means of member checking, which I describe in the trustworthiness section of this chapter.

The interview setting for the teacher interviews mostly took place remotely on Zoom. Comfort, privacy, and quiet were critical to establishing a safe space for teachers to share about their choral programs (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 48). Conducting the interviews on Zoom also allowed teachers to choose their interview locations. In each case, the teachers chose to interview in their offices at school.

My efforts to help teacher participants feel at ease began well before the formal interviews. To develop rapport, I spoke with each teacher participant several times prior to beginning the study. In addition to learning about their programs, I took a vested interest in their families, professional engagements, and personal interests. I continued to develop rapport with each teacher during the site visits, and noticed each teacher become more comfortable with my presence as time progressed, which I hoped would yield authentic responses.

To facilitate transcription, I audio recorded each teacher interview, while remaining aware that the presence of a recording device could have impacted the interview process. For instance, some teachers may have viewed the project as intimidating and attempted to provide “good” answers (King & Horrocks, 2010). The teacher participants frequently offered relevant material while I was not recording, demonstrating the “inhibiting effect of recording” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 45). To preserve the essence of their comments, I journaled afterward, either by speaking or typing out my thoughts, taking note to ask the teachers about their comments at the next interview. When in person, I used a small audio-recording device that I placed off to the side, careful not to obstruct the view of the participants. During Zoom interviews, I utilized the Zoom recording function, taking minimal notes to prevent the teacher

participants from feeling anxious or judged. Each teacher's private and quiet office facilitated high-quality audio recordings, and thus, accurate and complete transcripts.

Student Interviews

All consenting students participated in exploratory individual interviews which ranged from 8-26 minutes in length and took place during their choir classes (see Appendix E). This initial interview allowed me to acquaint myself with the program and the students, while simultaneously acquiring a better understanding of the activities associated with ILPP and choir. Initially, I anticipated selecting a smaller sample of 10-20 students per site to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview of approximately 30 to 60 minutes in length (see Appendix E). I planned to utilize purposive sampling to select (a) adolescents who gave robust verbal responses in the exploratory interview, and (b) a diverse sample, including confirming and disconfirming cases. However, once I developed a better understanding of each program, I knew I was interested in asking all students follow-up questions about their experiences with ILPP in choir. Therefore, I interviewed all students at each school at least twice, except a few seniors at East High School who graduated prior to the second interviews. For those seniors, I included a more comprehensive interview protocol for the initial interview, modeling it after the second interview protocol I used for all other students. Developed prior to the beginning of data collection, the second student interview protocol allowed me to dive deeper into student experiences with ILPP in choir, most notably including questions about the benefits and challenges of specific ILPP activities. I also added questions to the second interview protocol based on the first-round data collection. The second student interviews at the three schools ranged from 5 to 65 minutes in length. I

interviewed the students at Davis High School three times, because I wanted to hear their perspectives after their final performance, and I had already interviewed them twice. At Davis High School, the third interview took place in five focus groups of three to four students each, and was quite brief, clocking in at five to nine minutes each (see Appendix E). Second interviews (and third interviews, when applicable) were scheduled during choir class, before or after school, or during the students' free periods or lunch. Finally, in the fall of 2022, I conducted member checking with a small group of student participants at each school, which I describe later in the trustworthiness section of the chapter. Table 6 shows an overview of the number and types (FG=Focus Group, I=Individual) of student interviews at each of the three sites, but does not include the fall 2022 member checking interviews.

Table 6. *Number and Types of Student Interviews*

School Setting	Exploratory Student Interviews	Second Student Interviews	Third Student Interviews	Total Number Student Interviews
Davis High School	13 3 FG; 10 I	13 6 FG; 7 I	5 5 FG; 0 I	31 14 FG; 17 I
Morris High School	17 5 FG; 12 I	22 1 FG; 21 I	-	39 6 FG; 33 I
East High School	11 5 FG; 6 I	8 4 FG; 4 I	-	19 9 FG; 10 I
Total	41	43	5	89 29 FG; 60 I

Note: FG=Focus Group Interviews; I=Individual Interview

The interview setting for interviews with student participants varied between schools. Locality and scheduling necessitated some interviews to be held remotely. For the most part, all exploratory student interviews were held remotely, while most subsequent interviews were held in person. I utilized both Zoom and Google Meet for virtual interviews, depending on the application's availability at each school.

No matter the format — online or in person — comfort, privacy, and quiet were critical to building rapport, which is the "key ingredient in successful qualitative interviewing" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 48). I drew on my experience connecting with adolescents to inform my initial student interactions. To help the student participants feel at ease, I began each interview by asking non-threatening questions about their day and about school. During site visits, I chatted with students during downtime about the day's events.

Another way that I strove to heighten student comfort was by using spaces familiar to them for the locations of their interviews — mostly their music rooms. In a few cases (primarily due to COVID-19-related absences), students interviewed remotely from their houses. When interviewing on Zoom, I took care to assure students with non-threatening body language and behaviors, like greeting students with a smile and making small talk in the beginning of the interview. When interviewing in person, I used several of the same techniques and avoided sitting behind a desk/table to circumvent coming across as intimidating. Like with the teacher interviews, I audio recorded each student interview to facilitate transcription. Similar to the teacher interviews, the presence of a recording device could have made students feel inclined to provide "good" answers (King & Horrocks, 2010). To mitigate this difficulty during in-person observations and

interviews, I attempted to place my small recording device out of the direct sightline of the participants. During Zoom interviews, I utilized the Zoom recording function, taking minimal notes to aid with transcription and identification of who was talking.

Another way I attempted to facilitate student comfort was to provide them with an option to interview either as a part of a small focus group or individually. A "research technique that collects data through group interaction," (Morgan, 1996, p. 130), focus group discussions should "mimic the natural process of forming and expressing opinions" (Schutt, 2011, p. 309). Because of their social nature, focus groups aid some adolescents in speaking more freely (Cyr, 2019), while also "reveal[ing] the social and cultural context of people's understandings and beliefs" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 61). I found group interviews particularly helpful in acquiring an understanding of the social context of the school and choir program. To accommodate more private students as well as those whose opinions differed from their peers, it was also advantageous to interview some students individually. Because others were not present to speak on their behalf, some individuals shared more during individual interviews than in the group interviews. By using a combination of group and individual interviews, I developed a better understanding of the program's culture while gaining a sense of each student's stance as an individual.

In addition to comfort, King and Horrocks (2010) emphasized the importance of privacy and quiet in interview settings. To avoid being interrupted or overheard, the teachers assisted me in identifying ideal locations in advance of scheduling student participant interviews. At Morris High School, Zoom and in-person interviews with student participants took place in a soundproof practice room with a window. While the

interviews were not anonymous—passersby could see into the room—the interviews were both private and quiet. At Davis High School, Zoom interviews with students took place in the choir teacher's office with the door closed, which provided both a private and quiet place to interview. When I visited in person, I interviewed the students in the choir room during periods when choir was not taking place. Though the door to the room was mostly closed, sometimes teachers and/or other students needed to briefly enter the space. After a brief pause in conversation, we were able to continue the interview when the space resumed being private and quiet. Both Zoom and in-person interviews with student participants at East High School took place in the teacher's shared office with the door mostly closed. Because this office was shared, the two teachers needed to access the space more frequently than the interview settings at the other schools. Again, in this instance, students either continued talking, if the topic did not seem sensitive, or they took a brief pause until the teacher left the room. The relatively quiet interview locations facilitated high-quality audio recordings, and thus, accurate and complete transcripts.

Observations

Observations served as a secondary data source and aided in triangulating the student and teacher interview data. I aimed to complete between three and five days of observations at each site. At Morris High School, I observed for two full days in February and three full days in May, including their spring choral and band concert. At Davis High School, I observed for three full days in April, one full day in May, and also attended The Spectacular, a choir performance at the end of the school year. I encountered scheduling issues at East High School, which meant that I completed some observations virtually. At East High School, I completed two partial days of virtual observations and two full days

of in-person observations. I also attended their spring choir and orchestra concert in person.

When observing the choirs at each of the schools, I sat in the back of the choir rooms, aiming to remain relatively inconspicuous and inobtrusive. Due to this study's focus, students at all three schools frequently worked both as a large choir and in small groups. During small group work, I circulated from group to group, aiming to observe each group for a relatively equal amount of time. When observing small groups, I stood or sat off to the side with my laptop and handheld audio recorder. I quietly took field notes and audio recorded when moments seemed prescient. Once I developed a sense of the group dynamics, what the group was working on, and how they worked, I moved to a new group.

During virtual observations at East High School, Ms. Evans set up two devices and allowed me to join her classes via Google Meet. When students worked as a full group, Ms. Evans set up one of her devices so that I could easily see and hear all the students in the room. When students worked in small groups, Ms. Evans assigned students from each small group to join her Google Meet on separate devices before splitting into different breakout rooms. This allowed me the option to move between groups at my leisure.

While observing, I took descriptive fieldnotes with rich, thick, descriptions, including dates, location, social interactions, and the types of activities I observed. I also described the physical setting and who was present. When appropriate, I included direct quotes in my field notes to value the insider's (participant's) perspectives. I included objective descriptions and journaled about my own feelings, reactions, and reflections,

including what it was like for me to approach the observation from my own lived experiences. When appropriate, I noted how my observations did not match my expectations, following Patton's (2015) advice to describe what did not take place and what was not present in the setting. I made sure to separate interpretations and field-based insights from more objective descriptions. Through multiple observations at each site, I sought to move beyond my own preconceptions about the schools, programs, teachers, and students, developing empathy for what it feels like to be in that space as a student and teacher. As I documented insights and ideas, embarking on the process of meaning-making, I was able to hone understandings and craft future interview questions (Patton, 2015).

Artifacts

Yin (2018) identified artifacts as one of six main sources of evidence found in case study research. For this study, artifacts served as a secondary data source, which, in addition to observations, I used to triangulate the data. At all three high schools, I collected photos of the (a) sheet music, (b) physical spaces such as the music wings, (c) signs/posters on the walls and notes on chalkboards/whiteboards, and (d) other materials such as syllabi and student work. I also collected audio recordings of the performances that I observed at the three schools. To supplement these artifacts, I asked each teacher to send me any other materials that seemed crucial to understanding the high school choral program (see Table 7). Mr. Cohen and Ms. Evans created Google Folders and Google Docs with links, respectively, which they shared with me, providing access to many artifacts detailed in Table 7. Mrs. Wilson provided access to Davis High School's Google Classroom, where she added me to her 2021-2022 Cantamus page. There, I viewed

announcements, scores, accompaniment tracks, audio recordings, and part tracks. Mrs. Wilson also created a folder with Cantamus information from the year 2019-2020, which gave me access to additional artifacts, detailed in Table 7.

Table 7. *Artifacts*

Davis High School	East High School	Morris High School
Recordings of the full choir	Link to Ms. Evans' website	Chamber Choir songwriting EP from 2020-2021on YouTube
Part Tracks	Video recordings of hybrid/virtual performances from 2019 & 2020	Team-Time performance audio recordings from previous years
Photos from Zoom sessions during COVID	Instructions for projects, including the Senior Tributes project	Make Something Session audio and video recordings
Sheet Music	Video/audio recordings of current and previous Senior Tributes	Audio recordings from December 2021 concert
Google forms	Notation for "Traitor," the song arranged by Treble Choir	
Choir Calendar	Choir happenings calendar, including all rehearsals and events	
Choral Syllabus	Daily welcome slides & visuals used for warm-ups on Google Slides	
	Examples of previous Choir Projects	
	Practice tracks and sheet music for all ensembles	

Data Transformation

All data sources—interviews, observations, and artifacts—required data transformation. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. I employed both undergraduate music education students and a professional service entitled GoTranscript to transcribe the interview data which had been previously de-identified. In all cases, humans—not a computer AI system—transcribed the interviews. The transcribers focused on documenting the spoken language as well as nonverbal nuances, such as laughter, pauses, and interruptions. Once I received the completed transcriptions as Word documents, I labeled each interview with the school pseudonym, student/teacher pseudonym, and interview number. After, I organized the transcripts into folders according to the interview number (e.g., exploratory interview, second interview, third interview) and school. I stored all interviews in password protected folders on my desktop. I then double-checked that all data was anonymized by substituting pseudonyms for places, events and traditions, and specific attributes of the town (King & Horrocks, 2010).

To transform the data from observations, I reviewed the field notes on Microsoft OneNote after each day of observations. At this time, I added salient details, ensuring that the notes contained detailed, rich, thick descriptions, and organized the observation field notes in a locked folder according to date. I followed a similar process to transform the study's artifacts. Throughout the study, I reviewed the artifacts by journaling using Microsoft OneNote. I ensured that I included my own feelings, reactions, and reflections, as well as more objective observations.

Another source of data included audio recordings from the field. Examples included audio of student participants working, teacher participants speaking, in-progress

performances, and final performances. While observing and recording, I took note of salient moments by including timestamps in the field notes. Upon returning home, after uploading the mp3 from my audio recorder to my computer and labeling it according to date, class, and school, I spliced the audio samples for transcription and sent these samples to a professional transcription service. To prepare for analysis, I uploaded the interview transcripts, field notes, and researcher journal to MaxQDA, a qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software.

Within-Case Analysis

Multiple case studies present a unique opportunity for researchers to conduct within-case analyses before cross-case analyses (Stake, 2006). To begin the within-case analyses, I aligned the first cycle coding methods with the research questions, selecting multiple types of analysis, including constant comparison (Charmaz, 2008), and descriptive, in-vivo, emotion, and values coding (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). For the first research question, I sought evidence of IL specific to each school, aggregating the data around each activity that took place in the choir program. Constantly comparing data (Charmaz, 2008), I cycled between data collection and analysis, engaging in an iterative process while reviewing artifacts, interview transcripts, and field notes. I continually asked myself, “What’s happening here?” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 161). During this iterative process, I used my conceptual framework derived from Wright (2016) and Folkestad (2006) described in Chapter 1, to understand how IL transpired in each school choir program.

As I constantly compared, I determined that Wright’s descriptors of Ownership and Intentionality did not capture critical aspects of IL, including diffused power and

choice. Constantly comparing until I reached meaning saturation (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018), I developed a modified conceptual framework, entitled The IL-FL Continua (see Figure 2). To better align with the emerging themes and existing literature, The IL-FL Continua modifies Wright's (2016) Ownership descriptions and replaces Intentionality with Choice (see Figures 1 & 2).

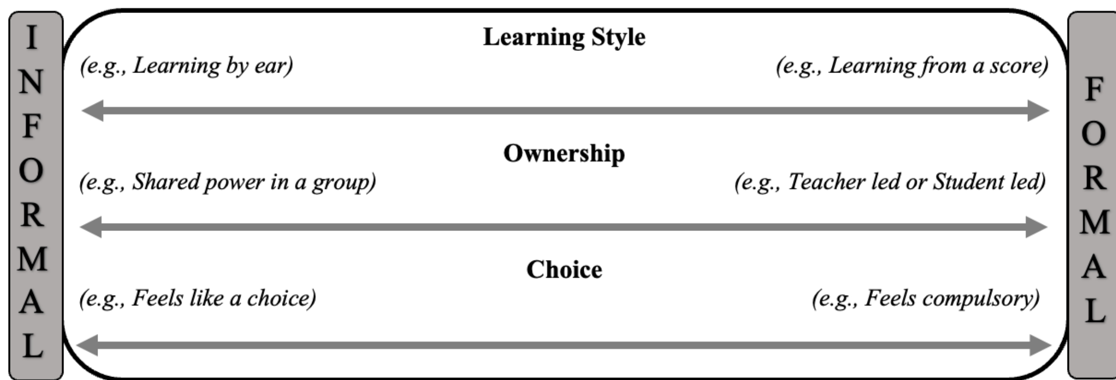

Figure 2. *The Informal Learning-Formal Learning Continua (The IL-FL Continua)*

Wright (2016)'s conception of Ownership classified formal as "teacher led" and informal as "student led." I observed, however, that this does not align with Folkestad's (2006) conception of informal Ownership which focuses on self-regulated learning, rather than didactic teaching. Noticing that many student led activities included didactic teaching, I concluded that one should not assume a relationship between IL and student led activities. For instance, one may classify either a student or teacher leading warm-ups as equally "formal" because the activity features a change in personnel and leadership, but not in Ownership. I also noticed more informal instances in class, such as students working in a small group toward a goal, with no clearly defined leader. Seeing these key differences emerge in the data, I adjusted the descriptors on the Ownership continuum to

reflect my analysis. The formal pole of ownership on The IL-FL Continua therefore reads "e.g., Teacher led or Student led" while the informal pole is labeled "e.g., Shared power in a group."

As I collected data, I also had difficulty locating students' Intentionality on Wright's (2016) continuum using the researcher's descriptors of "to play" and "to learn." Based on my observations, I posit that "to play" does not always align with IL as students may enter IL contexts intending to learn new skills. Furthermore, upon returning to Green's (2008) five characteristics of informal learning practices, I realized that Wright's model did not include "music which learners choose for themselves" (p. 10). Thus, I replaced the Intentionality continuum with Choice continuum, adding descriptors of "feels compulsory" and "feels like a choice." These descriptors emerged from the data as participants explained their IL learning experiences in choir classes. The data also revealed that Choice extends beyond Green's (2008) requirement that learners choose music for themselves. Instead, the continuum of Choice includes, but is not limited to, choice of music, choice of voice part, and choice of project. After this conceptual framework emerged during the first cycle of data analysis, I engaged in second cycle coding, using The Model of Music Learning to analyze research question one.

For the second and third research questions, which centered around the benefits and challenges of ILPP in choral spaces, I coded primarily using descriptive, in-vivo, and emotion coding (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). Descriptive coding allowed me to "assign labels to data that summarize in a word or short phrase," while in-vivo coding allowed me to capture the participant's own words in the code itself, using quotation marks (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). Finally, emotion coding emerged as an

important coding tool as I sought to explore the participant's perspectives, feelings, and experiences with ILPP in choir.

The fourth research question asked, "What beliefs and values lead teachers to make space for ILPP within the high school choral program?" Values coding emerged as most appropriate to address this research question (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). By identifying attitudes ("the way [one] thinks and feels about [themselves], another person, a thing, or an idea"), values ("the importance [one] attribute[s] to [themselves], another person, a thing, or an idea"), and beliefs ("part of a system that includes values and attitudes, plus personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretive perceptions of the social world") in the teacher interview (and coding them as such), I was able to develop an in-depth understanding of each teacher's identity (Miles et al., 2020, p. 67).

Morris High School Analysis

I began data analysis in April 2022 by focusing first on Morris High School. After reading through the Morris High School data (334 pages of interview transcripts as well as additional pages of field notes), I selected and combined notable interview excerpts from both teacher and student data (totaling 10% of the data, or 33 pages). I uploaded this document to Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software, before open coding with a peer coder. I met my peer coder several years prior to my PhD program. Both studying music education, we became fast friends, frequently collaborating as peer coders on various projects. Because of our experience working together, I chose to ask her to work alongside me for my dissertation research. Before my peer coder commenced with her work, I shared the purpose and research questions, as well as the projected coding types:

values, descriptive, in vivo, and emotion codes. After we both open-coded 10% of the data from Morris High School, we met on Zoom to discuss our codes, and developed a common code list, which I used to independently re-code the previously-discussed excerpts. I then modified the code list, after which we met again to code an additional 5% of the data and to check for bias and subjectivity. Together, we determined parent codes, under which I later continued to nest child codes as I continued with the data analysis. Working with my peer reviewer brought more questions than answers, as well as a heightened sensitivity to issues, themes, and outliers in the data set.

Though with my peer coder I used Dedoose, a cloud-based data analysis platform, I transferred the codes into a different qualitative data analysis software, MaxQDA, before coding the transcripts using first cycle coding methods (Saldaña, 2021). I chose to use MaxQDA for this study because of its more advanced tools for analyzing and visualizing qualitative data. Transcripts, collected prior to the second teacher interview, included 17 exploratory student interviews, 22 second student interviews, one formal teacher interview, three informal teacher-researcher discussions, and three field recordings: totaling 46 documents. First cycle coding resulted in hundreds of independent codes. I used code landscaping (Saldaña, 2021) as a means of transitioning to second cycle coding. Using MaxQDA, I created and explored code clouds associated with research questions two through four, including, but not limited to the following: (a) teacher values/attitudes/beliefs, (b) overall student descriptions of Team-Time, (c) benefits of Team-Time, (d) challenges of Team-Time, (e) student feelings related to Team-Time, (f) student suggestions to teachers for Team-Time, (g) overall student descriptions of Make Something Sessions, (h) benefits of Make Something Sessions, (i)

challenges of Make Something Sessions, (j) student feelings related to Make Something Sessions, (k) student suggestions for Make Something Sessions, and (l) overall classroom environment. Each code cloud represented the magnitude of the codes through size, meaning that codes that I used more frequently were bigger than codes that I used less frequently. I created multiple versions of each code cloud, varying the frequency of codes for each version. For example, when I changed the parameters in MaxQDA to a frequency of seven coded excerpts per code, the code cloud featured less codes, and provided additional insights about which codes were emerging as most salient.

To begin second cycle coding, I printed out the code clouds, cut out the individual codes, and used these codes to create network and graphic displays of the data (Miles et al., 2020). I created one graphic display that combined research questions two and three for each IL focus activity (benefits/challenges of ILPP) and a separate graphic display for research question four (teacher values/attitudes/beliefs). This resulted in three total graphic displays for Morris High School: Team-Time Benefits/Challenges, Make Something Sessions Benefits/Challenges, and Teacher Values/Attitudes/Beliefs. These graphic displays informed my process as I moved forward with pattern coding, a second cycle coding method, in MaxQDA (Saldaña, 2021). I did not create graphic displays of teacher-identified benefits or challenges of IL, because of the smaller amount of data. The pattern coding elicited seven pattern codes for research question two (three Team-Time benefits and four Make Something Sessions benefits), five pattern codes for research question three (three Team-Time challenges and two Make Something Sessions challenges), and four pattern codes for research question four. The strength of these

pattern codes meant that they could stand alone as themes, each with sub-themes. After solidifying the themes and sub-themes, I began to write up the findings.

Davis High School Analysis

My peer coder and I engaged in a similar process for the data from Davis High School, beginning our work in early October 2022. The 33 interview transcripts, collected prior to the second teacher interview, totaled 258 pages. After selecting salient excerpts, I sent my peer coder 10% of the data already collected, totaling 26 pages. We both separately open-coded the data before meeting on Zoom to discuss our codes, working to develop a common code list. Because of time constraints, I modified the next steps to be slightly less time-intensive for my peer coder. Instead of meeting again to discuss, I re-coded the initial batch of transcripts with the newly developed code list (plus another 5% of the data) and sent the coded transcripts to my peer coder to review by email. She verified the codes and provided feedback, helping me to further interrogate and finalize parent codes. We reached 100% agreement before I coded the remainder of the transcripts, adding child codes as I went. At this time, I used first cycle coding methods to code the 33 total transcripts (13 exploratory student interviews, 13 second student interviews, five third student interviews, one formal teacher interview, and one informal teacher-researcher discussion), which resulted in hundreds of codes and code segments. Using MaxQDA, I created and explored code clouds associated with research questions two through four, including, but not limited to the following: (a) teacher values/attitudes/beliefs, (b) overall student descriptions of The Spectacular, (c) benefits of The Spectacular, (d) challenges of The Spectacular, (e) student feelings related to The Spectacular, (f) student suggestions to teachers for The Spectacular, (g) overall student

descriptions of Talent Days, (h) benefits of Talent Days, (i) challenges of Talent Days, (j) student feelings related to Talent Days, (k) student suggestions for Talent Days, and (l) overall classroom environment. To transition from first cycle coding methods (open coding) to second cycle coding methods (pattern coding), I followed the recommendations of Harding (2019), as described by Saldaña, (2021), summarizing and comparing codes to create code charts. From there, I created summary statements about the emerging findings, before moving on to pattern coding, a second cycle coding method, in MaxQDA (Saldaña, 2021). Creating code charts and summary statements (as compared to network/graphic displays, which I used as transition methods in the other two cases) allowed me to better address the uniqueness of this case, which was a distinctly more formal program than the other two cases.

Pattern coding elicited nine pattern codes for research question two (six benefits of The Spectacular and three benefits of Talent Days), six pattern codes for research question three (four challenges of The Spectacular and two challenges of Talent Days), and four pattern codes for research question four. Again, the strength of the pattern codes validated their transformation into themes, each containing sub-themes, before I began to write up the findings.

East High School Analysis

My peer coder and I began to open code the data for East High School in late October 2022. The 20 transcripts collected at that point (11 exploratory student interviews, eight second student interviews, one formal teacher interview, and one informal teacher-researcher discussion) totaled 180 pages. I sent my peer coder 10% of the data (18 pages), taking care to send salient excerpts from a variety of participants. We

followed a similar process to that of the Davis High School analysis, meeting first on Zoom to develop a common code list. Next, I re-coded the initial set of transcripts and coded an additional 5% of the data with the newly-developed code list before sending the coded transcripts to my peer coder by email and finalizing the code list digitally. I used first cycle coding methods to code the 20 transcripts with hundreds of codes and code segments. Using MaxQDA, I created and explored code clouds associated with research questions two through four, including, but not limited to the following: (a) teacher values/attitudes/beliefs, (b) descriptions of Senior Tributes, (c) benefits of Senior Tributes, (d) challenges of Senior Tributes, (e) feelings related to Senior Tributes, (f) student suggestions to teachers for Senior Tributes, (g) overall student descriptions of Large Group Arrangements, (h) benefits of Large Group Arrangements, (i) challenges of Large Group Arrangements, (j) student feelings related to Large Group Arrangements, (k) student suggestions for Large Group Arrangements, and (l) overall classroom environment. Like the analysis of Morris High School, I printed the code clouds, which I used to create network and graphic displays of the data (Miles et al., 2020). I ended with three total graphic displays for East High School: Senior Tributes Benefits/Challenges, Large Group Arrangements Benefits/Challenges, and Teacher Values/Attitudes/Beliefs. These graphic displays served as a means of transitioning to second cycle coding (Miles et al., 2020). Second cycle coding consisted of pattern coding that resulted in five pattern codes for research question two (two Senior Tributes benefits and three Large Class Arrangements benefits), eight pattern codes for research question three (five challenges related to Senior Tributes and three challenges related to Talent Days), and five pattern

codes for research question four. I transformed these codes into themes, each containing sub-themes, before beginning to write up the findings.

Cross-Case Analysis

After themes emerged for each case, I engaged in a cross-case analysis of the three cases. According to Miles et al. (2020), many researchers analyze across cases by forming types or families. To create types/families, researchers "inspect cases in a set to see whether they fall into clusters or groups that share certain patterns or configurations . . . [which can] sometimes . . . be ordered or sorted along some dimensions" (Miles et al., 2020, p. 97). To address research question one, I formed types/families of learning practices/processes across cases, plotting them on a continuum of FL and IL, before comparing them to one another (Miles et al., 2020). To address research questions two, three, and four, I used one of the five analytic techniques suggested by Yin (2018), a case study expert: explanation-building. Similar to the process in grounded theory research in which researchers develop explanations of a process, case study researchers who engage in explanation-building can analyze the case study data and develop assertions about the quintain by building explanations about the cases. I engaged in several steps of analysis prior to building the final explanations. First, I thoroughly reviewed each case's data, keeping detailed notes, while centering the research questions in the forefront of my mind (Stake, 2006). Afterwards, I completed a worksheet for each site created by Stake (2006, p. 45) intended to distill (a) the synopsis of the case, (b) situational constraints, (c) uniqueness among other cases, (d) prominence of each research question in the case, (e) expected usefulness of the case for developing themes related to each research question, (f) findings, (g) possible quotes for multicase reports, and (h) other commentary. Next, I

created a spreadsheet that contained prominent themes from all three cases. I then used a checklist to track themes across multiple settings: Morris High School, East High School, and/or Davis High School. I dedicated additional columns to insights after comparing themes across cases and supporting/disconfirming instances in the literature. By combining the most important findings from each of the three case studies, I was able to make assertions about the quintain, or ILPP in high school choral contexts, which emerged as explanations (Yin, 2018). Throughout, I aimed to center polyphonic writing (Allsup, 2017) and "for the findings to keep their contextual meaning during the authoring of the multicase report" (Stake, 2006, p. 47). In other words, I resisted the urge to over-simplify themes simply for the purpose of making assertions.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations emerged during this study, namely the implicit power dynamic between myself and the participants and my predisposition toward ILPP in choral settings. My first ethical concern was related to the power dynamic implicit between myself and the student and teacher participants. Because I studied a school music program and interviews took place at the school, student and teacher participants might have felt pressured to please me as the researcher or please other constituencies, such as their teacher. To mitigate this issue, I attempted to create an interview space that felt inviting, non-judgmental, and open to multiple perspectives; I also sought an insider's understanding while maintaining empathic neutrality (Patton, 2015). Empathic neutrality refers to learning about participants without judgement while demonstrating respect, trust, and openness. During interviews, I attempted to genuinely understand participant meanings by asking questions, summarizing my understandings, and remaining open to

the data that emerged. I also assured the student participants that their teacher, parents, and classmates would not hear what they said. I hoped that by giving student participants an option to interview individually or in a small focus group, they would feel at ease in the interview setting. In classroom observations, empathic neutrality took the form of mindfulness; while observing, I worked to remain present, noticing without judgement (Patton, 2015).

Because of my past experiences facilitating ILPP in choral settings, including three years in a public school setting and four years in a community choir and collegiate setting, I understood that I was predisposed to bring assumptions and biases about ILPP to this study. However, engaging in qualitative research requires that the researcher remain reflexive and attuned to varying perspectives throughout the data collection and data analysis process. During the analysis stage, I kept in mind that "reflexivity calls for . . . critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and a willingness to consider *how* who one is affects what one is able to observe, hear, and understand in the field as an observer and analyst" (Patton, 2015, p. 381). While I sought to approach the data collection and data analysis with an open mind, I acknowledged that my lived experience necessarily shaped how I viewed the data. To mitigate this ethical issue, I used Patton's (2015) reflexive questions for triangulated inquiry to guide the data collection and analysis, journaling in response to the questions. I considered reflexive screens such as culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, political praxis, language, and values as a means through which to view (a) those studied, the participants; (b) those who receive the study, the audience; and (c) myself as a qualitative inquirer (see Patton, 2015, p. 72). I asked myself about how I know what I know, what has shaped my perspective/worldview, how

my participants view me, and how I perceive them. When themes emerged, I deliberately searched for diverging points of view, aiming to center the analysis around multiple voices and contradictory opinions. When analyzing and writing, I resisted the urge to neatly package findings, avoiding the temptation to make direct and orderly claims and find causal inferences that do not exist (Allsup, 2017).

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers generate credibility for their studies by establishing trustworthiness before, during, and after data collection and data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I sought to establish trustworthiness by engaging in triangulation, peer coding, and member checking. My use of multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and artifacts) and types (transcripts, field notes, and journal entries) served to triangulate the data collection, thus reinforcing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2005). By interviewing all students who consented/assented, I varied informants, thus increasing the trustworthiness of the data corpus. In addition to varying informants, I triangulated by varying methods—or modes—of data collection. By interviewing, observing, and collecting artifacts, I diversified the data sources/types, thus increasing the trustworthiness of the data. In addition to triangulating the data, I also engaged in peer coding with an experienced music educator and researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer coders serve to verify transcripts and analysis, by aiding the researcher in developing a common code list. In this study, I met with my peer coder several times, aiming to interrogate and finalize the parent codes for each of the three sites.

Finally, I engaged in substantial member checking, an indispensable means of establishing trustworthiness as well as collecting new data (Stake, 2006). After receiving

the completed transcriptions, I distributed them to the interviewees either in person or via email or text. Of the 89 student interviews across all of the sites, student participants checked 63 of the transcripts, yielding a 71% return rate overall (see Table 8). Of the nine teacher interview transcripts (both formal and informal), teachers checked three, totaling 33% of the interview data. I asked participants to check the transcriptions for accuracy, completeness, and possible misrepresentations. I also encouraged participants to add any missing and salient information to the transcripts. The method of distribution (text, email, or in person) depended on the timing of when I received the transcripts as well as the permissions that I received via the consent and assent forms. I prioritized distributing the transcripts in person whenever possible, because I accurately predicted that it would yield the highest rate of return. Texting student participants the transcripts yielded the second highest rate of return, while emailing was least successful.

Table 8. *Member-Checking Return Rates*

School Setting	Teacher Transcript	Exploratory Student Transcript	Second Student Transcript	Third Student Transcript	Overall Student Transcript
Morris High School	0%	94%	35%	N/A	61%
East High School	50%	73%	71%	N/A	72%
Davis High School	66%	100%	62%	100%	83%

Student and teacher participants also provided feedback about emerging themes, which served as second form of member checking. After I completed all observations,

student interviews, and the first round of data analysis, I interviewed the teacher participants a final time and conducted a focus group of student participants from each school (see Table 5 & Appendix E). Teacher participant member checking took place during the final teacher interview in fall 2022. I presented the teacher participants at Morris High School and East High School with the following code clouds: (a) teacher values/attitudes/beliefs, (b) overall classroom environment, (c) benefits of each IL focus activity, and (d) challenges of each IL focus activity. I asked the teachers to talk aloud while reviewing each code cloud by prompting them with questions and statements such as: "Look at this code cloud. Tell me what you see. What resonates with you? Is there anything you have to add? Anything with which you disagree? What's missing?" At Davis High School, themes were better suited to be presented as summary statements about the emerging findings; I presented them to the teacher participant as six statements, prompting her with similar questions to talk aloud while reviewing the statements. I sent each teacher a preview of the protocol and emergent findings by email to review prior to our discussion.

Student participant member checking also took place during fall 2022 with select groups of students from each school. I chose student participants who provided keen insights during the first and second interviews, as well as those who presented opinions that diverged from the majority. Organized in focus groups, I interviewed two student participants at East High School and four student participants at Davis and Morris High Schools, respectively. I interviewed one student participant from Morris High School individually because of scheduling conflicts. During student member checking, I showed participants a variety of code clouds, including those mentioned earlier: (a) teacher

values/attitudes/beliefs, (b) overall classroom environment, (c) benefits of each IL focus activity, and (d) challenges of each IL focus activity. I asked similar probing questions to those that I posed to the teachers. Member-checking interactions ranged from 20-30 minutes. In most cases, member checking confirmed and further validated the emerging themes. I incorporated any clarifications and additions into the second cycle analysis.

Case Profiles

This study took place in three settings: Davis High School, East High School, and Morris High School. In this section, I detail each setting, beginning by describing the research site and outlining the teacher participant profile before explaining the IL focus activities.

Morris High School

Morris High School is situated in a county sharing the same name and located in the Northeastern United States. Made up of three small towns, with a modest population density of around 400 people per square mile, Morris County's foremost gathering place is the local Applebee's restaurant. This site represents neither the highest nor lowest median income of the three sites; the average household income in Morris County is $84,246, with 4.7% of the population living in poverty. When first visiting Morris, I remember feeling confused as I attempted to locate a town center. After investigating, it turns out that none of the county's towns feature downtown or gathering areas, which negatively impacts the band and choir teachers' ability to arrange for concerts in the community; there is no obvious performing space in the community other than at the school.

Upon walking through the front entrance of Morris High School, I was greeted by a sign with the school's core values and beliefs, which center around effort, respect, and responsibility. The signage also features academic, social, and civic learning goals for all students. Containing everything that the 797 students might need, the school is functional, but not as well-equipped or updated as some other high schools. The student body's racial and ethnic demographics include students who identify as White (62%), Hispanic (12%), two or more races (12%), and Asian (10%). Black and students of other races/ethnicities constitute less than 4% of the population at Morris High (see Table 1).

The high school music department immediately struck me as cozy because it was filled with people who respected and cared for each other. Two full-time music teachers, Mr. Cohen and Mr. Simmons, share an office, as well as philosophical ideas, concerts, and students. Mr. Cohen teaches five curricular music classes in a two-day block schedule rotation, including: Class Guitar (a curricular elective of ~20 students), Low Voice Choir (entry-level choir of five voices), High Voice Choir (entry-level choir of 13 voices), Concert Choir (advanced choir of 13 voices), and Songwriting & Digital Beat-Making (a curricular elective of five students). In addition, Mr. Cohen facilitates an after-school *a cappella* choir, made up of eight students. Though the choir program is typically home to about 90 students, Mr. Cohen explained that the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on his enrollment. The band program also had trouble with program retention during the pandemic, and the band teacher, Mr. Simmons, teaches small classes: the Band (7 students), Wind Ensemble (5 students), Percussion Ensemble (14 students) and Jazz Band (4 students).

I spent most of my time observing in the two main rehearsal spaces, located in the dedicated music wing of the school. I observed the Songwriting & Digital Beat-Making and High Voice Choir classes in the first room, which felt small and rather uninviting, due to the small footprint, the white cinderblock walls, and the lack of decorations and natural light in the room. To compensate for the small space, Mr. Cohen uses a versatile furniture arrangement, which he and the students reset for each class. For Songwriting & Digital Beat-Making classes, the students set up several foldable tables and chairs, adorned by midi keyboards and their iPads. Immediately following Songwriting & Digital Beat-Making, Mr. Cohen and the High Voice students subsequently transform the space, moving the chairs into a semi-circle facing the front of the room. Class agreements are scrawled on the board and include (a) start/end on time, (b) step up/step back, (c) assume best intentions, acknowledge impact, (d) lean into discomfort, and (e) self-care.

I observed Class Guitar, Low Voice, and Concert Choir classes in the second dedicated music room, a larger space with many instruments flanking the sides of the room, including percussion instruments, instrument cases, and snare drum carriers. An upright piano stood at the front of the room—rarely used—as well as an upright bass. Two acoustic guitars held up in guitar stands, a drum kit, and an electric keyboard took a more prominent position in the room, which is logical considering Mr. Cohen's frequent use of guitar to accompany his choirs. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Simmons often use flexible seating options to convert this room between classes. While the guitar students sit in multiple rows with music stands, the choir students generally do not, instead sitting in a single semi-circle facing the front of the room. One who visits regularly would notice a

semi-permanent bulleted list scrawled across the chalkboard by Mr. Cohen, which represents the classroom community's values:

Individual/Collective:

1. Well-Being
2. Socio-Economic-Environment Sustainability
3. Collab Democratic

I also observed student rehearsals in the auditorium, which was located next to the music wing. With 500 comfortable seats, each with an attached desk, the small auditorium is modestly appointed with a projector and screen. Students mainly stood during rehearsals in the auditorium, except when Mr. Cohen paused to ask them to share their opinions/feelings or to solve a problem/decide on a solution; at that point, they sat on the floor of the stage, quietly attending to the task at hand.

Student interviews took place in one of the two practice rooms, located across the hallway from the second music room. The practice rooms are small spaces with cinderblock walls, with an Apple computer, a couple of chairs, and drab walls. However, the modest facilities do not hold back the students from working collaboratively toward their goals. When working in small groups during choir and guitar classes, students seem to pour out of every space, including the practice rooms, bursting with energy and ideas.

Next door to the practice rooms, I held interviews with Mr. Cohen about his philosophy, dreams for his students, and big ideas in his modest-sized music office, which he shares with Mr. Simmons. Though cluttered, the office is welcoming, with students frequently moving in and out with questions and funny anecdotes. During our lunchtime discussions, I noticed an assortment of photos from past choir events, as well

as one prominent poster by the Lincoln Center for Education, titled "Helping Young Minds Perform in a Dynamic World."

Teacher Profile

Mr. Cohen, a 35-year-old man, grew up surrounded by music, mainly through recordings, including Disney soundtracks, his dad's favorite bands, and Barbara Streisand. Excited by the prospect of playing an instrument after learning the recorder in elementary school, Mr. Cohen joined the band program playing French horn, which he continued studying through college. In high school, he joined the school choir. He also enjoyed playing keyboard and saxophone in his high school jam band with his friends outside of school; the band focused on writing their own songs, even recording an album with 10 tracks before graduation. This jam band, which he described as a "weird jazz, Emo rock-blues fusion thing," turned out to be a formative IL experience. He recalled prescient moments in which his formal musical knowledge from school helped him in his informal band setting.

> Because I played keyboard in that band . . . trying to try to work with everyone and feeling stuck, and then where the traditional classes I had taken little pieces of information, or something my teacher had said, would just pop up out of nowhere. It's like, "Okay, I don't know what to do. Let's try a Phrygian scale and see what that sounds like because I know what that is." Those were illuminating moments for sure.

Mr. Cohen stated that his rock/blues band experiences shaped his viewpoint on music education even as he pursued his undergraduate music education degree on French horn. Since then, Mr. Cohen has spent almost his entire 12-year teaching career (save for a half year) teaching high school chorus, guitar, songwriting, and digital songwriting and beat-making classes at Morris High School. During his fourth or fifth year of teaching, Mr. Cohen enrolled in a graduate class called Politics of Education, which he indicated,

"changed the trajectory of [his] philosophy . . . [giving way to] . . . a lot of the student-centered pedagogies." Since then, he has focused on placing democratic processes at the heart of his teaching. Involving his students in the decision-making process is not only one of Mr. Cohen's largest values, but something that students have come to expect from the choir program at Morris High School. Students do not take this mutual respect for granted; throughout my time at Morris High, students continually cited how different the choir room felt from the rest of the school.

In addition to prioritizing community, student choice/voice, and the learning process, Mr. Cohen values polished choral performances. Two days before the spring concert, on May 23, 2021, I observed the Concert Choir singing a Scandinavian piece, and noted the beauty of the students' blend, their mastery of singing with an Eastern European tone quality, and their musicality. To achieve that level of mastery, students use a five-step reading process that Mr. Cohen taught them, which Allison explained.

> So the five-step process that he taught us was either pitch or rhythm, those can be switched/flip-flopped for number one– I like to start with rhythm first– and so I do rhythm, pitch, tonal solfege in time, then audiate, and then sing.

In the introductory level choir classes, Mr. Cohen first guides the students through this process, and students gradually learn to guide themselves. In the advanced Concert Choir class, students more frequently break off into student-run sectionals to work through the five-step process together. Afterwards, Mr. Cohen facilitates a rehearsal in which students provide suggestions for things to work on, such as blend, balance, vowels, energy, and more. The rehearsals feel calm, relaxed, and focused. Mr. Cohen leaves ample time for students to ask questions and discuss musical options. The students

perceive this process as efficient, which I found surprising, because it differs significantly from the sequential teaching patterns that I have experienced in choral settings.

The students perform at a high level and are quite engaged in the learning process. Mr. Cohen smiles with his eyes and takes time to listen to his students, even when they barge into his office unannounced, bursting with emotion and passion. Students appear to adore Mr. Cohen, and he frequently and genuinely expresses his admiration for them, yelling things like “ROCK ON!,” “Epic!,” or “Oh my gosh-that’s a VIBE right there!” His genuine excitement and love for his students has helped his students to feel a true sense of community and a home in the music department.

Informal Learning in the Choir Program

Because the choral program at Morris High School centers around democratic learning, aspects of IL permeate all parts of the choral rehearsals. Students propose and vote on songs to sing, lead conversations, and make suggestions for how to navigate rehearsals. They frequently work on projects that they design in small groups and engage in large group vocal improvisatory exercises. Through an iterative process of data collection and honing my conceptual framework, I focused my study around two specific components of the Morris High School Choral Program: Team-Time and Make Something Sessions.

Team-Time. Inspired by Dr. Caron Collins’ model of Curious Collaborative Creativity (2022), Mr. Cohen began experimenting with Team-Time in his choral classes a couple of years before this study. Mr. Cohen explained that during Team-Time, students can “choose any musical topic that they'd like.” He went on to describe that “projects range from creating an original song, covering the song, [or] researching an

instrument or researching a musical tradition that they [aren't] familiar with or want to know more about." Students in the program followed this model in previous years, and many of their products were featured during choir concerts. Due to the extensive focus on IL during the pandemic (mainly as a necessity of social distancing), Concert Choir democratically decided that they desired more structured, FL experiences during this study's data collection period. Thus, the student participants enrolled in Concert Choir (all upper-class students) reflected on their experiences with the model of Team-Time from years past. Notably, toward the end of the data collection period, Concert Choir students began a small-scale Team-Time project, working in small groups to organize a Community Sing. However, Concert Choir's version of Team-Time did not serve as a focus of this study, because of the timing of the Community Sing in relation to the data collection period.

During the 2021-2022 school year, Mr. Cohen experimented with a different model of Team-Time for High Voice Choir. The students collectively decided what they wanted to create and learn together as a group, agreeing that they wanted to better understand what makes choral songs sound like choral songs. To do so, students decided to study a "traditional" choral song alongside a song of their choice, and then "choralify" their song choice, creating somewhat of a mashup. High Voice students chose Evanescence's song "Bring Me to Life" before asking Mr. Cohen to select something with a similar theme. He played them some options before the class decided on Schubert's "Die Leiermann" from *Winterreise*. After High Voice Choir collectively decided on a goal, the class split into teams with different tasks, including (a) an arranging team, (b) a Schubert research team, (c) an artwork team, (d) a poetry team, and

(e) an Evanescence research team. They spent many class periods working toward their individual goals before coming together as a group to finish the arrangement and share their understandings with each other. This process culminated in a performance during the spring concert.

Similarly, Low Voice Choir also worked to make an arrangement as a whole group, determined through a similar song-selection process as High Voice Choir. The students decided to remix “Mr. Sandman,” making an electronic version that they would perform live at the spring concert. Because the class only had five students, they all worked as one team together toward their goals. Similar to the other Team-Times, Mr. Cohen remained minimally involved, offering his advice when needed, and allowing the students to navigate the process as a group independently from him. This work culminated in a group performance, which was carefully arranged to include an electronic track, controlled live on an iPad by one of the students during the performance.

Make Something Sessions. Make Something Sessions are a full choir activity that take place mainly in Concert Choir, and most recently, in Treble Choir. Mr. Cohen explained the process:

> I will provide a picture or a quote either based on the repertoire we're doing or based on a discussion from the previous class or what have you. That will go up on the smartboard and then the students will come in and the only prompt is, "Look at this image, read this quote, and then think about what sounds would reflect, what you see, what you're reading," and then I turn the lights off and I just wait in the back of the room, and the students make sound.

He includes Make Something Sessions approximately once a week, and sometimes more, typically sitting off to the side as the students sing. Afterwards, the class debriefs about the musical content, the choices they made, and what they might want to improve or

change in the future. Mr. Cohen frequently uses this opportunity to apply formal musical terminology to label something that the group created relatively informally.

Davis High School

Home to a small population of about 164 people per square mile, the main street in Davis feels like a snapshot from the 1950s, with small humble bookstores, advertisements for Hoover vacuums, a local bakeshop, and a coffee shop. The scene was what I expected from a small town situated in a rural region in the Midwestern United States: everything one needs and nothing more. The people who live in the town—96% who identify as White—have strong ties to the area and a good bit of small-town pride. Wade, a student who attends Davis High School, described the town by stating:

> It's more country, but I like the isolation. I don't really like a lot of people in a small amount of space. It's got a lot of stuff right around here . . . we have a Walmart, we have basically every fast food that you would want. It feels like a good collection of what you would need in a smaller-type city.

The town of Davis represents the site with the lowest median household income ($58,302), with 13.6% of residents living in poverty. The many churches located in town point to the strong tradition of Christian faith in Davis. For recreation, people enjoy hunting and fishing as well as following the rivalry between the two local high school football teams.

As I approached Davis High School in my car for the first time in April 2022, I felt stunned by the enormity and modernity of the building. The school did not fit my perception of what I expected from a small town in the rural Midwest. Davis High School is beautiful and newly constructed, with an entire front section of the school lined with glass windows. Despite the amazing facility and resources, the school educates only a

small student body of 821 students, mostly consisting of White (83%) and Hispanic (15%) students. Asian and Black students constitute 1.1% of the population at Davis High (see Table 1).

The community of Davis clearly values the arts, demonstrated by the multiple music course offerings, high enrollment, and state-of-the-art rehearsal and performance facilities. Davis High School employs four music educators dedicated to nine musical ensembles, including choir, band, and orchestra teachers, and a staff member who assists with various classes as needed, but mainly teaches band at the elementary level. Mrs. Wilson leads the choir program at the middle and high school, teaching more than 200 students per day. She instructs the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade choirs, totaling over 100 students, and also teaches the four choirs at the high school: the Treble Ensemble (an entry-level ensemble of 57 singers), Concert Choir (an auditioned choir of 64 students), Cantamus (the flagship extracurricular ensemble of 28 singers), and the Ovations (an extracurricular show-choir offered in the spring only, typically about 50 students). The choral program is not the only musical offering at the school boasting large enrollment. The Davis High School orchestra, the only school orchestra program in the county, is home to 96 students, constituting almost 1/5 of the high school student body. Likewise, the high school band program also has robust enrollment, and consists of a marching band, jazz band, steel band, and concert band.

Because of the large class sizes, the state-of-the-art music wing seems to burst with energy and life during music class periods. The music wing consists of two enormous classrooms constructed specifically for music-making, two offices for the three music teachers, a lovely auditorium, multiple practice rooms, and a well-appointed

instrument storage room. Because the music teachers gave input into the recent renovation designs, building engineers constructed the choir room specifically for choral singing, with acoustical sound shells hanging from the ceiling and sound-cancelling panels secured above the whiteboard and mirrors. During the day, light floods into the room through the floor-to-ceiling windows, making the large, open space feel warm and inviting: an ideal environment in which to conduct most of the student interviews. When interviewing in that room, I set up two of the choral chairs facing each other, with a sightline through the double doors into the hallway. Additionally, I conducted some student interviews in Mrs. Wilson's adjacent office, at her high-top bistro table, situated next to her desk. Both of Mrs. Wilson's interviews took place virtually in her office.

Observations mainly occurred in the choir room and in the newly renovated auditorium, located down the hallway. Functioning as a centerpiece for the school building, the auditorium is truly stunning. The space features two levels of seating in cranberry-colored chairs, beautiful acoustical shells hanging from the ceiling, and an entire side and top of the stage constructed from a warm wood. The same wood hangs as dividers between the wings, creating a professional look to the space that I have never seen in a high school auditorium. Students not only benefit from the space itself, but also from the well-appointed lighting system. During performances, students work with information technology employees to project pictures and videos behind the performers, changing the mood of the space for every song. When performers require individual microphones, students retrieve their microphone packs immediately behind the auditorium in an attached woodshop, which contains set pieces and costumes for school musical productions. Choir students also frequently use the gender-separated dressing

rooms (male/female) to prepare for productions, which feature mounted lightbulbs and walls of mirrors.

I occasionally conducted observations of choir students in the instrumental room, which was also well-appointed with sound panels on the walls and hundreds of Wenger chairs and music stands. When I observed students rehearsing for their last performance of the year, called The Spectacular, a group of seniors used the two massive screens hanging from the ceiling in the front of the room to play YouTube videos. I also observed students working in the hallway between the choir and instrumental rooms, just outside of the instrument storage room, which holds both the band/orchestra instruments as well as large amount of steel pans.

Teacher Profile

Mrs. Wilson has been teaching for 17 years in the Midwestern United States. The daughter of a church organist, she grew up surrounded by music and began studying the piano at a young age, quickly gaining skills in reading Western notation before beginning to play saxophone in elementary school. She pursued her degree in music education at a small liberal arts college, with a concentration on piano, dreaming of becoming a band director. During her undergraduate degree, she was assigned to accompany the collegiate choirs before subsequently student teaching in a choral setting. Immediately after graduating, she pursued her degree in conducting at a nearby college, and again, was assigned to accompany the choral ensembles. Because of a lack of faculty availability, she studied conducting with a choral conductor, eventually conducting and leading the treble choir in the second year of her master's degree. After graduating, she worked at elementary schools, high schools, and took time off from teaching to raise her children,

before settling at Davis High School, where she has taught for 11 years, except for a one-year position at the district's elementary school. Currently, Mrs. Wilson is pursuing her PhD in music education while teaching choir full time at the high school and middle school; she loves to learn and enjoys being busy.

Mrs. Wilson does not consider herself a vocalist, but she does consider herself a serious musician who has spent most of her life learning music formally. Upon arriving at Davis High, she noticed that students could not read octavos; they were used to only learning their own part from a single notated line. During her first years at Davis High, her "first step was just putting music in the kids' hands." Looking back, she realized that she "pushed them too hard, too fast." However, after some time, "they mastered the literature they were doing" and "kids wanted to be a part of it because it sounded good and they were having fun." Since then, she has spent 11 years building the choral culture of excellence, structure, and efficiency. As soon as Mrs. Wilson announces the warm-up title, plays a singular chord on the piano, and conducts a preparatory breath, her students burst into a multi-part series of warm-ups, complete with choreographed movements. The students not only perform in synchronization, but they sound beautiful, blending and singing with tall vowels. To my ear, they do not sound like a high school choir, because of their mature and balanced sound. When students rehearse repertoire, Mrs. Wilson moves throughout the room, relying on her co-teacher, Mr. Carey, to accompany the choir on the piano. Mrs. Wilson has mastered sequential teaching patterns, which includes listening, giving brief verbal feedback, and then immediately diving back into singing; there is little downtime for the students in the large ensembles to chat because they spend most of the time rehearsing. The choir program's focus on choral excellence

is well-recognized. They perform three formal concerts per year (October, December, and May), and consistently receive high marks at their state's adjudication day in March and at external adjudications at places like Disney World in April. Cantamus finds extra time to connect with the community, performing at least 16 additional performances in December alone. Finally, the community looks forward to The Spectacular, similar to a large choir talent show, at the end of each school year.

When speaking with me, Mrs. Wilson appears self-conscious, frequently apologizing for the "chaos," but also qualifying that it's "normal." Her standards for efficiency and classroom management are clear; what I might consider to be typical, she considers chaotic. In addition to leading efficient rehearsals, Mrs. Wilson fosters student leadership and ownership in her students. Her advanced choir students, enrolled in Cantamus, frequently lead their own rehearsals, including navigating musical challenges, discussing staging and lighting, and more. She attributes her affinity for nurturing student leadership and ownership to her high school band director who offered Mrs. Wilson and her brother leadership opportunities in high school.

In addition to valuing the musical product and the efficiency of the rehearsal process, Mrs. Wilson cares deeply about her students as individuals. She attends sports games, talks to students during study hall, and meets their friends. She attributes her large enrollment and the success of her program to many of these efforts to take interest in students' lives.

Informal Learning in the Choir Program

While the choral program centers around Formal Learning (FL) a great deal of the time, I identified multiple components of IL, including sectional rehearsals and informal

performances. Through an iterative process of data collection and honing the conceptual framework, I focused on two specific components of the Davis High School Choral Program, including The Spectacular and Talent Days.

The Spectacular. The Spectacular has served as an important component of the Davis High School Choral Program for about eight years. Functioning as an end-of-year fundraiser for the music department, The Spectacular always features a theme; this year's theme is "Dinner and a Movie." The students spend approximately three weeks of class time in May preparing for the show. Leading up to May, students brainstorm and begin rehearsing for The Spectacular once a week, on Wednesdays, beginning in the middle of the spring semester.

Kate, a junior at Davis High School, described The Spectacular, stating, "It's kind of like a variety show almost—like a showcase—where we have a theme and the students pick songs or skits or dances they want to do." Any individual student or group of students can audition with an act, as long as it fits the theme. These acts are not required to include music, but most do; some students accompany themselves on the guitar while singing, others perform a short, choreographed number from a musical, and some play in a string quartet. The small acts tend to range from one to four or five people, though some groups feature significantly more people, like the group who performed the "Bend and Snap" scene from *Legally Blonde* this year. Students choose the songs, organize, and rehearse their own individual and small group acts during and outside of class time.

In addition to the small acts, Mrs. Wilson requires every student in Concert Choir to take part in a group number: one for seniors, one for juniors, and this year, one group number for sophomores and freshmen combined. Each group ranges from approximately

15-20 students. Students lead these groups, and each class decides on the number that they want to produce and choreograph. Mrs. Wilson requires that the class numbers include singing.

One of the most anticipated parts of The Spectacular is the return of the Ovations, an extracurricular group that rehearses in the evenings in the spring semester. Anyone, including students not enrolled in choir classes, can sign up for the Ovations. This allows choir students to perform with friends who are not enrolled in choir. The Ovations typically prepare two to three large group numbers, like a show choir, with a heavy focus on complicated choreography. Another teacher in the school choreographs and teaches the dance to the students, and they informally learn vocal parts by listening to the soundtrack, singing along, and making up their own parts.

Finally, Mrs. Wilson always organizes the final closing number, which she teaches formally to every student involved in The Spectacular. This year, students sang and danced to “We’re All in This Together” from *High School Musical.*

Talent Days. Most Fridays, both Concert Choir and Treble Choir take part in Talent Days. Students sign up in advance on the whiteboard, and on Talent Day, the choir warms up as a group before making their way to the auditorium. The choir president introduces each act, and students show off their talents to one another. They are welcome to perform songs or acts of any kind, and in any size group. Rose explained:

> People sing most of the time, but in the past, people have done . . . if they do art, they'll make a slideshow and email it to Mrs. Wilson, and she’ll put the board down and put it on the board and they'll present their artwork to us. A lot of time though it’s singing. Someone will just pick a song at random and they'll just sing for us. It's just a fun way to let off steam after a week.

Interviews with student participants indicated that the high school students often choose to sing solos, particularly those students who enjoy musical theatre. During Talent Days, Mrs. Wilson sits with the students in the audience, enjoying the show while the student leaders—mainly the choir president—facilitate the acts.

East High School

East Township, a suburban area located outside of a major city in the Northeastern United States, has both the highest population density (1,773.5) and the highest median income of the three sites ($121,917). Very few members of the population are living in poverty (3.8%), and the majority of residents (73%) identify as White. Though the Township's official website describes the town as an ideal small-town community and home to historic districts, nice shopping, lovely parks, and nature preserves, some parts of the town seemed quite run-down. With barely readable street signs and roads needing repair, I checked my previous assumptions about this town. Despite some of the outdated construction, I enjoyed driving past several local parks with lush greenery and lovely wildlife. Many residents frequently visit the major city nearby to attend festivals, eat at restaurants, and socialize with friends.

East High School is a mid-size high school, enrolling about 824 students per year. The district is currently remodeling the school, set to finish in 2023, in hopes of responding to a rising student population. Once the remodeling project concludes, the district predicts that enrollment will reach over 1000. The current population of the high school naturally reflects the population of the community at large; the school enrolls mostly White students (73%), with smaller percentages of students from other

racial/ethnic backgrounds, including Asian (22%), Black (1.2%), Hispanic (3%), and two or more races (11%).

Home to a vibrant music program, East High School employs three full-time music faculty— Ms. Evans, the choir teacher, Dr. Williams, the orchestra teacher, and Mr. Silver, the band teacher, who lead 10 ensembles, as well as other music classes, such as piano lab. The main curricular choir, Concert Choir, is home to all 100 choral students, freshmen through seniors, who enroll in one of the three sections offered throughout the day. For the purpose of this study, I refer to the sections as Concert Choir A, B, and C. Extracurricular auditioned choirs include Honor Choir (27 students), Treble Choir (16 students), and Bass Choir (15 students). The band program also boasts of large enrollment and is made up of four bands, including symphonic band, wind ensemble, jazz band, and jazz lab band. The large orchestra program is made up of a string orchestra and is supplemented by a chamber strings group.

Most of the observations took place in the choral room, a space typically filled with a chaotic energy as students sprint in and out all day. The colorful posters with positive messages and helpful musical reminders adorn the white cinderblock walls, reflecting Ms. Evans' bubbly and happy personality. Some of the positive messages include "All are welcome in this music room" and "Positive people don't put others down." Musical posters include fingerings for ukulele chords, guitar chords, and piano chords, as well as helpful tips for understanding time and key signatures. Ms. Evan's love for her students and their sense of community and belonging is apparent by glancing at the bulletin board featuring hundreds of pictures of choir students from over the years looking positively radiant.

The classroom contains built-in tiered seating where about 40 chairs are placed semi-permanently, making it slightly difficult to move around the room. Ms. Evans dedicated the last two rows of tiered seating to 12 keyboards, each with their own headphones. On the floor at the front of the classroom sits the electric piano that Ms. Evans uses daily to lead warm-ups and teach repertoire. Ms. Evans frequently employs her Smartboard, located at the front of the room, to feature a fun meme, the choir student of the week, a learning target, and any important reminders. Though a bit chaotic and cramped, every part of the classroom seems to project happiness, light, and community.

As the concert approached, my observations moved from the choir room to the auditorium, located across the hallway. Though fairly dated, the large auditorium can seat over 1200 audience members. Ms. Evans and Dr. Williams share the space for combined choral and orchestra concerts; the orchestras perform onstage while the choirs perform in front of the stage on three rows of risers, amplified with four handheld microphones. This auditorium is also well-equipped with a lighting and sound system, which allowed the teachers to project the senior slideshow onto the back wall of the auditorium while the choir sang “Thank you for the Music” from *Mamma Mia* during the Spring Concert of 2022. This space is clearly one where students can celebrate and share their love of music and each other with their community.

Other observations took place in the recording studio, nestled between the auditorium, choir, and orchestra rooms. Though makeshift, the studio’s existence exemplifies both Ms. Evans’ and Dr. Williams’ dedication to creating and jamming. Home to a couple of chairs, an upright piano, an older-looking computer, and

guitars/electric basses, I frequently observed small groups of students working in this space.

Student interviews took place in Ms. Evans' office, situated between the choir and orchestra rooms. Like the choral classroom, the office feels anything but minimalistic, containing many books, a rolling hot pink chair, several lamps and twinkle lights, seemingly hundreds of sticky notes, and a mini fridge. Despite the clutter, the space feels homey and welcoming and functions as a place where the orchestra teacher and choir teacher—great friends—can enter from their respective classrooms and share a laugh or an anecdote before returning to class. Students took part in both in-person and virtual student interviews in this space, with both doors closed.

Teacher Profile

Ms. Evans is a skilled musician who acquired her undergraduate degree in music education. As a vocalist, she spent most of her musical life focusing on vocal technique, learning to read music, and reproducing already-written musical works. Therefore, her formal choral background represents the biggest influence in her choral rehearsals. Ms. Evans' default choral rehearsal mainly centers vocal warmups and learning repertoire, using sheet music as a tool. Students vote on the repertoire that they rehearse and perform, and Ms. Evans ensures that the selections not only "light a fire" in her students and herself, but also vary in style, genre, composer background, and language. Though she works hard to acquire student input, Ms. Evans continues to hone her repertoire selection skills, humbly stating that the repertoire choices "aren't always a grand slam." Whether teaching warm ups or repertoire, Ms. Evans leads the class from the front of the room, standing or sitting at the keyboard that is set up facing the students. When Ms.

Evans is not leading the class, section leaders serve as the leaders of groups according to voice parts. In addition to learning music, Ms. Evans seeks out ways to center community-building in her choir. For instance, she and the students play musical and non-musical games focused on team building on the first Friday of every month, which they affectionately refer to as “First Fridays.”

As a result of her focus on community-building and her vested interest in students as individuals, Ms. Evans has a strong rapport with her students, which creates a welcoming environment. Fun emanates from Ms. Evans’ entire being, and she is likely to break into a British accent at any moment, exclaiming, "Well that was really quite lovely,” "samesies," or “okurr" with rolled r's. Her affect is endearing, and I couldn't help but smile in her rehearsals. Students relax and decompress in their own ways as they enter the classroom, some by jumping up and down with friends and others by melting into their chairs. Despite the relaxed feel, Ms. Evans brings an incredible energy and support to her students, especially when they sing something well, exploding with energy as she exclaims, "I'm so proud of you guys!"

Ms. Evans’ musical journey has centered FL, but she began exploring IL in college where she learned to use her ear to sing jazz harmonies in an improvisation class. Though the experience constituted a small part of her undergraduate degree in music education, she pursued opportunities to sing jazz after college, and continues to sing with a New Orleans-style jazz band that plays mainly for Mardi Gras parties. Until a couple of years ago, jazz singing constituted some of her only experiences with IL. But, after some coaxing from her colleague, Dr. Williams, Ms. Evans began playing the electric bass with the school band comprised of teachers. Furthermore, during the pandemic, she signed up

for songwriting lessons, which she really enjoyed. Between songwriting, working with Dr. Williams, and attending professional development events, Ms. Evans has steadily developed confidence in her ability to facilitate opportunities for IL for her students.

Informal Learning in the Choir Program

IL permeates the musical culture at East High School. Two school-wide talent shows are held each year: Winter Jam and Spring Notes. Held in the cafeteria, Winter Jam has a coffee shop feel, with no karaoke tracks allowed. Spring Notes, run by the senior class, is typically held outside. As students perform covers and original songs, the audience watches in lawn chairs, munching on snacks provided by the senior class. The music department also produces a third school-wide talent show, entitled Music for Life. Held annually in October, the music program began Music for Life after the Newtown shooting, to give students an opportunity to perform while raising money for not-for-profit organizations. In this event, students can perform with few restrictions, including with a live band or karaoke track. Leading up to these events, students frequently collaborate in the music wing, practicing for their upcoming performances, sometimes asking for help from the teachers, but mostly working inter-dependently.

The orchestra and choir teachers, Dr. Williams and Ms. Evans, both purposefully center IL in their curricular ensemble classes. Dr. Williams has studied IL in depth and incorporates a great deal of IL with her high school orchestra students, including composing, arranging, and more. In the choral area specifically, Ms. Evans provides students with IL opportunities during small group projects, class arrangements, songwriting, and more. During First Fridays, community-building exercises often include informal music-making, such as karaoke. Because of the timing of data collection, I

studied two focus activities at East High School: Senior Tributes and Large Group Arrangements.

Senior Tributes. Senior Tributes, an annual project, was designed by Dr. Williams, and subsequently adopted by Ms. Evans several years ago. After the spring concert, students in choir and orchestra break into small groups within their respective ensembles, choose a senior to honor with a Tribute, and send them interview questions to appropriately tailor their creation for that senior. After the teachers ensure that each senior will receive at least one Tribute, the small groups work together over a period of time, ranging from a week to a few weeks (depending on school calendar) to create original songs, raps, parodies, podcasts, videos, or other media projects. On a pre-determined day dedicated to presenting Tributes, the seniors return to school, don a crown, and watch and listen as their younger classmates present them with their musical gift.

Large Group Arrangements. Large Group Arrangements constituted the other focus activity at East High School. Ms. Evans has not arranged many songs with her students but felt inspired in the spring of 2021 to combine two of her own interests, student choice and creativity. Treble Choir arranged “Traitor” by pop sensation Olivia Rodrigo, while the three choir periods of Concert Choir arranged “All for Us” from the popular TV show, *Euphoria.* The two arranging processes unfolded quite differently. To arrange “All for Us,” Ms. Evans played each choir period the song, while helping them identify different vocal parts. Students sang along with the song, working together to create vocal parts for each section of the choir. After, Ms. Evans created a template on Noteflight with the homophonic rhythms, and the students helped her to move the notes

to the pitches that they audiated. This eventually resulted in an arrangement that all three class periods rehearsed and sang together at their spring concert.

Treble Choir's arranging process of "Traitor" was a bit more involved and more informal in nature. To begin, the students split into small groups with mixed voice parts and spread out throughout the music wing of the school, bringing portable keyboards and their laptops with them. Each group focused on a different part of the song. Students audiated and tried different musical ideas as a small group before recording their musical ideas on SoundTrap. The initial intent was that the groups would collaboratively work to notate the final arrangement, but Treble Choir ran short on time, so two senior girls took ownership to notate the final arrangement. In the last week before the concert, the group rushed to rehearse in a more formal setting under both teacher and student leadership. Treble Choir's performance in the spring concert was met with great enthusiasm from the audience.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the method, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and case profiles. The first three chapters of this dissertation provided an overview of the background, context, and method of the study. In chapters four, five, and six, I will present the findings from the within-case analysis for each case: Morris High School, Davis High School, and East High School. Each of the three subsequent chapters will present themes organized by research question. Chapter seven serves as a discussion chapter, in which I present the results of the cross-case analysis, contextualize the findings within the literature, and describe various limitations/delimitations before presenting suggestions for future research and

implications for various consistencies, such as preservice teachers, preservice teacher educators, inservice teachers, and school administrators.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL

On the day of the spring concert, the 13 students in the Morris High School Concert Choir[3] *stand on the stage after an unhurried series of warmups. Mr. Cohen states, "Let's make something for the room right now." The students know what to do. Closing their eyes, the singers stand in silence for quite some time, while Mr. Cohen quietly lowers himself into a chair in the audience, listening and watching. Eventually, I hear a light hum from one student, which eventually morphs into a rhythmic, repetitive pattern in major tonality as the 12 of the other students join in. As the students would say, "the vibe is chill." Clearly, students have grown in confidence since the last time I observed; the boys in the ensemble came up with their own part this time, which they struggled with before. After about six minutes of a slowly morphing musical loop, Mr. Cohen quietly stopped them, asking them to "dissect." After the students verbally analyzed what they produced, discussing musical choices including harmonies, melody, blend, balance, and emotional feel, Mr. Cohen explained:*

> *I feel like my life for the past year has been providing you with opportunities to know you're awesome . . . I've said this before, and I say it pretty much every time [during] Make Something Sessions, but you made . . . something really beautiful that didn't exist before. Just that mental process is really special. You sit in a space whether it's physical or intellectual where there isn't something, and then making something, is amazing. It is one of the things that sets humans apart from most other creatures on the planet . . . I've seen, over and over, your ability to make something really beautiful and passionate . . . Your comfort with each other and the things that you're willing to share are stunning.*

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[3] All proper names, including, but not limited to schools, teachers, students, ensembles, and activities in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

The students smile during this tender moment, nodding in appreciation, before they sing their other pieces. As the students sing "Mis on inimene?" by Pärt Uusberg, Mr. Cohen mostly stands in the audience, asking the students what they thought of each section and how it could be improved. The students take turns sharing, picking apart individual vowels, before creating what I call "choral magic:" a moment of community that feels reverent, serene, and seems to embody a sense of togetherness. They continue to critique their singing until the period has almost concluded, at which point Sydney jumps onto the upright bass, already sitting in the pit, and begins to play. Soon after, Mr. Cohen joins her on guitar, and the other students gather round, clapping, recording on their phones, socializing, and having a great time in this moment of raucous togetherness.

Introduction

This chapter centers around the findings at Morris High School. In this chapter, I present the results to the within-case analysis for research question one: how Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) are evident within the context of the Morris High School choral program; research question two: how Mr. Cohen and his students describe the benefits of ILPP in the Morris High School choral program; research question three; how Mr. Cohen and his students describe the challenges of ILPP in the Morris High School choral program; and research question four: the beliefs and values that led Mr. Cohen to make space for ILPP in the Morris High School choral program.

Two IL activities emerged as prominent in the data analysis at Morris High School: (a) Team-Time, and (b) Make Something Sessions. To address research question one, I analyzed each activity using my conceptual framework, The IL-FL Continua (see Figure 2). To answer research questions two and three, I analyzed student- and teacher-

identified benefits and challenges for both focus activities. Finally, for the fourth research question, I analyzed the beliefs and values that led the teacher to make space for ILPP in the high school choral program.

Research Question One

Research question one asked: How are ILPP evident within the context of three public high school choral programs? I analyzed the data using The IL-FL Continua, which emerged during an iterative process of constant comparison during the data collection and analysis (see Figure 2).

When speaking with the teacher and student participants during exploratory interviews, I identified activities present in most choral rehearsals at Morris High School: (a) choral warmups; (b) rehearsing choral repertoire: Team-Time and teacher-directed; (c) sectionals; and (d) Make Something Sessions. Mr. Cohen and the student participants shared the norms of each choir rehearsal, such as choral warmups and rehearsing choral repertoire. They also described activities that contained aspects of student-centered learning and activities in which they had a choice. Constant comparison of data revealed two activities with the greatest potential for ILPP: Team-Time and Make Something Sessions. To describe the attributes of IL-FL of both focus activities at Morris High School, I use The IL-FL Continua (see Figure 2), specifically focusing on Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice.

Team-Time

Aligning with work of previous scholars such as Green (2008) and Abrahams et al. (2017), Team-Time best reflected my prior assumptions of IL in choral classes. Student participants in all three curricular choirs (Concert Choir, High Voice Choir, and

Low Voice Choir) engaged in Team-Time at least once a week, and sometimes several times per week. Team-Time took on several different forms. For this study, Concert Choir students (all upperclassmen) reflected on their experiences with the model of Team-Time from years past. The model of years past was inspired by Dr. Caron Collins' model of Curious Collaborative Creativity (2022). In this version of Team-Time, students could choose to pursue any musical project. Some examples include covering a song, creating an arrangement, learning a notated arrangement, researching a composer, and more. For the purposes of this study, High Voice Choir students reflected on a version of Team-Time in which they collaboratively decided to create a class mashup of Evanescence's song "Bring Me to Life" and Schubert's "Die Liermann." For months, High Voice Choir students worked in small Team-Time groups toward this collective class goal, before coming together and rehearsing for the spring concert. Finally, Low Voice Choir students worked as a team to learn and remix "Mr. Sandman" into an arrangement inspired by Daft Punk.

Field note analysis revealed both the Learning Style and Ownership for Team-Time projects as wide-ranging on the IL-FL continua, depending on the project. High Voice Choir demonstrated this IL-FL range when they created a mashup of Schubert's "Der Liermann" and Evanescence's "Bring Me to Life." To begin, students in High Voice Choir learned Schubert's original "Der Liermann" with Mr. Cohen's guidance by reading the notation on solfeggio, with a Formal Learning Style and Ownership. At the same time, students demonstrated an Informal Learning Style as they worked in Team-Time small groups to learn "Bring Me to Life" and subsequently to create the mashup. While engaging in the learning and composition process, students also experimented with

IL by notating their musical ideas on a whiteboard, before transferring them to Noteflight. Students also demonstrated Informal Ownership when working in these small groups as they shared ideas openly, without any student leaders who I could identify. When students needed assistance with creating the mashup, they asked Mr. Cohen, who provided guidance, scaffolding students' learning as they sought to understand musical notation.

Student participants in Low Voice Choir followed a similar process, working as a classroom community toward the common goal of making a version of "Mister Sandman" inspired by Daft Punk. Because the class included five student participants, they worked together in one Team-Time group rather than splitting into multiple groups. Field note analysis exemplified varied Learning Styles and Ownership.

Observation- February 24, 2022, 9:00 A.M.

The five students enrolled in Low Voice Choir stare at a sheet of music, a single melody with the lyrics to Mr. Sandman, as they sit in choir chairs in a semi-circle, singing on solfeggio. Mr. Cohen, teaching for understanding, stops frequently, asking the students to figure out the pitches themselves. Though the process feels slow, the students demonstrate their engagement through their attentiveness and excitement when they figure out a new section. They end this portion of class with Mr. Cohen jamming out on the guitar, accompanying the five students, who each move awkwardly while singing what they have learned so far on solfeggio. Mr. Cohen then announces that it's time for 30 minutes of independent time to work on making their arrangement sound like Daft Punk. After a few minutes of a discussion that culminates in the decision to use Garageband, the room falls

quiet, and the students do not seem to know how they want to progress. Mr. Cohen remains quiet, off to the side of the room, until a student asks him for assistance. He happily chimes in, helping the students to set goals, before the students take over again. Soon, the boys return to throwing out ideas, discussing the "vibe" of the song before deciding to start with slow arpeggios that speed up. As students contribute ideas, Jason hops up, taking on more of a leadership role, moving between writing on the whiteboard and playing examples on the piano.

Student participants in Concert Choir mainly described their experiences with Team-Time from previous years, and thus, my understandings of their Team-Time experiences were informed by using their interview data and recorded artifacts. Unlike this year's High Voice and Low Voice Choir projects, previous-year Team-Time groups did not work toward a common class-wide goal, and thus, their Learning Styles and Ownership varied, though tended toward informal. While most groups chose to engage in an Informal Learning Style of arranging or composing songs by ear, other groups used IL to learn songs from notation, asking their teacher for help when necessary. For example, one group arranged an *a cappella* rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" by ear in four-part harmony; another group chose to learn a notated choral piece in Spanish using their formal five-step music learning process. Student participants mostly reported working as a team to make decisions and tackle roadblocks, but occasionally chose more Formal Ownership. For example, the group that learned the notated choral piece reported working as a team to make decisions and address challenges, but in a few instances, one student "took over," shifting the Ownership toward the formal side of the continuum. Finally, Concert Choir Team-Time fell firmly on the informal end of the Choice

continuum, as students were allowed to pick the project they worked on with few constraints.

Make Something Sessions

Comprised of both formal and informal elements, Make Something Sessions are best described as large group improvisation with Informal Learning Styles and Ownership. Student participants in both Concert Choir and High Voice Choir took part in Make Something Sessions. Though Mr. Cohen provided the prompt (an act of Formal Ownership), the student participants directed the learning from there, making their own musical decisions about which harmonies/rhythms to add and when they would sing. In contrast, Make Something Sessions fell on the compulsory side of the Choice continuum because the teacher initiated the activity each time and student participants expressed that they felt some level of discomfort at first. However, as Make Something Sessions progressed, the student participants engaged in informal practices, owning the decisions and learning without direct teacher instruction. Though Mr. Cohen mostly sat to the side, he did step in and guide the learning process at times. This mainly occurred after the session, as Mr. Cohen helped students to verbalize and interpret their musical decisions and product. Field notes from High Voice Choir reflect the role of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice during Make Something Sessions.

> *Observation-February 23, 2022, 9:00 A.M.*
>
> *After Mr. Cohen tells the students that there are no musical requirements for the Make Something Session- "zero rules, zero requirements," he picks up his chair and moves it to the side, before sitting down. "I'm going to play this video. When you have something musical that comes to mind . . . contribute that to the*

soundtrack . . . starting now, no sound until it's a musical sound that is connected to what you're seeing here." As Mr. Cohen closes the blinds, a peaceful winter scene fills the screen at the front of the room. The students stare at the frozen stream, moving briskly through a snowy forest, and all is quiet. Eventually, Cameron begins humming a three pitch pattern quietly. Bentley joins in almost immediately, humming a complementary pattern. Soon, an eerie soundscape emerges as other students join in humming both repeating patterns. Eventually, student participants begin singing on different vowels, notably "ah." The soundscape reminds me of something Philip Glass would write, both seemingly staying constant while also changing. After roughly five minutes, Mr. Cohen says, "I'm going to pause you, sorry. This really cool thing is happening here. Can you describe what you were singing and how it's associated with this or what your part was in terms of why you sang it?" Cameron immediately volunteers, describing that his pattern was meant to represent a "little critter popping through the snow." Other student participants follow suit, demonstrating their musical contributions before using musical terminology to describe why they made the choices they did. During the discussion, Mr. Cohen validates students' musical ideas while simultaneously helping them to verbally describe their learning experience.

Make Something Sessions served as a means for student participants to practice a Learning Style that was less familiar to them: learning aurally. During this time, students had an opportunity to engage in an Informal Learning Style and work through their own

musical challenges before receiving guidance from their teacher about how to improve for next time.

Summary

Two IL activities served as a research focus during data analysis for research question one: Team-Time and Make Something Sessions. Using The IL-FL Continua, I analyzed and described student experiences with the two focus activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. Both activities engaged students primarily in informal components of Learning Style and Ownership. Team-Time included mainly Informal Choice, while Make Something Sessions included mainly Formal Choice. Thus, Team-Time emerged as the most informal focus activity at this school, while Make Something Sessions emerged as comparatively more formal.

Research Question Two

Research question two explored how student participants and their teachers describe the benefits of ILPP in their choral program. I analyzed this question separately for both ILPP focus activities at Morris High School, including Team-Time and Make Something Sessions.

Team-Time Benefits

Analysis related to Team-Time benefits yielded three themes, including (a) musical choice yields pride, understanding, and skills; (b) life skills; and (c) collaboration enhances choir. With teacher support, student participants were able to achieve these benefits.

Musical Choice Yields Pride, Understanding, and Skills

Data analysis of Team-Time participation yielded multiple musical benefits for students, including "explore music the way we want," pride in musical products, deeper musical understanding, and improved musical skills. One of the most commonly-cited benefits of Team-Time was that students had the opportunity to "explore music the way [they] want[ed]." Natalie, a student in Concert Choir explained, "I think some benefits are you get to explore things on your own . . . [that] you think are interesting. It's not like, 'Here's a song you're going to learn.'" Likewise, Ian enjoyed the version of "Mister Sandman" that Low Voice Choir produced, explaining:

> I learned [that working with my classmates is] awesome . . . we turn [the song] into something more modern and . . . I like the song when it's remade. . . I like the original version, but the one we're doing right now sounds better.

Jade, a student enrolled in High Voice Choir, explained that she enjoyed having a choice of how to make music.

> It was nice, because we actually got to take part in creating the music we were going to perform, which is different from other choirs where the teacher just hands you the sheet music, and you just sing it. That was nice. We had a say about what we were doing. We came up with harmonies, and we changed the rhythm of the song.

Another benefit that emerged from Team-Time was pride in musical products. Jessa, a student in Concert Choir, reflected back on her time learning a Spanish song for Team-Time a couple of years ago. She recalled experiencing pride in the musical product that her and her team created.

> In the end, I think it turned out pretty good for what we had. I actually found the recording a few weeks ago and listened to it, and I was like, "Yeah this was pretty good for freshmen and sophomores to put this together on their own." It was difficult, but it was just the right amount of difficult to make sure that we could do it, but it would be challenging. And it worked out in the end for sure . . . I mean

> it's really cool what kids can [do] and are passionate about that you'd never know just in a normal choir setting when [the teacher] say[s], "This is what we're singing. Do it." [laughs]

Cameron, a student in High Voice Choir, used a metaphor to explain his experience creating the Schubert/Evanescence mashup during Team-Time.

> CAMERON: It was very windy. At the beginning, it was kind of bumpy, and then windy in the middle, and then at the end, I finally got to the clear road and I was able to finish.
>
> AIMEE: But you feel proud of the final product even though you had those bumps?
>
> CAMERON: Yes and I feel like that's the whole point of Team-Time. That's what Mr. Cohen was probably going for. He wanted us to make something for the concert, but also wanted us to feel proud of ourselves. I think that from what I've seen, I'm pretty sure that everyone who did their Team-Time project is very proud of it and they should be because they did put a lot of work into it.

In addition to sharing a sense of pride and excitement about the musical products, student participants noted a deeper understanding of music. Andrea, a student in High Voice Choir, explained that Team-Time was a chance to "get to understand how music works." She elaborated:

> I think Team-Time is very effective and I think that because from an outside perspective, some people feel like, "Oh, well, you all know music, why do you need to work in small groups?" But it's very effective because it makes you not only work with other people but also makes you focus on a specific part—whether it's a set part of a song or it's you looking at the lyrics. It basically makes you actually look at this song and see what it is. [chuckles] It's just . . . very effective. It's just like a really great way to understand music more.

Likewise, Sylvia identified growth in her musical understandings while working in Jessa's Team-Time group to learn a Spanish song independently from their teacher. She explained:

> When we had problems we could go to Mr. Cohen, but for the most part, we figured out the rhythm and the pitch ourselves. It was good to figure out how to do things on our own, and how to learn a song like that . . . We got better at

> reading music by ourselves, and [we learned] how to figure out what the notes are, what the pitches are, and what the rhythms are. It's good to have a chance to kind of test yourself on those instead of, you know, Mr. Cohen just giving . . . I mean he usually doesn't give us the rhythm or give us the pitches, but you know, kind of having those training wheels taken off was a good thing to know that we could if left by ourselves . . . [we could] figure out how to do it.

While many students focused on active music-making for Team-Time, some projects centered around gaining a socio-cultural and/or historical understanding of the contexts surrounding the music. Natalie explained how her Team-Time project from sophomore year was research-oriented, which allowed her to pursue her interest in understanding other cultures.

> And then my sophomore year I did research on one of the songs we were doing, and I worked with another student who wasn't doing the same thing as me, but we bounced a lot of ideas off each other, [and we] tried to brainstorm what other things to research to kind of deepen our understanding of that culture.

Tashi, a participant in High Voice Choir, researched Schubert for the High Voice Team-Time project, which resulted in PowerPoint that was displayed in the lobby during the spring concert. Like Natalie, Tashi described that she benefitted from the opportunity to learn more about musical cultures and history. She explained, “I learned about different varieties of music and different cultures and how they express their feelings in music and how you don't really have to understand the language to like the music.” Many student participants appreciated how the independence of Team-Time allowed them to pursue their own interests, but also valued having their teacher available to help when they “got stuck” musically. Mr. Cohen’s scaffolding, provided upon request, helped students to generate musical understandings and new musical skills.

Student participants explained that they benefitted personally by gaining musical skills in the following categories: playing instruments, music technology, aural skills, and

reading and writing Western notation. Participants who pursued Team-Time projects with instruments gained musical skills on those instruments, such as Melissa, who developed her skills with music technology and the piano:

> Well I kind of struggled with using both hands at the same time, I guess, for the piano, because it was a new skill and it was a very small amount of time . . . so . . . that was kind of a challenge, but we used a website . . . SoundTrap. And so I would just record each hand at one time. So I did the right hand first, and then I would do the left hand, and then I think I actually did singing separately. And . . . I just kind of found a way to mix it all together . . . Once I figured it out, I actually really enjoyed the process, because I didn't know how to play the piano before, so that was something new and exciting for me to do. But I really enjoyed it.

Jason, a Low Voice Choir student participant, also gained skills in music technology.

> JASON: So, the "Mr. Sandman," . . . [we] look[ed] at songs that are electronic. So yeah, that definitely also helped the class, but we also really talked during that class too about electronic [music] and what we wanted to add in a song.
>
> AIMEE: Oh, like what you wanted to emulate?
>
> JASON: Yeah. Like what patches—well not exactly what patches—but what effects did we want. There was a returning bit . . . like [we considered] what if we had auto tune for a bit?

In addition to developing skills on instruments during Team-Time, student participants improved their aural skills, especially because the majority of projects did not involve musical notation. Kimberly described her experience audiating a four-part harmony for her Team-Time group's arrangement of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

> It was a quartet, so we were trying to come up with four different harmonies that would mesh together to make a nice version of it, so . . . Harmonies were something we were kind of just diving into, but I do appreciate the fact that we didn't jump into trying to [compose] a [new] song. I think it was good that we started with an already-made base.

Kimberly and her group members experimented with playing different harmonies on the piano until they found something they liked, which they then attempted to replicate with

their voices. Despite the slow process, the group recalled feelings of pride at the end. Some student participants appreciated focusing on their aural skills because it provided an opportunity to mix up the Learning Style. Often, participants in Mr. Cohen's class used sheet music to learn formally. However, during Team-Time, students learned aurally first instead of with notation. Sumati described this experience as "backwards:"

> SUMATI: I'm not at a point where I can look at sheet music and know, "Oh, yes, this song goes like la-la-la-la." Being able to listen to it beforehand and then being able to attach the parts of music to the actual notes was much easier than me having to just go, "Oh, well, that note is *do*."
>
> AIMEE: Yes. It was a backward process from how you learn other music in choir, and you liked that?
>
> SUMATI: Yes, that was definitely much better.

Many student participants in High Voice Choir identified with the idea of improved aural skills, though they did not refer to them outwardly as such; they described gaining a better understanding of hearing rhythms, harmonies, and accompaniment styles. As the student participants on the arranging team in High Voice Choir created their Schubert-ized version of the "Bring Me to Life," they also worked to notate the arrangement, first on a whiteboard in the back of the classroom, and then using Noteflight, a music notation software. Kayla's music ability to read and write Western notation improved during this process.

> KAYLA: I learned a lot about the . . . how you can put some of the measures, how the way that it's set up can be put into other music. I learned a little bit about how you can put notes together and how say, a quarter rest can also be something else. I don't know, it was like the different ways that you can move notes around.
>
> AIMEE: Yes. Cool. You learned that by working on Noteflight?
>
> KAYLA: Yes, we didn't use Noteflight initially. We were using a whiteboard and we were writing out the notes. I learned how to properly write them. Then Cohen was helping us make sure that they were all correct.

Scaffolding from their teacher during this relatively independent process proved crucial for Kayla and the arranging team to succeed on their Team-Time project. Because of this experience, Sumati, another student on the arranging team, summarized, “I can read sheet music better than I could before.”

Student participants also practiced skills that they had learned in more formal sections of the choral class. Leslie explained:

> Well, freshman year we would learn how to read sheet music and audiate and all those basic music things. So when we got into Team-Time I would use those [skills] to help out the other people in my group to make the song.

Mr. Cohen also described the benefits of students beginning Team-Time with “toolbox knowledge.” He lamented that students did not have a chance to develop those understandings much during the pandemic.

> This year, I am very much aware of—again, I think this was naïve of me in the past, but I don't think I appreciated how much of the toolbox knowledge, the technical skills that are taught in class, really supported students pursuing their interests in informal environments. Because now, that assumed knowledge that was part of the choir culture has diminished because we haven't been performing; we haven't had the same [experiences that we normally do].

In addition to recognizing Team-Time as an opportunity to practice musical skills learned in other portions of the choir class, participants noted how musical skills gained during Team-Time helped them in other more formal portions of the choral rehearsal. Allison described:

> In that process [of Team-Time], I got to learn how to notate music, which not only helps me—I also like to write music—so it helped me be able to put it down on paper, put my ideas down, but also it helped me read music, which helped the next year—we were in chamber choir our junior year—and we're trying to read music and then now senior year. I feel more comfortable where I am and I don't feel like I'm struggling.

Similarly, Melissa summarized, “[Team-Time] also helped me this year [in formal choral rehearsals] . . . using prior knowledge from past years.” The knowledge and musical understandings that student participants gained informally during Team-Time proved valuable and pertinent enough for them to apply in formal settings. This reciprocal and mutually-supportive relationship between Team-Time and formal choral rehearsals was notable at Morris High School; student participants did not view one as more valuable than the other, but both as necessary and helpful.

Life Skills

In addition to musical benefits, student participants identified multiple life skills that emerged from Team-Time, including communication and teamwork, independence, and social-emotional skills.

Communication and Teamwork. Student participants described multiple ways in which their communication skills and their ability to work as a team improved. Through Team-Time, student participants gained experience expressing their opinions, sharing ideas, and asking questions. During Team-Time, Leslie felt more comfortable contributing and sharing her ideas because of the limited number of people.

> I felt that I could really bring out my ideas [during] Team-Time. When I’m in class I'm more put together and shy. So when I don’t wanna step on someone's toes, I won't say anything that might crush their ideas, but in a small group, it’s not just me bringing out ideas. If it's a trio, it's all of us working together.

Once students gained confidence in their communication skills in small groups, they sometimes felt more comfortable contributing during the larger, more formal choral rehearsal. Andrea explained that the more she practiced communicating her musical ideas, the more confident she became.

> ANDREA: I definitely liked talking to people and liked getting my ideas [out there]. It definitely became much easier after [Team-Time to feel comfortable sharing my ideas] . . . [Now] it's easier to be able to compromise and to just talk about my ideas.
>
> AIMEE: It's easier in a small group rather than in your large choir?
>
> ANDREA: Well, [now] both of them for me . . . I think it's easier now to say, "this is what I think would be good."

When student participants experienced challenges, they collaborated in their group as co-navigators. If student groups still felt stuck, they asked Mr. Cohen for guidance, which proved crucial to moving forward with their projects and musical ideas. Accordingly, some student participants felt as though they gained communication skills in the arena of honing questions and asking for help. Andrea described, "[Team-Time] definitely also makes you interact with people and makes you have to ask questions and not be afraid to ask questions." Some student participants, such as Sylvia, explained that these communication skills will help them later in life.

> The communication skills have definitely helped outside of school, whether that's, you know, just going and volunteering somewhere . . . that definitely has made us better at reaching out to other people and finding out things about what we are interested in. And even if we don't pursue something in the field of music outside of high school, whether we just go into the workforce or go to college or whatever else, I think that the time that we've spent in Team-Time or doing Make Something Sessions has benefited us as people in a way that I don't really know how to describe. It's kind of like a passive betterment if that makes any sense. I'm not sitting there thinking that this is going to help me later in life, but I think that, in a way, it does and it kind of builds a foundation for us to end high school on.

Many students referred to the intangible, yet obvious benefits of working collaboratively toward a goal as a team. For example, student participants learned the importance of group commitment, how they could benefit their group as an individual, and how to change their approach in response to challenges. Team-Time necessitated

teamwork, because it required student participants to coordinate their final goals while working together. Allison explained:

> You're collaborating with others . . . it was very much the whole team had one path rather than people trying to figure out and fend for themselves . . . if someone understood [something] more, they would try to help others and you didn't have to feel weird asking in front of the entire class and interrupting something, because as a team, you were just trying to get to that collective goal . . . As much as [our goal] was figuring out and singing the song, I also think, to a point, our goal is just to enjoy what we were doing and be satisfied with our work.

Independence. In addition to improving skills in communication and teamwork, student participants gained skills related to goal-setting and pacing long-term projects; they learned how to work independently from an authority figure. Sylvia explained her appreciation for the independence afforded by Team-Time.

> Having that independence of choosing what you can do and . . . how you can do it is also just a generally good life skill to have. I mean, in choir typically you don't think about gaining skills that you would use unless you go into music beyond high school. But I feel like what we do in Team-Time really helps build some of those foundations that you can continue to improve on, and it's something that I didn't think I would have learned in choir. And I guess that's also the thing that's different from even other classes. You usually don't get as much time where you can be independent and do things like that, so I think it's good that in choir it kind of gave us a place to do that.

Bentley elaborated how much she appreciated learning how to work independently with a teacher as facilitator instead of director.

> There's a difference between doing something that your teacher tells you to do, and doing something on your own that your teacher helps you with. In middle school choir, it's all—the teacher picks the songs, she teaches us how to sing it, and then if we suck in the concert, it's because the teacher just didn't teach us well enough [chuckles]. In this choir, he teaches us, and then once he feels that we're ready on our own, we have to figure out the rest. I think Team-Time helps us to be on our own better, because if it weren't for him treating us like independent people, instead of just sad, crappy little middle schoolers then I think that we would suck way more than we do.

Jessa explained that the independence of the task allowed her to develop self-efficacy related to her own musicianship.

> Team-Time was supervised, obviously by Mr. Cohen, but until then I had always had a teacher tell me what to sing, or a voice coach or a . . . I play violin, so my violin instructor, telling me what to practice and when to do it. Kind of being given a little bit of free reign basically over what we wanted to complete, that was definitely an adjustment and something we had to learn how to do, but hugely beneficial. I became a much stronger musician on my own when it was something I was genuinely interested in, working with friends that were also genuinely interested in the project.

Similarly, Mr. Cohen explained that he valued Team-Time because of the independence and self-efficacy involved:

> I think there's something to be said for that—going back to Dewey and the interest versus effort, when you're asking for that next level of intentional autonomy, being able to come back to, "This is your project, you designed this." To be able to say your only limitation was that music is the frame, is—I think—really important.

Other student participants pinpointed specific aspects of independence that they took away from Team-Time, such as how they learned to set their own goals and follow through. After goal-setting, student participants practiced skills such as time management and creating a schedule. Part of working independently included discovering the consequences of procrastinating. Andrea explained that during Team-Time, "you learn how to get things done in a certain amount of time." Sumati appreciated the flexibility afforded by the long-term task, explaining how her group enjoyed managing their own time.

> I loved the people that I worked with. They were all really kind. They all worked. I think as a collective, we weren't working for the first three classes very much, but we were all on the same page, so it was nice. When we wanted to work, we would. When we wanted to just listen to the music, we would. Yes, it was nice.

Sumati captured one aspect of independence that many student participants appreciated: the opportunity to interact and socialize with friends, vacillating between working on the project and discussing other things. I noticed this interplay between on- and off-task behaviors when observing High Voice Choir student participants begin their Team-Time project.

> *Observation- February 23, 2022, 10:00 A.M.*
>
> *As I approached the group who was trying to decide on the form of the mashup, one student sitting on the floor in the hallway looked straight at me and matter-of-factly stated, "We're focused, but not that focused." The student participants played "Bring Me to Life" on their phone, listening, before discussing if they should include rapping in their arrangement. One student said, "I don't feel like any of us can really rap." The others quickly concurred, and they decided to cut the rapping. Soon after, student participants decided that they needed printed copies of the lyrics. Without a printer close at hand, one participant asked, "So what do we do now?" At that point, their discussion quickly morphed into a series of other topics until Mr. Cohen walked into the hallway.*

These field notes exemplified how student participants frequently vacillated between on- and off-task behaviors during Team-Time. Notably, High Voice Choir accomplished their goals by the concert, acquiring a skill necessary for lifelong learning: time-management.

Finally, participants explained that they learned how to be reliable and responsible group members. Bentley explained that she learned the importance of group members being dependable.

> [Bolstering individual skills in choir is] an important thing . . . because you can't always rely on others. You should remember your parts yourself. You should remember the lyrics yourself . . . That's what I mean by independent. I'm not saying it to outshine all the other members of your choir. I'm saying you have to fight for yourself so that can work as a group. You can use that in any situation, working in an office on a group project. You have to do things for yourself so you can benefit the group. It's just how it works in life, I think.

Students like Bentley identified dependability developed during Team-Time as an essential skill in formal choir and in life in general.

Social-Emotional Skills. Finally, student participants recognized an increased sense of well-being when working in small groups with peers. They noted how different Team-Time felt from the type of work in which they engage during the rest of the school day and described choir as a respite from other classes. Sumati described feelings of increased well-being.

> I think having Team-Time and the Make Something Sessions, having that kind of less stressful period of independence throughout the school day kind of in general relaxes me a bit more and kind of takes some of the stress off for the rest of the school day. And then some of that [relaxation] I think does carry on [throughout the day], so just overall probably a slightly heightened sense of well-being has been a result of [IL in choir].

In summary, students gained multiple life skills by working in Team-Time: communication, independence, teamwork, and social-emotional skills.

Collaboration Enhances Choir

In addition to enhancing life skills, Team-Time served to strengthen the choral community at Morris High School in a variety of ways. Student participants consistently described collaboration as both a major facet and a benefit of Team-Time. When collaborating, student participants learned from others, which in turn bolstered their relationships with friends old and new. Student participants appreciated collaborating

with their peers, noting that everyone brought their strengths to the project. Sumati described, “I found out what other people can do that I can't. Yes. It was a lot of fun. It was like an exchange.” Lisa added, “Depending on what you are good at, and if other kids are struggling with certain stuff, you can help them through that.” Jade explained, “We got to collaborate and work together on the same piece of music. People suggested things that I would not have thought of myself . . . That was nice hearing other musical things we could [do] to fix the song.” Another benefit to working in a group was the wealth of ideas, described by Olivia:

> So [working in a team was] definitely helpful because if you were stuck on a certain part . . . someone else had an idea. Or if you wanted to make some kind of mashup, there was an endless supply of “Oh, we could do this song and this song and what if we slowed it down and changed the key?” There were just so many ideas that I would have never thought of that led to some really cool things that wouldn't have happened if I was by myself.

Furthermore, Jessa noted that student participants took on different roles in smaller groups, explaining that “It was really cool to see how we all took on different roles than we normally do.” Learning from others and collaborating served to strengthen the relationships within the choir community as a whole, which Cameron explained:

> I learned that there are a lot of people in my choir that like a lot of the same things that I do and are very passionate about some of the things that I'm passionate about. I got to learn about my classmates through this: through their finished projects of their Team-Time. That's very important.

Not only did individual relationships blossom as a result of Team-Time, but many student participants felt as though the project enhanced the entire choir community. Melissa described how she thought that the overall choir community at large benefitted as a result of Team-Time.

> It's just learning to work with each other and . . . it also helps everyone get closer with each other. As you know, I met a lot of my friends through choir. Just

> learning how to work together as a group, I think, definitely has helped us grow as a choir throughout the years.

Cameron, a member of High Voice Choir, articulated similar feelings as Melissa.

> I feel like we've grown closer as a part of it, because I know there's one student in my class who was very reserved, and now after Team-Time, actually goes up to talk to me outside of class.

Similarly, Kayla, a member of High Voice Choir, appreciated working in small groups because she got the chance to talk to others, which facilitated opportunities for her to connect with her peers and make new friends, helping her to feel more at ease during choir class. She stated:

> I made some new friends [during Team-Time] and now that I talk to more people, I'm more comfortable in choir. I feel like [arranging] was the fun part. I've never done it before. I thought it was pretty fun because we had to work through the music and re-compose it almost.

Team-Time not only elicited a stronger sense of community and safe space, but many students claimed that it also gave way to "better" formal music-making. Olivia explained:

> I feel like we are able to make cleaner and better music because of what we've learned . . . I feel like through Team-Time, we became more comfortable with each other, through the Make Something Sessions too, because someone could make a mistake and nobody would really mind or say something about it . . . I think that it's more of a safe space and I think through the music theory we learned we're able to apply musical knowledge. And the knowledge that even if we mess up that nothing is going to happen and so we are able to take risks and sing loudly . . . and sight read through a whole second half of a piece [laughter], which we did one time, and not be as hesitant about it.

In summary, the choral community benefitted in many ways when students collaborated during Team-Time, by supporting individual friendships, enhancing feelings of comfort and safe space, and improving music-making.

Make Something Sessions Benefits

Analysis of research question two related to Make Something Sessions yielded four themes, bound by time: (a) in the midst: “we have a choice;” (b) immediately after: “super cool” musical product; (c) long-term: individual musical growth; and (d) long-term: enhanced community.

In the Midst: “We Have a Choice”

Student participants described that they benefitted from the opportunity to make choices during Make Something Sessions. They appreciated taking chances, enjoyed the ease with which they could change their minds, and liked choosing how to engage. Perhaps most notably, participants prized feeling like they had control in an educational setting. Blake stated, “I find it really cool that we’re able to make art right off the spot and it’s completely our control on it.” To Allison, Make Something Sessions felt liberating because of the divergent nature of the activity and the idea of “no wrong answers” encouraged her to take chances:

> I think that we've been told since like ever, you know, “You should try new things, you shouldn't be afraid.” But I feel like in a school setting, in an educational setting, that's difficult. I'm not good at math so I don't like to raise my hand in math class and answer, because I don't want to be wrong. But here, there are no wrong answers, and if you don't think it sounds good, then you can tweak it on the spot, or you can take a few more reps, because normally it’s just four to sixteen bars of music that someone happens to make that you can tweak as you go, or . . . Sometimes the people adjust to you like, “Oh, I like what they're doing instead, but this chord is kind of crunchy. Let's fix that, cause it’s not how I want it to sound.” So it's not like you're actively saying, “Okay, what do you guys think about this?” or like, “What should we do next?” or “What is your opinion?” It's your opinion, and what you think is all in your head, but it still gets a say. And some people don't feel comfortable saying, “I want this” or “I think that this is better,” so Make Something Sessions allow them to say their opinion without actually saying it, because sometimes they feel like they're not going to be heard and they sound snobbish or they're going to upset others, but it's like… [during a Make Something Session] if someone changes something, oh well, you’ve got to

> just go with it, and you learn to just kind of go with the flow and be creative with the people that surround you, and it makes you way more comfortable working with them for future pieces or whatever you're doing really.

Jessa described a similar feeling as Allison, explaining that the divergent nature of Make Something Sessions helped her to feel more comfortable suggesting her musical ideas even in more formal musical contexts.

> I think [Make Something Sessions help you to get] over that boundary of not wanting to share the ideas that you have. I personally have struggled with that a little bit. I do my own writing outside of class, and I've shared one song with my music theory class when I finished that, but other than that it's always been really difficult to share something that's original . . . Luckily, we have an environment that it feels very safe to do so. But [Make Something Sessions] definitely challenge people to, you know . . . [share their ideas]. Your idea is gonna turn into something really cool no matter what it is, cause there's a ton of other people who make it cool. So it definitely pushes people to just share in the first place.

In addition to feeling free to take chances, student participants noted the flexibility to change their mind in the middle of a Make Something Session. Allison explained that Make Something Sessions feel low-risk because "it's very easy to just hop off [one musical] bandwagon and get on something else, whether you're going to jump on [with] someone else or make your own part."

Finally, student participants appreciated the opportunity to choose how to engage in the Make Something Sessions. They have the option to start, to generate and add a new original musical idea to the loop, or to join in singing with someone else's musical idea. Kimberly described the various ways in which she has participated in Make Something Sessions: "I've had the opportunity to come up with something myself, and then also build off of somebody else's work, which I think are [both] super important skills." Kelsey explained why she appreciated choosing how to engage with the music during Make Something Sessions.

> As much as I love being able to see the piece in front of me and know that this is what it's supposed to sound like, it's a really nice contrast to be able to not have that music in front of you and not have a set rhythm. Like, you can play around with it and you can take different chances and all the parts don't have to be soprano, alto, tenor, bass, it can be bass, bass II, sopranos—three of them—and . . . I like that if I don't like how it sounds, I can always change what I'm doing and without judgment and I can mess up and play with different parts, without it being wrong.

The flexibility to experiment with music proved beneficial to students, especially in the context of school where convergent thinking reigns.

Immediately After: "Super Cool" Musical Product

After Making Something, student participants almost always felt pleasantly surprised by their musical product. Naomi, reflecting on her first Make Something Session, described, "I was really proud of that very first Make Something." Kelsey added, "By the time we have a finished product it's really cool. We've been doing [Make Something Sessions] for years. I still have recordings on my phone from two years ago." Students also described feeling accomplished when they contributed something that they audiated themselves. Jessa explained that "It felt really nice to be like, 'Yeah, something I came up with helped contribute to this larger thing that everybody liked.'" Kimberly concurred, stating:

> Whenever we start [Make Something Sessions], it normally takes a few minutes to build and finally get to something. But once we actually get into it, we've come up with some really cool stuff that we've all been able to claim as our own as a choir, which is really nice. And I think it really is just a representation of most of the skills we have. One of the biggest things that you want out of choir is to be able to produce music, and that's what we're doing with [Make Something Sessions], which is really nice.

The idea of producing a novel product in choir that was uniquely theirs motivated the students. For most student participants, the benefits of the cool musical product

outweighed the awkwardness that occurred in the beginning of the Make Something Session.

Long-Term: Individual Musical Growth

Student participants noted many individual musical benefits afforded by Make Something Sessions, such as self-efficacy in one's own musicianship and strengthened musical skills. Because Make Something Sessions relied on aural skills as opposed to notational literacy, some participants voiced that engaging in this large group improvisation activity helped them to gain confidence in their own musicianship. Allison explained that Make Something Sessions "let you be creative and have your own thoughts and feel like you have a part in music if maybe reading music isn't your thing." Other student participants described feeling validated in their musicianship skills and more confident in their ability to make music independently. Naomi explained:

> [I gained] confidence in [my]self. Like, "Oh my gosh, I can make music" . . . which isn't something you think about when you're in a choir. Like, "Of course I can sing. Of course I can be a part of this choir." But when you're on your own, in the dead silence of a room, you don't really think that's something you can come up with yourself. It's always, "Look at the music sheets" or something like that.

One of Mr. Cohen's goals with Make Something Sessions was for students to believe that they had the ability to make music at any time, with any group of people. Sylvia asserted that she indeed gained confidence in her ability to make music with others:

> I think it's cool to know that there are people around you who are able to just make a song and who you can make a song with and in general make music with, and I think that's a super good thing to bond over.

In addition to students gaining confidence in their own musicianship, Make Something Sessions strengthened their musical skills: their individual vocal skills, their ability to be creative with music, and their aural skills. Make Something Sessions presented a unique

opportunity for student participants to explore their own vocal ranges with few restrictions. Kelsey explained:

> I think it kind of allows for more freedom than we might be used to. The entire choir department here allows for a lot of freedom. But we still have our set parts, you know. I was an alto. I'm a tenor now, but I still am in this set part. But the first few times we did Make Something Sessions in freshman year, I was like, "I kind of want to go lower." You know, I didn't have as low of a range as I do now, and I knew that that was something I wanted to try, so I got to experiment with my own voice in a comfortable setting where it wasn't just me practicing on my own, but it was actually making something . . . So when we do Make Something Sessions, I can decide "Oh, maybe I want to be a soprano today. . . It's definitely . . . there's a lot of experimentation and freedom.

In addition to exploring their vocal ranges, student participants strengthened their musicianship with the opportunity to practice their aural skills. Blake explained that because students needed to audiate to create their own harmonies and rhythms, Make Something Sessions "helped [students] find harmonies and make rhythms with already established music." Leslie concurred, stating:

> I have learned how to harmonize better . . . When I'm in a Make Something, I'm making the harmonizations myself. I'm calculating it in my head and trying out notes that I think will fit, and if they don't, it's just trial and error and I'm not judged for that. In normal choir, it's just on the score. It's set for you. That's what you have to sing.

Part of what student participants appreciated about creating their own harmonies was the opportunity to engage with and enhance their own musical creativity. Blake explained, "It gets your creativity going [and] I find it really cool that we're able to make art right off the spot and it's completely our control on it." Sylvia added, "It's cool to be in a room with nothing and then come up with something . . . that is just from our minds and then is put into the atmosphere as sound. It's cool to have that free-flowing creativity." Allison explained how the creativity involved with Make Something Sessions feels refreshing

compared to other FL processes in choir.

> I think that Make Something Sessions can be a refreshing reminder that music is creative, just because sometimes we get so into a piece that we're doing, and we're so sucked in as a whole. And no one's unhappy, we're just so focused on how it should be on paper and how we've heard other composers do it. And there's some creative components to it. You know, we don't really need to follow all the crescendos and stuff like that, but we normally end up following what it should sound like, whereas Make Something Sessions, you can . . . just kind of go with the flow and be creative with the people that surround you, and it makes you way more comfortable working with them for future pieces or whatever you're doing really.

Changing the Learning Style not only helped student participants to feel refreshed, but also helped to make music feel more individualized. Allison explained, "When you add your own part, it becomes very personal in a way."

In addition to practicing and learning new musical skills, Make Something Sessions allowed both the student participants and Mr. Cohen to assess each adolescent's musical understandings. Leslie added, "It gives me a chance to use all the knowledge I've learned from freshman and sophomore year . . . and actually put it into something instead of it always sitting there." Kimberly also referred to the utility of using Make Something Sessions as an assessment tool, because it is "a representation of most of the skills that we have."

> KIMBERLY: I think [the skills we gain in Make Something Sessions are] directed more towards the production of music rather than reading music . . . When we're provided a new piece, we're working a lot on trying to get through those measures, reading them. But [during Make Something Sessions] we get to concentrate a lot on technique skills and [show] how much we retain[ed] . . . When we're working on Make Something Sessions, we're trying to apply that skill to something that's our own . . . We're taking things that we work to perfect in our regularly rehearsed pieces into Making Something right off the bat.
>
> AIMEE: Yeah. It's almost like… It seems like it's almost kind of an assessment of what you've learned in another area of the choral rehearsal.

Mr. Cohen also appreciated the opportunity to assess student participants' musical understandings and audiation during the Make Something Sessions, explaining:

> So [during Make Something Sessions] I'm sitting here geeking out as a choir director because they're just making this and I'm like, "Here's this class that is mostly freshmen. None of these kids [have had] a concert in two years and they're singing one on a part, half step harmony in tune." Do you know what I mean? [laughing] That's the checklist going out of my head, but in their mind, it's all aesthetic.

By experimenting with sound, individual students benefitted by enhancing and practicing their own musical skills during Make Something Sessions, which also helped them during formal choral rehearsals.

Long-Term: Enhanced Community

One of the most prominent themes of Make Something Sessions was enhanced community with one sub-theme: collaborating and connecting. On the topic of collaborating and connecting, Sylvia explained, "You know, I've definitely grown closer to people because of music, and part of that has been through the Make Something Sessions." Leslie added that Make Something Sessions helped her to "just feel comfortable with the people in the room. It's just a bonding moment, like if I close my eyes, I know who's singing what part and how I can go off of [them]." Kelsey elaborated:

> It makes us comfortable with each other . . . You can feel the energy build as the song goes, because the volume gets louder, but then afterwards, you can also feel closer with everyone. I had a moment, like a proud mom moment [after the basses started their first Make Something Session yesterday], and I was like, "They just did that, you know. I know they don't like to do that, and then they came up with something that they were proud of, and now I'm proud." And then we had . . . What was it, eight parts at one point? And it felt very . . . It always feels really uplifting and bonding.

As a result of collaborating and connecting during Make Something Sessions, student

participants appreciated feeling like they were a part of something, feeling supported by their classmates, and developing trust. Instead of feeling like they need to fend for themselves, students felt supported by their peers. Kimberly explained:

> I think [Make Something Sessions are] really beneficial, and I think that's where a lot of our comfort [in choir] comes from. It's a big testament to our choir as a whole to be able to just sing and hope that nobody's judging you, because we're not judging you . . . It's really a space just to create our own thing that we don't get a lot of the time. Or feel like you're part of something, so even if you don't come up with maybe a melody, you can come up with a harmony, or you can join on somebody else's part that you really enjoy, so just making something all together.

Engaging in vulnerable musical exercises like Make Something Sessions allowed the community of music-makers to build upon the already-existing sense of trust and safe space, which Jessa described:

> I think a lot of that [trust and community] has come from making things on our own, like the Make Something Sessions, realizing that we can trust each other to have musical ideas, and that we can feed off of what we as a choir are doing . . . I think that's contributed a lot to like an overall choir sound.

When student participants felt more comfortable making music with the community in less formal activities, they also felt more comfortable and safer with the same group of people in formal choral settings as well. Allison summarized that “Make Something Sessions instilled that confidence in me that I have a part in this class, there's a part in music for me, and that we are a team, whether we're trying to read music or make it ourselves.”

Both the strengthened musical skills and enhanced sense of trust during Make Something Sessions benefited the choral sound and group singing skills, such as blend and balance. Olivia explained:

> I just really like layering, like the layers and stuff . . . Coming up with something together . . . I think it's a really good activity for choirs because it helps you blend better and I feel like we're better balanced as a choir because we always have these different parts in the Make Something Sessions . . . all these different rhythms and harmonies and I feel like we're very in tune with each other.

Jessa elaborated on the group musical benefits of participating in Make Something Sessions, explaining:

> JESSA: I think [Make Something Sessions] definitely help us work together a lot more. That's always . . . the last couple classes, I've been sitting in choir and thinking that we take for granted how unified we are sometimes. Things like getting cut offs together, making sure we're blending or something. I mean, we just take it for granted how well we can all work together with one another, and I think a lot of that has come from making things on our own—like the Make Something Sessions . . .
>
> AIMEE: Oh that's interesting, so you feel like Make Something Sessions end up helping you with your other repertoire?
>
> JESSA: Absolutely. Maybe not consciously, but yeah definitely.

As Jessa explained, Make Something Sessions encouraged students to listen to their individual, section, and whole choir sound.

Summary

For the second research question, I analyzed teacher and student-identified benefits of ILPP within the context of the Morris High School choir program. Three themes emerged from the analysis of benefits associated with Team-Time, including musical choice yields pride, understanding, and skills; life skills; and collaboration enhances choir. Four time-bound themes emerged from my analysis of benefits associated with Make Something Sessions, including (a) in the midst: “we have a choice;” (b) immediately after: “super cool” musical product; (c) long-term: individual musical growth; and (d) long-term: enhanced community.

Research Question Three

Research question three prompted me to explore how student participants and their teachers describe the challenges of ILPP in their choral program. I present challenges separated by activity, because I analyzed this question separately for both ILPP focus activities: (a) Team-Time and (b) Make Something Sessions.

Team-Time Challenges

Analysis of research question three related to Team-Time yielded three themes: (a) musical setbacks, (b) difficulties with open-ended and independent task, and (c) social dynamics. These challenges acted as barriers that all could lead to student participants "getting stuck" and having "trouble making it work." When students encountered barriers, they often demonstrated off-task behaviors and described a lack of motivation.

Musical Setbacks

Musical setbacks included learning new skills and differing levels of musical proficiency in each Team-Time group. Sometimes, students set goals that initially felt attainable, but later realized that the task was more difficult than they initially expected. Jessa, a participant who created a four-part *a cappella* arrangement of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" explained that "Just splitting up parts, figuring out how to sing with one person or two people on a harmony . . . Just from a choral standpoint, that was difficult to put together." Her group member, Kimberly, concurred that they misjudged the difficulty of the task:

> We would get pretty far, and then we would just kind of plummet because we didn't know how certain [things worked] . . . And it was hard because we weren't just trying to build one harmony. We were trying to build three or four. And that's a challenging skill for a lot of people, let alone kind of novice writers or composers, so . . .

Notably, this group did finish the arrangement and performed it at the spring concert, later citing that they acquired skills in arranging, notational literacy, and creating harmonies.

Unsurprisingly, participants experienced a learning curve when acquiring new musical skills (e.g., playing instruments, navigating music technology, using aural skills, and reading/writing music). For instance, Jessa described how her lack of experience with notation and writing original songs initially presented challenges.

> There were a few weeks there where it was definitely a struggle trying to come up with lyrics, or [figuring out] how we could actually turn this into a full piece instead of just an idea. Especially as sophomores not knowing how to do that or learning how to notate what we heard in our heads . . . that was a much more musical notation challenge than before. [laughs]

Likewise, Natalie's experience composing an original song was also challenging, because it was something she had never done before.

> I was in a group that tried to write a song. We wrote a very short song, and we . . . It was definitely a learning process, because we were like "oh we're gonna write a song" and didn't exactly know how to go about that, but I think the resources Mr. Cohen provided to us—to not just tell us how to do it, but to give us the resources to figure out what we wanted to do—were very helpful.

Participants acknowledged that their progress during Team-Time slowed when they encountered musical setbacks. Sumati, a student on the arranging team in High Voice Choir explained, "I mean, I think we did pretty good. It took a long time. We spent classes on one single thing that we could have done in 30 minutes, but it all worked out." In spite of the aforementioned challenges, with teacher assistance, most student participants were able to overcome their challenges related to learning new skills, which led students to view these newly-acquired skills as benefits. Still, a few student participants did not gain the necessary skills to achieve their goals:

LISA: I was working with a few other kids in my class. We were trying to make a mashup of two different songs.

AIMEE: Oh, that's cool. Did it work out?

LISA: Not really.

AIMEE: [laughing] Mashups are hard.

LISA: Yeah, we couldn't figure out how to put it together, I guess. We had what we wanted to do but we couldn't make it work, I guess, or something.

AIMEE: Yeah. Did Mr. Cohen help at all during Team-Time?

LISA: Yeah, he'll give us little tricks or hints to what we could do to make it a little better.

While some student participants felt as though their whole team struggled with a lack of musical experience in certain areas, other student participants identified mismatched amounts of prior musical experience within a group as a greater challenge. For instance, Jason, a student in Low Voice Choir, explained his struggle with his group members, who had less experience with music technology than he did:

> I feel like if I wasn't in the classroom, it'd be way easier to kind of coordinate stuff because I feel like it's kind of like a weird like bump for an experience. But yeah, but I think it worked well, at least for most of it. It felt kind of like the focal point but I didn't really intend to be sometimes. I don't want to [be the focal point]. I feel like at some points it feels weird because, like, it's not a class about Jason. It's a class about like, you know, the other students as well.

Jason felt uncomfortable because he had more prior musical experiences than his peers in the "Mr. Sandman" group. Because of his interest and prior knowledge of the Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) that his group used, other students relied on him to help them navigate the arranging process.

Difficulties with Open-Ended and Independent Task

Student participants also experienced challenges related to the open-ended task and independent nature of Team-Time, such as the lack of parameters, getting into the flow, too many ideas at once, formulating questions for teacher help, and moving forward efficiently. The lack of parameters and the open-ended nature of Team-Time proved difficult for some student participants to choose a path and begin. For instance, Kelsey "was nervous without having parameters." She expanded, "I didn't have a syllabus so I didn't know what needed to be done and how much I should be working, and I had a lot of trouble picking a project." Other student participants also recalled feeling stressed at the beginning of the Team-Time project. Melissa shared, "I think it was a little stressful at first, because I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do. But once I figured it out, I actually really enjoyed the process." Some student participants, such as Kayla, admitted feeling confused: "I think in the beginning we were all a little confused. We didn't really know what to do . . . Then once we figured out, we got the hang of it and then we were working through it." For some participants, this confusion about where to begin led to a lack of efficiency and off-task behaviors. Sumati described how her group had trouble "figur[ing] out what to start with," which resulted in them "[not] working for the first three classes very much." Mr. Cohen explained how his preservice teacher preparation program did not prepare him as a facilitator. Thus, he learned over the years to "reorient [his] approach so that it had more openness to process and procedure." This differed from how he was taught to direct student learning: "When you're a choir director, you're trying to determine the process and the procedures so that everyone knows where to jump on

board." At the time of this study, Mr. Cohen described learning to accept initial student struggle as part of the process.

When students encountered challenges, they frequently relied on Mr. Cohen for assistance. However, their lack of musical experience sometimes made it difficult for them to formulate questions for the purposes of seeking help. Naomi described that "nobody really knew what questions to even ask." Kimberly elaborated:

> [We didn't have] a full comprehension of [building harmonies], so when we would ask questions, we couldn't always put a direct question on what we were trying to learn, without saying, "Just do the project for us." [laughing] We needed more specific tools, but didn't know what we needed, which Mr. Cohen . . . He was good about helping as much as he could, but he didn't want to just hand us the answers at the same time. So that was a challenge. So sometimes it would really just take us . . . We would work through the whole Team-Time period just trying to figure out how we needed to do something, instead of actually directing our focus on the process itself.

Mr. Cohen recognized value in the student struggle and had a difficult time determining when to step in and how much assistance/guidance to provide, describing, "It's . . . [difficult] trying to choose the elements that are most useful to them in the moment. [Trying] to walk that line of not being overbearing in throwing too many things out there is tricky." He added:

> That reflexive relationship [between teacher and student] is just so complex. There are times where I look how things are functioning and I do think to myself [that] it would be so much easier to just stop and teach how I taught in my first two years, but . . . what comes from that complex approach is a lot more gratifying.

Furthermore, Mr. Cohen stated that "pursuing informal practices . . . [is] just really hard, and that's what's fun about it. [But] . . . this was not part of teacher training. This was not part of the thing that you were sent off to do." Even when student participants determined which questions to ask, they sometimes struggled because of the student-teacher ratio.

Sylvia admitted that it was tricky when her group did not “know where to go next and then also ha[d] to wait until [Mr. Cohen] was free to help.”

Moving forward efficiently constituted the largest struggle related to this theme. Student participants expressed difficulties with time management, making efficient progress, productivity, and motivation. Struggling with time management, many students referenced wishing that they had more time. Some participants described feeling rushed because of the amount of teamwork and coordination required. Sumati explained, “That was a long process. I didn't think we were going to finish in time, honestly. There was a lot of teamwork, coordinating, talking to other people about what they've done, but overall, I think we did pretty good.” Mr. Cohen explained that “[Some] students . . . discovered things that they wanted to learn that they didn't know they wanted to learn, but once they were in this group, there was not the time.” Part of the student struggle with not having enough time could be attributed to the slow-moving nature of IL. Mr. Cohen explained why students progress at a slower pace when engaging in IL as opposed to FL:

> I think that in IL, that is also this peripheral effect where when you engage in these processes, everybody has to be a little bit more real. You can't put everything in a box and show it—share information—and then move on. You have to be concerned with where everyone is in the room. That just makes the whole thing so much more fun. By a “traditional choral program standard,” things definitely move slower, I would say.

Because steps are not laid out clearly for students, Team-Time involved a good bit of trial-and-error, which resulted in gradual progress. One of the reasons that student participants had trouble getting started or moving forward efficiently toward their goals related to getting overwhelmed by the large quantity of ideas. Olivia described this struggle:

> Even though part of what makes it Team-Time is that we're doing it on our own, the problem that we started to realize was that everybody was trying to figure it all out at once . . . and they would just list too many things . . . And I think that was also a big part of what . . . was stopping it from being as effective as it could be.

Furthermore, when musical tasks were very difficult, some groups struggled to maintain flow, focus, and productivity while working. For instance, when Cameron's group decided to assign solfege to their pop song, "it spiraled into, you know, venting time and then going on your phone." On the other hand, sometimes socializing with friends led to off-task behaviors. Leslie described, "I feel like [some] people weren't using their time very well and thought of it as a sort of study hall-ish thing." She then elaborated, stating that the quality of the final product was negatively impacted by her group's socialization, off-task behaviors, and lack of focus.

> LESLIE: I thought that [our final song] was good enough. It wasn't as good as it could probably be with some fixing and some focusing [laughter]. But it was good enough to perform, I think.
>
> AIMEE: Why do you think you all had problems focusing?
>
> LESLIE: I think it was because we are really close, so we just kind of like goofed off most of the time that we had time to focus. That was our main problem.

Off- task behaviors were not always indicative of musical or social challenges, however. Bentley admitted:

> For each song, I'm writing a haiku . . . but I'm lazy, so [during Team-Time] I could be [doing] anything from reading, to scrolling through Instagram, or working on it, but not actually working on it. I think a lot of what I do is I write. Not what I'm supposed to write, but I write [fiction].

Bentley felt excited about Team-Time but struggled with the motivation needed to move forward. Mr. Cohen explained that a lack of motivation does not reflect a lack of musical interest or passion.

> There's a handful, literally I think about five students that I've interacted with so far [in my career] that really struggled to articulate a passion. For the rest, they can articulate it. I mean, motivating them to actually progress is another thing. But if you're asking about articulating a passion or something they're interested about learning, that has not been a huge struggle.

Instead, Mr. Cohen attributed the adolescents' struggle to stay on-task with their prior schooling, which involved mainly convergent tasks. He explained:

> We've had the privilege of failing at IL in a couple different ways in our school. In different departments, not just in music, we have had a chance to see what it looks like when you go in very naïve and say, "You know what? If we just let the kids do what they're passionate about we're going to make magic." Then you create the space for that to happen and it turns into, "At this point in my school career in high school I'm translating any free time that my teacher gives me to either a study hall or just scrolling social media."

Mr. Cohen admitted that he is still struggling to navigate how to help his students maintain the self-regulation necessary to consistently progress with their Team-Time projects. When student participants did not use their time wisely, many ended up feeling disappointed in their projects. Olivia stated:

> It was easier to work together in the way that we would keep each other focused and there was immediate feedback, but it was also difficult because it's easier to get sidetracked [laughter] and sometimes you will run into disagreements. Like, I wrote a song with two other girls, and I feel like if we had worked a little bit harder, that song could've been a lot better than it was. So I'm kind of upset that we didn't fully use that time, cause I remember we spent forever working on the first part of the song and then the second part I just wrote by myself really fast because we were running out of time and I feel like that's partially because we didn't know as much about music, but also because we didn't take it as seriously (looking back now) as I think we should have.

As Olivia noted, the lack of close supervision and off-task behaviors meant that some student groups did not achieve their goals.

Social Dynamics

In addition to musical setbacks and challenges related to working on an open-ended task independently, student participants struggled to navigate social dynamics due

to few friends, group size, lack of leadership, and losing the meaning of team. One student, Naomi, struggled with social dynamics from the onset of the project, because she felt as though she lacked friends with whom to work:

> I hated it, mostly because I do not have many friends . . . I didn't have someone to do a Team-Time with. So I just tagged along with some seniors I knew from another club that I wasn't really active in. They had their own idea already. They had already come up with stuff, so I was just tagging along, because I didn't want to sit alone and not do anything for Team-Time. It didn't end very well. Because we were a group of friends, there was nobody to organize us and be the parent. And yeah, we didn't finish our project.

Other participants who worked with older students also felt intimidated, which led to difficulties collaborating.

The next challenge related to group size. Olivia described how larger Team-Time groups made less progress than smaller groups.

> Team-Time was super cool. We would split into groups and we quickly found out freshman year that the bigger groups were not as effective, because it was just . . . there was no day to day objective, it was kind of just like everyone's trying to figure everything out all at the same time and no one was really getting anywhere. But little groups or individual projects were super successful and just overall everyone seemed to really enjoy the time to explore music the way they wanted to.

Some groups, large and small, struggled to move forward due to an absence of leadership. Sylvia explained that sharing power between group members stifled progress.

> You know, we were all freshmen and we're all kind of shy, so no one really wanted to take the leadership position [and tell the group], "This is what we should be doing now, and this is what we should probably be working on next" . . . No one was really, you know, super like a dictator about that, which I guess in a way is a good thing, but it would have probably been helpful to have one of us kind of be the leader in that sense.

Eventually, these groups made progress; moving forward was simply slow-going.

One of the largest sub-codes that emerged was “lost meaning of team.” In some cases, this meant that groups split up. In other cases, students did not contribute equally in their groups, which resulted in one student taking over and in others feeling like they did not have a voice. Mr. Cohen explained that even though students appeared to be motivated during Team-Time, “there was still that cliché dynamic of group-work where if there was a group of three students, there was one who was doing 80% of the work, and the others were doing 20%.” Participants who recognized unequal contribution expressed frustration related to the social dynamics in the groups. Kimberly reflected:

> So I enjoyed it. It was hard, because it was essentially . . . me and another girl kind of carr[ied] the weight of the whole Team-Time, which sometimes was stressful because it was more of a free time situation for the other two [girls]. So when we were trying to put effort towards an actual product, they were not on the same page. And then, by the time we had to kind of tell them what they were singing, they weren't completely there. But I enjoyed the project, aside from that.

Kimberly’s group was not the only team that struggled with social dynamics due to off-task behaviors. Cameron explained his struggle with one group member: “One person . . . was on their phone all the time. I was like, ‘Oh my God, Jesus.’ Yeah. So eventually I just became the only one doing any work.” When Mr. Cohen noticed that student participants were off-task, he reminded himself of the following:

> There are always those students, and even you get a group of teachers together to work on something, there's going to be the same exact dynamic . . . [people who are not contributing equally]. It's an exception when it's not that way. One word that I try to remove from my vocabulary when I'm thinking about these things is the word “lazy.” It's transferring that language to “barriers.”

Framing his mindset in this way helped Mr. Cohen to persevere in assisting students with self-regulating their own learning and navigating their own social challenges.

Make Something Sessions Challenges

Analysis of research question three related to Make Something Sessions yielded two themes: discomfort at beginning and audiating ideas that "fit." Make Something Sessions always began with silence while students audiated. This silence could stretch on for multiple minutes, because student participants ubiquitously felt uncomfortable and nervous to start. Starting a Make Something Session proved challenging for two reasons. Firstly, some student participants felt uncomfortable singing alone, noting that they joined choir because they enjoy singing in a group. Aubrey explained, "I think [Make Something Sessions are] fun, but at the same time, in the beginning, it's awkward . . . because none of us want to be the first person to sing." Blake rationalized why some people do not want sing first, explaining, "A lot of people just don't want to start because they're not confident or they're too shy or something like that."

Secondly, and most prominently, student participants worried that by singing first, they might "step on people's toes" or "determine the path for everyone." Olivia described, "It's very nerve-wracking to, in a silent room, just sing something when you don't know what everybody else is thinking. You get nervous that you'll sing something that is not at all what they wanted it to sound like." Many participants repeatedly claimed that as a result of the supportive environment, they did not feel nervous about people judging them. On the contrary, Sylvia explained that she primarily worried that she would not sing her musical idea the way that she audiated:

> I think it's just hard when there is no sound to be the first one to make sound, and I don't think it's even a fear of the other people in the room judging what you come up with, because we wouldn't, and anything that anyone comes up with I always think is super cool. I guess it's just, you know, putting yourself out there in that slightly vulnerable state when you don't know if this is going to be good or

> not, because even if you have it in your head, maybe it just isn't as good in the air and out there.

Leslie disagreed, stating she felt nervous beginning because she feared judgement from her peers. She said, “I think I'm mostly scared of, like if we have a picture on the board and someone really loves their idea and I just happen to do something first . . . I don't want that to happen. Going off of that, I’m nervous they’ll judge me for it.”

Though many of the same students tended to start the Make Something Sessions, most student participants did not view that as a deficit. Allison explained:

> Some people are the ones to start it, and some people just . . . that's not who they are, but they're content with that. There's a lot of people that I have talked to in that class that are like, “Yeah, I wait for someone to start it,” and then there are others who are like, “I wait for someone to start it, and then someone else to find a part for me, and I just kind of hop on.” That's just how they feel comfortable, but they're not insecure about the fact that they don't want to start it. There's different levels of confidence and comfort. That's not necessarily a bad thing. It's not like anyone's taking it away from them. They just think they don't want it, and that's okay.

Feelings of discomfort were time-bound and concentrated at the beginning of the Make Something Sessions. Participants explained that once the Make Something Sessions began, they felt more relaxed and enjoyed the process and product, calling it “super cool.”

After tackling the initial feelings of discomfort during the Make Something Sessions, students continued to face musical setbacks, specifically struggling to audiate musical ideas that “fit” with the rest of the improvisation. Melissa described how this musical challenge differs from what she experiences in other parts of the choir rehearsal:

> MELISSA: Sometimes you just kind of have to sit there, and you have to think about things, and you have to try different things and see what fits with the other people. And then sometimes someone will add something else. Then you realize your thing doesn't fit anymore, and then you might have to change it a bit. So it's

> kind of just working together and trying to find that balance between everyone's parts, I guess.
>
> AIMEE: Yeah, so it poses some musical challenges, then. Do you think those musical challenges are different than ones you run into in your typical sort of choir rehearsal?
>
> MELISSA: A little bit . . . I mean, because with usual choir rehearsals we have exactly what we're supposed to be singing in front of us. We can just easily fix . . . like, “Oh you're on the wrong note, it's supposed to be this one.” But with the Make Something Sessions, it's kind of like, “Does this work with it?’ like, “Should I change this?” It's kind of just like we don't really know what we're doing with the Make Something Sessions. But with normal practice then at least we have a guide to go off of.

Not having a written guide posed new musical challenges that student participants did not experience in other parts of the choral rehearsal. However, with these challenges to students’ aural skills also came musical growth.

Summary

For the third research question, I analyzed teacher and student-identified challenges of ILPP within the context of the Morris High School choir program. Three themes emerged from the analysis of challenges associated with Team-Time, including musical setbacks, difficulties with open-ended and independent task, and social dynamics. Two themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Make Something Sessions, including discomfort at beginning, and audiating musical ideas that “fit.”

Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked, “What beliefs and values lead teachers to make space for ILPP within the high school choral program?” Using values coding, I coded Mr. Cohen’s interview transcripts and used student interview data to triangulate

the analysis. Four prominent teacher values and beliefs emerged: (a) robust teaching philosophy; (b) music education as place-based, relevant, and differentiated; (c) student voice; and (d) lifelong learners with independence and agency.

Robust Teaching Philosophy

Mr. Cohen's teaching philosophy was comprised of four pillars: constructivism, progressivism, democracy/pluralism, and critical pedagogy. Aligning with constructivist thought, Mr. Cohen spoke about the importance of validating student lived experiences and understandings that they brought into the classroom. Mr. Cohen explained, "I think that . . . there is this toolbox that you can be developing that might not be something that you're carrying with you already, but it can be informed and enriched by what you're carrying with you." He felt strongly that he needed to get to know individual students in order to help them to construct and add to their personal toolboxes. In addition to acknowledging students' existing knowledge and understandings, Mr. Cohen validated student feelings and experiences.

> I think that . . . when we come into a room . . . acknowledging we are all carrying in whatever we're dealing with, no matter how recent the experience—and that can be positive and negative—and being transparent about that [is important]. I think the way that I try to show it, is the music and singing together, is a way for us to process that and experiment with different emotions that we've all felt, but through a frame . . . making it something that is separate from ourselves, so we can look at it from a different perspective and process something . . . but be able to learn something from it. Because when we're going through intense joy or intense sadness, all we can do is process. All we can do is work through that moment and make it to the other side.

One set of beliefs and understandings that students bring into Mr. Cohen's room relates to their identities as music-makers. Mr. Cohen acknowledged that by the time students enter his classroom, they already have decided if they are musical or not, which affects how he teaches:

> At a certain age, probably much younger than we'd like to admit, we start to think of ourselves as musical or not musical. We don't do it to ourselves actually . . . there's a lot of conditioning that goes into that, but we subscribe to one perspective or the other. The students that we have the privilege to work with are ones that either have subscribed to [the belief] that they're musical or are working through the barriers that make them feel that they're not.

Mr. Cohen strove to help every student acknowledge their own musicianship and he viewed ILPP as a way to validate student musicianship by encouraging them to make music without teacher direction.

Mr. Cohen's next philosophical pillar related to democracy and pluralism. Mr. Cohen thought deeply about student voice, student growth, and practical application of democracy in the choir classroom. He spoke extensively about his admiration for Maxine Greene, Paulo Freire, and John Dewey in explaining this pillar. From Greene, he drew an emphasis on a holistic approach and acting on students' interests and what they brought to the classroom.

> MR. COHEN: I think reading Maxine Greene, the way she talked about the role of teachers and her perspective on what they should be doing and when they should be doing it, and her emphasis on growth and actually engaging and taking action . . . that was the line of thought that really helped me step into this space in the classroom as opposed to just in my head.
>
> AIMEE: Emphasis on teacher growth or on student growth?
>
> MR. COHEN: Both. I think her emphasis in interacting with art as a way to just understand life, understand reality, understand everything, just taking it all together and this holistic idea that everything has value and developing skills to observe and notice as intimately as possible.

Mr. Cohen tempered this belief with Dewey's philosophy on effort and interest in the classroom. Mr. Cohen described how Dewey has given him a more nuanced understanding of students who have a lot of interest and musical passion but struggle to follow through. He noted that most students are interested by IL projects and democratic

choices, even if they don't put a lot put in a lot of effort for one reason or another. He attributed a lack of effort to students being overtaxed and feeling behind and like failures in many areas of their schooling.

> The essay that I carry with me in my toolbox . . . is on effort and interest in education. [Dewey described] the contrast between those two and his acknowledge[d] the struggle . . . [The idea that] if we just allow the student to pursue their interest, they're going to evolve into their best selves . . . is such a fantasy and not practical . . . If I have a specific set of goals, whether it's intonation or any kind of notation literacy, those considerations are what I bring to the table, so I'm respecting their interest but acknowledging that if we only pursued that, the effort toward these skills that expand their musical experience are limited if we don't bring that into the table . . . I think that [Dewey's idea of interest vs. effort captures what I notice]. At the high school level, you are seeing students who have a ton of interest, but I think they've been limited because of everything else that they're being asked to do throughout their schooling and they're just being presented with failure after failure. Then when they get to high school, it is this infinite checklist of things they have to catch up on.

Finally, Mr. Cohen described how Freire's humanistic writings on love influenced philosophy:

> For Paulo Freire, I think that was a nice next step for me because just his writing was a little bit more humanistic, I guess, in the sense that love was this implicit part of the conversation and so between that kind of introduction of making love something that we can include in our educational process as well as the idea that mastering technical skills can facilitate liberation in many contexts.

Guided by his belief that any attempt to build students' toolboxes should not supersede student feelings, Mr. Cohen's philosophy manifested in his care for each student. Furthermore, Mr. Cohen's philosophical influences inspired his key beliefs about music education: music education as place-based, relevant, and differentiated.

Music Education as Place-Based, Relevant, and Differentiated

Mr. Cohen believed that music education should center divergent thinking, student voice, asset-based pedagogies, and student growth by being place-based, relevant, and differentiated. Mr. Cohen spoke at length about the importance of having a sense of

place as an educator, talking first about the dangers of trying to subscribe to and replicate the same choral ideal in all schools, before explaining why IL allows teachers to teach with a sense of place.

> When I hear a piece like . . . Pärt Uusberg, huge on him right now . . . when you hear Estonian choirs singing this gorgeous, close harmony, it takes work to bring that into being. There's dangers of trying to replicate that in the wrong places. There's the illusion that everybody can have everything. You're at some random school in Midwest, whatever, and you have 100 kids in your school, sure, you can sing Eric Whitacre if you want to, if you try hard enough. [Laughing] It's like, "No, that's not the thing," but some people will kill themselves to make it happen as opposed to the . . . IL practices [that] require you to have a sense of place . . . By teaching to that sense of place, then you can really discover the other versions of those magical moments we experienced with the more traditional choir program, but they can be better suited for your students.

One reason that Mr. Cohen felt so strongly about place-based school music was because he hoped that his music classes will hold relevance to his students later in their lives. He stated:

> I found myself more realistically imagining what music-making looks like after high school]. For most students, it's not going to be a choir. It's not going to be a band. It's not going to be an orchestra. I think that choir is powerfully positioned in that the things you can explore using the human voice are amazing . . . It's certainly not in my lesson plans, but no one would be surprised if I just asked them, "Hey, what's the song you're popping on right now? Great, let's look at the chords. Cool, let's make some free form harmony." I think that's just more relevant. That's the overall issue with education right now in general is just like recentering relevance as a primary issue.

Mr. Cohen's desire for music education to be meaningful inspired his focus of ILPP in his classes. He explained, "I think what I'm hoping to share with students and to see from them is the ability to manipulate sound the way that they would like to, and the ability to understand sounds that they hear in a way that's meaningful for them." He believed that teachers should provide a variety of relevant music-related opportunities for students by centering different "on-ramps," or entry-points, for them to partake in school music-

making. Using himself as an example, Mr. Cohen explained that different types of music-making interest some individuals more than others: “The way that I feel even now when I make music with other people with no pretense, just sitting down and jamming in whatever capacity, is immensely gratifying and freeing . . .”

Mr. Cohen’s beliefs developed in part as a reaction to school and music education norms, which he identified as (a) convergent thinking, (b) deficit lens, (c) capitalistic choir model, and a (d) hierarchy of academic music-making. Mr. Cohen explained the institution of schooling prioritizes convergent thinking, which he believed was “unhealthy” for children. Additionally, he balked at how schools and teachers often viewed students through a deficit lens, which in turn, “produces” adolescents who view themselves through a deficit lens. Furthermore, Mr. Cohen noted that the choral profession needed to revisit the industry standard of the large ensemble, describing that choirs are structured in a way that favor the “hierarchy of academic music-making.” He explained that “the hierarchy has implicit demands, and directors feel like they need to meet these demands or they aren’t a good teacher.” Finally, Mr. Cohen expressed that instead of “mining for student talent in a capitalistic model,” teachers should favor democratic processes while centering humanistic and constructivist ideals.

Student Voice as Central

Student voice as central emerged as the third theme related to Mr. Cohen’s beliefs and values. I present the sub-themes under two headings: classroom environment and practices/actions.

Classroom Environment

Five sub-themes emerged related to the classroom environment created by Mr. Cohen and his students. “We have a voice” emerged as the most salient theme from student interviews. Other themes included the teacher as a guide in the democratic process, community/family, and trust and vulnerability.

“We have a Voice.” Student participants identified Mr. Cohen’s value of student voice as a centerpiece of choir. Kimberly explained how having a voice differed significantly from middle school choir and her experiences in the rest of the high school.

> In comparison to the middle school choir, we really didn't have a say . . . It was very much “teacher, student.” And while we were singing, we were singing what we were told, and I don't remember really having a say at any point in time, which is fine, but I don't think it's preferable by any means. And compared to classes on the regular that aren't in the music program, this is gonna sound harsh, but it's kind of like a prison. [laughs] I'd say in more circumstances than not, we have no say once again. And there's just really no give or take. It's us being presented information, and we take that information and toss it off in a day, or whenever that test is over, whereas the information we learn here is definitely being soaked in and interpreted into larger scenarios that we can take with us.

In their interviews, many student participants agreed with Kimberly’s perspective, explaining that they feel as though they have a voice in choir class. Notably, student participants described the learning environment as feeling different from the rest of the school, including a sense that choir was more “informal,” which could be attributed to student participants feeling that they have a voice. Mr. Cohen explained:

> I do think that if you were to ask any of the student participants in the program . . . I think they would feel as though they have a lot of choice in what they're learning. Some might even say too much. I know that there are some students who would love more of, “here's ‘Ave Verum Corpus’ and we're going to sing it now” and that's pretty much it.

Teacher as a Guide in the Democratic Process. Mr. Cohen described acting as a guide in the democratic process. Using student goals as a starting point, he listened to students, helping them to express themselves through music and to achieve their goals. As a facilitator, he remained reflexive in his teaching, staying open-minded to the learning processes/procedures in which students engaged. Though students did not always choose to interact with music-making processes in the same way that he would, he validated students, which helped them feel safe to express their feelings.

Community/Family. With Mr. Cohen as the guide, the students created a community/family within the choir program at Morris High School. Mr. Cohen stated, “I'm really trying to hone in on the opportunities for them to collaborate and re-establish a sense of choral culture [after COVID].” The data analysis revealed that student collaboration resulted from incorporating opportunities for students to connect and work together through IL. Mr. Cohen explained the connections between IL and community:

> IL is about the community. It has to be. You're taking all of this energy and knowledge and technique, et cetera, that normally we conceptualize as one person: the teacher. If you're in IL, you are actively trying to diffuse that.

Student participants also acknowledged the strong classroom community that resulted from IL and FL. Naomi stated, “we’re like a family. I mean, this choir feels more like a family than my actual house does. [laughter] . . . It's a real community.”

Safe Space. Though some participants described feeling more passionate about choir than others, and not everyone got along, all student participants agreed that the choral space was safe and they felt comfortable. Mr. Cohen acknowledged the role that safe space, vulnerability, and trust played in the choir program, stating, “[The classroom] cannot feel like a safe space unless [students are] vulnerable. [They’re] going to be more

vulnerable if it feels like a safe space. Which one comes first depends on the students that walk into the room."

For student participants, a safe space was multi-faceted. Students felt safe to take risks because they knew they had a supportive community that supported them; they trusted their classmates and Mr. Cohen. Because of the safe space, Cameron described the choir room as "an escape," and a "place where we can be ourselves." He elaborated, "It's a very safe space for me to be and I don't feel like there are a lot of those in my life, so I appreciate that Mr. Cohen has made such a place for me to be who I want to be." Melissa elaborated:

> We're all just very accepting of each other, and when people make mistakes or something we all just kind of laugh it off. No one really judges someone else for making a mistake, and we all just help each other and it's very nice. It's a good atmosphere.

Mr. Cohen acknowledged the importance of creating an environment in which students could feel positive during moments of struggle, not only success. He explained, "In these vulnerable moments, I think having success as the outcome is . . . You want them to achieve a positive experience at the end, but that positive experience can exist within a failure."

Trust and Vulnerability. Providing students with opportunities to fail required Mr. Cohen to trust his students and his students to trust each other in vulnerable moments. Student participants appreciated that Mr. Cohen trusted them enough to challenge them. Jessa explained, "It's nice that Cohen trusts us [to handle musical challenges], and we trust him to give us things that will challenge us and be intricate enough that we can still handle it." This trust and mutual respect served as a key

foundation for students to succeed when engaging with ILPP, which Mr. Cohen explained:

> I would definitely say that there has to be a level of trust between the students and the teacher. To be able to say, "Okay, this is what you're passionate about, here's time to work on it. I can help you in some way. Just make sure that it's still focused and it's not just free time." [laughter] But also, it's a way to keep kids engaged.

Mr. Cohen displayed his trust in his students by acknowledging students' interests and their ability to work independently. In his classroom, students could thrive during ILPP because of the supportive community and safe space that had been established as the norm. By regularly practicing vulnerability with Mr. Cohen as a facilitator in FL, students felt more comfortable in IL. In short, the classroom community/environment laid the foundation for the practices and actions within the classroom itself.

Practices/Actions

When analyzing practices/actions valued and employed by Mr. Cohen and his students, one theme emerged as most salient: "democratic process." Sylvia explained, "The democratic process is definitely a theme throughout everything we do." Mr. Cohen elaborated:

> Ultimately, we're talking about democratic processes. We want them to feel comfortable in that space and sometimes I will say this explicitly to students. My goal is that if [my students] find themselves in a situation that feels unjust or needs to be rectified, whether that has to do with interpersonal relationships between humans or our relationship with the environment or our sense of purpose as a species or as individuals—if there's a dissonance between what they feel should be and how things are functioning, I want them to feel comfortable saying so.

Sub-themes of democratic process included balance of teacher and student Ownership and critical thinking through a variety of musical experiences.

Balance of Teacher and Student Ownership. Balance of teacher and student Ownership emerged as a sub-theme of democratic processes. In the Morris Choir Program, the students and teacher chose the songs, selected how they learned songs, and directed conversations. Kelsey summarized the balance between student and teacher Ownership:

> He always asks us. There's nothing that we do that isn't decided on as a group. And you know, he is the teacher, he does decide our curriculum and everything, but you know, he always lets us choose what we're doing, even if there's parameters around it.

One of the most immediately noticeable democratic processes involved song selection; both the teacher and students chose the repertoire. Mr. Cohen explained:

> The first round is always a class playlist. The students come in with one song that they love and share it . . . We listen to those songs and the discussions are guided by me, but the first step of the discussion is very much just a general, like, “Hey, what songs stood out to you?” I'll usually end up just being a note-taker during that time. From there, the next level of filter is the audience filter. We have all these songs and now we're going to sing them for other humans. “Why?” Or “Is this an appropriate song if our five-year-old baby sister is going to be coming to the concert? Should this be on the setlist?” Then the final filter consideration is the technical aspect. Sometimes it starts with the aesthetic component of—I think a lot of the students would conceptualize it as, “Can we pull this off? Is it going to work for our group?” Then by that time, there's a consensus around three or four songs. For example, I feel like “Bohemian Rhapsody” always ends up on the playlist. That's just a great example of, you listen to [the song] and you're like, “Yes, this is incredible. This is amazing. There's *13* of us.” Instead of just saying “no,” it's really fun to have that conversation because inevitably I think it takes the patience of sitting back until a student says, “I don't think we can do this, guys.” Then seeing what level of intricacy that conversation gets to, because for us, we would be talking about range. We would talk about the complexity of the harmonies, the number of parts, the tempo changes, all these amazing musical things that you can analyze and reflect on, but it's so cool how much of that comes out in their own words if you just take a step back . . . They have the option of either suggesting a song to the ensemble or they always have the invitation that I can just go into choir director world and try to find stuff that is reflective of what they're looking for.

As a result of the repertoire selection process, students appreciated learning music they chose and selecting genres of music that they hoped to explore. To balance out student experiences in choir, Mr. Cohen also chose songs using a three-lens framework, explained in the next sub-theme: technical toolbox, cross-cultural lens, musical creativity. Mr. Cohen consistently explained his reasoning for submitting certain pieces, and even the songs that Mr. Cohen selected entered the pool of repertoire upon which the students discussed and voted. Again, students had a voice in this process.

Both the students and Mr. Cohen worked together to choose how to learn at any given point in time (e.g., the Learning Style and Ownership). Whether engaged in FL or IL, students could determine how they wanted to learn (e.g., with notation or aurally; with Mr. Cohen leading or student led). Sylvia explained that students had a say in the Ownership of the activity on any given day:

> The democratic process is definitely a theme throughout everything we do, even if it's just one day that we are supposed to be practicing this song. Mr. Cohen might ask us if we want him to help us with it, or if we want to break out into section groups and go over our parts with the other people on our part.

Finally, Mr. Cohen valued a balance of student and teacher leadership. The students and Mr. Cohen took turns directing conversations and acting as leaders, appearing to trade roles almost seamlessly. Student participants described that they felt comfortable asking questions and bringing up new topics at any point in time. Furthermore, Mr. Cohen did not perceive student discussion as a waste of time, but as a way to enhance student understanding. Students not only took turns leading discussions, but also leading the class, vacillating from more formal to more informal aspects of Ownership throughout their choral experiences.

Critical Thinking through a Variety of Musical Experiences. The second sub-theme of practices/actions was critical thinking through a variety of musical experiences. As mentioned previously, Mr. Cohen centered three lenses of music learning in his classes: technical toolbox, cross-cultural lens, and musical creativity. No matter who was

leading the class or what aspect of music learning was in focus, critical thinking remained central to the learning process. Even when Mr. Cohen led the class, he focused on teaching the students to understand music, instead of how to reproduce music. Student participants noted that this focus on critical thinking made the class feel challenging but rewarding. Ultimately, student growth generated feelings of pride. Mr. Cohen described the three lenses this way:

> The framework that I keep coming back to, and this might be like an oversimplification, but I have these three columns of like the technical toolbox and then the cross-cultural lens and then the creative lens. Right now, very low on my list of priorities is centering traditional repertoire.

Mr. Cohen acknowledged the importance of helping students to develop and build upon their technical toolbox, which involved many aspects that centered process over product, such as notational literacy, learning by ear, and understanding/ knowing how to manipulate sound. While balancing these three lenses, he worked hard to foreground critical thinking. For instance, he focused heavily on teaching students to read Western notation with a five-step process, so that students could transfer skills in the future. Students stated that they understood how to read music, which I confirmed as I observed students in all grade levels demonstrating notational audiation, not simply decoding.

In addition to notational literacy, Mr. Cohen valued learning by ear as another part of one's technical toolbox. Students learned by ear during Team-Time, Make

Something Sessions, and in formal choral rehearsals when Mr. Cohen taught by rote or in the aural-oral tradition. Mr. Cohen acknowledged that a stronger, well-balanced, technical toolbox helped students to succeed in informal settings, whether in class or at home.

> Especially the past two years, I've been working to accumulate this idea of a toolbox, helping students to use music literacy and expand what music literacy is. As opposed to just sight-reading, revaluing oral skills, and using solfège as a way to help scaffold some skills that students walk into the building with. Because some students will listen to a melody and you're like, "Hey, can you harmonize this?" They're like, "Heck yes, I can." They'll throw a third on top of it in a second. That's a highly valued skill, I think.

Learning by ear bled into his second "column" in his pedagogical frame: cross-cultural lens. The music that students chose partially determined the Learning Style, due to the cultural and musical traditions of the repertoire. Mr. Cohen focused heavily on fostering socio-cultural and historical understandings, which led student participants in Mr. Cohen's classes to identify music as a key part of understanding the world around them. Furthermore, student participants cited prior meaningful collaborations with artists during choir and discussed the importance of gaining a deep understanding of the music they performed. For example, the choir recently collaborated with a South African musician who taught the choir about his culture, taught songs in the aural-oral tradition, and facilitated a creative music-making process. Similarly, the choir hosted a residency with a Puerto Rican Bomba musician.

Finally, Mr. Cohen's creative lens was linked to IL. On the topic of the creative lens, Mr. Cohen noted, "I've been very much into using music as a mode of self-expression, so songwriting, composition, arranging, things like that . . ." Noting that all three lenses were connected and could enhance one another, Mr. Cohen seamlessly

incorporated the creative lens in a way that bolstered the other lenses. For example, a couple of years ago, his students rearranged Michael Barrett's "Indodana" to be more culturally responsive. On the topic, he explained:

> [Two years ago], we performed [Michael Barrett's arrangement of] "Indodana" for [my choral director friend who teaches at a South African University]. [After], I had a conversation, teacher to teacher about [the song]. He [said] "Yes, that sounds like a White Westernized choirized version of a folk song." What it ended up being . . . with all of this, Make Something and talking about solfège and harmony and rhythm being these malleable tools for creating . . . he agreed to facilitate or be . . . a cultural referee for us. He encouraged us because these students had learned five or six songs from him over the past several years. Using what they knew from what he had taught them, [he encouraged them to] take "Indodona" and rearrange it as what they perceived to be South African music from what he had taught them. It was freaking awesome . . . They went in and they added all this rhythmic background. They kept the chord progression. They kept the melody as it was, but they added this rhythmic calm response element to the harmony. Something much more typical of what you'd hear. Whenever you look at actual Zulu vocal music, there's no one just going, "ooh" . . . [My students] rearranged it and played it for him . . . and his response was "This sounds more like home." For the kids to hear that, and to have that relationship with someone who's obviously an expert in what they do—that was *a moment,* and it was [because] of the Team-Time framework. I gave them that little lead sheet for the tune—the reduction of it—[and] they all broke off into teams of four or five and they talked it through and . . . experiment[ed] using their voices, and tr[ied] the things that they were talking about. It was awesome to walk around the room and the auditorium and see them all bopping and talking through ideas, and really thoughtfully reflecting on what they had learned from [a South African musician]. That is the synthesis of everything I'm talking about.

Mr. Cohen believed that the technical toolbox, cultural lens, and creative lens can and should work in tandem, with student understandings from all three areas supporting each other. All these practices/actions led to true student understanding, student independence, and agency, which yielded specific outcomes and prepared students for life. As students gained more experiences in choir class, they also earned more freedom in the class itself, because they were better able to scaffold themselves through the process of learning music independently. Student participants identified independence with music, agency,

and musical self-efficacy as the goal of the course: being able to think critically about music, express their own opinions, learn music on their own, and express understandings about music. As a result of choir class, student participants noted that they could transfer their musical understandings to music-making outside of class (e.g., writing songs). Because students could independently engage in music, they felt confident in their ability to pursue lifelong learning, which constitutes the final theme/value.

Lifelong Learners with Independence and Agency

The final theme revealed Mr. Cohen's goal of raising lifelong learners who have independence and agency. Sub-themes included: student participants knowing themselves in a democratic and pluralistic society and music facilitator. Upon graduation, Mr. Cohen hoped his students would feel prepared to navigate conversations with people who come from a variety of lived experiences. Because ILPP gives students opportunities to better understand themselves and how they function in a democratic group, Mr. Cohen hoped that ILPP could help to prepare his students for operating in a pluralistic society. He described his goal:

> Music is the model for a process, and that process includes a lot of factors, and probably the most complex being working with other people. Even if [the students] don't necessarily just develop this skill set during their time with me, finding out what kind of human they are in a democratic environment, who do they become when they are empowered to make choices that will affect reality, I guess that's the big-picture version.

Additionally, Mr. Cohen wanted to prepare students to facilitate music-making with others. He explained:

> Coming to a more musically specific place, [I want students to develop] the skills to facilitate with other people that want to make music. We've talked about the power of just using your voice and not needing a guitar or piano or anything like that.

Mr. Cohen elaborated that IL activities help students to achieve this goal of becoming independent music-facilitators.

> The ten of you that are graduating, each of you individually has the skill sets. I've witnessed it. You have the skills that are necessary to help other people do this. The only thing that will keep you from doing that in the future . . . is whether you think you can or not. I'm telling you, as someone who's been doing this for a while, every single one of you seniors could walk into a room with a bunch of other people and make something beautiful, whether that's teaching someone a harmony that you figured out on your own, whether that's suggesting a way to sing a little bit more in tune . . . In the past couple years, part of the way that we've talked about making music and what I've tried to do is hopefully break down the idea that making really amazing things like this has to happen in a bubble or it has to happen on the concert stage. It could be in your living room could be around the campfire, could be in a car heading somewhere. This is why I love *a cappella* music. You all have everything that you need to make stuff like this anywhere you go.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings that emerged from the case study conducted at Morris High School. From the qualitative analyses, findings emerged related to each of the four research questions. Two IL activities served as a research focus during data analysis: Team-Time and Make Something Sessions. Using The IL-FL Continua, I first analyzed and described student experiences with the two focus activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice.

For the second research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified benefits of ILPP within the context of their choir program, according to both focus activities. Three themes emerged from my analysis of benefits associated with Team-Time: (a) musical choice yields pride, understanding, and skills; (b) life skills; and (c) collaboration enhances choir. Four time-bound themes emerged from my analysis of benefits associated with Make Something Sessions: (a) in the midst: “we have a choice;”

(b) immediately after: “super cool” musical product; (c) long-term: individual musical growth; and (d) long-term: enhanced community. The aspects of ILPP that Morris High School Choir participants appreciated most was the opportunity to “explore music the way we want” and the opportunity to collaborate with teacher support.

For the third research question, I analyzed teacher and student-identified challenges of ILPP within the context of their choir program. Three themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Team-Time: (a) musical setbacks, (b) difficulties with open-ended and independent task, and (c) social dynamics. Two themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Make Something Sessions: (a) discomfort at beginning and (b) audiating ideas that “fit.” The aspects of ILPP that Morris High School Choir participants found most challenging were beginning the musical task and off-task behaviors, which were prompted by musical, independent, and social dynamics.

The fourth research question addressed the beliefs and values that led the teacher to make space for ILPP in the high school choral program. Four themes emerged as salient: (a) robust teaching philosophy; (b) music education as place-based, relevant, and differentiated; (c) student voice; and (d) lifelong learners with independence and agency. The subsequent chapter will present the findings from the next case: Davis High School.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL

It's 15 minutes before The Spectacular[4] *is set to begin on May 20, 2022, and there are at least 100 kids in the choir room, many of them practicing their dances, smiling, jumping up and down, and squealing as only high school students could. It's a cacophony of shrieking, talking, and chanting through dance moves. The choir president and her friends hug and check themselves out in the mirror on the front wall, taking a picture. Five minutes before the show is set to start, Mrs. Wilson gathers the attention of the group and gives them a pep talk full of seasoned reminders. She concludes by asking, "Are you excited?!" and the group responds "Yeah!" At 6:58, she said "I feel like we should pray or something, but we don't have time." From the time I walk into the auditorium at 6:59, I'm enthralled by the acts that the students have put together over the last couple of months. From the large acts to the small acts, student performers shine in this well-polished and expertly run production.*

Introduction

This chapter centers around the findings at Davis High School. In this chapter, I present the results to the within-case analysis for each research question. Two Informal Learning (IL) activities served as a research focus for the data analysis at Davis High School: (a) The Spectacular and (b) Talent Days. To address research question one, I analyzed each activity using The IL-FL Continua as a conceptual framework (see Figure

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[4] All proper names, including, but not limited to schools, teachers, students, ensembles, and activities in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

2). To answer research questions two and three, I analyzed teacher and student benefits and challenges for both IL focus activities using in-vivo and descriptive coding. Finally, for the fourth research question, I used values coding to analyze the beliefs and values that led Mrs. Wilson to make space for ILPP in the high school choral program.

Research Question One

The first research question asked: How are Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) evident within the context of three public high school choral programs? I analyzed the data using The IL-FL Continua, which emerged during an iterative process of constant comparison during the data collection and analysis (see Figure 2). See Chapters 1 and 3 for a more complete description of the conceptual framework: The IL-FL Continua.

I relied on exploratory teacher and student interview data to identify the primary activities related to the choral program at Davis High School. Five choral activities emerged as salient: (a) choral warmups, (b) rehearsing choral repertoire, (c) sectionals, (d) Talent Days, and (e) The Spectacular. Mrs. Wilson and the student participants described the norms of each choir rehearsal, such as choral warmups and rehearsing choral repertoire. They also defined activities that contained aspects of student-centered learning and activities in which they had a choice. Constant comparison of data revealed two activities with the greatest potential for ILPP, including The Spectacular and Talent Days. To describe the attributes of Formal Learning (FL) and Informal Learning (IL) in both focus activities at Davis High School, I use The IL-FL Continua as a frame, specifically focusing on Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice (see Figure 2).

The Spectacular

The Spectacular, like a variety show, took place each May. Leading up to the show, students brainstormed and began rehearsing for the Spectacular once a week, on Wednesdays, beginning in the middle of the spring semester. During the last month of rehearsals, the students rehearsed daily. Almost all rehearsals are student led, with little formal teacher direction. Analysis of field notes and interview transcripts revealed the Learning Style for The Spectacular as primarily informal, and the Ownership and Choice as either informal or formal, depending on the circumstance. The Spectacular featured two primary types of acts: required large group acts and voluntary small group acts. Students experienced more informal qualities of learning when preparing for small groups acts than while preparing for large group acts.

Small Group Acts

Small group acts were voluntary and chosen by Mrs. Wilson after a student audition. Because participation in small groups was completely voluntary, I identified the type of learning on the Choice continuum as informal. Students openly shared ideas when working in the small groups that I observed, demonstrating a shared and informal sense of Ownership.

> *Wednesday, April 20, 2022, 8:45 A.M.*
>
> *As I walk out of the choir room into the hallway, I notice Kate, Brianna, and their other friend gathered around a chair, doubled over in laughter. Their fit of giggles doesn't last long, because they soon focus on rehearsing "Honey Honey," from Mamma Mia. I'm impressed and surprised by Kate's energy and confidence as she sings a cappella while the other two girls lay on the floor, moving their*

legs in tandem. When they reach the second chorus, they stop to figure out the backup vocals, gathering around one of their iPhones to watch and listen to a performance on YouTube.

During this observation, I noticed informal elements of Choice, Ownership, and Learning Style as students learned their vocal harmonies by ear by referencing YouTube. Though I observed multiple small groups employing an Informal Learning Style, the possibility exists that that some students learned their small group numbers formally with notation, outside of class.

Brianna, one of the backup dancers/singers in "Honey Honey," explained how Ownership and Choice felt different when rehearsing for small and large group acts (e.g., the number performed as a class/grade).

> [I] definitely [prefer] the smaller groups. Class number's fine, I guess. It's just more fun to be with your group. We have more freedom in creating it. [In] the class number, the senior's like, "Oh, we're doing this." That versus me, Kate, and [my other friend], we came up with a dance, we figured out how to sing it, and it was just fun. We get to make our own costumes and more freedom in our own thing.

Many students, like Brianna, appreciated the more Informal Ownership and Choice involved in the small group acts. Students did not reference musical benefits related to The Spectacular, but did appreciate the more relaxed environment, independence, and creative freedom invited by the Informal Learning Style, which I discuss in research question two.

Large Group Acts

Large group acts consisted of the class numbers, the closing song in which all students took part, and the performances by the Ovations (the extracurricular show choir).

Student experiences with Choice varied during large group acts, but generally, most participants described the large group class acts and the final number as compulsory. Contrary to my initial suppositions, the field note and transcript analysis revealed the Ownership as mostly formal for the large group class numbers. In these instances, students who excelled at dancing and served as leaders in other contexts of the choral rehearsal took leadership of the group, encouraging everyone to pay attention and to polish the number. On the other hand, participants who performed with the Ovations described a more informal element of Choice; the acts did not feel compulsory, because the students elected to participate. Field notes exemplify the Choice, Ownership, and Learning Style of most large group class acts:

> *April 20, 2022 – 8:00 A.M.*
>
> *I watch from the wings of the auditorium stage as approximately 20 juniors rehearse the class number, "It's On" from* Camp Rock 2*. One girl that I do not know leads the dance rehearsal from the front of the stage, occasionally coordinating with approximately four other girls to make decisions. After the student leaders observe the group performing what they've learned so far with the mp3 track, they decide to simplify a few of the dance moves so that it looks cleaner. I'm surprised by the attentiveness of most of the students in the rehearsal, even from the boys who told me that they don't enjoy dancing. Next, the leaders suggest that the group practice the singing, and everyone moves to a large clump at the front of the stage, surrounding one girl's phone playing a video of the song with lyrics.*

I noted that Spectacular leaders exercised IL to lead the songs using lyric videos on YouTube. Even Mrs. Wilson used this strategy during the Ovations rehearsals, playing the lyric video repeatedly, as students sang the melody and improvised harmonies that eventually, over the course of many repetitions, solidified into distinct vocal parts. Though students sang during Spectacular rehearsals, vocalizing was not a focus of large group practices, because most students struggled more to learn the complex choreography of each number. Additionally, Mrs. Wilson did not require a minimum number of vocal parts. Consequently, most groups chose to sing in unison, which did not pose musical challenges for a choir accustomed to singing in four to eight parts.

In summary, while the Ownership, Choice, and Learning Style of the small group acts all tended to be more informal in nature, only the Learning Style of larger group Spectacular acts consistently leaned toward the informal side of The IL-FL Continua.

Talent Days

Talent Days took place on most Fridays throughout the year and were open to acts of all kinds: singing, dancing, art, and more. Students voluntarily chose to perform in Talent Days, selecting and learning the acts/songs outside of choir class without teacher direction. Analysis of field notes and interview transcripts situated Talent Days as mostly IL. Because Mrs. Wilson did not require students to perform on Talent Days and interview transcripts confirmed its informal nature, I classified the Choice as informal. Brielle explained, “It's really fun, I usually do [Talent Days] every week. You can do whatever you want. You don't have to sing—I always sing—but you don't have to sing. It's just whatever talent you want to share.” Because individual students decided if they wanted to perform, Talent Days were composed of acts based on several isolated

individual or group decisions indicative of Informal Ownership. Students prepared songs and acts outside of class; thus I could not determine Learning Style. However, I hypothesized that many students learned their songs using IL (by ear), while other students with more notational literacy experience learned their songs using FL, perhaps even with a voice coach or teacher. Overall, Talent Days appeared mostly informal.

Summary

Two IL activities served as a research focus during data analysis for research question one: The Spectacular and Talent Days. Using The IL-FL Continua, I analyzed and described student experiences with the two focus activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. While both focus activities encouraged IL and FL, Talent Days and Spectacular Small Groups featured a greater concentration of IL than Spectacular Large Groups. Talent Days and Spectacular small group acts mainly prompted Informal Ownership, Choice, and Learning Styles, while Spectacular large group acts prompted Formal Ownership and Choice, but Informal Learning Styles.

Research Question Two

Research question two asked how students and their teachers describe the benefits of ILPP in their choral program. I analyzed this question separately for both ILPP Activities, The Spectacular and Talent Days.

The Spectacular Benefits

Six primary benefits emerged during my analysis of The Spectacular, including (a) student-driven and creative freedom, (b) more relaxed environment, (c) fun performance, (d) community-building, (e) character development, and (f) extrinsic gains.

Student-Driven and Creative Freedom

Student participants appreciated the student-driven nature and creative freedom associated with The Spectacular, citing that they liked having the opportunity to choose their own songs and acts and work independently without direct teacher instruction, which yielded Ownership. Brianna summarized her gratitude for this independent task:

> [I] definitely [appreciate the] student leadership, the freedom. I wanted to do choir because of [The Spectacular]. When I was younger, I remember going to it and thinking, “Oh, that's so cool. That girl is singing this song I love from *Mulan*, and you wouldn't sing that song in choir.” You could just sing the songs you like and perform it . . . the freedom's really cool. Mrs. Wilson does help. If we need her, she'll help, but that's not the main thing. We do it on our own. I think that's really cool: leadership and then collaborative efforts. We can be really creative. I like that versus normal class. Normal class is fun, but I like the freedom a lot more. It's a fun time of the year. You look forward to it.

James also cited enjoying having the opportunity for him and his peers to choose and rehearse their own songs and acts, describing [The Spectacular] as “student-driven.”

> I like it. I definitely like having it being student-driven because it gives us more creative freedom . . . We came up with everything . . . I like how the students are pretty much deciding what number they do, how they want to do it, and pretty much when they want to do it in the order . . .

Similarly, Kendall described her appreciation for the creative freedom afforded by the task, explaining, “There's more open freedom. Yes. There's more freedom to do whatever we decide to do as a class. It's more like bouncing around ideas than like trying to fix parts that are already written for us.” Similarly, Addison expressed her appreciation for the independence involved throughout The Spectacular rehearsal process.

> For the most part, it is all student-driven, and it's really exciting for us, because we don't do typical choir music. We get whatever music we can pick that fits into our theme. This year we're doing movies and stuff. And so we put together . . . The only thing Mrs. Wilson really helps with is we do one big group number, which is all seventy of us, so she has to help us coordinate that, but then we'll have smaller groups. Last year I was in a number where there was thirty of us that we did a song and dance. There's a lot of solos or duets or really small groups.

> And yeah, we all pick what we wear, we pick what songs we do, [and] we pick how we want the stage to look when we do it. So we have a lot of our say in that which is really fun.

Student participants appreciated the independence that accompanied The Spectacular, especially within the context of a structured school day. Jack explained, “I do like it a lot. It's different. We're just so used to having teachers teach us and tell us to do this and that, and it's so weird and fun to go on our own and put something together.” Kate summarized the multiple ways in which students experience independence during this task.

> I would say definitely Mrs. Wilson does a really good job of letting us take control and she makes sure everything is running smoothly, but she definitely gives all the students freedom to do what they want. All the classes . . . do what they want and how they want to do it. She just sits back and watches. I think that's a really big part of why it's so much more involved, because the students are the ones who have to create the choreography and sing all the different parts and sing the solos and get the costumes and have those ideas. It's more of a collaborative thing rather than her just telling everyone, “Oh, this is what we're going to wear. This is who's going to sing that part.” I think that's why we all enjoy it so much just because she gives us that freedom of it, whereas you don't usually have that. I also would say that just makes it fun for the kids. I don't know. I feel if someone was controlling everything that was going on, not as many people would be interested in doing it because it's not as fun for everyone.

Student participants specifically described their opportunity to choose the number of performances in which they take part, their group size, and their role in group numbers (as a leader, follower, etc.). Participants noted that they could partake in as many or as few numbers as they want. Eva explained, “We definitely notice that some students will do a lot of numbers. It's very your preference. If you feel comfortable doing a solo you can, or if you'd rather do a big group, small group.” Students also appreciated choosing the size of their groups; this helped students engage in music-making in ways they felt comfortable. Some students chose to participate as a soloist, while others appreciated the opportunity to sing in a larger group. Jack summarized:

> JACK: The smaller acts are good for the people who want to do their own thing. A few of them are soloists. It's really cool if you have that ability to go out there and do those things on your own, or with a few people, because those always seem to do really well, because either it's a few people that are really good friends, and they bond together, and they all really like what they're doing, so it looks good . . . For the people who don't want to be as involved in a smaller group, the big group helps a lot. Because there's so many people that you can always . . . even if you're not 100% sure what you're doing, you can look at someone around you and know what you're doing.
>
> AIMEE: You like the required class acts, the safety in numbers?
>
> JACK: Yes. 100%.
>
> AIMEE: Yes. You probably would not be as into it if she said something like, "Okay everyone, form your own [small] groups."
>
> JACK: Yes. That'd be a little bit nerve-wracking, because whenever it comes to singing and stuff, I'm not like, "I want to go do a solo," or like "I want to be with a few people and sing." My confidence is more in the band side of things. I would do a solo anytime, anywhere in band, but singing-wise, for some reason, I don't want to hear people hear my singing voice. I want to sing with a group.

Addison concurred that she also liked the opportunity to work in a larger group of people during The Spectacular, because she would not be comfortable singing and performing in a smaller group.

> A lot more people participate in [big groups] because I think . . . I personally felt so much more comfortable being in that group of thirty up on stage, even though it was smaller than our massive choir. I felt more comfortable just being thirty kids than if they were like, "Okay Addison, you're going out on stage by yourself." That would be . . . I don't think I could do that. It's very scary and overwhelming.

Many participants appreciated the opportunity to decide how to engage within their group, often describing themselves as a leader or follower. Morgan explained:

> For the most part, I feel like even the people that maybe it's not their thing, they still do a pretty good job of doing what we're supposed to be doing. I feel like it's more of the students that are really into it [who] will be making more suggestions or [who] want to be in the front, want to take lead. Then [there are] those that are maybe not [into leading]. They're okay with maybe standing in the back or just letting other people teach them. I feel like there's not a whole lot of an "I really

> don't want to be here," kind of thing. I feel like it's more of a what role you take on is more reflective of how much you want to be doing it, I guess.

Similar to the latter type of person described by Morgan, Wade allowed others to lead during Spectacular rehearsals.

> I just let them make the decisions, then I do what they tell me to . . . I'd rather just have other people [lead] . . . because I think I could probably put the effort into it, but it's also outside of my interests almost. It's just I don't have enough interest in it to want to put the effort. I got so much academic stress right now, like exams, finals coming up. I have track full time. We have practices every single day. We have meets. Then stack Spectacular on top of it, which is an elective choir class, where now I need to put aside my education time to do the choir Spectacular stuff. It's like I'll focus on the other stuff right now instead of [on Spectacular].

On the contrary, students who did not typically lead often stepped up as leaders for The Spectacular. Lyla explained, "[The Spectacular] inspires a lot of creativity from people . . . who you wouldn't normally see leading." Student participants attributed increased participation and willingness to lead to a variety of factors. Some described feeling more passionate about the musical selections for The Spectacular while others felt more comfortable speaking up in a small group of peers. Students who studied dance felt empowered to lead dance-heavy Spectacular numbers.

Finally, the independence and creative freedom contributed to feelings of student ownership. Eva explained, "I agree that it definitely gives a little bit of 'this is my thing that we made,' which is very cool and reforming." In my interview with Mrs. Wilson, she described feeling proud when students take ownership of their learning:

> Most of the time . . . [The Spectacular] feels empowering to me because those kids are taking so much and doing it and it makes me feel like I'm doing something good too . . . I'm proud that the kids just do it, take ownership and do it.

More Relaxed Environment

Student participants explained that the learning environment felt more relaxed during Spectacular rehearsals, which they enjoyed. Several aspects of Spectacular rehearsals contributed to this more relaxed feeling that felt "different than normal," including less pressure for perfection, student-directed, the different Learning Style, and the musical genres. Student participants frequently compared the learning environment during Spectacular rehearsals to the learning environment during formal choir rehearsals, citing feeling more relaxed during Spectacular rehearsals; participants explained that they felt less pressure for everything to be perfect, which felt like a relief. Brielle described choir singing during formal rehearsals as "more strict," stating that "it's really specific what you have to sound like." Jack added that mistakes in formal choir rehearsals feel like they hold more weight. He described increased pressure to sing correctly in formal choir rehearsals, noting, "you're following all the markings and music dynamics and accents, crescendos, because you don't want to be that one person that stands out, obviously. That's embarrassing." Other participants also cited how the level of difficulty of the music affected the learning environment. During formal choral rehearsals, I noted that students engaged with music that challenged them, singing in multiple parts, which was accompanied by a feeling of pressure. However, during The Spectacular, students mostly chose to sing in unison, which also contributed to a more relaxed learning environment. Kendall explained:

> [Choir is] definitely a little more relaxed when we're all in different groups and stuff [during Spectacular rehearsal] . . . there's just more room to have fun than when you're like trying to hammer out specific parts . . . There's definitely no pressure that it has to be fantastic when it comes to The Spectacular, which I think draws a lot of people.

As a result of this less regimented environment, participants described an increased willingness take risks during Spectacular rehearsals, because making mistakes would result in less embarrassment with friends. Eva expanded:

> It's easier to have a more laid-back group . . . and actually enjoy stuff with your friends. It's easier to say, "Wow, that didn't go great. Can we change that?" Or like, "Well, I made a mistake, but that's okay." I feel like sometimes in choir there's a lot of pressure of, oh, I made a mistake.

As referenced in the previous theme, the student-driven nature of The Spectacular also contributed to a more easy-going environment. Brielle described working together in a group without direct teacher instruction as "a nice respite from the rest of the week." She went on to explain:

> It's a very different environment since we all get to go and do our own thing. Mrs. Wilson just lets us go and do everything on our own, which in choir, she always reins us in and obviously, [she is] the head of everything we do on the "normal choral" days, but [Spectacular rehearsals] just feel looser and less structured.

Participants also associated a relaxed rehearsal environment with the different Learning Styles afforded by Spectacular rehearsals. Eva noted that learning primarily by ear contributed to the "different from normal" feeling, explaining, "It's like, well, I hear this part now and that sort of thing . . . it's just your job to figure it out . . . and do something . . . [that] isn't so by the book, almost." Interestingly, participants also connected specific genres of music with formal and informal parts of choir rehearsals. Because popular, or "out-of-school" music was mainly saved for The Spectacular, participants associated classical "choir music" with more regimented environments, while describing singing popular music as "more student-driven," "carefree," and "fun." Kate explained, "[Spectacular is] more carefree at times because it's dancing around and singing pop songs. Sometimes choir is like classical music, but this is more student-

driven. People are doing stuff that they want to do and it's more fun." Students seemed to take popular music less seriously, citing the goal of singing popular music during The Spectacular with "having fun" instead of with producing a high-quality product. For example, Rose said:

> Most of the time . . . we want to sound really good like the Class A choir like we are. Then in Spectacular, we get to just have fun, sing songs we really like, and they're just normal and familiar and different than what we normally do.

Fun Performance

The more relaxed environment yielded students not only having fun during rehearsals, but also a fun performance. Sub-themes of fun performance included performance opportunity, exciting performance, and pride in products. Students who enjoy performing in solos or small groups appreciated the opportunity to perform the song/act of their choice. Brielle, a junior who aspired to major in musical theatre, explained that "[The Spectacular] is more experience to be on stage and have an audience and perform in front of people . . . Everyone's excited, everyone's rehearsing, and it's a fun thing. I always love Spectacular. It's just another performance opportunity." Aiden, a student who also enjoys performing in musical theatre productions, explained:

> I just like The Spectacular because it allows you to experience new things. Say, "Hey, I may want to go into singing when I grow up," you can [sign up] for a solo and you can sing . . . in The Spectacular in front of a massive house or you can just do something as simple as just a skit out there. It allows you to perform in front of people [and] to [do] whatever you want to do really.

Students who did not enjoy performing in small groups or alone still appreciated the performance opportunity, particularly because the performance felt different than typical choral performances, namely "more fun" and "less serious." Morgan explained that The Spectacular is "something to look forward to throughout the year." Eva expanded:

> [The Spectacular is] a fun way to share with our families and friends stuff that we entirely came up with that's for fun . . . I know a lot of people that look forward to it because it's our own thing to be proud of.

Finally, participants enjoyed the performance because they felt proud of the musical product. Eva and Kendall explained the difference between how students feel after a "typical" choir performance and after The Spectacular performance.

> EVA: [The Spectacular is] something that I feel like both the audience and the students and performers walk away with just a good feeling from. [For] our concerts, I'm like, "Yay. We did that. That sounded really good." Sometimes it's "Yay. I don't have to sing that song again." Versus walking away and being like, "Wow, that was a lot of fun. I really had fun performing" . . . I think it really ends the year on a good note and is a good way of saying like, "Yes, we do this again next year." I've heard feedback from a lot of people. I haven't heard anybody walk away and be like, "I didn't have fun with Spectacular this year."
>
> KENDALL: No, I've never heard that.

Participants indicated that the fun performance benefitted the performers while also serving as a fundraiser and as a means of advocacy for the choir and theatre departments.

Community-Building

The Spectacular invited multiple benefits related to community-building. Sub-themes of community-building benefits included collaboration and cultivating camaraderie.

Collaboration. Participants appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with each other, and many groups noted that they worked successfully together, which felt like a benefit. Kate explained, "Yes, I definitely have moments where I'm like, 'Oh, not everyone's getting this, why don't we do something easier?' We all listen and are like, 'Yes, yes,' then we throw out ideas that we like." As I described in the student-driven theme, students appreciated the opportunity to choose their own roles when collaborating, whether as leaders or group members. Additionally, students thought the collaborative

nature of the task inspired some healthy social pressure for more students to try their best, which differed from typical choir rehearsals. Eva explained that during Spectacular rehearsals, "There's a little more pressure if you're just sitting not putting in your best effort . . . [as compared to] a song that we normally sing. I think people are pushed to try at least a little bit." Jack elaborated on how social pressure motivated students during Spectacular rehearsals.

> You might not be friends with the person who's mainly leading [The Spectacular rehearsal], but then you see your friend doing it and they encourage you. I know I'll always encourage the people around me like, "Hey, we're doing this." They always seem to pick [it] up eventually. It definitely sets in that, "Oh, it's going to be really embarrassing if I just go out there and don't do anything." It motivates people to do what we're doing and make sure that it looks good and have fun with it. It's definitely a little bit like, "I've never done this before, this is weird to me." Then eventually it gets fun.

In addition to social pressure, students perceived creative freedom as a factor that inspired more collaboration than in formal rehearsals. Eva explained how she felt during Spectacular rehearsals, stating, "I feel like we have a little bit more of a voice. Even the people who don't normally like to talk feel free and open to chime in on their opinions." Some student participants conjectured that others might feel more inclined to participate because of the less-intimidating Learning Style: learning by ear. Kendall mused:

> Maybe because it's less sophisticated, more people don't have pressure to feel like they're going to be wrong, because like when there's a piece of music in front of you and somebody's like, "Oh, I think we need to get louder here." Then [you're] like, "it says, decrescendo . . . I don't think that's what we're meant to do." Maybe there's less pressure of [doing the right thing because] it's your own, like creatively.

Cultivating Camaraderie. Student participants most often identified camaraderie as a benefit of collaborating for The Spectacular. Specifically, students appreciated the opportunity to work with friends while also getting to know new people. A few

participants suggested that the bonds created during The Spectacular carried over into other parts of the choir rehearsal. Student camaraderie from the informal context to a formal context was notable as the only benefit of The Spectacular that transferred (albeit minimally).

Many students appreciated the opportunity to work alongside of friends during rehearsals for The Spectacular. A senior, Lillian, explained that she valued The Spectacular as a way to reflect and connect with peers before graduation.

> I have all of my friends there [in the Senior number] . . . so we make it fun. If I have no idea what I'm doing, [and] they're like, "I will show you," it makes it fun to deal with [because we're] friends. If it's not with friends, then it's just meh . . . I think it's fun with the class numbers, at least this year, because it's our last thing to do together. We have Spectacular and then [we] graduate. It's like one last thing that we're as a group for, because most of us have been in choir since sixth grade . . . It's cute and I'm also sentimental . . .We're all together. It's nice.

Addison, Lillian's senior peer, concurred that "it's really nice to have that like camaraderie for sure," referring to the performance as "our last hurrah all together." She noted, "we don't get to really do much [bonding] as a class when we're just preparing for our concerts. It's nice to get to actually do something with [our] class and the kids [we've] spent so many years singing with."

Comparatively, many underclassmen with less-established class bonds preferred working on the smaller numbers because of the opportunity to work with only their friends. Brianna described how she preferred working in a smaller group of friends.

> [I] definitely [prefer] the smaller groups. [The] class number's fine, I guess. It's just more fun to be with your group . . . me, Kate, and Ashley, we came up with a dance, we figured out how to sing it, and it was just fun. We [got] to make our own costumes and [have] more freedom in our own thing.

Student participants also appreciated that anyone, even students not enrolled in curricular choir classes, had access to participate in the extracurricular group, the Ovations. Addison described spending time with one of her closest friends who is not enrolled in choir:

> I like that for Ovations . . . anyone can be in it from the school, so it's not just choir kids. One of my close friends, Nick, he's my partner for the dance. He gets to be in it and involved, which is really nice.

While participants appreciated working with friends, some explained that The Spectacular was an opportunity to get to know new people. Because of the high enrollment in the choir classes at Davis High School, students indicated that they did not often have the chance to create bonds with new people in formal choral rehearsals. Thus, The Spectacular provided an occasion to meet people new to them. Marcus explained, "[During the class number], I've learned more about the people in my grade. There's a couple of people I didn't know their names until we started The Spectacular." Additionally, in Ovations, the extracurricular show choir, participants cited meeting new people. Kate explained, "It's also a good opportunity to meet some people because people who aren't in choir are allowed to Ovations and stuff like that."

Notably, a few participants suggested that the bonds created during The Spectacular carried over into more formal parts of the choir rehearsal. These student participants described how the time spent bonding during Spectacular rehearsals strengthened the choral community in the subsequent school year. Eva said, "I feel like it really helps some people feel more comfortable in this environment and get to know other people." James and Aiden discussed this topic in detail.

> JAMES: You don't really see a lot of people in your class because you're always on your phone with them or you're texting or something, but actually face-to-face

> human interaction . . . I think that's what [Mrs. Wilson] values a lot. And being able to actually build a choir instead of just building people who you stand with and sing with . . . it's . . . not family, but you at least have a connection between everyone, and that grows the choir. The more connected you are, it speaks, especially in choirs. The more connected I am with each person, the better it sounds. I'm not saying you're rehearsed more or anything but it's just better. It's just a better choir experience, better sound, better everything . . .
>
> AIDEN: Yes. Building those relationships definitely helps.

Aiden and James referenced a better sound during formal rehearsals because of community-building during Spectacular rehearsals. Though these are unique perspectives, it is notable that community-building in smaller sub-groups of the choir helped some students to feel more comfortable during more formal activities in the choir setting.

Character Development

Mrs. Wilson and student participants identified benefits in the category of character development, specifically related to developing confidence for performing and cultivating leadership skills. Several participants contemplated how The Spectacular enhanced feelings of confidence, especially for those who decided to perform in a small group or as a soloist. Rose explained:

> You push yourself to do more things and be in more numbers. You have that opportunity to be in anything you want. You can [even] have a solo [if you want]. I feel like it's really beneficial to some people to get over their nerves on stage. It's an opportunity to perform.

Though Kate typically did not volunteer to sing alone in choir, she decided to perform a solo in The Spectacular. Kate explained that she felt more confident because she had the opportunity to choose a song that fit her voice.

> I think people [gained] confidence [during The Spectacular]. I don't really audition for solos and stuff [during] regular choir [for] the formal concerts, but I'm doing a song for The Spectacular because it's fun and you get to choose

> yourself what you're doing and something your voice would be comfortable with. I think that helps a lot to people sing and dance who normally wouldn't.

Certain students also appreciated the opportunity to develop and practice their leadership skills. Lyla summarized, "It's just nice that [Mrs. Wilson] takes a step back and just let us do our thing and figure it out ourselves. It's a very good time for people to learn leadership qualities." Similarly, Addison valued the time to practice leading a group of people.

> Especially this year, my leadership skills [improved]. I've learned a lot about how I lead and how to work with people. [I learned] . . . what approaches work . . . [like talking] one on one and [asking], "Are you struggling with this? Do you want to walk through this certain count?" Or some people would need you to be like, "Okay guys, let's go, let's focus"—just call them out in a sense—"Okay, talking time is done." It's like, figuring out how to do that and not turn into bossy and mean and [not] getting frustrated when people aren't listening when you're like trying to teach them something. It's like, "We have this amount of time to get something done." Definitely learning how to be a better leader has been a big part of that for me this year, at least.

In addition to giving upperclassmen leadership experience, The Spectacular allowed Mrs. Wilson and the upperclassmen the opportunity to identify leadership qualities in the underclassmen, who would eventually become the leaders of the choral program. Jack explained:

> I think [The Spectacular is] good because, especially every year, the freshmen, they have to come together [for the show] . . . and they have to put something together and that's where people are going to have to step up as leaders, [because] eventually seniors are going to graduate. We need new leaders. This is a really good opportunity to find the new leaders and get them out there and get them to start being leaders.

James, someone who did not enjoy leading, concurred that The Spectacular functioned as an opportunity to identify future leaders of the choral program.

> You can find out who leaders are from [The Spectacular]. I know I've never been one to just take charge, unless it's like a guy's number, but if it's a class number, I can't dance, so I'm not going to take charge on that. Especially being a senior, I

see the younger kids and how they'll pick a kid [to lead] or [how] a kid will just finally just get tired of not doing anything and just get up and start [leading]. I think [The Spectacular] definitely builds leadership skills.

Extrinsic Gains

Finally, Mrs. Wilson and the student participants described several extrinsic gains related to The Spectacular, namely fundraising, choir, and theatre advocacy. Most obviously, The Spectacular functioned as a fundraiser for the music department. During the data collection period, the students raised funds for the choir to go to Disney the subsequent year. When asked why Mrs. Wilson included The Spectacular in choir, Margaret responded, “It’s a fundraiser for the music department.” Mrs. Wilson described how The Spectacular evolved as a fundraiser.

> MRS. WILSON: The first year I was here at Davis . . . there were a couple of senior boys . . . and they wanted to start a music club . . . On Fridays, we started offering music club and at first it was just kids come in and anybody that wants to perform can perform. You can sing, play the piano, whatever you want to do. Then the music club had to move into the auditorium because we have like 150 kids coming to watch other kids perform. These two boys who were very forward-thinking . . .They said, “Hey, if all these people are coming, what if we charge them?” We were like, “Well, we can't charge them because it's a school activity.” They came up with an idea of doing evening shows and charging a dollar for the kids to come to make money, but then the administration [asked], “Well, what are you making money for? Why do you want to make money?” The intent was, and we did, we purchased an electric guitar and amp. We got stuff that the school didn't have for kids to use. The first year after we had had these evening things, every month, we had an evening show. At the end of the year, they wanted to do a battle of the bands because they'd had some people come in the evening and perform, so they thought what a great money maker. We did, and we charged $2 that night and it was a battle of the bands. Then it was only bands were allowed to enter, like rock bands and garage bands and all kinds of stuff. It was a great success and then those two boys graduated. They both graduated, but music club by now had a very strong core.
>
> The second year, the students that were senior leaders . . . that wanted to continue what those two boys had started. The once-a-month evening thing was too much, so we went to every other month, and then it morphed into more of a show. By the end of the year, instead of doing a battle of the bands, they wanted to do like a show where anybody could be in it . . . It was more diverse and more of a show,

even though it wasn't really a show that was organized; there was no program. There was no nothing, it was just people paid $2 and they came and they just were entertained. It was like an hour and a half long because kids signed up ahead of time.

AIMEE: But the $2 went toward . . .

MRS. WILSON: Towards the music club to be able to buy stuff. They bought some recording equipment that we had used in the old building because that was 10 years ago when we didn't really have stuff. They bought a midi keyboard and they bought—We had a computer from the school, so they got like a couple of things so they could record the music. Then they bought a couple pedals for the electric guitar . . . They bought a bass guitar . . . After the second year, I was the co-advisor, but doing that show that way was chaotic. It was way too much. There was no organization to it. The mics, there was nobody like really running sound, the music. I didn't know if it was okay until the kids were singing it. There were too many unknowns.

I had started a show choir that year and they were one of the acts, the Ovations. We started that my second year and they were one of the acts in that show. After that second year, when that was over, I had applied for us to become a Tri-M chapter. We turned into a Tri-M chapter and then Tri-M turned it into The Spectacular, and so then it became an organized . . .

AIMEE: Like the student leaders of Tri-M?

MRS. WILSON: The student leaders of Tri-M, and every act had to be auditioned, and there was a plan, and we did curtains and lighting, and it became a very organized production. For five years we only did it one night. Then the sixth year of The Spectacular was the year that we were like everybody's doing so much and working so hard. We're going to make it a two-night show. That's how it became what it is now.

In addition to raising money for the music department, the program raises awareness of the choir program. Morgan described how The Spectacular draws a larger and more diverse audience than typical choir performances.

Sometimes students and teachers outside of the choir program come and so I think it's really cool to show them what we do in here because not everybody comes to our concerts. A lot of people don't really—they know that we sing but we're not super broadcasted to the rest of the school. Especially something like this that's a lot of fun so I feel like it's a good opportunity to show what we do.

The more diverse crowd facilitated recruitment for the music and theatre departments. Both Mrs. Wilson and the student participants explained that children in Davis attend The Spectacular and look forward to participating one day themselves. Brianna described her memories as a young child, “I remember watching it whenever I was like . . . ten, and looking up to all the girls who did it.” Kate elaborated about how The Spectacular served as a way to spread awareness about the choir program.

> It's a good opportunity, I think for people who don't see what goes on, to give them a little insight [into the choir department]. It's not a formal concert, so people are more drawn to come to see it, I would say, because it's more fun and out there.

Brielle added, “It helps our drama department too. If people do this and then they're like, ‘Oh, I like this,’ then they do the shows and have a good time.”

Talent Day Benefits

Three primary benefits emerged from my analysis of Talent Days, including (a) performance career preparation, (b) talent-sharing opportunity, and (c) “safe space.” Though anyone could sign up to perform in Talent Days, the analysis revealed “same kids every time” as a notable code. Students who performed benefitted most from Talent Days. Thus, fewer benefits emerged for this focus activity because fewer participants performed regularly. Brianna and Kate discussed the personnel who typically participate.

BRIANNA: No. [laughing] Almost no one ever does Talent Days.

KATE: It’s usually the same people who are . . .

BRIANNA: We got like . . . Ophelia, she’s one.

KATE: Zane.

BRIANNA: [laughs] Zane. He’s always does. He's like the one guy that will . . .

KATE: Peter does it every once in a while.

BRIANNA: Okay, Peter does. Peter’s good.

KATE: Yeah. It’s usually those people in rotation.

As indicated by Brianna and Kate’s conversation, most students choose not to perform during Talent Days; the observers’ experiences will be addressed in research question three when I present the challenges of Talent Days.

On the other hand, students who chose to perform in Talent Days reported a positive experience. Though few students at Davis High School continued in college as music or musical theatre majors, Mrs. Wilson worked to provide those students with extra opportunities. Talent Days reflected one way that Mrs. Wilson prepared students to make music in higher education settings. Brielle, a student who wanted to major in musical theatre in college, described the opportunity to perform and share her talents as beneficial.

> It's really a safe space because everyone is supportive and everyone claps for everyone and everyone's attentive and it's just a chance to perform in front of others. And Mrs. Wilson is really supportive too, because I'm a music theater major, and she's giving me advice more recently for college and stuff.

While Eva did not plan to major in music or musical theatre in college, she elaborated that Talent Day is a safe space for students to share something that they have been working on.

> It's a nice opportunity to perform for our peers for something that's often a different style than what we're doing. It's not like we sing stuff from a musical in class every day. It's a nice opportunity to show some other talents that we have. We've had some people show videos of their art and stuff before . . . and [Talent Days] encourage . . . a confidence in what we do . . . It's cool because everybody appreciates [your performance] and no matter how—Your performance could have gone not great, it just could have been an off day, and everybody is still going to support you through that, which is a really nice thing to see.

Though students who chose to perform in the Talent Days perceived the space as safe, others felt reluctant to participate because the space did not feel safe, which I address in research question three.

Summary

For the second research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified benefits of ILPP within the context of the Davis High School Choir program, according to both focus activities. Six themes emerged from my analysis of benefits associated with The Spectacular: (a) student-driven and creative freedom, (b) more relaxed environment, (c) fun performance, (d) community-building, (e) character development, and (f) extrinsic gains. Three primary benefits emerged from my analysis of Talent Days: (a) performance career preparation, (b) talent-sharing opportunity, and (c) "safe space."

Research Question Three

Research question three prompted me to explore how students and their teachers describe the challenges of ILPP in their choral program. Using descriptive and in-vivo coding, I analyzed teacher and student-identified challenges of the two focus activities: The Spectacular and Talent Days. In the next section, I organize challenges under focus activities.

The Spectacular Challenges

Four major challenges emerged as prominent in the analysis of The Spectacular: (a) group social dynamics, (b) dancing, (c) lack of structure, and (d) logistics. In my research journal, I noted that participants focused on describing the challenges for the larger group Spectacular rehearsals—the more formal experiences. Thus, I did not receive an abundance of data related to student challenges experienced in smaller groups.

This finding may suggest that students experienced fewer challenges with ILPP when working in smaller groups. Additionally, because The Spectacular did not center singing (as per participant reports), and because students did not tend to tackle challenging musical tasks in large groups, musical challenges did not emerge as prominent in the analysis.

Group Social Dynamics

Group social dynamics emerged as a challenge of working in larger groups, particularly during the mandatory class numbers for Spectacular rehearsals. Students experienced fewer social challenges when preparing for small group numbers and learning more informally. Accordingly, the challenges described in this section mainly relate the formally-led large student groups. Common social challenges in these large groups emerged as mutual frustration between leaders and classmates, clashing leaders, difficulty agreeing, and lack of assertiveness in student groups.

Student participants explained that leaders and classmates emerged quickly within the large, mandatory class numbers, and soon after, power dynamic struggles followed. Already-existing tension built between students during formal choir rehearsals appeared to exacerbate the struggles during practices for The Spectacular. Student participants described these tensions in formal choir rehearsals as people wanting to be there vs. people not wanting to be there, people who sing vs. people who don't, and people who care more vs. people who care less. The choir's large size only aggravated these tensions, because many students did not know each other very well. During ILPP, participants identified that tensions intensified, and leaders—many of whom were the same as in

formal choir—and classmates experienced mutual frustration. Mrs. Wilson summarized her perception of these tensions.

> The challenges of the [Spectacular] setting is [that] students feel power because of their leadership or other students relying on [specific] students to be leaders, rather than all of them having a voice. That's a constant challenge and struggle, but different years it works differently, depending on how well students feel like they can communicate with me and come back to me to let me know and their own communication skills of working it out within the leadership. It's give and take.

Mrs. Wilson also expressed concern about the social dynamics when students engaged in IL, indicating, "Well, I'm a control freak, so it's a little nerve-wracking, and sometimes I worry about what's being said when I'm not present if students get a little frustrated with each other." As Mrs. Wilson evidenced, leaders frequently perceived their classmates as not committed enough during Spectacular group rehearsals, explaining that they experienced disrespect from their classmates. Lucy, one of the leaders in the sophomore group number, "9 to 5" explained:

> I feel like sometimes it's pointless. I don't know. It has to be good or people have to put in a little bit of effort for it to be worth it. If two people or a small group of people out of a whole class is actually putting [in] no work, it feels like there's no point in doing it . . . The same sophomores are in the back just talking the whole time or messing around . . . [It's frustrating] because I'm trying to teach something I spent two or three hours trying to figure out and half of the people aren't paying attention. Then they don't understand what's going on.

Likewise, Brielle expressed her frustration with the boys in the junior class number, who complained, and according to her, did not try as hard as they should have.

> I've talked to people from multiple grades and [the boys] just think they're too cool and they won't listen. There's certain people that are in charge of the things that have stepped up as leaders[s] for learning choreography and the vocal parts and stuff but [the boys] won't listen to them because they're not the teacher and stuff.

Students who did not take on a leadership role also identified social tension and expressed frustration, occasionally admitting that they did not feel inspired to try their best when a peer was in charge. Wade explained, “If it's like student leaders, sometimes I don't care what they say. If it was an adult, then I'm like, ‘Yes, ma’am, I will do it.’” Lillian agreed that she did not enjoy taking directives from her peers, stating, “It's annoying. We're the same age. Come on. You're not in charge of me. You're my peer, not a teacher.” Morgan elaborated on the reasons why some students feel reticent to take direction from their peers.

> When students lead, sometimes it's hard. Since the students are in authority, some people might take it more offensively if they're correcting them. Sometimes it's hard for everyone to get along since we are all the same age and in the same boat, but some people have to take charge maybe more than others.

Sometimes group members felt frustrated because they did not perceive that the student leaders listened or valued everyone’s opinions. For example, the tenors and basses in the sophomore group number were not interested in performing Dolly Parton’s “9 to 5,” but they ended up doing so because the leadership of the sophomore class “vetoed them.” Marcus, a sophomore, explained, “At the beginning . . . it was one person telling everybody what needed to happen, and a lot of the people just didn't want to do it. There's nobody putting in any effort . . .” Though the number improved over time, Marcus and his peers continued to dislike the song selection throughout the rehearsal process. James explained that ideally, leaders for The Spectacular large groups would facilitate more equal participation instead of running “a dictatorship.”

> I feel like for the people who want to talk over people, they just don't have respect. They just think they're higher than everyone else. Especially if they have experience in dancing or singing or something, they think that their opinion is more valuable . . . My preference is to just make sure you hear out everyone. A leader should be able to say, “Okay, hey, person who doesn't talk, what do you

> think?" That's what a leader should do. They should engage those people in the conversations, not create the conversation themselves. That's the type of leadership I think [we should have], personally.

This social tension between leaders and their classmates in the large class numbers sometimes led to an observed lack of efficiency, which irritated some participants. Brianna stated:

> I think that it's hard [when my classmates are] goofing off. This girl's trying to teach, and then they're goofing off. She can't teach. She's trying to teach a whole dance number and they're messing around and that's really hard for us to get things done.

Sometimes, social problems arose because student leaders misjudged the skill level of the group. Margaret described this challenge in detail.

> One of the biggest challenges . . . is that a lot of the people who take charge don't assess everyone's skill level when they start making a dance or something. I think that's been one of the biggest challenges for my grade is that we had a really fast and really fun dance but not everyone could do it because the girl that choreographed it, she dances at one of the studios in town. I dance at one of the studios too and I could do it fine, but we have guys that have never danced before and this is their only real dancing experience. [Some friends and I made] alternative choreography, but we had to break the news gently to the choreographers so they weren't offended by it, just because it was too hard for some people to get.

Because power was not shared in these instances and classmates were subject to the choreography and direct instruction of student leaders, participants frequently noted their concerns around the difficulty level of choreography.

Along with general struggles that accompanied taking directives from peers in leadership positions, classmates expressed frustration when they perceived the leaders of their groups as disorganized. Eva explained:

> I think it really depends on who's leading the group as to how organized it is because there are some that it's like, "Yes, this is exactly what we're going to do. Here's all of the information. Here are your expectations." Then there's some, that's like, "Hey, we want to meet." [Then we meet, but] we don't really . . .

> figure out any details. . . which is just hard for people with very busy schedules. . . It can be a little bit of a negative when you're in multiple things and [leaders are] unorganized.

Some participants noted a struggle not only between students and student leaders, but between the leaders themselves. James explained:

> When you're in a bigger group setting, you typically have more leaders. I see a lot of clashing of leaders. For example, there's three or four so-called leaders . . . in our sophomore class. They always end up talking over each other or they always go off ranting to their friends . . . Some people just naturally, they just have leadership, but the difficulty I see are people who call themselves leaders being able to step back and say, "Okay, I want to hear someone else's idea." They always end up talking over each other and that's what I see. We don't accomplish a lot because of that.

Lillian concurred that Spectacular groups struggled to make progress when the student leadership was not on the same page.

> I don't really think a whole lot gets done, but then again, there is turmoil [about] who's going to be the leader. At least one person I can think of . . . no one ever wants to listen to her. She's just frustrating, and then it just turns into her taking over. Even if other people are in charge, she just takes over every time. It doesn't make it fun, [and] we also don't get a lot done, because then people are upset that she took over. Everyone gives up on it.

In addition to the mutual frustration that emerged between leaders and classmates (and sometimes leaders and leaders), leaders cited the challenges they faced in making decisions upon which everyone would agree. For example, Addison referred to leading as "a balancing act of trying to do what everyone's going to agree upon." Some students complained during large group Spectacular rehearsals, which irritated the student leadership, because they had tried to make decisions with everyone in mind. Rose and Lyla lamented:

> ROSE: Yes. They've been making complaints about the choreography we've been trying to teach them . . . They complain a lot.
>
> LYLA: A lot.

> ROSE: Complain a lot. It's just us having to deal with it and just make them understand . . . like you guys did agree to this song and someone went out of their way to make the choreography for this. You can put in your ideas if you have anything else that you'd like to do here, but you just have to do it at this point. Even if you don't love it, just give it your best. That's just how it has to be.

The analysis suggested that the combination of the required group numbers (Formal Choice) plus the student leaders (Formal Ownership) led to social challenges in The Spectacular.

Though less commonly cited, the final social challenge of The Spectacular related to a lack of assertiveness in large student groups. Marcus explained how his class struggled at the beginning because no one stepped up as a leader of the sophomore number, “We were completely lost and . . . we didn't know what to do. Mrs. Wilson gave us a couple ideas . . . [but] it definitely needed a leader.” Mrs. Wilson shared her perception about why some students might have felt self-conscious about sharing their ideas or taking on a leadership position.

> I think for them, the difficulty is some are afraid to use their skillset because they don't want people to get mad at them, and . . . if they don't get to use it then they don't get to develop it. Then when they are fed up, [and] they're a control freak like me and they step in, then it backfires.

Like Mrs. Wilson shared, some students did not contribute their ideas or step up to lead because of concern about judgement from their peers. Aiden explained why he held back from contributing his ideas during the large group rehearsals, stating, “Judgment sometimes blocks you from being able to say, ‘Hey, I'm going to go out and try to learn this.’ Instead, you're worried about [what] people think of you.” In some groups, only the students who perceived themselves as talented or confident contributed regularly. Lillian illuminated this struggle, sharing that she only sometimes felt comfortable sharing her ideas.

> It depends on the thing. If it's a big group and somebody older than me is in charge, I probably won't say it because I get embarrassed. If everybody thinks the idea is stupid, I'm going to look like an idiot. If it's a small group of friends, then I'll be like, "No, I don't really think I like that. What if we do something like this or something like this?" If the idea's going to be heard and [they're going to] com[e] at it with an open mind, then I'm more likely to share. Because if I think they're just going to veto it, I'm not going to share. Because nobody wants to be told their idea is stupid, you know what I mean?

As Lillian explained, when rehearsing in smaller groups, student participants did not appear to have the same social challenges as when rehearsing in the larger, more formal Spectacular groups. The data analysis revealed that in smaller groups, student participants more frequently shared Ownership, working with people who would accept their ideas. Brianna explained, "I feel like [when] it's bigger, it's more people, less voice, and then [in] a small group, it's like it's *your* thing."

Dancing

Dancing emerged as a significant challenge of the mandatory large group class acts. Student participants repeatedly underscored the importance of dancing in The Spectacular, emphasizing that dancing held a much larger focus than singing. As a result, students who did not identify as strong dancers experienced challenges. Wade shared:

> I'm not really much of a dancer. I'm in choir so I'm fine with singing, and I've been doing it since middle school. The Spectacular part feels like, "Well, now I got to do that to get to the end of the year."

Lillian, a member of the senior class who performed Hannah Montana's "Hoedown Throwdown," explained, "I don't like dancing. I'm very uncoordinated. I play soccer. [I don't] dance. All of my friends are cheerleaders, and I was like, 'You can do that? That's not for me. I'm a background person.'"

Participants also struggled to keep up with the student choreography, which they sometimes felt was beyond their skill level. James and Aiden discussed the time it took to learn the choreography.

> AIDEN: Definitely getting choreography down [was a challenge]. I recall last year, we had two choreographers. They said, “Oh, they'll get it in three days.” Took us four weeks. [laughter]
>
> JAMES: That's true.
>
> AIDEN: You have all different levels of skill and these two girls were great dancers, so they thought everyone was on their level. [Then] you have the guys, they can't dance for the life of them. The [leaders are] like, “Do this. Do this.” We're just like, “I don't know.”

Eva expanded that singing while dancing added an additional challenge, stating, “We're working on it. We have a good bit of the dance, but when people try to sing and dance, it can be a little rough.” Several students felt embarrassed when they struggled with choreography, such as Jack:

> JACK: [The Spectacular is] not my favorite because I don't always like dancing, but I'm not going to be a party pooper and not do it. Practicing for it sucks, and then whenever you get to [the performance], it's so fun the two days that we do it.
>
> AIMEE: Why does practicing suck?
>
> JACK: I just get so embarrassed whenever I'm dancing in front of everyone. Then whenever it's everyone on the stage, it's not like they're specifically pointing you out. It's like everyone's just watching everybody. Even if you do mess up, it's funny and fun. It's not like it's that big of a deal.

Mrs. Wilson proposed that students experienced self-consciousness about dancing because their personal mistakes were more visible than when they sing in formal choral concerts.

> If they're singing, even if they sing unison, people think it sounds good, but if you're not dancing at the right spot or put your arm out there, everybody sees that [and it] draws attention. Whereas the singing, if I'm not singing as loud, nobody knows I'm not singing as loud . . . There's an underlying culture that's not even

> related to the music department as musicians that the school has. I think in their mind [they think], "If somebody sees me do a wrong move, everybody's going to be talking about it" . . . Just typical kids.

An essential feature of The Spectacular, participants' challenges around dancing suggest that including dancing as an expectation of a performance in choir may have drawn student attention away from other musical elements, such as singing, arranging, or harmonizing.

Lack of Structure

While student-driven emerged as a benefit of The Spectacular, the lack of structure emerged as a challenge. Without teacher led instruction, students had trouble getting started, knowing what to do next, staying focused, and managing their time. Several groups identified choosing and agreeing upon an act as one of the most difficult facets of preparing for The Spectacular. Rose explained that "the hardest part was figuring out and agreeing what we were going to do . . . but we're over that hump at this point." Some groups struggled to begin and make progress because of a lack of defined leaders. Jack explained, "It's definitely a challenge to get started because it's choosing the person that's going to nag us on and get us started, and it gets fun while you're practicing it."

Once students got started with the task, they sometimes had trouble identifying the steps necessary to progress. Wade explained, "Knowing what to do next [is challenging]. Keeping track of everything and having a group agree on what we're going to do, like if it's clothing, or I guess dance moves . . . [is difficult]." Mrs. Wilson explained that she frequently felt uncertain of "the right time to step in and . . . the right time to let them just struggle." This led to her expressing uncertainty as a facilitator. Mrs.

Wilson questioned, “Should . . . I . . . intervene, or, no, just let it go a little longer and they'll work it out or something?” She subsequently added, “It can do a lot of damage if you wait too long [to intervene], but if you don't wait, then they never learn to work through that or figure it out.” When I observed Spectacular rehearsals, I noticed Mrs. Wilson mostly allowing students to independently operate and solve problems.

Without much structure or guidance from Mrs. Wilson, the efficiency of each group depended on social dynamics amongst the group members themselves. Morgan explained that “There are definitely some [Spectacular rehearsals] when you leave feeling stressed, [wondering] ‘Did we really get anything done?’” As a result of the student-driven nature of group work, some groups had trouble staying focused, and thus, making progress. Wade felt annoyed when he perceived a lack of progress.

> WADE: The student leadership, I don't think it's a terrible thing. I think it's cool and refreshing to get it, but I don't think it's very productive. I think if Wilson just told us what to do, it would be done and then that'd be it.
>
> AIMEE: Are you the type of person who likes to be very productive?
>
> WADE: Yes. I want to stay focused on the main point, especially if the social aspect is really annoying, then I'm like, “Yes, let's get this work done.”

On the whole, students in the smaller groups experienced more success staying on task. Hence, Brianna preferred working in the small groups. She explained, “I like to be productive. In my small group, we can be productive. In [the big group], they just stand around. I feel like I'm wasting time that could be spent with my small group getting stuff done.” Participants in groups who struggled with time management explained that their acts often did not come together until the last minute. Lillian described how her class threw together their number at the last minute for previous year’s Spectacular.

> Our grade's the grade that . . . waits till the last minute or doesn't do a whole lot. Last year, for The Spectacular, we were going to do a thing from *Mamma Mia*, and then the week before, we changed it to a *Mii* skit and we all wore black, glow sticks, and danced like Miis for . . . like 10 seconds. It was so funny. It was so bad . . . Our class is like bare minimum. Get it done as late as possible. It's funny.

Likewise, Lyla described the Mii performance as a "chaotic mess up until the first night [of the performance]." Last year's sophomore class cited a similar experience. Grant explained, "It kind of came together in the ninth hour, eleventh hour, whatever. Very late in the process. It was like, 'Oh, let's do the Friends theme song, because we all know it.'" James explained that the pressure of the impending performance served as a motivator to polish their acts, even if it did come together in the last minute.

> I'd say the process is we don't really get our act together until about a week before, because that's when we're like, "Okay, it's crunch time. We actually need to put on a show." Before [that] . . . there's not really a sense of urgency and everyone just throws in their own opinion. Then we're all like, "Oh, crap, we've got to do this." Then we do it in about a week in advance. I don't know. I'd say the urgency and the awareness of, "Hey, we have this in a week," kicks in. That's when everything gets done, in that week or week and a half before The Spectacular.

Students were not the only ones who struggled with the lack of structure. Mrs. Wilson consistently referred to The Spectacular rehearsal days as "mass chaos days," explaining that "this isn't fun for me, but it's fun for them" because she's a "control freak." Even though the student ownership made her feel proud, Mrs. Wilson felt stressed as a facilitator.

Logistics

Logistical challenges mainly related to attending rehearsals. Many participants committed to performing in multiple numbers, which meant that they needed to split the limited rehearsal time between acts. Sometimes, rehearsals ran concurrently during choir class, meaning that class numbers rehearsed at the same time as small groups.

Logistically, this proved challenging because rarely were all personnel present for rehearsals. Kendall described the challenge of finding time to rehearse for all her numbers.

> Organization-wise, sometimes it gets a little confusing especially because some people are only doing the required class number, but there's [also] a lot of other people who are doing solos or other large groups or stuff like that. You're forced to choose a little bit, unless we all schedule [rehearsals] out of class time, which is limited when you have a larger group and not everybody's schedules fit. That's a little difficult when you're trying to learn in a group, like a piece of music or a song or a dance or whatever, when not everybody's there. Then, the next time you have to meet up, some people don't know anything, and some people know the whole song and it's difficult to organize in that way.

When students chose to miss rehearsal in lieu of practicing for another number, social tensions sometimes arose, which Kate explained:

> It's hard when you have so many different things going on at one time. Some people, when we were doing the big class numbers, they were like, "Oh. I'd rather work on my solo or work on something else." I feel it depends on the day because I feel sometimes people are very power-heavy about it and they're like, "No. We're doing this and you have to do this." Then some days it's like, "Oh, do what you feel needs the most work right now." It just depends, I would say.

Finally, absences from school created social tensions. Addison explained that when people missed rehearsal, they fell behind and missed crucial moments of consensus in the decision-making process.

> I would honestly say the biggest challenge is . . . people being absent. If they miss a day, then they forget the choreography because then it's been two weeks [since they've rehearsed]. Or if we've learned something new then . . . someone has to go . . . teach this person. Or when we were deciding [on the song] . . . a couple of people were out. [When they came back], we [said] "Okay, right now we think we're going to do, "You Can't Stop the Beat" and they were like, "Well I don't want to do that." We're like, "But when we voted with everyone who was here, that was what the majority voted for." Then they're like, "How could you vote when I wasn't here?" . . . We can't wait for every senior to be here because that's probably never going to happen. Like senioritis has hit everyone so hard that people are absent every day. That's probably been the biggest challenge . . . getting everyone on the same page.

Talent Day Challenges

Two primary challenges emerged related to Talent Days including intimidating to perform alone and too busy to prepare. Firstly, performing as an individual onstage for a crowd comprised of combined grade levels felt daunting to many participants. Lillian explained, “Yeah, Talent Days . . . I'm not a fan of singing in front of people by myself, I get kind of anxious . . . Like I said, not for me [laughter].” Lyla concurred, “I don't love singing solos. I like having other people with me when I sing. I think I’d do it if I was [with] a group of people, but I feel like that's not really my comfort zone.” Even students who had a great deal of musical experience felt intimidated by the prospect of performing on Talent Day, stating that they should be a “great performer” to sign up. James, who sings in his church choir and takes private vocal lessons, admitted:

> I feel like if you do a Talent Day, then the expectation is set pretty high to be like, “Okay, you should be pretty good at this.” So I guess that's where I’m at with it. And you know, everyone's supportive of you, but it's just subconsciously like, “Okay, it probably didn’t sound great,” you know?

Some students refrained from participating in Talent Day because they feared ridicule from their peers about the genre/song selection or about their voice. For example, Brianna enjoyed singing in small groups for The Spectacular. However, she chose not to participate in Talent Days because she felt nervous that others would make fun of her song choice, explaining, “I feel like you could be judged by the song you pick . . . because there's so much you can do. If you do a song that’s kind of weird, then it's like, “Why did you do *that* song?” Similarly, though Margaret had a solo prepared for the Solo and Ensemble festival, she did not consider performing for her peers on Talent Day. She described thinking that her genre choice would not be acceptable to her peers in the

context of Talent Day, stating, “Well, today, they do a lot of pop stuff and my solo is in Italian, and it's very . . . it's not pop.” The data analysis revealed that social norms acted as barriers to participation in Talent Days for many participants. Participants described their awareness of other students getting picked on which led to heightened self-consciousness. When observing the High Voice Choir participants on a Talent Day, I noticed how some students received more positive reinforcement from their peers (e.g., emotional reactions, loud clapping, and compliments), while others received more polite and restrained feedback (e.g. restrained reactions and clapping).

> *April 22, 2023, 8:50 A.M.*
>
> *As students take turns performing mostly show tunes, such as “Tightrope” from The Greatest Showman, and “When will my Life Begin” from Tangled, I notice myself feeling a mix of emotions. One audience member literally sobbed after the Tangled performance exclaiming, "It was just so good!” I delighted in this palpable excitement amongst students supporting their peer, who beamed with pride. On the other hand, I also found the polite and composed reactions of the student audience after some performances uncomfortable, noting my own feelings of anxiety and embarrassment for the student performers.*

The last challenge related to Talent Days was logistical; students felt too busy to prepare to perform. Though Talent Days took place during choir class, Mrs. Wilson did not allot time for students to prepare their performances. Thus, students who were too busy to prepare outside of school did not perform. Though students can perform in groups, most avoided doing so, because of the logistical difficulty of getting a group together to rehearse. Margaret described this struggle.

MARGARET: I haven't signed up for one yet. I've definitely considered it though. I wanted to do a duet with my friend. We just haven't had time to prepare one.

AIMEE: Right. So, since you don't have time in class to prepare, it makes it hard?

MARGARET: Yeah.

Morgan elaborated that more students participate in The Spectacular because of the dedicated rehearsal time in class, stating, “We have some class time to prepare for Spectacular. If you're going to do Talent Day . . . it'll have to be something you're completely doing outside of school.”

Summary

For the third research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified challenges of ILPP within the context of their choir program. Four themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with The Spectacular: (a) group social dynamics, (b) dancing, (c) lack of structure, and (d) logistics. Two themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Talent Days: (a) intimidating to perform alone, and (b) too busy to prepare.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked, “What beliefs and values lead teachers to make space for ILPP within the high school choral program?” Using values coding, I coded Mrs. Wilson’s interview transcripts and used student interview data to triangulate the analysis. Four prominent teacher values and beliefs emerged: (a) “students doing what I expect,” (b) wide variety of teacher-selected experiences, (c) student leadership and ownership, and (d) students as musical advocates and career musicians. Because the majority of Mrs. Wilson’s program reflects FL, not all values and beliefs directly influenced her decision to make space for ILPP in her program. Specifically, the first two

values do not directly reflect values/beliefs that led her to make space for ILPP, while the second two values/beliefs more directly relate to ILPP. To provide a holistic and contextual view of teacher beliefs, I present all four themes.

“Students Doing What I Expect”

Mrs. Wilson set high expectations for students from a young age, and she valued students meeting and exceeding those expectations. As a middle and high school choral teacher, Mrs. Wilson frequently taught students for multiple years, which gave her multiple opportunities to teach them what it means to be a choral performer, including where to go, how to behave, and more. Mrs. Wilson held a foundational belief that everyone has a right to learn and has the capability of learning, and she experienced a great sense of pride when her students accomplish the goals that she sets forth, stating:

> I think when you come into my space, my philosophy is that you can succeed and together we'll make that happen. I think that sense of togetherness in a constructive environment [is] a very . . . collaborative space. I think that is what my philosophy is all about. It's not a dictatorship. I hope it's not, but it might be. I might be way off.

Mrs. Wilson worked hard to instill three primary values in her students: structure and consistency, efficiency, and high musical expectations. Mrs. Wilson explained, “It's pretty structured. We always start class the exact same way with the first warmup, always being exactly the same.” I witnessed this structure when I observed.

> *Thursday, April 21, 2022, 7:55 P.M.*
>
> *Roughly 45 students gather in front of the mirror, socializing and stretching as they prepare for their Ovations rehearsal, all donning athletic wear, such as leggings, shorts, t-shirts, and sneakers. Mrs. Wilson tells me that their choreographer, another high school teacher, is not present that day, so she’ll be*

running rehearsal. Referring to the process as "chaotic," she apologizes in advance to me, before promptly switching on the karaoke track to "Surf Crazy" from Teen Beach Movie as the clock strikes 8:00 P.M. Without any instruction or prompting, students immediately move away from their friends, spreading out across the room, bursting into song and dance. I can understand now why they're all wearing sneakers, as they literally run in circles! Efficiency is clearly a key part of Mrs. Wilson's rehearsals; over the course of rehearsal, there's almost no downtime. When they're not dancing and/or singing, Mrs. Wilson is giving a brief directive. I couldn't help but smile during this rehearsal, because the students are so engaged, having a great time.

Mrs. Wilson hoped that the structured environment yielded both high quality musical results and a feeling of safety.

> I hope [that students feel like it's] a safe learning community or . . . an accepted space. I don't know how to say that, but I hope that they feel safe being cultivated as leaders and with these expectations because, because . . . Maybe the structure and consistency help to create a safe space. I don't give them time to dwell on other baggage. It's just about the music-making together.

She believed that through music-making, students build community, which is "how that Informal Learning can happen."

In addition to a structured and consistent environment, Mrs. Wilson valued students doing what she expected with efficiency.

> MRS. WILSON: I'm just proud of the fact that the students for the most part do what I'm expecting them to do.
>
> AIMEE: Yes.
>
> MRS. WILSON: I hope that I'm not an iron fist but for instance, [during] our October concert, we had six choirs perform 15 numbers. The last two were full combined with all of them singing together. You've got 370 kids on the stage

> together, and we did all of that in 55 minutes. To me, that's like, yes, I'm proud of that. They went where they were supposed to go, the transitions were seamless. The combined numbers we've never practiced together worked. Which means there's some consistency happening on my part that they're able to just come together for the first time and make it happen.
>
> AIMEE: Wow.
>
> MRS. WILSON: I'm just proud of the fact that the kids, I don't have to deal with a lot of, I don't know, behavior management or other things. I'm proud of that because I think that's a reflection on my passion for what I do and then them getting on board with that.

While conducting rehearsals with structure and efficiency, Mrs. Wilson centered high musical expectations for concert literature and vocal technique. I discussed these high musical expectations with Mrs. Wilson, who described how she encouraged her students to always try their best to produce the optimal musical product.

> AIMEE: They definitely have high standards for themselves as performers, it seems like.
>
> MRS. WILSON: That's probably my fault. I push. Every time I always say, “Okay, so now, what can we do better?” [chuckles] It's like, they think I'm never satisfied. But really, with music, you can always make it better or different, or next time you sing it, it's not going to sound the same. It's a one time out there and gone, and you never get it back, so do it better the next time.

Mrs. Wilson most valued formal choral musical performances over other musical goals, such as Talent Days, explaining:

> Right now we're not [doing Talent Days] because we're getting ready for a concert. We don't do [Talent Days] right before the concert . . . because we have to get ready. I mean, it does matter, I guess. [Laughs].

Though she held high musical standards for performance, Mrs. Wilson also sought to prepare students for learning in the long-term. She described how she worked to balance her goals of high musical expectations with long-term student learning.

> And, and sometimes I struggle with, I do want a certain goal met, but then I remember to come back to reality that it's not about me meeting a goal. It's about the students learning as much as they can and being able to do what they can do.

In addition, Mrs. Wilson valued a teacher and student led class. No matter who was leading, Mrs. Wilson almost always maintained a sense of order in her classroom, where structure/consistency, efficiency, and high musical expectations reigned. Mrs. Wilson sought to provide students with a structured and consistent class so that students could emulate her leadership style.

> [Starting in sixth grade, the students do] student led warmups. There might be a group of kids coming up to decide what warmups that happen. It might be the officers that have been elected by the ensembles leading. It could be, I just randomly call on somebody, "What warmup do you wanna do next?" So we start exactly the same way every day, but it starts to transition into being students deciding how we're gonna go from that starting point. And I start that during the second nine weeks of sixth grade. So the students realize that they're in control of how they're warmed up. And obviously at that stage where I'm asking questions, "do you feel like you're ready to sing this piece of music now?" And they're like, "no, we need to do this now." "Okay." So I help them learn to assess themselves and what warmups they need to do certain things.

In addition to providing a strong model of leadership, Mrs. Wilson took note of students who possessed leadership qualities, working over the course of years to help specific students cultivate their skills. Over time, these students became choir officers and section leaders who kept the class running seemingly without a hitch. From taking attendance to running warm-ups, these student leaders demonstrated an enormous amount of responsibility.

Wide Variety of Teacher-Selected Experiences

Mrs. Wilson's core values influenced her practices and actions within the classroom, which primarily centered around a wide variety of teacher-selected

experiences. During class, Mrs. Wilson reported that she engaged students in a wide variety of teacher-selected experiences, with foci on vocal technique, singing quality repertoire, notational literacy, and polished performances. Mrs. Wilson valued centering vocal technique, first in warmups and then when singing repertoire, explaining, "Warmups are where you learn your technique and application. And then within the literature, you refer back to those warmups for them to understand what they need to do to fix something. It's a very foundational thing for me." She actively adapted her instruction depending on what she perceived students needed to improve their vocal technique. She explained how she added a new routine to the middle school warmups to address the concepts of vocal flow and breath support.

> Last year, I noticed the choirs . . . didn't have a concept of flow and structure . . . This year, I made it a point to select literature that focused on that but I had to be careful that everything wasn't slow to create a lyrical line in our singing. For instance, I chose a seventh grade song [that] didn't have any words; it was all on sounds. Of course, that helps with their reading of music [because] there's no words to find out where you are in the music, but it also gave them that sense of line. We're using cups with water and blowing bubbles twice a week during warmups . . . They have a straw and their cup with water, and while they're singing their warmups, they blow bubbles . . . We do that while they hum all their warmups blowing bubbles, and so that is assisting. Like today, we're doing "Breath of Heaven" right now, and we haven't sung it for almost a week, and then today they got it back out right after we did our warmups with the bubbles on Mondays and Wednesdays, and they just couldn't believe their sound. I choose repertoire based on, these are the things I think we need some more work on, how can we do that? Then incorporate that into obviously warmups and other activities we do.

Mrs. Wilson also described how movement, also centered in warmups, helps student vocal technique. Mrs. Wilson explained that she requires so much movement because she believes the sound improves when students move their bodies to reflect the music.

> I think it's because your instrument is your body and so you need to use your whole body when you're singing. All day the kids just sit at a desk. What are they doing to really move their bodies? It's like giving them exercise and energy

> underneath that. I try to have the movements in some way reflect the sound that they're trying to produce. For some kids, they need to see or feel, and so I'm just trying to incorporate all the learning styles into one . . . People think we're crazy that we move around so much, but everyone that I have brought in to work with my students are like, “This is so great. They're moving.” I'm like, “Well, I don't understand why everybody doesn't,” but that's just me.

In addition to prioritizing vocal technique, Mrs. Wilson valued notational literacy, quality repertoire, and polished performances, which made The Spectacular, situated in May, seem like an afterthought to the student participants. Lillian explained:

> It's difficult . . . transitioning between concert music to Spectacular music because until we perform our concert, which is a week before The Spectacular, we have to solely focus on that music, which is like traditionally, choral, class A music, and then you have to transition right into either pop or Broadway-style, which is completely different. *And* you're basically not even working on Spectacular music until the concert's fully over. You only have a couple of weeks to completely be working solely on that. That just makes it a little difficult.

Student Leadership and Ownership

Mrs. Wilson’s value of providing a wide variety of experiences for her students influenced her decision to provide leadership opportunities that facilitated student ownership. Mrs. Wilson cited student ownership as her primary motivation to include ILPP in her classroom. Considering leadership skills at the core of character development, Mrs. Wilson hoped to prepare students to lead in society after graduation by providing them opportunities to lead in choir class. She began by identifying potential student leaders in middle school, and then worked to develop their skills over the course of their time in choir. She viewed The Spectacular as a particularly apt opportunity for leaders to develop and practice their skills, stating:

> I can already see growth in their leadership from what's happening. As you do that year after year, if your freshman have that, and then they have their sophomore year and their junior year, and they take on more responsibility and more roles. By their senior year, the leadership is so strong. You don't have to hardly do anything.

Leadership was so ingrained in the choir culture at Davis High School that current student leaders helped to identify and foster leadership skills in younger students.

> I think the other part of it is that, that leadership being developed is when seniors see potential in somebody, they're not afraid to give them that opportunity. Because I let students take my place, they're willing to let somebody take theirs, because they understand that it won't continue if they don't do that.

Mrs. Wilson felt proud that giving students choice and leadership opportunities allowed them to increase ownership. She explained one way that she works to instill ownership in her students during sectionals.

> I think it's all the time I'm in the back of my mind thinking of what they're going to need to be able to do. I'm always trying to reinforce those types of things. Even right now, the kids go into sectionals and they're led by their section leaders. I can't be in four sectionals or five, even six. We've got six-part music. . . I think that's all groundwork that helps prepare for that. . . At the end of their sectional . . . each section has notebooks . . . [and] they're keeping track of, [for example], "Next sectional we need to make sure we practice this. We don't know this and we need to make sure we touch on that." They're taking responsibility for their sections and the notebook just goes from person to person. I don't even know who has it right now. That way, there's not just the section leader taking full responsibility, it's just the section as a whole.

Along with valuing student ownership and leadership as a means of assessing students' understandings, Mrs. Wilson also valued these opportunities because she knows that entrusting students to lead was meaningful to them. Mrs. Wilson's experience in high school band exemplified why she valued student decision-making and ownership.

> I've always valued [student ownership]. But I think part of it was because [laugh] when I was in high school, I was the field commander for the band and the, oh my gosh, I'm gonna cry . . . I had been the field commander, my freshman and sophomore year with my brother. We did it together . . . and then he graduated and I was by myself, which was fine, but my senior year, my band director came up to me and he said, "I'm gonna sit up there on the hill and I want you to get the band going." Like—that was amazing. He trusted me . . . as a kid for the whole band of 200 students. You know, he *trusted* me to get it, start to warm them up and to do it . . . And that's why I want the students to feel that . . . I've always, I've always, always, always, always . . . even when I did my student teaching, I got in

> trouble because I wanted the students to make decisions and I was told, "The students are not qualified. That's why you're the teacher. You are the teacher."

Instilling ownership and fostering student leadership made Mrs. Wilson feel proud, especially when students demonstrated the ability to keep the class running efficiently when she was away.

> I can go to [our statewide music] conference for three days and come back and my choir will know two new songs . . . Teachers love to sub for me, because all they have to do is come in and sit and listen to music being made. They don't have to do anything . . . I give [the students] so many opportunities when I am there to lead and I can interject and guide and structure . . . that when I'm not there, they they're able to do it.

Mrs. Wilson appreciated IL because of the opportunity to assess ownership.

> Well I value [IL] because I think the students have, they need to have ownership of what they're doing. And so by them just making decisions and putting that together, they have complete ownership of that, but then I'm gonna sound really bad. It's a really selfish thing. I've done my job if they can do that. Do you know what I mean? Like I feel successful even though I had absolutely nothing to do with the product that they created. I helped them realize that they could do that. I laid some groundwork that enabled them to process that on their own and then come up with something . . . Most of the time . . . it feels empowering to me [when students learn informally] actually because those kids are taking so much and doing it and it makes me feel like I'm doing something good too. I guess it would be along that thing at the beginning where you said, "What am I proud of? I'm proud that the kids just do it, take ownership and do it."

In short, Mrs. Wilson stated that she valued IL because she can assess student ownership and understandings that she has been working to instill for years.

Students as Musical Advocates and Career Musicians

Finally, Mrs. Wilson kept long-term outcomes central to her teaching, as she aimed to help students develop the leadership skills needed to become musical advocates, to feel prepared for musical careers, and to develop character. When asked about the goal

of her choral program, Mrs. Wilson explained how she hoped to nurture long-term advocates for music.

> First, my primary goal is probably not a good one. I don't know. I don't wanna say this is my primary one, but this is what I'm always thinking about . . . I am cultivating advocates for music education, and music in general: the arts pretty much. That is always at the front of what I'm doing. If even I have one rehearsal where I feel like the overall rehearsal was not a good experience for the students, I make sure that every stop comes out at the next rehearsal . . . that they don't remember that the day before was not a great music day because . . . really, many of the students won't end up doing anything with music ever again; this is their only time. So I want them to have as many experiences as possible. So the first goal for me is just cultivating advocates for music, people who love it and are gonna continue to support it.

Mrs. Wilson clarified that her primary goal for her students is “not necessarily the musical skills themselves but [for them] to be advocates.” In addition to raising musical advocates, she hoped to develop students’ character by instilling values such as responsibility and accountability in her students. When asked about her goals for The Spectacular, she explained:

> [I include The Spectacular] because it gives the students a lot of freedom to express themselves and to choose what they're going to do and how they're going to do it. And the[y] . . .[also have the] responsibility of following through what they say they're going to do. Has nothing to do with really the music, I don't think. It's more with character development.

In addition to preparing most students to serve as musical advocates, Mrs. Wilson’s long-term goals included preparing specific students—those who expressed interest—for musical careers. She noted, “[For] students I know that are planning to either continue in music or sing after they leave high school whether it be community or otherwise . . . I think I give them a little bit more side attention.” This side attention came in many forms, one of which was giving extra feedback after students sang on a Talent Day. She expanded:

> [The music teachers] . . . try to come alongside [students] throughout the four years so that, you know, if we know someone wants to be a music teacher, we're gonna make sure that they're in front of the ensemble directing once in a while. If we know someone is interested in doing more of the logistical side or maybe acoustical engineering, well then we make sure we team them up with the sound people who run the sound here at the school. You know, if someone's more interested in doing the logistical backstage [work], we team them up with the tech department who runs our shows. So we try to identify students in the music department and come alongside them . . . They think they're interested in something, but they don't know until they experience it. We don't want their first time, you know, when they're in school and they've declared a major to be standing in front of an ensemble directing, then it's like, “Wait, I had no idea what I had to do.” And then if a student's specifically going into music education . . . like right now we have three students that we know are interested. We are working on planning our Disney trip next year. Right now when I have the meetings with our tour consultant, I have those kids present, so they see what's all this behind the scenes stuff you have to do as a music educator. It’s not just standing in front of your ensemble doing your work. And that at the end of the year, I make sure that they're in the meeting where we do purchase orders. So they see how we fill out, you know . . . you have to do all this paperwork or you don't have what you want for the following year.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings that emerged from the case study conducted at Davis High School. From the qualitative analyses, findings emerged related to each of the four research questions. Two IL activities served as a research focus during data analysis: The Spectacular and Talent Days. Using The IL-FL Continua, I analyzed and described student experiences with the two focus activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. While both focus activities, The Spectacular and Talent Days, encouraged informal and formal qualities of learning, Talent Days and Spectacular Small Groups featured more of a concentration of informal qualities than Spectacular Large Groups. Talent Days and Spectacular small group acts mainly prompted Informal Ownership, Choice, and Learning Styles. Spectacular large group acts prompted Formal Ownership and Choice, but Informal Learning Styles.

For the second research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified benefits of ILPP within the context of the Davis High School Choir Program, according to both focus activities. Six themes emerged from my analysis of benefits associated with The Spectacular: (a) student-driven and creative freedom, (b) more relaxed environment, (c) fun performance, (d) community-building, (e) character development, and (f) extrinsic gains. Three primary benefits emerged from my analysis of Talent Days: (a) performance career preparation, (b) talent-sharing opportunity, and (c) "safe space."

For the third research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified challenges of ILPP within the context of the Davis High School Choir Program. Four themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with The Spectacular: (a) group social dynamics, (b) dancing, (c) lack of structure, and (d) logistics. Two themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Talent Days: (a) intimidating to perform alone, and (b) too busy to prepare.

The fourth research question addressed the beliefs and values that led the teacher to make space for ILPP in the high school choral program. Four themes emerged as teacher values: (a) "students doing what I expect," (b) wide variety of teacher-selected experiences, (c) student leadership and ownership, and (d) students as musical advocates and career musicians. The last two values proved most salient to Mrs. Wilson's incorporation of ILPP in the high school choral program. The next chapter will present the findings from the final case: East High School.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: EAST HIGH SCHOOL

Sitting at my computer, I watch a video-recorded mock funeral for 18-year-old Mosley, written and recorded by Wesley, Don, and Jerry, members of the fifth period choir class at East High School.[5] *Inspired by the sketch "Friday Night" from the Netflix comedy series* I Think You Should Leave*, the recording is not only comedic, but also musically impressive! After an extended introduction of the boys standing in front of an assortment of handmade gravestones discussing what they appreciated about Mosley, I watch Jerry begin singing their cover of "Friday Night" a cappella, before a fully recorded accompaniment, made up of acoustic guitar, keyboard, and two vocal harmonies begins playing in the background. The visuals transition from the funeral to videos of Mosley doing funny things, like eating a kiwi and making sounds with his mouth. They also include sweet pictures of Mosley giving piggy-back rides to his choir friends, before concluding with a mock commercial for Hot Pockets.*

After a lengthy chuckle, I click on the next link in the Google spreadsheet, and spend the next few hours watching music videos, listening to podcasts, and reviewing mp3 files that accompany slideshows. I watch underclassmen smile, laugh, and seemingly have the time of their lives using a microphone as a prop in various spots around the school, as they sing cheesy lyrics about their friends about to graduate. One parody, based on "I Knew You were Trouble," by Taylor Swift, stands out as particularly

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[5] All proper names, including, but not limited to schools, teachers, students, ensembles, and activities in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

hysterical because of the energy and enthusiasm of the performers. The chorus goes: "She's been in chorus since freshman year/ She loves hangin' out and her favorite singer is Taylor Swift/ And now we're singing you this song! / AH! AH! SENIOR! TRI-BUTE! / AH! AH! SENIOR! TRI-BUTE!"

Introduction

This chapter reports the findings at East High School. In this chapter, I present the results to the within-case analysis. Two Informal Learning (IL) activities emerged as prominent in East High School's data analysis: Large Group Arrangements and Senior Tributes. To address research question one, I analyzed each activity using The IL-FL Continua as a conceptual framework (see Figure 2). To answer research questions two and three, I analyzed student and teacher benefits and challenges for both IL focus activities. Finally, for the fourth research question, I analyzed the beliefs and values that led the teacher to make space for ILPP in the high school choral program.

Research Question One

The first research question asked: How are Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) evident within the context of three public high school choral programs? I analyzed the data using The IL-FL Continua, which emerged during data collection (see Figure 2). Composed of three IL-FL continua, the framework allowed me to analyze and describe student experiences with musical activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice.

I relied on teacher and student interview data to identify the primary choral activities with which students engaged at East High School. Six choral activities emerged as salient: (a) warmups; (b) rehearsing repertoire; (c) large group arrangements; (d) small

group music projects: Senior Tributes and Choir Project; (e) group bonding activities; and (f) informal student performances: Winter Jam, Music for Life, and Spring Notes. Ms. Evans and the student participants shared what constituted practices typical of each choir rehearsal, such as choral warmups and rehearsing choral repertoire. They also described activities that centered aspects of student-centered learning and activities in which they had a choice. For this study, I focused my analysis on the two activities in which I identified the greatest potential for ILPP: Senior Tributes and Large Group Arrangements. I also considered using informal student performances, such as Winter Jam, Music for Life, and Spring Notes as a focus for this study, but not all of those performances were specifically produced by the choir program, and I did not have the opportunity to observe any of those performances during the time period of this study. In the next several sections, I use the elements of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice from The IL-FL Continua to describe the attributes of FL and IL embedded within both focus activities at East High School.

Senior Tributes

Senior Tributes took place annually in the East High School choir and orchestra programs each May. In choir, students formed relatively small friendship groups of approximately two to six students with the intention of creating a musical dedication for one senior in the program. The dedications ranged from musical parodies to original songs to other media projects. At the conclusion of the project, students presented their Tributes to the senior, who sat at the front of the room with a crown.

Field note analysis revealed the Learning Style for Senior Tribute projects as informal. No matter the type of project (e.g., parody, original song, media project), the

students gravitated toward an Informal Learning Style, experimenting with sound as they employed their aural skills to improvise, create, and solidify their musical parts. Using varied means of documentation, including Google Docs, pieces of scrap paper, and audio recordings, students preserved their musical ideas for later. Notably, formal musical notation did not emerge as a key component of most students' Learning Styles during this project. When observing on May 16, 2022, I jotted in field notes:

> *May 16, 2022 – 11:20 A.M.*
>
> *None of the groups are using any sort of notation. They're all creating their Tributes by ear. One group appears to be having a particularly great time working on their parody intended for two senior friends. They're practicing VERY enthusiastically, singing loudly while moving their hands in a dramatic flourish, "Senior Tribute, Annie and Kelly; Now's the time, we will miss you!"*

Field notes and interviews indicated the power of shared Ownership. Student participants took turns suggesting ideas, listening to their peers, and considering multiple points of view, all while enjoying working with friends new and old.

> *May 16, 2022 – 1:45 P.M.*
>
> *Students in the "Build Me Up Buttercup" parody group carefully consider how to honor their senior, debating the lyrics and syllabification . . . Students work hard to compromise, vacillating between discussion and singing as they try to decide between two ideas: "Maya oh__" or "Maya buh da da." Three students take turns talking and suggesting ideas while the other three listen intently. All of a sudden, one of the quieter girls proposes the line, "Our favorite choir friend" and*

the others respond, "that's SO good!" They subsequently add the idea to the Google document.

While some students participated more than others, "collaborating" through shared Ownership emerged as a key benefit, which I describe in research question two. Even quieter students and those who did not prefer the activity shared in their interviews that they had a voice throughout the process.

However, one student participant, Ruby, described her frustration with the "cliquiness" of the two other girls in her group, which made sharing Ownership difficult. Because the three team members procrastinated, they completed the project at home using the app Snapchat to communicate. Due to the circumstance, Ruby sometimes felt pressured to initiate and execute ideas alone, explaining, "We didn't do it at all during choir class. [When] we talked about questions [to ask our senior] . . . I felt like I was the only one coming up with them." Ruby also felt left out of some of the decision-making processes: "I was not an editor and I had trouble reaching the editor; she was never answering her phone. And when she [did answer], it [was not] detailed . . . she would give me a one-word response."

The formality of Choice related to Senior Tributes also varied: the activity felt optional to most and compulsory to a few. Many student participants noted that Senior Tributes "felt different" from other school projects, because of the genuine nature of the task; they sincerely felt motivated to honor their senior, wanting to make someone else feel good with their actions. Jerry described this feeling.

> It makes it not really feel as much of a . . . school project that you have to get done, and it makes it more of a fun thing and a more personal thing . . . because it's between you and another person. That adds a level of making it more genuine

> and making it something that you want someone else to see, rather than just doing what you're told to do.

Furthermore, many students used the word freedom as a descriptor when referring to Senior Tributes, which introduced the element of Informal Choice. Erica explained that Senior Tributes are "a good way to work with each other and have a lot of freedom when it comes to music." She added, "We could have done anything . . . and it's nice to have freedom in that way sometimes." On the other hand, a few students, notably those who had less-established relationships with the seniors, stated that the project felt obligatory, locating Choice on the formal end of the IL-FL continuum. For example, Jasmine explained that she could not identify many benefits of Senior Tributes, noting that "It kind of made me do more work . . . it's not like we had fun, we just went right to it and finished it." Students who did not enjoy Senior Tributes noted that the project felt like something they had to get through: compulsory due to the institutional context.

While student engagement with Senior Tributes often embodied multiple aspects of IL as indicated on The IL-FL Continua, student experiences were not ubiquitous. For some, the Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice of Senior Tributes all was informal; for others, the Choice was formal, the Ownership fell between formal and informal, and the Learning Style was informal. For many participants, aspects of informality vacillated from formal to informal and vice versa.

Large Group Arrangements

Large Group Arrangements constituted the other focus activity at East High School. Though Ms. Evans had not previously arranged a song with her students, she felt compelled to try arranging with two of her groups during the spring of 2021. Treble

Choir arranged “Traitor” by Olivia Rodrigo, while the three choir periods of Concert Choir arranged “All for Us” from the popular TV show, *Euphoria.*

Large Group Arrangements emerged as generally more formal than Senior Tributes, with varied Learning Styles, vacillating Ownership, and Informal Choice. Field notes and interviews revealed that the Learning Style varied during both Treble Choir and Concert Choir’s arranging processes of “Traitor” and “All for Us,” ranging from FL with notation to IL by ear. To learn “Traitor,” students began by splitting into small groups of mixed voice parts, listening to the artist’s original recording before audiating musical ideas and recording them on SoundTrap. After, students notated their musical ideas in Noteflight and shared Ownership while experimenting with a more Formal Learning Style. As the concert approached, the students ran out of time, so Ms. Evans appointed a few leaders to finish notating the arrangement. After providing the two seniors with guidance about writing in 6/8 time, Ms. Evans stepped back, allowing the student leaders to navigate the remainder of the notation process together on their own. Once the seniors finished notating, Ownership remained formal as Ms. Evans taught the group the arrangement with student leaders occasionally leading sectionals. Jessica described how the Ownership shifted throughout the arranging process.

> If someone had an idea, they would share it and then when we work in SoundTrap, we would record it so we can have it for like later . . . And when we notated it, I know for most of it we kind of did together. Ms. Evans was in my group because no one in my group was really comfortable with Noteflight. But I do know other groups who are more comfortable, [and] they put their notes down and did all that sort of stuff, and then we collabed together and put [our ideas] together. And then students also worked during choir classes to sort of mesh it together while Ms. Evans was teaching.

While arranging "Traitor," teacher help proved crucial. Because students frequently approached Ms. Evans for assistance, the Ownership frequently vacillated from the informal to the formal side of the continuum and back again: a benefit of having teacher aid readily available in the classroom.

The arranging process for "All for Us" differed significantly. Ms. Evans embraced principles of Formal Ownership while scaffolding most of the learning experience, first leading students in brainstorming ideas for the arrangement before presenting students with tasks and identifying next steps. Though Ms. Evans scaffolded the experience, students learned with a more Informal Learning Style. Ms. Evans began by playing the recording and modeling how to identify different vocal parts by ear. Students then mutually decided on vocal parts before notating their musical ideas in Noteflight. With a final notated arrangement in hand, Ms. Evans taught the students their parts formally.

Ms. Evans explained her two-fold reasoning for providing greater scaffolding for the arranging process in Concert Choir. Firstly, she hoped close scaffolding would facilitate a singular arrangement across the three class periods of Concert Choir. Secondly, Ms. Evans recognized this experience as one of the students' first forays into audiating and creating their own vocal parts. By providing scaffolding and Formal Ownership, Ms. Evans hoped to provide students with a safe space to practice a Learning Style that was relatively new to them.

Finally, the data analysis revealed Informal Choice for the arranging processes in both Concert Choir and Treble Choir. Students chose the songs and their own vocal parts, along with other aspects of the arrangements. Furthermore, "we have a choice" emerged

as a primary benefit of large group arrangements, which I discuss in research question two.

Summary

Two IL activities served as a research focus during data analysis for research question one at East High School: Senior Tributes and Large Group Arrangements. Using The IL-FL Continua, I analyzed and described student experiences with the two focus activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. Both activities engaged students in IL and FL components of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. Senior Tributes emerged as the most informal focus activity at this school, while Large Group Arrangements emerged as the most formal focus activity at East High School.

Research Question Two

Research question two prompted me to explore how students and their teachers describe the benefits of ILPP in their choral program. I analyzed this question separately for both ILPP focus activities: Senior Tributes and Class Arrangements.

Senior Tributes Benefits

Two themes emerged from the analysis of ILPP benefits related to Senior Tributes: (a) “building bonds” and (b) “freedom to do something different that I love.” “Building bonds” emerged as the most important benefit of the Senior Tributes project, because students appreciated honoring seniors while collaborating with their peers, both of which were affirming to their social identities. “Freedom to do something I love” also emerged as a salient theme because students appreciated the opportunity to choose how to honor their senior, using different musical skills, noting that during this project, they felt as though “[they] have a Voice.”

“Building Bonds”

“Building bonds” emerged as the most important benefit of the Senior Tributes project. The first salient feature that students referenced in regard to “building bonds” was honoring seniors. This project gave underclassmen a way to process their emotions and express themselves while also affirming the seniors. Wesley appreciated acknowledging his feelings during this project:

> It’s . . . a good way to send off seniors and process emotions of a quarter of the people in choir now leaving. And be able to send them off in a fun way that’s not just like, “Give another speech [and] talk about how much you like this person.” Incorporating skills learned from choir and skills that you’ll learn from this project, in that way . . . it’s good.

In addition to working through their own emotions, participants cherished the opportunity to uplift the seniors, which Liam and Erica discussed:

> LIAM: It’s a wide selection of grades in a class, and . . . we aren’t that different. We’re all in high school, we’re all . . .
>
> ERICA: . . . going through the same kind of stuff. Stressed, tired . . .
>
> LIAM: Yeah, we’re all tired, we’re all exhausted. But it’s just nice knowing that you could make a song for someone and it could brighten up their whole year, like they could always think about it, which is really nice.
>
> ERICA: Right, like they could be really touched by it or really enjoy it.
>
> LIAM: Yeah. And I feel like Ms. Evans’s philosophy is building bonds with people, like that’s what she wants. And it’s the best philosophy ever.

Seniors affirmed the value of receiving a Tribute. Phoebe shared, “[when] people who you don't think you've made an impact on . . . do a song for you . . . it's like, ‘Oh wow, that’s so cool.’” Jerry summed up the reciprocal nature of the project, describing how both the underclassmen and the upperclassmen benefit emotionally.

> I mean if I got a serenade from someone just as a senior, I think it would kind of help me feel appreciated. And it just kind of makes it more of a friendly environment, because we have activities where we have to let other people know how much they mean to us and stuff like that, so I think it just hopefully makes the person feel good on the receiving end, and it also kind of feels good to make something for someone else.

Finally, Ms. Evans viewed the project as a way for her to give each senior a "special moment." This theme of honoring the seniors set Senior Tributes apart from other IL activities in this study.

The second salient feature that students referenced in regard to "building bonds" was collaborating. Collaborating on the Senior Tributes project elicited many benefits for student participants including (a) augmenting friendships, (b) getting to know new people, (c) learning from other people's strengths, and (d) developing life skills together. Firstly, participants identified the Senior Tributes project as beneficial because it served to strengthen existing friendships.

> JERRY: Yeah, it was fun because I got to do it with a few kids that I'm pretty friendly with. So . . . it didn't feel like a project. It was more like a fun activity.
>
> LIAM: I think it's so fun. It's sad because all the seniors are leaving but it's like a fun . . . after choir thing, because after the spring concert we're basically done. So we really just like, have that activity, and . . . it's fun doing it in groups that you like. You can pick your own groups which is really nice.
>
> AIMEE: Yeah, so one of the benefits is you get to choose your own groups?
>
> LIAM: Yeah. I feel like when you have people that you choose, you have a better creativity outlet in your head, if you get what I'm saying. Like, your mind is going faster and things come out easier because you're with your friends and you're with them all the time, so it's easy to express that.

Though students chose the personnel for their groups, some worked with people who they did not know as well. In these instances, participants appreciated developing relationships

with new people. Liam stated, “It was fun building bonds with people that I didn’t think we would build bonds with, but we did.” Mariana elaborated:

> I feel like the benefit would definitely have to be working with people you wouldn’t normally work with. The majority of the people chose their groups . . . and usually we choose our closest friends, but . . . I was working with Johanna. I wouldn’t normally work with Johanna, but I definitely learned a lot from her. I hope she learned a lot from me [laughs]. And I think it’s just . . . it’s a good experience to do something you wouldn’t normally do.

Whether working with friends new or old, many participants noted that they learned from each other’s strengths. Johanna described this benefit of learning collaboratively:

> Even though we were working with people we don’t usually work with, it [was] really fun to get to see what they brought to the table . . . And . . . it just brings our fun out of us with the dedication for creating the project for our seniors, especially when . . . we’re usually in [more formal] class.

Because of the nature of working in small groups, participants reported learning more about their peers than they typically did in their teacher-directed choral setting.

Participants also cited developing life skills related to collaboration and time management. They noted difficulties in working together at first, but then noticed that their ability to work together as a team improved as time elapsed. Erica and Liam discussed how working with new people helped them to learn how to collaborate:

> ERICA: I think it was a little hard to work with each other at first, but then we got more used to each other, because we did it for a week and a half or so.
>
> LIAM: Yeah.
>
> AIMEE: Hard to work with each other because you didn’t know some of the folks?
>
> ERICA: Yeah, we didn’t really know each other well . . . And we just kind of come from different social groups so it was just a little harder, but we got used to each other while we were doing it, so . . .

> AIMEE: Yeah. Would you have preferred to have it be just people that you picked in the group?
>
> ERICA: I honestly don't know.
>
> LIAM: It was kind of fun.
>
> ERICA: I feel like it wouldn't make too much of a difference either way.
>
> LIAM: Yeah, it was kind of fun having new people.
>
> ERICA: Yeah, I think our project ended up turning out better because we had more people in the group . . . Cause there were just gonna be three or four of us at first, but it ended up being seven people in the group, so . . .
>
> LIAM: Yeah, I think it was nice having a wide variety of people in our group.
>
> AIMEE: Mmm. Yeah, so even though it was awkward at first, it was worth it getting to know people.
>
> ERICA: Yeah. It ended up turning out better because we had more people to contribute to it.

Finally, participants acknowledged that this project gave them an opportunity to collaboratively improve their skills in time management. Though Mariana felt displeased with how her group managed their time, she learned an important lesson about her own work ethic for the future.

> I feel like I learned a lot about myself and how . . . I do work better with a time constraint. I feel like if we had a month to come up with this Tribute, I'd put too much pressure on myself and I'd just overthink it. I learned that sometimes . . . giving it only two weeks rather than a month, it can actually be beneficial, and that actually . . . benefits me.

"Freedom to do Something Different that I Love"

The second benefit of the Senior Tributes project was the "freedom to do something different that I love." This theme encompassed three sub-themes, including freedom to choose, "I have a voice," and different musical skills.

Freedom to Choose. Many participants appreciated the open-ended nature of the assignment and the ability to choose how they wanted to honor their senior. They applauded the diverse options, such as performing live or recording in advance, using instruments or singing *a cappella*, and writing something original or performing a parody. Erica described:

> It's a good way to work with each other and have a lot of freedom when it comes to music. We kind of do what we want with that, like . . . we could have done anything . . . and it's nice to have freedom in that way sometimes.

Having a choice propelled students to pursue their passions surrounding music. For instance, students who enjoyed songwriting chose that avenue while others who expressed interest in music technology selected to use a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW). Mariana explained, "It was really cool to do something that I know that I love. [I liked] sharing it with other people and see[ing] how they responded." Johanna agreed, "I feel like there's more creativity. And having like more excitement to . . . make it as if it was a gift for someone."

Some participants conjectured that this sense of freedom led to more involvement from people who typically do not participate much in choir class.

> ERICA: Yeah, a lot of the freshmen don't [typically] sing [in choir class].
>
> LIAM: . . . and [when we were working on our Senior Tributes] they would just sing, and it was weird cause we don't ever hear them.
>
> ERICA: They never sing, yeah . . . and they had fun with it too!
>
> AIMEE: Why do you think they were singing more in Senior Tributes?
>
> ERICA: I feel like [they] might've just been more comfortable since it was a smaller group and they had friends in the group.
>
> LIAM: Yeah. And exactly, like the freedom portion.

> ERICA: Yeah. They got to pick what they were doing . . . unlike where in choir we get our set songs and parts and stuff. I think they enjoyed that more.

When asked, Ms. Evans attributed much of the student engagement to the opportunity to cater their learning toward their interests. In short, she described IL tasks, including Senior Tributes, as “more individualized,” because they yield opportunities for students to make their own choices.

“I Have a Voice.” Participants appreciated the opportunity to share their musical ideas in class. Ilsa and Wesley described the benefits of contributing to a small group:

> ILSA: It was nice to get your ideas somewhere . . . Stuff that we do with the whole choir, maybe your idea won’t get heard, but in a smaller group it’s easier to do work and it’s easier to collaborate and to see your ideas come into form.
>
> WESLEY: Yeah, I agree with that. It is easier to see ideas come into fruition with a smaller group like that. I definitely . . . I had more say in what was happening in the project.

Similarly, Kathy explained how sharing her musical ideas within the context of choir class validated her interest in songwriting and her feelings.

> That's actually one of the things that I had been wishing for at my old school, cause I . . . really just wanna share my music with people. And I really just wanna show people how I feel and make it normal for like children, like little itty-bitty children to be writing songs and have feelings.

Different Musical Skills. While pursuing their own musical interests during the Senior Tribute project, participants relished in the change of pace from what they typically experience in choir class, viewing the project as an opportunity to explore and learn different musical skills than normal for their futures. Wesley expressed:

> I think it is something different. For most of the year, we’re preparing for the winter concert and then prepping for the spring concert. So after that it gives a chance for a different kind of thing than just running music, and a more creative form of a project.

Kathy echoed the benefits of the change of pace and pursuing different musical skills than “normal” in choir class.

> I think it's a good creative opportunity to kind of expand beyond just learning music theory specifically and just like limiting yourself to singing these specific songs at these specific times and then forgetting it. It's kind of like . . . it's equivalent to taking a test and forgetting all the information after, because you never have to take that test again.

Participants discussed different musical skills they pursued within a choir context, including songwriting, music technology, aural skills, and playing instruments. They also cited learning a variety of musical skills that corresponded with the musical task that they decided to tackle. Ilsa explained:

> Well I have better songwriting skills now because of [Senior Tributes]. It just depends on what you do. If you make a video, you’re obviously gonna have better video editing skills or whatever. And I know that Wesley really enjoyed making a film because he wants to do that kind of stuff. It’s nice to expand on skills that you want to improve on. I never really got into any editing, but I had to learn how to edit things together for my Senior Tribute, which was a nice little skill to have. And even the song that I wrote for my Senior Tribute helped me write a song for my AP US History final. So it helps and makes a lot of different connections.

Engaging with music creatively and primarily employing aural skills instead of notational literacy directly contrasted with their typical choir rehearsals. Liam explained:

> I think it opens you up to, like, a new type of music because usually in choir you just get sheet music and then you'd have to sing it. But like this one, you take the lyrics out and you really dig in and see what lyrics work with what, and you make your own [song].

Kathy, an avid songwriter, expressed how much she appreciated being able to pursue her passion of songwriting while honoring someone else, saying:

> When I found out that we were doing Senior Tributes I was so excited cause I love music and I love songwriting and I love performing and just getting to do all that for someone that you love is really, it's really amazing.

Jerry decided to use Logic, a DAW, for his Senior Tribute as a means of pursuing his interest in music technology.

> JERRY: For one of my Tributes I did it for one of my friends and I made a . . . recording in Logic, and I kind of had to learn a few things of how to make it, so that was a learning experience . . .
>
> AIMEE: Yeah. What kinds of things did you learn on Logic?
>
> JERRY: I didn't really know how to balance it and do EQ and all that stuff, but that's what I had to learn, because it didn't sound that good after we [first] recorded it. And it was a fun experience.
>
> AIMEE: Oh, that's really cool. So now I guess you have those skills in your toolbox, right? Have you used Logic since then?
>
> JERRY: Yeah, a couple times for personal things, just like making backing tracks or just singing. I've used it a few times for [my extracurricular choir] to practice songs too.

Ms. Evans confirmed that some students pursued music-making informally in extracurricular contexts because of their experiences with ILPP in choir.

> A couple of my students have just really liked SoundTrap and just been recording themselves making harmonies to other songs just because they discovered it and they're like, "This is so cool."

Though some participants cited musical growth from making their Senior Tributes, others felt that they did not develop additional musical skills. Musical benefits were calibrated with the types of challenges that students decided to tackle. When students took on reasonable challenges, they described achieving their goals while learning new musical skills. However, when students chose projects that posed too few challenges, they identified minimal musical benefit. Jessica admitted, "I don't think I [learned anything] in particular. There's not something that I took away. I might've. . . improved my skills of what lyrics flow, but [that was] not an intentional thing that I

grabbed from it." Students derived benefit from what they put into the process, appearing to only gain skills as they met sufficient challenges.

Large Group Arrangements Benefits

Analysis of research question two related to Large Group Arrangements yielded three benefits, including "we have a choice," collaboration, and musical validation and growth.

"We Have a Choice"

Students who created arrangements of "Traitor" and "All for Us" appreciated the opportunity to give input and to make choices as a group. Students contributed to many aspects of the process, including choosing what to sing. Annie described increased student motivation when students chose the song:

> I thought it was cool [arranging "All for Us" from *Euphoria*]. It's a very different song so that was fun. [It] was kind of difficult, but it was interesting to figure it out. It's also fun because everyone wants to be singing the song.

Ilsa explained how she felt when she realized that they would be arranging a song that her and her classmates had picked out, saying:

> When Ms. Evans first mentioned the idea of us doing "Traitor," I was really excited because it's a song that a lot of people in Treble Choir really like, and a lot of us love Olivia Rodrigo, so [I thought that] doing one of her songs would be really awesome.

Ms. Evans also noted the heightened motivation and engagement when students chose to work on music that they enjoyed, including the song "Traitor." She recognized that students and audience members alike felt excited and engaged when students performed popular songs, saying:

> It could have done better but who cares. It was theirs and they made it and people still talk about *Traitor*. That's probably the one song they talk about the most that we sang at the spring concert last year.

In addition to selecting the song to arrange, participants exercised choice in the arranging process, which Kelly described as "something to keep us really interested, instead of just doing the same thing that we always do." Jasmine described how arranging "All for Us" differed from how they typically learned music using scores in choir.

> Well, usually we just get the sheet of paper and then Ms. Evans will give us . . . she would sing it for the different sections—sopranos, altos, et cetera—and then we'll try and match the pitch of hers. But for "All for Us," we got to choose our own pitches.

Ilsa described what it felt like to make choices throughout the arranging process: "I felt like it was really cool to be able to put in, like, your ideas of how you wanted it to sound." She elaborated that "the harmonies in the beginning were just really exciting to work out and it was really nice being able to kind of put our twist on a song that we all enjoyed. And it was a really fun process." Ms. Evans noted the sense of ownership and pride that students felt after performing their arrangement of "Traitor."

> MS. EVANS: Especially last year, when we arranged music, they were really, really proud of that. They talked about it this year so we're going to do it again in the choir, and in the Treble Choir. I think, aside from singing difficult, challenging pieces, when we do creation projects throughout the years, they are really proud of what they made, wanted to continue on.
>
> AIMEE: That sort of ownership.
>
> MS. EVANS: Yes.

In summary, participants described that "hav[ing] a choice" contributed to their motivation and engagement in choir. Ms. Evans' recognition of these benefits in turn motivated her to continue offering opportunities for ILPP.

Collaboration

Participants benefitted from the arranging processes because of the opportunity to collaborate with their peers. At the beginning of the arranging process for “Traitor,” students worked in small groups according to voice part to try to arrange their own part. Mutually sharing Ownership, participants collaboratively made decisions. Johanna and Liam cited collaboration during this process as beneficial:

> JOHANNA: I enjoyed being able to be in the mindset of getting creative and know that we're making it together as a choir and we're like basically making our own version of the song.
>
> LIAM: I like the “Traitor” small group. I think that it was just really nice having a small group and we all collectively decided how it was going to sound. And I think it was fun hearing the other groups do their part too. Like, it was a cool experience.

Collaborating in small groups with mixed skill levels allowed for students to learn from each other. Ilsa described:

> We all had different skill levels and a lot of people aren't very comfortable with arranging. So the people that weren't comfortable went with people that were more versed in arranging. So having like a leader and having someone that was writing down the notes and having other people just kind of bouncing off ideas was really helpful.

In this study, participants took on different roles, contributing in ways that felt comfortable to them.

Though participants felt comfortable sharing musical ideas, students necessarily needed to compromise to settle on one unified path forward. However, everyone had an opportunity to express their musical thoughts before the group moved forward:

> AIMEE: Do you feel like everyone got at least some of their ideas incorporated?
>
> LIAM: Yeah.

AIMEE: Even though they had to make compromises along the way?

LIAM: And people spoke up, which is really good. They didn't let anyone shut them out, they really spoke up and showed resilience.

Musical Validation and Growth

In addition to collaborating and having a choice, students expressed that collaborative arranging led to musical growth during the learning process and pride in the musical products. The arranging process developed and validated their individual musicianship. When describing students' musical outcomes from arranging "Traitor," Ms. Evans summarized, "I feel like if you ask[ed] [students] about the benefits of learning Mozart, the list would be similar, but I don't think it would hit as [many learning goals]. Sorry Mozart . . . Olivia Rodrigo!" Ilsa and Wesley discussed how they learned to identify harmonies when listening to the "All for Us" recording.

ILSA: The cool part was that the first day when we were like, "oh we're doing this," we listened to the song a bunch of times and we picked out which notes we heard, and it was cool to hear the different parts.

WESLEY: That was cool. Yeah.

ILSA: Because it's a song with a lot of stacked harmonies, so it's like, "I hear this now. I think I hear like four [different harmony parts]." And it was good to practice musicianship. And also, what is it called when you like are taught a song without words in front of you, but it's like . . .

AIMEE: By rote?

ILSA: Yeah. It was helpful.

WESLEY: It used a lot of great skills that would be helpful to learn with picking out harmonies in a song and working on that, by rote, like you said . . . I would like to do more of that kind of project in the future. [For example, we could] pick a pop song and work out a four-part harmony arrangement for it for a day a week.

After students audiated and audio-recorded their initial musical ideas for each voice part, they worked together to notate what they had created. Because of time constraints, two seniors, Lucia and Phoebe, completed the notation process themselves on Noteflight. Lucia described how this process helped her and Phoebe to gain skills related to reading and writing music.

> We normally don't get to do the behind the scenes, I guess, like counting the music and writing it. And . . . by the end . . . I knew like, "Oh, I have to put this kind of note and it has to be dotted or has to be tied, and what kind of rest," so I liked learning as I went through the song.

Lucia described how the process of arranging "Traitor" validated her own musicianship while helping her gain confidence with notational literacy in other contexts, such as formally learning a piece of music in choir.

> So everyone in my family is musically inclined. We all like to sing, but we've always on focused on, "Yeah, we're good at singing." But I think knowing more than just how to sing [is important]. Being able to look at sheet music instead of just listening to what Ms. Evans does and copying it [is a good skill]. [After arranging "Traitor,"] I know, "Oh, it's this note with this time signature. Now I know I hold it for this long." With a piece that we're doing this year, "Light of a Clear Blue Morning," the whole first half is just oohs, and it's all different timing for alto, soprano, and tenor and bass. So going through, now I know, "oh like this is a whole note, and it's 4/4 time, so it's held for four, but it's tied to this note, so then I have to hold it for four plus two." So I think that [arranging] definitely helped. And I think also if somebody has a question, I'm better equipped to answer that question.

Though students gained new musical skills while arranging, the arranging process also served to validate students' and the ensemble's existing musicianship. Liam stated:

> I think it shows how musically strong we are. I feel like we never really considered ourselves like singers until . . . [well] we always did but it was kind of overshadowed because we had the sheet music. But now arranging our own song, it just felt so much more rewarding at the end, seeing like, "Oh my god, that was the note that I picked out" that now is in this arrangement.

Finally, participants expressed pride in their musical arrangements. Creating a product that they liked helped students to feel validated in their own musicianship. Phoebe described her feelings of pride related to their choir's performance of "Traitor."

> I feel like it puts more meaning behind the music too, and like you had a big part of what it actually is. And when we're singing it, it's like "our arrangement," like it's something cool that we all did, so I think it puts more meaning behind it.

Summary

For the second research question, I analyzed teacher and student-identified benefits of ILPP within the context of the East High School choir program. Two themes emerged from the analysis of benefits associated with Senior Tributes, including "building bonds" and "freedom to do something different that I love." Three themes emerged from my analysis of benefits associated with Large Group Arrangements, including "we have a choice," collaboration, and musical validation and growth. East High School Choir participants appreciated ILPP most for its benefits to their community, their heightened sense of freedom/choice, and the positive impact of ILPP on their musicianship.

Research Question Three

Research question three explored how students and their teachers describe the challenges of ILPP in their choral program. I present benefits separated by activity as I analyzed this question separately for both ILPP focus activities: Senior Tributes and Large Group Arrangements.

Senior Tributes Challenges

Data analysis of ILPP challenges related to Senior Tributes yielded five themes: (a) pressure to honor senior, (b) independence and self-regulation, (c) group work frustration, (d) musical setbacks, and (e) vulnerability.

Pressure to Honor Senior

The most salient challenge for students during Senior Tributes was feeling pressure to honor their senior. Because of the bond between students in different grades, most students knew their seniors well and held a great deal of admiration for them. These personal relationships motivated students to write meaningful lyrics and choose a song that the seniors would appreciate. Wesley summarized this feeling of pressure.

> It's difficult to come up with an idea for them because you want to make it personalized and individual to each of the people, and creative because it's not always a song, like a straightforward traditional song. But yeah, you want to make it mean something. So it's tricky, but it's good.

Practically, some students struggled to write something meaningful for the seniors that would be easily understood by all of their classmates. Jerry summarized:

> I think the hardest part was making something that we thought . . . Mark would enjoy and making sure that it’s understandable by everybody else. So the inside jokes and stuff aren't really the main thing here. So it looks like a regular video to people.

In a few cases, participants wrote Senior Tributes for seniors that they did not know well, but still felt pressure to honor them by writing something consequential that would make them feel appreciated. Kelly summarized the struggle of writing something meaningful for someone that she did not know well.

> I feel like it’s hard when you aren’t really close with any of the seniors. Like how do you write about someone you don’t really know. I feel like throughout the year we all get really close so it doesn’t usually happen, but it does with certain people.

Though honoring their seniors presented a challenge, it also emerged as the largest benefit, which I discussed in research question two.

Independence and Self-Regulation

The nature of working independently on an open-ended task—Senior Tributes—required students to self-regulate their own learning. This presented several challenges, namely knowing where to start and time management.

Knowing Where to Start. Some participants disclosed that they felt uncertain about where to begin. Wariness often stemmed from the self-induced pressure related to honoring their senior. Wesley illustrated this challenge, explaining, “This year, knowing the person pretty well, I think the hardest part was just getting started.” Additionally, some participants experienced challenges with the open-ended nature of the assignment. Ruby and Mariana’s conversation demonstrates how participants perceived creative ideas “coming easier” to some people than others.

> RUBY: Actually, you know what’s crazy? I’m the exact opposite. I think this is still fun, but I see myself as more of a logical thinker, so projects that are like “create a presentation,” or “create a math solution” are so much easier for me.
>
> MARIANA: So you like when people tell you exactly what to do, when there’s a set of instructions rather than a creative create your own thing? That’s cool.
>
> RUBY: Yeah definitely. Also I’m more of a mathematical thinker, so math helps.
>
> MARIANA: See, that’s not me at all. [laughs]

Ruby experienced challenges knowing where to start because she describes herself as more of a logical thinker; she enjoyed convergent tasks that did not invite as much creativity, while Mariana did not experience the same challenge with the open-ended task.

Other times, knowing where to start proved to be difficult specifically because of a lack of prior relevant musical experiences. Nylah said:

> At first, I was a bit . . . I was kind of clueless, because I didn't really know what to do. I knew we had to make music and stuff, but I was clueless on how to actually do that . . . I'm in ninth grade, so this is my first year here. And we didn't do much arranging in middle school, so it was kind of hard for me to adjust to it and I was confused on what we were doing. But as we got more used to it, I feel like I at least know what I'm doing. [laughs]

I describe the limitations of prior musical experiences in the musical setbacks theme later in this chapter.

Time Management. After students determined their goals and made a plan, time management proved challenging for some, especially those who volunteered to create Tributes for multiple seniors. Mariana described a struggle to allot her time while working on multiple Tributes with different groups of students.

> Yeah, it was a really good experience. I was really nervous that I wasn't going to finish. [laughs] But we were able to tackle each of the Tributes. We had a fun time doing it, and we were proud after we created our songs, so it was really fun.

To create a Tribute, students sent questions to their designated senior. While many seniors responded in a timely manner, some took a while to respond, which made it challenging for groups to progress with the project. Erica and Liam discussed this challenge in their focus group interview after Tributes concluded.

> ERICA: It was fun. She didn't really respond to any of the questions until right before it was due, so we kind of rushed it . . ."
>
> AIMEE: What about you, Liam? What did [making a Tribute] feel like to you?
>
> LIAM: Probably the same as what she said. We did ask her a lot of questions and she was busy with things for school and stuff, but it was . . . kind of rushed. But I feel like we got it together.

Some participants attributed their difficulties with time management to a lack of motivation. Participants appreciated when choir felt “relaxed” and “easy,” and explained that they did not necessarily appreciate or yearn for challenging tasks in choir class because they felt burnt out from their other classes. Ruby and Mariana described their hesitancy to try their best and challenge themselves during Senior Tributes.

> RUBY: Yeah, I would say it’s going well. In all honesty, it’s kind of hard for me to have motivation to just follow through with it, cause choir’s at the end of the day, I’m a junior, so I’m really exhausted. But overall, if you have enough motivation, it’s really, really fun and special.
>
> MARIANA: Yeah. That’s always a problem with me too, like time management and staying on top of things, staying motivated. That’s the hardest part, I feel like, of high school.
>
> RUBY: Yeah. It’s also just general exhaustion. It’s not that I wouldn’t want to stay on task, it’s just that I physically can’t.

When students struggled to make progress on the project, they spent their time socializing. For example, I noticed a group of students watching TikToks instead of making progress on their Tribute. When describing ILPP in choir, Ms. Evans explained, “sometimes you just have to work a little harder to get buy-in.”

After the project concluded, Ruby reflected on how procrastinating due to a lack of motivation made the project feel less enjoyable and stressful.

> We procrastinated heavily. We had [time] to do it and really only started actually doing it the last two days. We knew what we wanted to do, so I think that's why we held off on it. But also, I would say . . . that my group was lazy. I could say that I was busy too. But the people I was working with are not like me at all. And we're just different people. Like, they just [didn’t] want to work on [the Senior Tribute]. So I kind of [had to] conform to that, I guess. So I feel like it was stressful in the last two days, and we could have it could have been so much better.

Group Work Frustration

Many participants reported having minimal social challenges, especially if they worked with their friends. However, some frustration related to working collaboratively did arise, specifically with regard to keeping everyone on task, working without friends, and absences. Challenges with time management and staying on task sometimes resulted in frustration between peers. While some peers wanted to move forward with the task, others were more interested in socializing. Participants, like Jessica, described the challenges of getting everyone on the same page and encouraging group members to work on the task.

> It was . . . frustrating at some times because it's harder to have to be talking to your peers and being like, “We have to get this done” because you don't really have that sort of power. You don't really . . . you're not really in a position to do that necessarily with your peers, so getting work done sometimes was a little more frustrating, because you have to put in extra effort to sort of organize it and make sure people are doing what they're supposed to do, because you can't be like, “Oh you're going to get a detention” or something like that. I don't think Ms. Evans ever says that, but something like that. [laughs] But it was all my friends so it wasn't totally hard, but there were definitely moments I was like, “Oh my gosh, can you please just listen?”

Jessica specifically referenced felling frustrated by the shared Ownership, especially when her peers did not assume responsibility to try their best as group members.

Though students chose their groups, some participants ended up working with people that they did not know as well, which presented other challenges. Some participants indicated discomfort, but then later admitted that they appreciated getting to know new people and make new bonds with other choir members. Nylah, a freshman, described how the common goal of honoring a specific senior brought her group members together.

> I know them well, but I don't talk to them much, so it was a bit awkward. But when we all talked about how amazing Maddie was and everything, that just made us get closer and I felt more comfortable as time went on.

In other cases, participants who worked in groups without friends did not take the opportunity to bond with others, but rather attempted to "get it over with."

> AIMEE: Were there any benefits for you?
>
> JASMINE: Oh, not really. It kind of made me do more work because I have other schoolwork, so not really.
>
> AIMEE: Yeah, it sort of just felt like something you had to do.
>
> JASMINE: Yeah, because we weren't, I wasn't in a group with, like, my friends or anything. So it's not like we had fun, we just went right to it and finished it.

For Jasmine, Senior Tributes felt more formal, because she felt like she did not have Choice.

Finally, absences challenged and frustrated the community. When certain students were absent from the small groups, their classmates had difficulties moving forward. Isla split her time between choir and band, thus, she needed to complete the project twice as quickly as other groups. She explained the stress that put on her and her partner:

> I honestly didn't have many challenges this year. The only challenge that I had was regarding how I'm not in class half the time cause I'm also in band, so it was a little bit difficult when my partner would be working on the project, but I couldn't be there. But that's just a personal thing. Not everybody has that issue, but that was the biggest problem [for me] this year. Other than that, it went really smooth.

Musical Setbacks

Students experienced musical challenges according to the goals that they set for themselves. Most students set conservative musical goals, and therefore experienced few musical setbacks and little musical growth. For those who set higher musical goals, they faced more challenges, but also more musical growth at the end.

While most students did not experience many musical setbacks because they designed fairly simple projects for their skill levels (e.g., writing and singing parodies in unison), participants did cite common challenges, such as setting the words to the beat. Groups who made parodies felt challenged by the task of counting syllables and fitting new words into the original tune of the song. Jasmine described, "It was really hard to come up with lyrics because you need the same . . . syllables and . . . also you need to keep the same rhythm. And also, rhyming words. It was kind of hard. Different." Kathy echoed Jasmine's sentiment by stating that "Syllable and rhythm counting [was tricky]. Finding words that fit into those spaces is kind of hard."

A few groups referenced difficulties with staying together when singing. Jasmine explained:

> JASMINE: Well, we recorded it a couple of times because we were really out of sync. And then later on, when we did the official recording, one of us was not here. And then we have another person who couldn't hear. So that's about it.
>
> AIMEE: Yeah. So why was it initially out of sync? Like you just were having trouble singing together as a group?
>
> JASMINE: Well, we didn't really . . . rehearse. We just went right for it [to] see how it [went]. And . . . I was the one who started the song because they were too nervous to start it. So at the beginning, you could kind of hear my voice and then, yeah, it was just kind of weird. [It was] just kind of weird hearing each other sing.

A few groups tackled more difficult projects. Challenges for those groups included playing an instrument, creating multiple harmonies, and more. Phoebe described the challenge of tackling new musical skills during the Senior Tributes project.

> It's like you're trying to play the song too. You don't want to put a karaoke track to the song. You want to learn the chords or notes and stuff like that to play on piano or guitar, ukulele or something with it. So it's a whole process of making sure the words you're putting match the actual rhythm of how the song goes, and syllable counts and all that stuff.

Vulnerability

Finally, participants described feeling vulnerable performing their original work in a small group in front of the class. Jasmine experienced embarrassment when her classmates heard her singing during the small group performance.

> JASMINE: It was good. It was kind of embarrassing, actually. When they were showing [the Senior Tribute that my group made] to the class, it was really embarrassing. I kind of left the class.
>
> AIMEE: [Laughing] Why was it embarrassing?
>
> JASMINE: I don't know. It's just like, because usually people don't individually hear your voice and stuff. But now, you can really clearly hear your voice. So it was kind of weird.

Jessica also described feeling nervous to perform in a small group in front of her peers.

> [Our] one [Tribute] was definitely hard to find our flow with the rap . . . And a little nerve-wracking to rap in front of [everyone]. The band kids were in the chorus room while we did it as well, so that was another added level of everything. [laughs]

Some participants felt vulnerable because their Senior Tribute was personal. Kathy described feeling nervous to share her feelings about another person in front of the class, "I think it all connects back to vulnerability because it's really scary telling someone just how much you love them. But I definitely think music helps you translate that in an easier way to someone."

Large Group Arrangements Challenges

Analysis of student-identified challenges of ILPP related specifically to Large Group Arrangements yielded three themes, including limited time, musical roadblocks, and unequal contribution.

Limited Time

Arranging a song, especially as a larger group of students proved to be time-consuming, leading to a slower process. Students did not seem to mind the pace of the process. However, Treble Choir faced consequences of having little time to polish the final product for the performance. Ilsa described Treble Choir's progress a week before the spring concert:

> It . . . went a little bit slow at times. A large group of people . . . can be good for getting work done, but at the same time can slow down the process a little bit. It's just . . . a timing issue for us because our concert is so close. So I mean . . . we [finished notating] the [final sheet] music like, a few days ago. And our concert's next week. But other than a timing issue, I feel like that was the only challenge here.

Phoebe described how the lack of time caused a "time crunch." Consequently, instead of the whole Treble Choir notating the arrangement, a few students finished it as a small group. Phoebe, one of the girls who helped to dictate the arrangement, stated:

> I feel like if we ha[d] a downfall with Treble Choir singing "Traitor," it [was] that . . . [a few of us] had to arrange it so much on our own time because we didn't have enough time in the day and rehearsals to be able to get the Treble Choir to [finish it].

Ideally, students would have continued on a similar trajectory as they started, with all of the Treble Choir members involved throughout the process. Ms. Evans and her students referred to the arranging process as an experiment, admitting that they would allot more time in the future.

Musical Roadblocks

A few musical challenges emerged when the choirs worked together to arrange "Traitor" and "All for Us." Firstly, students described the difficulty of figuring out their

parts by ear. In the midst of working on “All for Us,” Wesley described how arranging constituted a new skill, and he felt a bit lost learning without sheet music:

> For me it's a little hard to learn [“All for Us”] because it feels very abstract. We don't have the sheet music like we do for a lot of other songs where I can look at it and read it and know my part. So I still feel a little bit lost with that one.

Because Ms. Evans’ choral students learned so frequently with musical notation, engaging musically without a score often felt intimidating.

Once students overcame the roadblock of generating musical ideas for the song “Traitor,” they struggled to combine disparate musical ideas. For Liam, this part of the arranging process felt frustrating.

> It was fun [but] it was frustrating at some times. Because I feel like [typically in choir] it's like more like, “Oh, let's just get a paper handed to us of the sheet music” and then it's like easy. But yeah, it came together, which is very nice. We all knew it was going to come together, but we were worried because we all had different ideas and they were all clashing. But then we came together, and now we all love how it is.

Finally, after students determined how to combine their musical ideas, Ms. Evans suggested that students notate the song using Western notation, which became a barrier. When Phoebe and Lucia began notating, they lacked confidence in their skills. As time went on and their ability to read and write using Western notation improved, Phoebe and Lucia gained confidence and the task felt more approachable.

Unequal Contribution

Throughout the arranging process, most students felt as though the groups worked well together, with minimal social challenges. However, a few students perceived unequal contribution among group members. Johanna described feeling frustrated because she yearned for more involvement.

> It kind of felt less open to . . . some people in our group. I kind of felt like it all relied on one person in each group to do something. Like, recording melodies instead of letting everyone else get a chance . . . [it would have helped to] give more people more chances to create something in the song.

Ms. Evans also noticed students' unequal contribution, which she attributed to some people's lack of prior musical skills. She conjectured that having one person with more notational literacy skills in each group would help with this struggle in the future.

> Now I know, "Oh, no, I need someone that can read music in a group." If I have a group without someone that can read music, I need to be very clear how to record their own music [using SoundTrap]. I thought I was [clear] but there are some groups that it was a lot harder to, like, get their ideas out of them if I hadn't been sitting there with them. My choir president . . . Lucia . . . she ended up being my number one person putting things into Noteflight because I showed her how to count 6/8. She has a really good ear, I think she has perfect pitch, and then she figured it out.

Another reason for a lack of equal contribution was because some students dominated the group work. Ms. Evans also noticed these instances, explaining that groups had "multiple personalities" that led to "drama." Phoebe described her frustration when some students took on roles of arranging parts of the song by themselves without consulting the group.

> We did have some people that . . . [would go home] and . . . come in the next day, and they . . . arranged their whole part, and we're like, "Oh, okay. We didn't tell you to do that." So they kind of took it upon themselves.

Phoebe went on to describe how ideally, she would have wanted to better ensure a balance of personalities and skill levels in the small groups who worked together on "Traitor" at the beginning of the process, stating, "Socially it depends on the group, but it's kind of you want to have a balance in every group, but it's not . . . always possible."

Summary

For the third research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified challenges of ILPP within the context of East High School's Choir Program. Five themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Senior Tributes: (a) pressure to honor senior, (b) independence and self-regulation, (c) group work frustration, (d) musical setbacks, and (e) vulnerability. Three themes emerged from my analysis of student-identified challenges associated with Large Group Arrangements: (a) limited time, (b) musical roadblocks, and (c) unequal contribution.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked, "What beliefs and values lead teachers to make space for ILPP within the high school choral program?" Using values coding, I coded Ms. Evans' interview transcripts. Student interviews served to triangulate these values. Five themes emerged as salient: (a) challenging choral teaching and learning standards; (b) teacher growth: "I'm a work in progress;" (c) classroom environment of vulnerability, community-building, and joy; (d) democracy and a variety of musical experiences; and (e) students possessing tools, passion, and confidence for lifelong music-making.

Challenging Choral Teaching and Learning Standards

Ms. Evans discussed that she had internalized standards for choral teaching and learning, which were taught and reinforced in her teacher preparation program and in other formal music-making settings. In these settings, she learned that to be a great choral teacher, she must choose "the best" repertoire, focus on notational literacy and musical

reproduction, teach efficiently using formal instruction, and be an "expert" musician. Over time, she accumulated experiences that challenged those internalized beliefs.

Choose "The Best" Repertoire

In college, Ms. Evans developed the belief that teaching her students Western Art Music (WAM) was most highly esteemed, even though she personally enjoyed listening to popular music. When she started teaching at East High School, she noticed that her students also preferred to listen to popular music. However, because of her teacher preparation program, she thought she was limited to programming WAM. As she gained experience over the years, attending conferences and talking to colleagues, she learned that highly esteemed choral teachers included many genres of music, including popular music, in their teaching. Ms. Evans described her first time observing a colleague who programmed popular music in her classroom:

> When I went in . . . and saw what her piano class was doing, I was like, "Oh, their final project is to play a pop song and accompany themselves and have varying styles of accompaniment for the different parts of the form. *That* can be a final project?" That was wild to me. I [felt] like, "I didn't know that you could," because when I took piano lab it was you had to play Bach, or . . . I don't know, whatever we had to play.

Observing and talking with colleagues who centered multiple musical genres in their classes increased Ms. Evans' confidence to do the same. Since then, she has regularly included varied genres of music, including vernacular and popular music, in all of her classes.

Center Notational Literacy and Musical Reproduction

In college, Ms. Evans internalized that notational literacy and musical reproduction should be the most important goals of a choral ensemble. She traced her dismissiveness of rote learning to her experiences in her teacher preparation program.

Even in collegiate settings known for improvisation and musical creativity, like jazz, Ms. Evans recalled her professors valuing polished performances over musical creativity.

> In the jazz world, it was all very like, “Here's the music, reproduce it.” Even our improv class . . . it was just a one semester, one-off thing where we did really cool activities that I had a lot of fun with, but it wasn't integrated into the whole of our curriculum. It almost—and I love [my] University—but . . . it felt almost like a check-off box. Not “here is a way of thinking that you should infuse into your teaching in all the ways.”

Because her experiences with notational literacy felt so central in her undergraduate career, and her experiences with music creativity felt like “a check-off box,” she began her high school teaching career by stressing the importance of reading using Western notation:

> I came [into my first year of teaching] just like any college student thinking that I was going to change the world and I was like, “Oh my gosh, every student I ever have is going to be able to read music by the time they leave my room. Why wouldn't they be able to read notation?”

After a few years, Ms. Evans realized that her values did not align with those that she had internalized in her preservice teacher preparation program.

> As I was reaching for that [music literacy] goal [during my first few years of teaching], I just realized that it really wasn't the important goal. While it is important for them to be able to read notation, it was more important to just get them making music right away. The notation could come, or it couldn't . . . I just realized [that], especially with high school, when you might only have a kid for one semester and that might be their last chance to ever make music again . . . I wanted them to just have as much fun as they could making the music so that they'll want to do it again. Instead of struggling the whole time with learning how to read the treble and bass clef and just being like, “I can't do it. It's hard. I'll never be able to do it so I'm just not going to music anymore.”

At the time of this study, Ms. Evans described prioritizing student engagement and lifelong learning over developing notational literacy skills.

Teach Efficiently Using Formal Instruction

The next belief that Ms. Evans internalized during her preservice preparation program centered on teaching efficiently using formal instruction. As an undergraduate student, Ms. Evans envisioned her future teacher self standing in front of a classroom full of students, managing the room, and being completely in control. During her first several years of teaching, she learned to develop an appreciation of IL at professional development sessions and from working with the orchestra teacher at her school. Over time, she worked to incorporate more opportunities for students to engage in IL, which validated her decision and reminded her of the benefits that students gain from those experiences. While engaging more in IL, she thought about her mentors and worried what they would think of her curricular decisions. She described her high school choral teacher, who is one of her mentors, explaining, "I don't know if our philosophies align. Because I respect him so much, I was also afraid of doing something that he wouldn't have done." At the time of this study, several years after prioritizing IL, Ms. Evans described an uneasiness about her decision to break away from how she was taught, saying, "I have this idea in my head that if I'm not in front of the kids and giving them everything all together, I'm not being a good teacher."

Be an "Expert" Musician

Even after Ms. Evans realized that she "had permission" to explore multiple genres, styles, and music-making directions with her students, she remained hesitant because of her lack of "expertise." Because she had not gained much experience with IL in her P-12 and preservice teacher training experiences, Ms. Evans felt as though making music informally by songwriting, singing popular music, and playing piano were off-

limits to her, describing these activities as a "sandbox [she] wasn't allowed to play in." After years of conversing with colleagues, Ms. Evans realized that she did not need permission to enter into musical territories in which she had little expertise. Ms. Evans shared:

> It's only been the last decade that I realized I could play pop music and sing along with myself. You don't have to be a virtuosic piano player. Not to say you don't need to be skilled, but I just thought like, "Oh, I didn't major in piano in college and spend eight hours a day practicing, so I can't do that."

Describing herself as mainly a vocalist, Ms. Evans lacked confidence in her piano skills when first arriving at East High School. Her colleague, the orchestra teacher, encouraged her to reduce the accompaniment, something that she had not realized was possible/advisable, because this skill was not stressed in her teacher preparation program. Ms. Evans spent several years strengthening her capacity to accompany herself on the piano, though she still stayed away from writing original music, referencing this activity as one she "wasn't allowed to [do.]" She finally gained the courage to begin songwriting during the COVID-19 pandemic, explaining, "the other thing that I always thought I wasn't allowed to play in the sandbox, that was songwriting. During the pandemic, I started taking songwriting lessons over Zoom, and it has changed my life." At the time of this study, Ms. Evans wrote songs in her spare time at home and described greater confidence with IL.

Ms. Evans also used to avoid engaging students in musical genres and styles in which she lacked expertise. She eventually realized that she did not need to be an expert in all musics to support her students during ILPP.

> Just in the last two years since starting [songwriting with my students], I just realized that there's many things that you don't have to wait for permission to try

> with your kids. Whereas before, I felt like there was this invisible choir person that was like, “You must always be doing these standard things, and you're not allowed to deviate from the standard. This is what a choir is.” It's been exciting and scary, and I've messed up and done well, and done all the things in trying to make choir something different than what I experienced choir as.

Ms. Evans’s feelings about a “standard” choral program are notable, and likely what led her to feel initially reticent to include IL in her music classes.

Though Ms. Evans held strong internalized beliefs about standards for choral teaching and learning, she gradually accumulated experiences that allowed her to challenge them. Since the beginning of her career, Ms. Evans has gained the courage and self-confidence to decenter typical choral teaching and learning practices. However, she still conceptualizes much of the IL in which her students engage as “an experiment,” viewing herself and her practices as constantly evolving.

Teacher Growth: “I’m a Work in Progress”

Often referring to herself as “a work in progress,” Ms. Evans identified many ways that she aspired to develop her own teaching. She acknowledged two goals: to improve as a music-maker in informal settings, and to overcome her own insecurities related to thinking outside of the box and facilitating IL. She aimed to provide students with the music education that she wished she had in high school.

Participating in Informal Music-Making

Participating in informal music-making began as a major source of discomfort for Ms. Evans, because of her beliefs referenced in the previous theme. Ms. Evans described a moment from several years ago that stood out in her mind as consequential in gaining confidence with her musicianship skills:

> I remember, I was at my friend's house, and he was like, “Do want to jam with us?” [Then he said], “I'm not a real musician,” because he couldn't read music.

> Then I was like, "No, I'm not a real musician," because I could read music, but didn't know how to just jam. Then he just played some chords on a guitar, and he said, "Sit at the piano. You play piano." I was like, "I don't *play* piano." I sat there, and it was just like E and B, but they didn't tell me. I was proud of myself that I figured it out. Then I felt cool. We literally just jammed on those two chords, and I was like, "Oh, this is what people are doing when they're jamming. I thought it was something else." Like, "Oh, I can do this." I think it was just something I hadn't done so I didn't know that I could do it.

Since that moment, Ms. Evans identified her ability to learn music informally as a point of growth and a source of pride. She described her feelings when she played the bass guitar for the first time in a band.

> We started a teacher band at East High School. Saige, [my coworker], started it with the teachers that aren't music teachers, and she was like, "You're going to play bass." I was like, "I don't play bass." She was like, "Yes, you do. It's the bottom four strings of the guitar." I said, "Yes, I know that, but I don't play bass." She was like, "It's A and D. It's open strings." She just handed me the bass and on we went to perform the song. I was like, "Oh my God!" First of all, I felt so cool just being on stage holding a bass. The students were so inspired and then they wanted to do it and I was like, "Oh my gosh, why didn't I do this before?" That was six or seven years ago that we started [the teacher band].

At the time of this study, Ms. Evans described still feeling greater discomfort making music in informal settings compared to formal ones. However, she took great joy and pride in her emerging ability to make music informally.

Facilitating Informal Learning

Despite gaining some confidence as an informal music-maker, Ms. Evans still struggled to deviate from direct, formal instruction in her choral classroom—what she called thinking outside of the box—because of her internalized beliefs about what made up an "excellent" choral teacher.

In addition to feeling self-conscious about facilitating ILPP, Ms. Evans identified several challenges as a facilitator. Firstly, she struggled with the idea of students pursuing music that she identified as beyond their skill level. Thus, she felt uncomfortable

allowing students to proceed with a task or song that she labeled as too difficult. She described how she initially reacted when her students asked to arrange "All for Us" during Concert Choir.

> Then in choir, the kids, they've been obsessed with the show . . . called *Euphoria.* Everyone is obsessed with Zendaya and she sings this song with LeBron called "All For Us." The Harvard Opportunes have this really awesome arrangement on YouTube of them performing it. The kids showed [the YouTube video] to me and I was like, "Oh, this is amazing." They were like, "Can we please do it? Can we please do it?" My initial reaction really was to say no . . . because I saw the Harvard Opportune thing and I was like, "Oh, this is too hard. We can't do that." Then I was like, "Wait, don't be that old version of [me]. Look at it outside the box and [see] what can we do with it."

Once students began working together informally, Ms. Evans expressed feeling uncertain and nervous about her role as a facilitator, noting that she felt a lack of control, both over the timing of projects and over the scaffolding of student progress with the task. When describing Treble Choir's process of arranging "Traitor," she explained:

> Besides writing it . . . trying to learn it quickly for the spring concert . . . we only met once a week, so that felt very rushed. If you ask them, they enjoyed it. I was the one [song] that [felt] like, "Oh my god" . . . but we finished. [Then] they sang it at the concert and it went really well.

Ms. Evans also stated that she had difficulty anticipating and meeting student needs, which again, made her nervous that she wasn't doing enough to be a "good teacher."

> I think [one] of the biggest challenges [with facilitating the arrangement is] . . . anticipat[ing] their needs because it's not something I've done before. That's part of the reason why I'll get really nervous, because I don't actually know what they're going to understand and what roadblocks they're going to run into. I don't know what the answer is when they hit those roadblocks because I haven't done it before so that always makes me so scared. Then Saige, [my colleague], will remind me like, "So what?" Then [I remember], "Oh, yes, so what?" [laughter]. That's scary going into it.

Ms. Evans summarized her biggest insecurity related to serving as a facilitator instead of a director, stating, "I don't like trying something that I'm not exactly sure how it's going

to go with the kids and I don't know why. If it doesn't go well, so what?" As a means of addressing this insecurity, she sought out professional development opportunities to strengthen her own IL and improve as an ILPP facilitator.

Classroom Environment of Vulnerability, Community-Building, and Joy

While Ms. Evans endeavored to break away from internalized teaching and learning standards, she held onto her most important classroom values, including vulnerability, community-building, and joy.

Ms. Evans believed in the importance of modeling vulnerability for young people. Openly referring to herself as a "work in progress" in front of her students, she consistently displayed vulnerability by sharing her informal products and new musical skills, such as her original songs and her bass guitar playing. Ms. Evans hoped that her own vulnerability would set the stage for students to feel more comfortable in class.

In addition to vulnerability, Ms. Evans placed emphasis on community-building in her classroom. Jessica and Nylah explained the choral environment:

> NYLAH: It's very chill and it's not . . . Usually [other classes are] awkward because it's with a huge group of people and just the teacher talking. I feel like [choir] could be boring and awkward. But Ms. Evans, she's really outgoing, and she always likes to talk to everyone and make them feel like they're at home even if it's just choir class. And everyone feels like they're loved, and it's not awkward.
>
> JESSICA: And then for me, comforting, fun, musical, exciting, homey.

Part of the reason that students felt so at home and comfortable in Ms. Evans' classes may be attributed to her philosophy of humans first, music second.

> When they're in the music space, I want to bring the playing of music and the joy of music into their lives and allow them to enjoy it rather than ruling with an iron fist. I guess my philosophy is empowering the students via a positive environment for them to thrive . . . then the reward is that we get to make music.

Participants understood how much Ms. Evans cared about them, which motivated them to continue in choir. Kathy explained, “It feels refreshing, because you can really tell that [Ms. Evans] cares about not only, not only the music, but also the children that are in her class and the teens. And it's nice.”

Ms. Evans’ focus on community-building not only elicited a bond between students and teachers, but also between students. Participants identified the bond between students in different grade levels as unique and valuable. They cherished these relationships because they helped choir to feel like a comfortable and safe environment in which to take risks. Wesley described:

> The social bonds across grades in choir . . . definitely help in an environment where making music through voice is . . . very nerve-wracking to people, so having those bonds between people makes it less scary and more a comfortable, safe environment that Ms. Evans works hard to build with everyone.

Ms. Evans validated Wesley’s perception when she described how she hoped to establish community as a foundation to positively influence the music-making later on. Ms. Evans explained, “the other goals [including ILPP] that we have in choir are a little bit easier because we set a foundation for a safe place to be yourself and connect with others.”

To build community, Ms. Evans purposefully planned moments for connection, which included IL activities. She explained:

> MS. EVANS: I feel like [IL has] always just served our community the most. While IL has musical purposes, I feel like the kids look forward to it because it’s something different . . . it’s just like burst of enthusiasm in the kids. When we build that community there . . . the other goals that we have in choir are a little bit easier because we set a foundation for a safe place to be yourself and connect with others.
>
> AIMEE: One of the main benefits [of IL] is community and that transfers into formal learning settings as well?
>
> MS. EVANS: Yes.

Finally, Ms. Evans aimed for her students to experience joy. She described:

> I'm most proud of the culture we've created because I've always wanted the choir to just be a very positive, safe space for the kids that come and feel that this part of their day is where they experience joy, and that music is the vehicle we use for that, but that they feel safe and seen and heard. I feel the pandemic solidified that that's the most important thing we're here for. That's . . . what I am most proud of. I just feel it's a very positive, welcoming culture that has been created that is very student-centered, and student-run, even though I'm the director.

Though some students invested more energy and passion into choir than others, all student participants that I interviewed stated that they enjoyed choir, which aligned with Ms. Evans' goals for the classroom environment. Though I noticed students who invested more effort into choir than others, all participants with whom I spoke expressed love and appreciation for their classmates as part of the choir family. I attributed these positive feelings to Ms. Evans' consistent and persistent focus on community-building and supporting one another.

Democracy and a Variety of Musical Experiences

Within the context of the classroom environment that centered vulnerability, community-building, and joy, Ms. Evans employed specific practices and actions that exemplified her values and beliefs: namely engaging in democratic practices and providing students with a variety of musical experiences. Firstly, Ms. Evans' students engaged in democratic repertoire selection processes, which led to Bass Choir singing songs by the Backstreet Boys, Treble Choir singing a smash hit by Olivia Rodrigo, and more. Ms. Evans explained that she engaged her students in democratic repertoire selection to validate the musics that students listen to outside of school.

In addition to giving students a voice in the classroom, Ms. Evans provided opportunities for students to engage in a variety of musical experiences, including singing

diverse repertoire, learning to read/write music using Western notation, and engaging in musical creativity. Ms. Evans shared, “I’m trying to . . . include more variety in the classroom that’s not just concert prep, concert prep, concert prep. I think it makes them more well-rounded people and musicians.” Ms. Evans reiterated that it is not her intention to discard IL, WAM, or Western notation. However, she clarified that the aforementioned goals are not the *only* musical goals, or even the most important musical goals:

> Before, I was like, “I have to make sure I do the best. We need to do a Moses Hogan and we need to do a Whitacre and we need to do this.” I still want to do all those things, but I want them to know that they can write songs. I want them to know that they can pick a pop song and get friends together and make a band.

Students Possessing Tools, Passion, and Confidence for Lifelong Music-Making

Ms. Evans articulated that her overarching goal was to help students develop the tools, passion, and confidence for lifelong music-making. She described her hopes for her students post-graduation.

> I want my current choir kids to [be prepared for college choir and community choir], but then I also want them to be able to audition for an *a cappella* group or I want them to sing at an open mic night, or I want them to sing duets with their friends at their family events . . . I want them to just be excited about finding music-making opportunities on their own once they leave. I basically want to foster their love of music in a way that makes them feel they're allowed in all the “sandboxes” of music-making, so that when they leave me and go off into college or wherever they go, they'll continue making music for their lifetime and feel they have the tools to do that.

Ms. Evans specifically prioritized ILPP in school choir because it contributed to her goal of preparing students to pursue music-making in the long-term.

> [I prioritize IL in class] because I’m trying to build the program that I wish I would’ve come from. I’m so proud of where I came from, but I wish that all the things that we’re doing, I had learned way earlier in life. So I want [my students] to have that. I want them to experience it in a safe, happy, fun place so that they’re willing to try it . . .

In short, Ms. Evans endeavored to prepare students for a lifetime of music, and she believed IL opportunities embodied one way to prepare them.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings that emerged from the case study conducted at East High School. From the qualitative analyses, findings emerged related to each of the four research questions. Two IL activities served as a research focus during data analysis: Senior Tributes and Large Group Arrangements. Using The IL-FL Continua, I analyzed and described student experiences with the two focus activities in terms of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. Both activities engaged students in informal and formal components of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. Senior Tributes served as the most informal focus activity at this school, while Large Group Arrangements served as the most formal focus activity at this school.

For the second research question, I analyzed teacher- and student-identified benefits of ILPP within the context of their choir program. Two themes emerged from the analysis of benefits associated with Senior Tributes, including “building bonds” and “freedom to do something different that I love.” Three themes emerged from the analysis of benefits associated with Large Group Arrangements, including “we have a choice,” collaboration, and musical validation and growth. East High School Choir participants appreciated ILPP most for its benefits to their community, their heightened sense of freedom/choice, and the positive impact of ILPP on their musicianship.

For the third research question, I analyzed teacher and student-identified challenges of ILPP within the context of their choir program. Five themes emerged from my analysis of challenges associated with Senior Tributes: (a) pressure to honor senior,

(b) independence and self-regulation, (c) group work frustration, (d) musical setbacks, and (e) vulnerability. Three themes emerged from my analysis of student-identified challenges associated with Large Group Arrangements: (a) limited time, (b) musical roadblocks, and (c) unequal contribution.

The fourth research question addressed the beliefs and values that led Ms. Evans to make space for ILPP in the high school choral program. Five themes emerged as salient: (a) challenging choral teaching and learning standards; (b) teacher growth: "I'm a work in progress;" (c) classroom environment of vulnerability, community-building, and joy; (d) democracy and a variety of musical experiences; and (e) students possessing tools, passion, and confidence for lifelong music-making.

The next chapter will present a cross-case analysis, discussion, description of limitations/delimitations, implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 7

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study was to investigate Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three public high school choral programs. In this discussion of the cross-case analysis, I first present the Informal-Formal Activities Continuum (see Figure 3). The continuum emerged as I formed types of activities across the quintain, or the overall object/phenomenon/condition that I studied: namely student and teacher perspectives of ILPP in high school choral programs (Miles et al., 2020). Next, I present nine explanations and associated implications, which I developed and revised through an iterative process of engaging with the data from the three separate cases. I conclude this chapter with suggestions for future research.

Research Question One

Research question one asked "How are Informal Learning Practices and Processes evident within the context of three public high school choral programs?" To begin the cross-case analysis, I analyzed each site's focus activities for elements of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice before forming types of learning practices and processes across cases (Miles et al., 2020). From this analysis, four activity types emerged, including (a) teacher or student led rehearsals, (b) large group creative activities, (c) small group creative activities, and (d) non-compulsory performance opportunities.

Teacher or student led rehearsals mostly centered Formal Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice. In this study, I observed several activities that I characterized as this type because they centered a teacher or a student as a singular leader who led

activities that felt compulsory and most frequently used musical notation. Activities included whole-group rehearsals, and at Davis[6] and East High Schools, choral sectionals run by section leaders. Additionally, I classified large group Spectacular rehearsals as primarily teacher or student led.

Large group creative activities centered a combination of Formal and Informal Learning Styles, Ownership, and Choice, and in this study, I observed two such large group creative activities. At East High School, I observed Ms. Evans facilitating the arranging process of “All for Us” with the three sections of her Concert Choir. At Morris High School, I observed the students engaging in Make Something Sessions where they improvised as a whole group. In both instances, the Learning Style and Ownership vacillated between formal and informal. The Make Something Sessions fell more on the formal end of the Choice continuum because they felt compulsory to students, while the Large Group *Euphoria* arrangement fell more on the informal end of the Choice continuum, because students chose the song.

Small group creative activities primarily centered Informal Learning Styles, Ownership, and Choice, and in this study, I observed two such small group creative activities. Firstly, I observed students working in small groups toward class-wide goals that were pre-determined by the entire choir. At East High School, I observed the Treble Choir working in small groups to create an arrangement of “Traitor.” At Morris High School, I observed Low Voice Choir students working on a Daft Punk-inspired

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[6] All proper names, including, but not limited to schools, teachers, students, ensembles, and activities in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

arrangement of “Mr. Sandman,” and High Voice Choir students working on a mashup of Schubert’s “Der Liermann” and Evanescence’s “Bring me to Life.” In addition to striving toward class-wide goals in small groups, I observed students at all three schools reaching for more individualized goals. For example, I observed Senior Tributes at East High School, where small groups of students created musical tributes to a senior in the choir program. Additionally, I observed The Spectacular small groups at Davis High School germinating ideas together before rehearsing and performing a musical act with their small group. I also viewed artifacts and interviewed Concert Choir students at Morris High School who had participated in previous iterations of Team-Time where each Team-Time group determined and pursued their own musical goals. With all small group creative projects—no matter the end product—I observed primarily Informal Ownership and Choice, with mostly Informal Learning Styles.

The last activity type, non-compulsory performance opportunities, primarily centered Informal Learning Styles, Ownership, and Choice. In this study, I observed two such activities. At Davis High School, I interviewed participants and observed students facilitating a Talent Day. At East High School, I acquired interview and artifact-related data about the optional talent shows: Winter Jam, Music for Life, and Spring Notes. Though not classified as focus activities because of my inability to observe the performances, I gathered that, like Talent Days at Davis High School, these non-compulsory talent shows centered primarily around Informal Ownership, Choice, and likely Learning Styles. Thus, this type was most informal compared to all others.

After grouping activities that shared commonalities into types, I arranged them on a singular continuum of informal to formal (see Figure 3), which allowed me to

synthesize the study's findings across the quintain (Miles et al., 2020, p. 97). I acknowledge the limitations of this approach to analysis, most notably that I collapsed the three continua of Learning Style, Ownership, and Choice onto one continuum. However, I found that this analysis process illuminated the varying ways that choral directors engage students in ILPP, helping me focus on the quintain as I strove to broaden my analysis and understand a larger collection of cases (Stake, 2005).

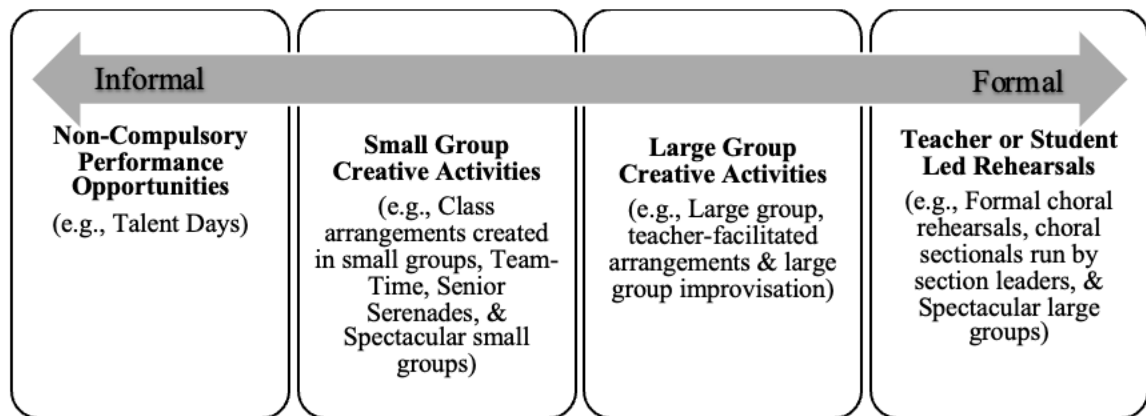

Figure 3. *Informal-Formal Activities Continuum*

In this study, the teacher and student led rehearsals and sectionals represented the most FL activities and non-compulsory, talent-related performance opportunities, such as Talent Days, constituted the most IL activities. In general, the types on the formal side of the continuum (teacher or student led rehearsals and large group creative activities) provided students with *some* opportunities to explore components of ILPP (e.g., Informal Learning Style, Ownership, and/or Choice). Some activity examples from this study that exemplified these types were: FL choral rehearsals, choral sectionals run by section leaders, large group teacher-facilitated arrangements, Spectacular large groups, and large group improvisation. The types on the IL side of the continuum (small group creative

activities and non-compulsory performance opportunities) allowed students to engage in *multiple* components of IL at once (e.g., Informal Learning Style, Ownership and Choice). Some activity examples from this study that exemplified these types were: class arrangements created in small groups, Team-Time, Senior Tributes, Spectacular small groups, and Talent Days. Data analysis confirmed that teacher led activities are not always more formal than student led activities, as some student led activities (e.g., Large groups-Spectacular) featured more formal elements than teacher led activities (e.g., Teacher led class arrangements & teacher-facilitated improvisation). For example, when singular students assumed leadership positions, such as during The Spectacular large groups, their classmates expressed that they had little say in both the rehearsal process and artistic outcome. On the other hand, when teachers carefully facilitated activities such as arrangements and group improvisation, students experienced less direct instruction and reported feeling as though they had more "voice."

My analysis also revealed evidence that in certain circumstances, activities on the formal side of the continuum prepared students to engage in activities on informal of the continuum. Likewise, in certain circumstances, activities on the informal side of the continuum bolstered student experiences with activities on the formal side of the continuum. I expand on how student engagement in a variety of activities in the continuum mutually strengthened one another later in this chapter in the first explanation.

Research Questions Two, Three, and Four

Research questions two, three, and four addressed teachers' and students' benefits, challenges, and values of ILPP in high school choral programs. To analyze these three research questions and make assertions about the quintain, I created explanations,

one of the five analytic techniques suggested by Yin (2018). My analysis yielded nine explanations, which I present in the subsequent sections of the paper in groups. I present each group of explanations with associated implications for choral teaching and learning (see Figure 4 for overview). I share a list of all explanations at the end of this discussion.

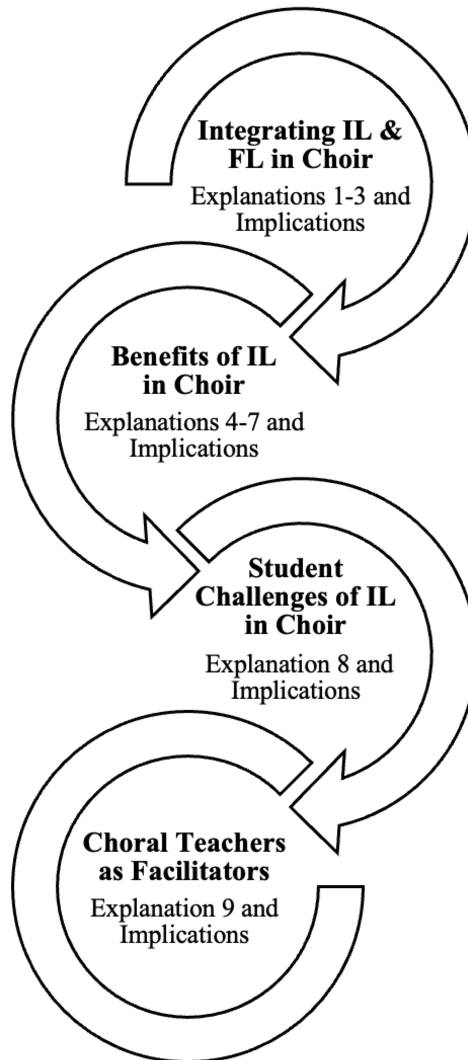

Figure 4. *Overview of Explanations and Implications*

Integrating IL and FL in Choir

This multiple case study's cross-case analysis revealed that teachers include IL and FL in varied ways in high school choirs. Two types of IL-FL integration in a choral context emerged as salient: mutually-supportive IL and FL, and IL as additive. In this section, I address the benefits of a mutually-supportive IL-FL model before presenting the drawbacks of an additive model. Lastly, I present the conditions that emerged as necessary for mutually-supportive IL-FL: (a) a democratic, trust-filled environment; (b) a teacher committed to and invested in fostering mutually-supportive IL-FL; (c) a teacher dedicated to helping students pursue long term goals related to music, community, and life skills; and (d) a teacher who challenges students during IL and FL.

Explanation 1: Mutually-supportive IL and FL in choral programs can elicit musical and communal benefits for individual students and for the ensemble.

Many researchers have expressed the need for a balanced approach to FL and IL in music classes (Costes-Onishi, 2016; Dean, 2019; Feichas, 2010; Fleet, 2017; Green, 2002; Hess, 2020; McPhail, 2012; Robinson, 2012). For example, Hess (2020, p. 441) called for a "both/and" approach to FL and IL in schools, while Feichas (2010) explained the importance of "an integrated approach" (p. 54), writing that "formal and informal seem to be opposed forms of learning, but both can live together in harmony" (p. 52). Like these scholars, I embrace the integration of both IL and FL in music classes, and choir classes specifically. For the purposes of this discussion, I will use the term mutually-supportive to refer to a pedagogy of practice in which student experiences with learning on all parts of The IL-FL Continua (see Figure 2) contribute toward shared

outcomes/goals. In the next several paragraphs, I explore how a mutually-supportive IL-FL model might serve to support musical goals and strengthen community within choral ensembles.

In a mutually-supportive IL-FL choral context, both FL and IL reinforce the musical goals of the ensemble. Mutually-supportive IL and FL experiences in the choral classroom help students gain musical skills and understandings and transfer them between modes (i.e., IL to FL/ FL to IL). As these data evidenced, musical understandings and skills that students develop while learning formally can prepare them for learning informally, and vice versa.

In this study, Morris High School student participants identified growth in their formally-developed musical skills/understandings when engaging in ILPP. First with direct teacher instruction, and later with teacher facilitation, students practiced transferring their musical understandings between formal and informal contexts. For example, after students participated in Make Something Sessions, Mr. Cohen often facilitated several minutes of formal discussion as students analyzed what they had made through a lens of music theory (e.g., assigning solfeggio) and musical appreciation (e.g., describing how and why the music exemplified their feelings). In other words, students transferred skills (e.g., solfeggio and music theory) typically reserved for formal choral situations into IL activities. Furthermore, in Team-Time, students utilized the five-step reading process that they learned in FL, with one group self-selecting to use the same process to learn a notated Spanish song.

Simultaneously, Morris High School student participants identified that their formal ensemble music-making and understandings of formal musical concepts

benefitted from their engagement in informal learning. For example, when participants gained experiences practicing musical skills like listening, blend, and balance during Make Something Sessions and Team-Time, they perceived an improved ensemble sound when rehearsing choral repertoire. Another example related to students who created a mashup of the Evanescence song and Schubert lieder. Participants on the arranging team described that because of musical exploration, research, and group work, they better understood choral concepts like musical expression, meter, and notation.

Mutually-supportive IL-FL in a choral context also contributes to the sense of community. At both East and Morris High Schools, students and their teachers identified community-building as a focus during formal choral learning. At Morris High School, student participants referred to their choir as a “team,” a “family,” and a “community.” Participants also described choir as a “safe space.” Most prominently, Mr. Cohen and the student participants cited that mutual trust existed between all members of the classroom community: teacher and students alike. Mr. Cohen primarily developed this safe space through his focus on a democratic mutual learning community, which helped the students to identify that “we have a voice.” Similarly, participants at East High School stated that “choir is family” and “choir is homey.” They explained that during FL and IL contexts, everyone in choir cultivated bonds, even across grade levels. Like at Morris High School, participants at East High School identified the focus on community in the formal learning situation as the groundwork that generated a sense of student safety and risk-taking visible during ILPP.

I observed that when students at Morris and East High Schools learned informally, they leaned heavily on the already-existing norms of mutual respect, democracy, safe

space, and trust. Hess (2019) also described community as helpful groundwork for mutual learning, writing that "when music educators facilitate a practice of community through music, students learn about both the importance of listening to the voices of others and the appropriate time to step forward and offer leadership" (p. 151). Safe space, vulnerability, and community established at Morris and East High Schools during formal learning was mutually reinforced during informal learning.

Student participants also discussed that the sense of community fostered during IL could transfer to FL contexts, benefitting them while making music more formally. For example, students at East and Morris High Schools noted that their relationships and collaboration skills developed during ILPP, which then further enhanced the culture of the ensembles during FL. This finding reflects research by Abrahams et al. (2017), who determined that the culture of choral ensembles shifted in a positive way after students participated in informal learning. This finding is further supported by participants in a study by Hess (2019), who described that teacher facilitation, instead of teacher-directed learning, is critical to community-building. Hess' (2019) summary of facilitation aligned with what I observed at Morris and East High Schools during both FL and IL:

> Prioritizing facilitation that values the contributions of all assists the process of building community and creating mutually supportive spaces. Giving youth important responsibilities potentially further facilitates their sense of self-worth in the classroom community and their willingness to share their own contributions. (p. 67)

Notably, students at all three schools identified collaboration and enhanced relationships as a benefit of IL. In other words, students reported a greater sense of community as a result of IL at all high schools, whether IL-FL was mutually-supportive or not. However, overall community benefits were most prominent in schools in which IL

and FL were mutually-supportive. In summary, mutually-supportive IL and FL in choir classes can elicit musical and communal benefits both for individual students and for the ensemble.

Explanation 2: An additive model of IL in choral programs may result in limited musical and communal benefits.

The cross-case analysis revealed that musicianship was not mutually-supportive in IL and FL contexts at East and Davis High Schools. Compared to Morris High School, participants at East High School identified personal musical development in terms of skills, not in terms of musical understandings or improved whole choir musical sound. Consequently, "musical understanding" did not emerge as prominent at East High School, perhaps because Ms. Evans focuses more energy on connection, community, and a relaxing and fun environment than on facilitating transfer of musical understandings. Participants at East High School who identified musical benefits of ILPP perceived that they developed new musical skills, rather than building upon existing skills from the more formal parts of the choral rehearsal. Though students gained competencies during ILPP such as songwriting, music technology, aural skills, and playing instruments, they did not perceive these skills as relevant or connected to their typical choral rehearsals.

Accordingly, teachers cannot expect that students will make connections between the understandings and skills they gain from IL and FL contexts without teacher facilitation. Considering that competencies developed in FL contexts often differ from those developed during ILPP (Clements, 2012), teachers must reinforce musical skills ripe for transfer between settings if students are to perceive them as mutually-supportive

on all parts of The IL-FL Continua. Clements (2012) underscored the importance of helping students to transfer understandings from one musical context to another, writing that "transfer has to be taught, and unless you are teaching how to transfer to and from multiple musical cultures it has no lasting meaning or relevance [to students]" (p. 5). Furthermore, Jones (2015) emphasized that students who are enculturated in FL practices typical in large ensembles may need additional tools to navigate ILPP.

During ILPP at Davis High School, Mrs. Wilson did not expect her students to gain musical skills or understandings that would transfer to FL. Accordingly, student participants did not often cite gaining new musical skills and understandings during ILPP, namely because of a lack of musical challenge, which I discuss in explanation eight. Thus, the language that student participants used to describe benefits of ILPP activities at Davis High School remained superficial, such as "fun" and "different from normal."

Though participants at Davis High School identified communal benefits during IL Spectacular preparations, such as bolstered relationships and collaboration skills, these benefits minimally enhanced feelings of community during FL. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that students had few opportunities to continue to grow these relationships in a more structured and efficient formal environment. Though Mrs. Wilson identified community as a value, little time in rehearsal was dedicated to student socialization and community-building. I also observed that Mrs. Wilson and student leaders encouraged efficiency and focus during FL, leaving little time for group bonding and development of empathy between students from different grade levels, with different ability levels, and with different priorities. Thus, when engaged in IL, student participants

from Davis High School noted tensions between groups in the choir (e.g., people wanting to be there vs. people not wanting to be there, people who sing vs. people who don't, and people who care more vs. people who care less). In summary, an additive model of informal learning in a choral context may result in limited musical and communal benefits.

Explanation 3: Several conditions are required for IL and FL to become mutually-supportive: (a) a democratic, trust-filled environment; (b) a teacher committed to and invested in fostering mutually-supportive IL-FL; (c) a teacher dedicated to helping students pursue long term goals related to music, community, and life skills; and (d) a teacher who challenges students during IL and FL.

In this section, I address the first three conditions required for mutually-supportive IL-FL. The last condition (a teacher who challenges students during IL and FL) will be addressed in explanation eight.

Democratic, Trust-Filled Environment. A democratic and trust-filled classroom environment is the first mediating condition for establishing formal and informal learning as mutually-supportive. Researchers have spent decades exploring democracy in classrooms (Dewey, 2004; Freire, 2000/1970; Greene, 2000; Gutman, 1993; Noddings, 2016) and in music education (Allsup, 2003; Woodford, 2005). Drawing on Dewey's writing, Noddings (2016) explained that in a democratic educational environment, "children [are] encouraged to communicate, inquire, and construct common values and knowledge" (p. 35). Furthermore, Noddings (2016) illustrated democracy in schools as "students working together on common problems, establishing the rules by which their

classrooms will be governed, testing and evaluating ideas for the improvement of classroom life and learning, and participating in the construction of objectives for their own learning" (p. 36).

In this study, teachers who centered democratic processes at Morris and East High Schools helped to prepare students for the informal components of Ownership and Choice inherent in ILPP, indicating democracy as a condition for mutually-supportive IL-FL. By centering democracy, albeit on different scales, Mr. Cohen and Ms. Evans enabled students to shift Ownership and Choice away from the most formal side of the continuum, even when taking part in more Formal Learning Styles, such as learning a piece of choral repertoire using notation. When writing about democratic classroom environments, Mullen (2019) explained that teachers and students "cannot totally erase teacher-student hierarchies," instead suggesting that "students [can] reframe themselves as active participants in their own education rather than customers preparing themselves for the global economy" (p. 60-61). Students in the choirs at both Morris and East High Schools exemplified Mullen's description of active participants, as they took part in extensive repertoire selection processes. Jerry, a student participant, described the process at East High School.

> Ms. Evans will give us a Google form . . . Everybody enters I think it's four or five songs that [they] might like, and then you can always add more. And then she kind of filters it down, and then we do breakout groups and pick one for that day, and then we rank it. And then they all get ranked and then it goes in . . . It's like a big tournament, almost. [laughs] . . . I think it makes sense because . . . You get to feel like you have a lot of control over what you sing, and it's not just like, 'Oh, I have to go sing this cookie cutter music that I didn't get to pick and I don't like it.' It definitely allows you to kind of be more active.

Notably, students choosing their own repertoire at East High School did not constitute a fully democratic classroom environment. However, this practice did strongly contribute to the students' positive experiences in choral classes, while preparing them to engage in Informal Ownership and Choice more fully.

At Morris High School, students explored democratic practices beyond repertoire selection, working together to determine how formally or informally they wanted to learn, effectively making their own decisions according to the Choice and Ownership continua. For example, I observed Mr. Cohen teaching with direct instruction and sheet music in response to Concert Choir students' expressed desire to primarily learn songs with notation. He also followed the lead of the students; if they asked a question, he assumed that "the student is always right." Instead of dismissing a student's question and moving forward with his goals, Mr. Cohen helped students to better understand what they did not understand before. Many times, Mr. Cohen greatly deviated from the activity at hand in pursuit of helping his students (e.g., instrument-playing, long discussions, etc.). Mr. Cohen's responsiveness to his students embodied what Mullen (2019) called a "dialogical process" (p. 60). According to Mullen (2019), when students engage in a dialogical process, they become curious and comfortable with manipulating music in creative ways while thinking critically about music. This allows them to produce "locally and culturally specific musical experiences and artifacts grounded in youth culture," shifting their identities from "cultural consumers to cultural producers" (Mullen, 2019, p. 61).

This study demonstrates that students accustomed to democratic classroom environments are prepared to work effectively during IL, perhaps because democracy

centers many of the same characteristics. In democratic environments, students learn how to reframe themselves as active participants (i.e., by guiding their own learning by choosing what music to learn, how to learn their own music, and how to think critically), which is required in informal situations (Mullen, 2019). In this study, Mr. Cohen's students experienced few social challenges during informal group projects and appeared willing to take on larger, more open-ended, and more challenging projects relative to the other two school programs. This willingness to take risks was facilitated by their comfort sharing opinions in a group, experimenting with musical sounds, and navigating complex musical challenges without a central authority figure. When student voice and Informal Ownership took on a central role in the classroom environment, students appeared to understand how to direct their own learning and share power with others. This was especially apparent during Team-Time.

On the other hand, the data analysis revealed that when teachers spend significant amounts of time cultivating a small group of student leaders, remaining students may be less prepared for the informal components of Ownership and Choice inherent in ILPP. For example, when student participants at Davis High School were provided an opportunity to work in large groups on The Spectacular numbers, they defaulted to formal Ownership, with one or a few students acting as authority figures, determining the path forward for the entire group. Student behavior so clearly reflected the practices typical of a choral rehearsal that I categorized these rehearsals as FL. While students defaulting to FL in The Spectacular large groups could be attributed to the group size, one must also consider their relative inexperience with Informal Ownership in choir.

Teacher Committed to and Invested in Mutually-Supportive IL-FL. To maximize musical and communal benefits when including IL and FL in a choral program, teachers must believe that IL and FL are mutually-supportive. In this study, Mr. Cohen conceptualized IL and FL as interconnected, explaining that "the idea of informal being a separate technique feels odd . . . it's all a part of the process." Accordingly, students at Morris High School did not view activities that centered IL as a "change of pace," like at Davis and East High Schools, but rather experienced them as part of their choral education. Because Mr. Cohen viewed IL and FL as connected, he facilitated experiences for his students to explore Informal and Formal Learning Styles, Choice, and Ownership, moving fluidly from one end of The IL-FL Continua to the other. As he helped facilitate transfer, his students gained musical and communal benefits. At East High School, Ms. Evans believed in the value of ILPP in choir, but was still coming to terms with its integration. In other words, she was still experimenting. Thus, at East High School, some elements, like community, were mutually-supportive, and others, like musical skills and understandings, were not. At Davis High School, Mrs. Wilson did not express beliefs that indicated mutual support. While her students benefitted from both formal and informal learning experiences in choir, their musical and communal benefits were limited because these experiences were not mutually-supportive.

Teacher Long-Term Goals. Teacher participants' long-term goals for their students influenced the extent to which IL and FL were mutually-supportive. In this study, teachers' goals for students upon graduation (e.g., music facilitator, music-maker, musical advocate) played a part in student growth (e.g., musical understandings, musical skills, and/or character development) during ILPP. For example, Mrs. Wilson valued

students becoming musical advocates after high school. Therefore, her goals of ILPP focused on helping students develop character. As a facilitator, Mrs. Wilson focused on how students worked together, as opposed to what students gained musically. Accordingly, students at Davis High School mainly reported growth in leadership skills, community bonds, and self-regulatory skills. On the other hand, Mr. Cohen hoped his students would graduate with the ability to facilitate music-making amongst varying groups of peoples. Therefore, some of his goals of ILPP included cultivating students' musical understandings while building upon existing musical skills. As a facilitator, Mr. Cohen helped students to design and work toward goals that necessitated musical challenges, and thus, musical growth in both understandings and skills. Accordingly, his students reported gaining musical skills as well musical understandings.

Implications of Integrating IL and FL in Choir

This study's findings hold implications for integrating IL and FL in choral classrooms. Aligning with Costes-Onishi's (2016) claim that teachers need not choose between formal and informal processes and practices in the choral classroom, teachers should carefully consider how all experiences might be mutually-supportive. Teachers should work to establish conditions ripe for the transfer of musical skills, so students can build upon their understandings in each setting. Notably, I am not advocating for an approach in which ILPP dominates in choral settings. In fact, several researchers have cautioned against primarily centering ILPP in music classrooms (Allsup & Olson, 2012; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2012; Rodriguez, 2012). Instead, I suggest that teachers "wrestle with the questions of both informal and formal learning," acknowledging the

value that can emerge as a result of musical engagement across the Informal-Formal Activities Continuum (Allsup & Olson, 2012, p. 17).

Specifically, teachers should consider the role of Learning Style in their choral classes, working to embed opportunities for both learning by ear and learning with notation during activities that invite both formal and informal Ownership and Choice. Further, teachers should seek opportunities to help students draw connections across Learning Styles. See later in this chapter, Implications of The Benefits of ILPP in Choir, for specific activity ideas.

In addition to engaging students in a variety of Learning Styles, choral teachers should carefully consider the role of Ownership in their choral classes, working to establish a democratic, trust-filled environment. Sharing Ownership within a democratic context can prepare students to work informally, with the teacher gradually taking on less and less of a central role (Mullen, 2019). If students are accustomed to a democratic environment, mutual learning and sharing of power will not feel unfamiliar, and thus, the teacher and students can lay the foundation for mutually-supportive FL and IL. There are many ways that teachers can de-center themselves during choral rehearsals. Firstly, choral teachers can encourage students to introduce conversation topics, decide what they want to learn (e.g., repertoire, instruments, genres, etc.), and how they want to learn (e.g., learning style, size of groups, etc.). Next, teachers may consider following student interests by engaging students in projects that they select (e.g., voting and choosing their own repertoire and/or projects). To encourage Informal Ownership, teachers might encourage students to keep their group sizes small; this will help students to diffuse power, instead of centering around a singular leader. Though Azevedo (2006) noted that

students feel a sense of agency when they choose their own learning materials (e.g., repertoire), teachers should remember that democratic learning involves much more than repertoire selection (Vakeva & Westerlund, 2007). Instead, "music educators that want to apply democratic procedures need to constantly invent new ways of co-operation and continue to search for meaning in relation to the experience of the students and to the educational situation and contexts" (Vakeva & Westerlund, 2007, p. 103).

Furthermore, when assessing the role of Ownership in choral classes, choral educators should consider interrogating the role of student leadership. Though choral teachers frequently assign section leaders or students elect choral boards (e.g., president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, public-relations, etc.), these positions may limit shared Ownership. When only certain students have leadership experiences with musical tasks (e.g., section leaders), only those select students have opportunities to practice skills such as directing their own music learning and problem-solving, both necessary for lifelong music-making and facilitating. If teachers value lifelong and lifewide musicking and facilitating, then all students must have Informal Ownership experiences. To prioritize Informal Ownership, educators should consider moving away from the model of a singular student serving as a section leader, instead allowing the group to mutually work through problems and decisions, sharing Ownership.

Findings from this study suggest that the time has come for choral music educators to reexamine the purpose of choral music education. This aligns with the American Choral Director's Association's (ACDA's) goal of finding "a new paradigm, a better way, and a concept of choral excellence encompassing musical artistry and the principles of inclusion and radical hospitality" (ACDA, 2023, Diversity in the work of

choral musicians section, para. 1). For years, the choral paradigm has reflected principles of aesthetic education (Meyer, 1956; Reimer, 1989). To help students achieve "choral excellence," many choral texts (e.g., Brinson & Demorest, 2014; Holt, 2008; Phillips, 2016) continue to situate the necessity of carefully sequencing rehearsals, including emphases on vocal development, sight singing, and high-magnitude director behaviors (Yarbrough & Price, 1989) such as eye contact, proximity, expressive movements, and a variety of facial expressions. However, formal learning in the typical choral paradigm reproduces barriers to student participation, including barriers with vocal production that align with Western Art Musics (WAMs), Western notation, and a canon of repertoire (Kivijärvi & Väkevä, 2020). In this study, Morris High School students achieved "choral excellence" that both aligned with a typical choral paradigm and evidenced ACDA's (2023) "new paradigm . . . [and] concept of choral excellence" (Diversity in the work of choral musicians section, para. 1). Morris High School student participants gained not only the ability to sing their part in a formal choral concert, but also referenced achieving a better understanding of music.

This study holds implications for developing and centering an emerging and new choral philosophy for preservice teacher education. Though future research is needed to put forth a comprehensive and contemporary choral philosophy, this study points toward mutually-supportive IL and FL experiences as one way to address inequality and injustice in the choral profession and to respond to pleas from researchers to consider new possibilities for large ensembles to accommodate the needs of the 21st century improviser-composer-performer (Arasi, 2006; Campbell et al., 2014; Conkling, 2019). At the core of this new contemporary choral philosophy lies the potential of democratic

learning and decentralized power to help educators and their students realize a mutually-supportive informal and formal learning model. By decentering power in the choral classroom, teachers open the door to validating and lifting up multiple realities while believing, as Mr. Cohen did, that "[the] students are always right." Mr. Cohen embodied this contemporary choral philosophy as he asserted democratic teaching and learning through a mutually-supportive IL-FL model. Preservice teacher educators should emphasize the musical and communal benefits of learning informally in ensemble classes, with the hope that future teachers will embrace mutually-supportive IL-FL. See the implication associated with explanation nine for more suggestions for preservice music teacher education.

The Benefits of ILPP in Choir

This multiple case study's cross-case analysis revealed benefits of ILPP in all three choral settings, whether or not FL and IL were mutually-supportive. Firstly, students enjoy and feel motivated by choral activities that center informal characteristics of Ownership, Choice, and Learning Style. Secondly, collaboration while engaging in ILPP strengthens relationships and benefits the choral community. Third, students develop life skills when engaging in ILPP in choral classes. Finally, ILPP in choir improves recruitment and program advocacy.

Explanation 4: Students enjoy and feel motivated by activities in choral classes that center informal characteristics of Ownership, Choice, and Learning Style.

In Davis, East, and Morris High Schools, students appreciated engaging with ILPP because of the informal characteristics of Ownership, Choice, and Learning Style.

Students valued the independence that accompanied the Informal Ownership and Choice brought forth during ILPP. Themes emerged such as “we have a voice,” “explore music the way we want,” “freedom to choose,” and “we have a choice.” Existing literature about ILPP in music education contexts underlines this finding of student enjoyment of the independence offered by Informal Ownership and Choice (Derges, 2022; Hallam, et al., 2018; Haning, 2019). Some researchers noted “freedom to choose” as a student-identified benefit of ILPP (Derges, 2022). When engaging in ILPP, students chose what to sing (e.g., diverse musical options) and how to participate (e.g., their musical and group role). For example, at East High School, Treble Choir students expressed excitement about working on the song “Traitor” by Olivia Rodrigo. Similarly, participants at Davis High School enjoyed choosing their own music that they listen to at home for The Spectacular. As a result, this study builds upon findings of others such as Green (2008) and Wallerstedt and Pramling (2016), who suggested incorporating ILPP in music classes as a means of exciting students and welcoming genres, practices, and methods typical to students’ out-of-school lives into the school building. For most student participants across all three research sites, working independently and making one’s own creative choices yielded feelings of ownership, reflecting claims by Evans et al. (2015), who noted that adolescents demonstrated feelings of ownership and autonomy over their own learning in an IL-based curriculum. Admittedly, though students almost ubiquitously enjoyed having choice, the open-ended nature of IL was not motivating to all, and still required some teacher direction.

While participants at all three sites appreciated the informal characteristics of Ownership, Choice, and Learning Style that accompanied ILPP, student participants at

Davis and East High Schools specifically valued the change of pace offered by ILPP in their choir classes, as they changed Learning Styles (moving from learning with notation to learning aurally) and altered Ownership (moving from a teacher-directed class to a class with a less centralized source of power). The independence and "freedom" offered by IL differed from other formal parts of the choral rehearsal, which students described as a "relief." Similarly, student participants in a study by Evans et al. (2015) also enjoyed a change of pace during ILPP. While participants at Morris High School cited enjoying the variety ILPP provided, they only contrasted ILPP with other parts of their school day, rather than more formal parts of the choral rehearsal.

Explanation 5: Collaboration while engaging in ILPP strengthens relationships and benefits the choral community.

In Davis, Morris, and East High Schools, ILPP required collaboration, no matter the prompt or type of IL activity. When students worked together, they strengthened their individual relationships with friends old and new. These fortified relationships benefitted the choral community at large and fostered increased peer-to-peer interaction and comfort, even during formal choral rehearsals. Though students in choirs often report social benefits to choral participation (Adderley et al., 2003; Arasi, 2006; Bartolome, 2013; Durrant, 2005; Parker, 2010, 2014, 2018), the findings of this study evidence that attending to one-on-one and small group social bonds supports interpersonal relationship development, which also benefits the whole group. Put simply, learning informally yielded perceptions of improved full-choir social dynamics.

Collaboration during ILPP might also have led to participant development of a positive social identity (Tajfel, 1978). In other words, working in small groups contributed to students perceiving themselves as a valued part of the choral social group. Allison, a student participant at Morris High School, captured how ILPP in choir contributed to her social identity: “Make Something Sessions instilled that confidence in me that I have a part in this class, there's a part in music for me, and that we are a team, whether we're trying to read music or make it ourselves.” Future research is needed to explore how ILPP might affect adolescent social identity development in a choral context.

Explanation 6: Students develop life skills when engaging in ILPP in choral classes.

Whether or not IL and FL are mutually-supportive, ILPP experiences in the choral classroom help students to gain life skills such as independence, teamwork, and time management. This study’s findings align with Abrahams et al. (2017), who discovered that co-creating an arrangement in a choral context positively impacted peer-directed learning and autonomy. In this study, students at all three high schools practiced working in groups with purposeful and limited teacher intervention, gaining skills related to independence and self-regulation. Zimmerman’s self-regulation theory (2000) involves goal setting, self-efficacy, self-control, self-observation, self-judgement, and self-reaction. Varela et al. (2016) summarized self-regulation theory as “the goal-oriented planning, cyclical adaptation, and reflection of an individual’s thoughts, feelings and actions” (p. 55). Notably, self-regulation requires observing and emulating self-regulating exemplars as well as instances of scaffolded support (Zimmerman, 1998, 2000, 2011). In

this study, I labeled self-regulation skills as "life skills," because of Dewey's (2004) concept of education as a laboratory, serving to provide students with tools that can aid them in their future life.

In this study, participation in IL at all three schools facilitated improved life skills. During ILPP, all students practiced making choices and taking chances within contexts in which they could easily change their minds. At Davis High School, students cited improved leadership skills, though this theme notably emerged mostly from formal learning during large Spectacular groups. At East High School, students cited improved skills in time management when working on the Senior Tributes. Finally, at Morris High School, students described improved communication and teamwork skills, bolstered social-emotional and goal-setting skills, and the developing ability to pace a long-term project. Researchers have highlighted the value in engaging students in the pursuit of these skills in an institutional context, explaining that students need opportunities to practice these life skills in a context with a teacher before graduating and entering the professional workforce and world community (Luce, 2001; Hopkins, 2015).

Explanation 7: ILPP in choir improves recruitment and program advocacy.

ILPP in choir may improve recruitment and program advocacy because (a) ILPP invites a fun and relaxed performing environment, and (b) IL performances often include popular musics, which appeal to a wider audience. As a result of ILPP, students at Davis and East High Schools enjoyed the opportunity to perform and connect to a wider audience. At Davis High School, student participants explained that more people attended, and a greater portion of the student body participated in The Spectacular

because of the familiar music and the fun atmosphere. Citing similar reasons, student participants from East High School explained that a larger population of the school community attended and participated in the informal talent nights like Winter Jam and Spring Notes. Different and more relaxed performing environments through alternative programming is well-documented in the literature (Constantine, 2010; Gardner, 2010; Gulish, 2014; Turino, 2008). For example, in a study of an extracurricular high school coffee-house-like event, Gulish (2014) found increased participant autonomy, musical creativity, and confidence. Additionally, Turino (2008) noted there are many participatory musical activities that are less formal than typical school choral concerts, explaining that "these other activities are more about the doing and social interaction than about creating an artistic product or commodity" (p. 25). Turino clarified:

> I want to argue that these situations of participatory music making are not just informal or amateur, that is, lesser versions of the 'real music' made by the pros but that, in fact, they are something else—a different form of art and activity entirely—and that they should be conceptualized and valued as such (p. 25).

Vernacular musics contributed to and characterized a relaxed performance environment at Davis and East High Schools during performances such as The Spectacular, Spring Notes, and Winter Jam. These performances served as fundraisers and good recruitment and publicity tools because students performed songs that the audience enjoyed. Despite the popularity of these performances, vernacular and popular musics have historically not been valued in choral settings. In fact, recent choral texts have discouraged music teachers from including too large of a focus on popular musics in their teaching and performances, instead encouraging them to center "quality choral literature" and musics of great Western composers (Phillips, 2016, p. 147). Phillips

(2016) even warned that "choral directors are not professional entertainers," describing that some popular music in the curriculum might be "acceptable," but that choral directors should not "take things to extremes" (p. 150). Though Mathis (1994), the former ACDA president, claimed that generations of singers would be "in peril" if the profession "stray[ed] from [their] prime belief that good music attracts the conductor, the singer, and the audience," this study's findings indicate that vernacular musical selections—running contrary to what the aforementioned authors would define as "good music"—attracted the singers and audience (p. 37). Thus, this study joins the call of many researchers in recent years for the profession to re-examine "good music" (de Quadros, 2015; Howard, 2020; O'Toole, 2005; Philpott & Kubilius, 2015).

Implications of The Benefits of ILPP in Choir

Explanations four through seven illuminate the value, though limited, of the additive model of ILPP in choral settings (i.e., when instances of IL are episodic and/or IL and FL are not mutually-supportive). This study provides some evidence that scaffolding elements of IL into FL situations helps to prepare students before they engage in open-ended tasks with minimal teacher assistance. Additionally, in practice, choral teachers might face significant challenges in imagining and implementing mutually-supportive IL and FL. Thus, inservice teachers might begin initiating IL with an additive model. For example, teachers might incorporate one activity that deviates slightly from the most formal side of the Informal-Formal Activities Continuum (see Figure 3). Teachers could facilitate a large group creative activity, such as a teacher-facilitated arrangement or whole group improvisation. Because these activities allow for full group participation, teachers can retain typical choral classroom management procedures. Thus,

these activities might feel most comfortable as a launching point for choral teachers new to their facilitator role. This study suggests that students will likely enjoy the change of pace from the teacher-centric portions of their school day, as well as reference benefits of independence and choice. Starting small can also involve providing choice for students. For instance, instead of embedding democracy throughout the entirety of the choral curriculum, teachers might consider starting with only a democratic repertoire selection process, like Ms. Evans.

Though less valuable than a mutually-supportive model, an additive model can still provide opportunities for students and their teacher to develop relationships and build community. If teachers aim to enhance their choral community, they should consider planning opportunities for students to engage in ILPP in smaller groups. This aligns with the call of researchers to broaden collegiate music curricula to include more chamber music opportunities, “in which students can develop musical decision-making, interpersonal relations, and cooperative learning” (Woody & Adams, 2019, p. 900). Opportunities to make music in smaller groups may respond to researchers’ calls for students to make music in situations (i.e., small groups) that reflect ways they are likely to engage with music as adults: “in basements, pubs, garages, worship teams, computer labs, dance clubs, and recording studios” (Clements, 2012, p. 3-4).

This study may also hold implications for adolescent social identity development in high school choirs. Though researchers who have studied social identity development in choirs have primarily focused on studying choirs that engage in FL (Major & Dakon, 2016; Parker, 2014, 2018), this study’s findings suggest that ILPP may bolster opportunities for students to connect with their peers, leading them to engage in a crucial

initial step of developing their social identity, one that Parker (2018) entitled, "becoming a group." By incorporating opportunities for ILPP while choirs are "becoming a group," teachers can help students build upon group bonds and feelings of belonging. While teachers frequently incorporate IL activities at the end of semesters (i.e., after concerts), teachers should consider including these activities at the beginning of the semesters because of their potential to facilitate community-building, necessary to forming a positive social identity. After getting to know each other better in smaller contexts, students might feel more comfortable in the community at large, even during formal choral rehearsals.

Teachers might also consider incorporating opportunities for IL in choral classes to allow students to practice self-regulation skills. These skills will help students both in FL and IL music settings post-graduation (Partti & Karlsen, 2010). Furthermore, self-regulating one's own learning by self-directing music projects can help people in everyday life to regulate moods, communicate, and engage in self-care (Partti & Karlsen, 2010). In this study, participants gained the ability to self-regulate their own music-making. Thus, if teachers want to emphasize lifelong and lifewide music-making, they need to provide opportunities for students to self-regulate their own learning by creating space for Informal Ownership and Choice. When students graduate, they will need greater self-direction and will not have a teacher to lead them. If students' choral worlds are entirely compulsory, students may have trouble (a) motivating their own self-directed selection of opportunities after high school and (b) knowing how to challenge themselves to grow when given a choice (Clements, 2012). This study aligns with Gulish (2014), who asserted that "instead of scaffolding learning for students, teachers [should] provide

students the opportunity to creatively solve problems and develop autonomy through self-directed learning" (p. 21). It also bolsters Varela et al.'s (2016) suggestion that teachers consider "foster[ing] time-management skills while remembering to make room for informal/creative activities as these sustain motivation levels" (p. 57). Therefore, findings of this study suggest that teachers provide opportunities for students to practice self-regulatory skills in relation to music within a classroom setting, prior to graduating.

Before planning opportunities for ILPP, teachers should ask themselves about how they can provide IL opportunities that benefit the greatest number of students. If ILPP is facilitated in a way that remains true to informal contexts, teachers will naturally mitigate barriers to student participation. Ironically, talent shows, a common performance opportunity in schools that invite ILPP, limit participation and present many barriers to student participation. While optional performances (e.g., coffeehouses, talent days, open mic nights, etc.) benefit the performers themselves and may serve as an effective recruitment tool, teachers should keep in mind that they present multiple barriers to participation, such as the necessity of scheduling rehearsals outside of class and student performance anxiety. This study presents evidence that optional informal performance opportunities may benefit only the most talented students or students with the most confidence. For example, student participants at Davis High School indicated that most choir students do not perform in Talent Days because they do not have time to prepare and because they feel intimidated and unprepared to perform alone. In response, teachers who plan these events might provide time in music classes for students to prepare, while also striving to ensure that all students have regular opportunities to engage in ILPP in class. For example, teachers might schedule a coffeehouse and dedicate class time for all

students to prepare an act before students determine whether or not they want to participate.

One alternative to Talent Shows as recruitment and retention tools could be to include familiar songs in typical choral performances as a way to “better reflect the musical world in which we live” (Woody, 2007, p. 32). As Gould (2012) suggested, popular music should not be used as a “hook” to as a means to attract students to “good” music, but should be planned genuinely. Thoughtfully incorporating popular musics into school programs may increase the relevance of school music, reach more diverse student populations, and increase student interest (Isbell, 2007; Kruse, 2015). In this study, the school community flocked to attend The Spectacular at Davis High School, in which all students performed an array of popular songs from movies in both large and small groups. As a result, students and their teacher viewed The Spectacular as a good recruitment opportunity. Explanations four through seven also hold implications for the curricula of preservice music teachers, which I address in explanation nine’s associated implication.

Student Challenges of ILPP in Choir

In this multiple-case study, student feelings of ownership and pride in their informal musical products were scaled to the musical challenges and amount of effort students put into the process. In other words, some students worked on an entire project, and though they engaged in ILPP, they did not perceive growth in their musicianship.

Explanation 8: Despite feeling excited by Informal Learning Styles, Ownership, and/or Choice, students may not choose to pursue musically challenging projects/goals when learning informally. Furthermore, learners may face challenges related to self-regulation and social interactions.

This study's findings reflected those by Guzzetta (2020); the task needed to appropriately challenge students, according to their musical skill levels and current understandings, for them to experience growth. For example, at East High School, many students designed relatively simple Senior Tribute projects (e.g., singing in unison, etc.). When asked about their musical takeaways, many could not identify any, and those that did, related their musical growth to how challenging they chose to make their Tribute. Findings at Davis High School were similar; Mrs. Wilson adopted a hands-off approach typical of many facilitators, and students did not challenge themselves as a result. Instead, students often sang in unison and reported little musical growth. This contrasted with the FL contexts, where each choral teacher sought to challenge their students' musicianship. It should logically follow that if teachers hope to engage students in ILPP, they should not sacrifice critical thinking; students must challenge themselves enough to foster personal growth. In Noddings' philosophy of education (2016), she advised that music classes can and should be relevant to students' lives while also centering critical thinking. Drawing on ideas from both Noddings (2016) and Dewey (2004), Draper (2019) clarified:

> The role of the teacher-facilitator is to provide the students more ownership in their learning process by being open to student contributions while maintaining an appropriate level of challenge for students' musical growth. It is not a dichotomous process but, rather, a continuum of leadership in the classroom. Putting too much on the students can result in their not feeling supported and losing motivation. Likewise, not letting go enough does not allow the students to

> make impactful choices and learn from the successes and failures of their outcomes. (p. 21)

The findings from this study support Draper's claim. Only when students overcame musical challenges, like in Mr. Cohen's class, did they experience benefits such as developing musical skills (e.g., aural skills) and a greater understanding of music overall.

When students chose tasks that were either too challenging or too simple, they struggled with self-regulation and social interactions. Specifically, when students experienced musical or social barriers, they had trouble determining how to proceed, and thus struggled with time management and staying on-task. Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) may explain why students had difficulties with self-regulation and social interactions when they did not feel appropriately challenged. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) theorized that one can experience a state of optimal experience, or flow, when the challenge of a task meets one's skill level. When a task is appropriately challenging, students may find themselves in the flow channel: noticing that time seems to pass quickly as they work diligently, with minimal struggles with self-regulation. In this study, students who received teacher guidance in correctly calibrating the difficulty level of the project (e.g., designing a project that was not too easy or too difficult) experienced fewer challenges with self-regulation. Furthermore, participants who had trouble staying in the flow channel—because of a project that was too easy or difficult—benefitted from teacher intervention. When teachers helped students to navigate back to the flow channel, students experienced less challenges with self-regulation and social interactions. Similarly, multiple researchers have suggested the importance of teacher scaffolding or

intervention when groups struggle to make progress in IL contexts (Costes-Onishi, 2016; Evans et al., 2015; Guzzetta, 2020; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2016).

Additionally, social challenges accompanied ILPP, no matter the level or type of musical task. Some students struggled because of a lack of friends and group member absences. Ubiquitously, participants described feeling frustrated when there was a lack of shared dedication to task and a misalignment of productivity between group members. Finally, when students assumed leadership roles in comparison to when they shared Ownership, more tensions emerged. Formal Ownership was more likely to naturally occur when students worked in larger groups (e.g., groups larger than 4-6 students). Again, in instances in which students struggled with musical, social, or self-regulation-related barriers, teacher intervention remained crucial. Thus, this study's findings validate those of Evans et al. (2015), who explained:

> Despite greater pupil autonomy, data from this study [including evidence of disagreements, perceived lack of commitment during group work, the reluctance of some learners (with more formal experience) to engage in aural learning and learners taking too long to select song choice, suggest that teacher intervention remains important in facilitating learning. These interventions, however, are not didactic but aimed at promoting learner autonomy and providing and/or creating opportunities for learners which suggests a change in the role of the teacher from leader to facilitator. (p. 14)

Implications of Student Challenges of ILPP in Choir

Findings from this study emphasize the importance of teacher facilitation during ILPP in choral settings. Davis (2022) noted that "informal music learning as an in-school educational approach can and should involve the guidance of a music teacher" (p. 10). Teachers should help students get started on the task at hand, create goals that are appropriately challenging, and help them learn to manage their own time. To start,

teachers can consider facilitating opportunities for students to practice self-regulation and social skills during small-scale independent tasks before tackling independent learning in large periods of time. For instance, teachers might consider encouraging small groups of students to aurally arrange a chorus of their favorite song in two parts before they arrange a whole song. When students work on larger independent tasks, teachers should not be afraid to intervene, because it remains helpful to aid students in overcoming challenges related to music-making and self-regulation. Teachers also should intervene to help students share Ownership; one cannot assume that a project like Senior Tributes, intended for collaboration, will necessarily result in shared Ownership and decentered power within a constituency of students.

Teachers should carefully consider how they facilitate. For example, Costes-Onishi (2016) suggested that teachers should help students to solve their own musical problems, instead of simply telling them what went wrong. When teachers notice students struggling to progress, they might consider asking students to critically reflect on their own processes and products; by engaging students in conversation, teachers may naturally help guide students in a logical way to move forward, without direct teacher instruction. Guiding student discussion also helps students to practice skills in reflection and critical thinking, necessary to self-regulating their music-making and learning in the future. Hallam et al.'s (2018) research provides insight into the ideal amount of intervention; they found that "students liked receiving help but only when they needed it" (p. 224). Keeping that in mind, teachers should practice restraint, not intervening each time students struggle (because students may arrive at a solution on their own) or every time students are off-task (because students may navigate back to on-task behaviors).

Instead, teachers can embrace their role as facilitators, intervening when necessary. In short, teachers should aim to help their students learn within the flow channel, because of the implications for student focus, motivation, and positive outcomes.

Preservice teacher educators should ensure that preservice teachers have an opportunity to practice facilitating student learning, not only directly instructing students. Many preservice teacher preparation programs include a strong focus around fostering formal teaching skills, such as sequential patterns of instruction and error detection. However, to serve as effective facilitators, this research suggests that preservice teachers need to learn about topics related to self-regulation (e.g., goal-setting, time management, and flow theory) and critical thinking. Preservice teachers should also acquire skills related to facilitating group work (e.g., conflict management), to prepare to help students navigate social, musical, and logistical barriers during IL. Finally, preservice teacher educators should consider centering topics in music education classes related to fostering mutual respect, democratic classes, facilitating dialogue, and building community. I address more implications for preservice teacher education in the implication section associated with explanation nine.

Choral Teachers as Facilitators of ILPP

In this multiple case study, teacher participants perceived a variety of challenges and benefits related to centering ILPP in their high school choral programs. Though the teachers questioned their role as facilitators, they all perceived ILPP as worthwhile and meaningful for choral students.

Explanation 9: Choral teachers experience feelings of uncertainty, discomfort, and pride when facilitating ILPP.

Teacher participants expressed feelings of uncertainty and discomfort when facilitating student ILPP. Feichas (2010) attributed teacher discomfort to the necessary shift in the teacher's role.

> In [an informal] model the teacher is not the owner of knowledge choosing what and how to teach. Students and teacher need to develop a partnership in which students are respected and not moulded to a predetermined standard. [IL] also demands a non-linear view of acquiring knowledge and skills. (p. 55)

In this study, one common teacher concern related to the timing and frequency of intervention. For nearly 15 years, researchers have documented teacher feelings of uncertainty about how and when to assist student groups during ILPP (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010; Rodriguez, 2009). Rodriguez (2009) explained:

> [The] implication for experienced teachers wishing to adapt their practices to informal learning is a shift in expertise and that is from teaching [students] how to play music to helping students learn the music on their own. [This] can be frustrating if the teacher is unable to incorporate the new approach in their already tested teaching schema. (p. 39)

Ms. Evans and Mrs. Wilson expressed general feelings of discomfort with facilitating ILPP both because of their lack of experience making music informally and because of their perception that IL was less valued in the field. IL did not constitute a significant part of any of the three teachers' education in their teacher preparation programs. Because of their experiences in choral music education, Ms. Evans and Mrs. Wilson had internalized a schema of classroom norms (Wright, 2016), and associated choral teacher effectiveness with direct instruction, esteemed literature, and helping students achieve a "quality" choral sound while singing polished musical products (Conkling, 2019; Howard, 2020; Shaw, 2019). Though Ms. Evans had the support of her administration to pursue ILPP

and informal performance opportunities, she feared letting down her mentors and being perceived as a bad teacher by those in the choral profession. Mr. Cohen did not personally identify with this fear, but he summarized why choral teachers might feel uncomfortable facilitating IL, stating, “There's this whole hierarchy of academic music-making that has these demands. At some point, directors feel they must meet those demands, or else they aren't a good music teacher.” Reflecting Mr. Cohen’s point and research by Finney and Philpott (2010), Howard (2020), and Shaw (2019), Mrs. Wilson demonstrated reluctance to adapt her practices, repertoire, and beliefs, because of the strong pressures of socialization in the choral profession. She believed in the virtues and benefits of historically “typical” choral practices, and in fact, took great pride in her existing, formal, choir program. Again, teacher feelings of discomfort while facilitating are not uncommon, and may be related to challenges with classroom management, the lack of teacher control to scaffold skills from simple to complex, and more (Costes-Onishi, 2016; Feichas, 2010; Guzzetta, 2020).

This study evidences that increased personal engagement with ILPP and greater time spent facilitating ILPP may build teacher comfort and confidence. For example, Mr. Cohen, involved in an “emo rock/blues fusion jam band” in his adolescence, experienced IL from a young age, which made him feel adamant about pushing against educational norms in order to center IL in choir. While he still struggled with practical issues when engaging students in ILPP, Mr. Cohen expressed less concern than Mrs. Wilson or Ms. Evans about how other professionals might perceive his practice. Ms. Evans steadily gained confidence facilitating ILPP since joining her school staff’s rock band and writing more songs on her own time. Furthermore, she expressed that she learned a great deal

through facilitating activities like the "Traitor" arrangement, which informed her practice as a facilitator for the next project.

Though all three teachers experienced feelings of uncertainly and discomfort while facilitating student work during ILPP, they also felt proud of their students during the process and after producing finished products. Some teachers felt proud because observing independent processes allowed them to assess each student's understandings, while others felt proud that students exhibited ownership over their products.

Implications of Choral Teachers as Facilitators of ILPP

Facilitating ILPP in choral contexts can be rewarding for teachers, but may also feel uncomfortable, particularly for those who have little experience with IL (Wright, 2016). Thus, one implication is that inservice teachers should consider engaging in ILPP themselves. Teachers could jam with friends, sing karaoke, learn a pop song by ear, or write songs. This study suggests that with increased opportunities to make music informally, teachers will likely develop increased comfort and confidence with multiple Learning Styles while also experiencing how it feels to share Ownership and engage in mutual decision-making in a group. Teachers who understand the benefits and challenges of ILPP because of firsthand participation may develop empathy for students who engage in these practices and processes during class. In addition to engaging in ILPP themselves, inservice teachers should consider regularly facilitating ILPP opportunities for their students. As teachers experience feelings of pride at what their students can accomplish (like Ms. Evans), they may gain confidence as facilitators over time.

To develop confidence as facilitators of ILPP, inservice teachers might consider finding support through teacher sharing communities, which are well-cited in the

literature (Blair, 2008; Stanley et al., 2014). Stanley et al. (2014) suggested that collaborative sharing communities create opportunities for teachers to reflect, ask questions, and solve problems. In this case, a collaborative sharing community could serve as a venue for teachers to discuss challenges related to ILPP, such as the timing of interventions, the transfer of understandings between contexts, group social dynamics, logistics, and lack of structure. Research suggests that participating in collaborative sharing communities may improve teachers' feelings of efficacy (Stanley et al., 2014).

Finally, this study holds multiple implications for preservice teacher education, including (a) uplifting vernacular musics, (b) decentering musical notation, and (c) including opportunities for ILPP. First, if those in the music education profession truly value music-making that is relevant to students, those teaching preservice teachers must discontinue privileging some genres of music while disregarding others (Adams, 2017; Isbell, 2016; Woody & Adams, 2019). Higher education contexts that primarily center WAMs exemplify the "hidden curriculum" in higher education contexts (Pitts, 2003), which instills beliefs in students about whose music is most valuable (Bradley, 2012; Fuelberth & Todd, 2017; Hess, 2015; Shaw, 2012, 2016, 2019). Kruse (2015) proposed an alternative norm for preservice teacher preparation programs:

> Instead of curricular programs designed to encourage greater classical-centricity in an already classically oriented population, music teacher education programs could consider providing performing experiences in other music genres, musicology courses covering music outside of the Western art canon, performance models and master classes by nonclassical musicians, and methods courses specifically aimed at the teaching and learning practices of nonclassical music. (p. 20)

In response to Kruse's (2015) suggestion, preservice teacher educators should hold discussions with their students about the meaning of "good" music, and collegiate choral

ensemble directors should demonstrate place-based programming for their students by programming diverse works that hold meaning to the communities in which they teach. Finally, preservice teacher educators should facilitate conversations with students about participatory musics and alternatives to formal choral performances (Gulish, 2014; Kruse, 2015; Woody & Adams, 2019).

The next implication for preservice music teacher education relates to decentering musical notation in the curriculum. The reasoning for decentering is multi-faceted. First, notation acts as a barrier to many students: a cognitive barrier for students with disabilities and a cultural barrier to students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, to name a few. Additionally, researchers have found that the requirements of musical notation can often limit student creativity when they produce musical products (Bersh, 2011; Marsh, 2008). Preparing music teacher educators to facilitate teaching music without notation can pave the way for them to remove some barriers to choral music education for their future students.

Furthermore, choral music teacher educators must be taught not to equate music literacy (i.e., music reading and writing of Western notation) with "good musicianship." In fact, in many aural-oral musical traditions, such as gospel music, folk music, and many vernacular and popular musics, teaching music with a score is culturally insensitive, appropriative, and inauthentic (Covalle, 2022). Instead of primarily engaging with notated musics in teacher preparation programs, students should be immersed in a variety of opportunities related to creating, performing, and responding without a score. A few examples could be improvising as a large group in choral settings, making an arrangement of a popular song in a music education class, or learning a spiritual in the

aural-oral tradition. Practicing musical engagement without notation (for instance through improvisation) is one way that preservice teacher educators might prepare preservice teachers to facilitate IL (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010).

The final implication for preservice music teacher education is that teacher preparation programs should provide safe spaces across contexts for all future music teachers to make music informally. In Isbell's (2016) study, preservice teachers who were provided the opportunity to learn informally in a music education course (i.e., forming small ensembles, playing without notation, and leading rehearsals) developed musicianship skills, leaned new pedagogical methods, and became more comfortable working in collaborative groups while learning without notation. However, Isbell (2016) warned that providing opportunities for preservice music teachers to engage with ILPP did not lead to preservice teachers imagining themselves facilitating IL with their future students. Thus, the concept of mutually-supportive IL-FL experiences discussed in explanations one and two also appear to apply to preservice music teacher education. Participants in Isbell's (2016) study seemed to experience IL as a single episode, one they referenced as "fun" and not integrated into the whole of their teacher preparation program or their "regular learning" (p. 35). Thus, those designing curriculum for preservice music teacher educators should consider ways of incorporating mutually-supportive IL-FL experiences in many contexts. Episodic opportunities for IL (e.g., in one or a few music education classes) are clearly not enough to foster preservice music teacher self-efficacy as facilitators. Instead, all educators of preservice teachers, including ensemble directors, music theory professors, music history professors, and so on, should work to embed opportunities for preservice teachers to experience ILPP throughout their degree

program. Professors in all classes should highlight the relevance of ILPP in each context, helping to facilitate transfer for students. If preservice preparation programs provide multiple spaces and opportunities for IL, teacher preparation programs will send a message to future educators about its value in school settings.

Summary of Explanations

Here, I summarize the nine explanations related to research questions two through four.

1. Mutually-supportive IL and FL in choral programs can elicit musical and communal benefits for individual students and for the ensemble.
2. An additive model of IL in choral programs may result in limited musical and communal benefits.
3. Several conditions are required for IL and FL to become mutually-supportive: (a) a democratic, trust-filled environment; (b) a teacher committed to and invested in fostering mutually-supportive IL-FL; (c) a teacher dedicated to helping students pursue long term goals related to music, community, and life skills; and (d) a teacher who challenges students during IL and FL.
4. Students enjoy and feel motivated by activities in choral classes that center informal characteristics of Ownership, Choice, and Learning Style.
5. Collaboration while engaging in ILPP strengthens relationships and benefits the choral community.
6. Students develop life skills when engaging in ILPP in choral classes.
7. ILPP in choir improves recruitment and program advocacy.
8. Despite feeling excited by Informal Learning Styles, Ownership, and/or Choice, students may not choose to pursue musically challenging projects/goals when

learning informally. Furthermore, learners may face challenges related to self-regulation and social interactions.

9. Choral teachers experience feelings of uncertainty, discomfort, and pride when facilitating ILPP.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Despite my best efforts to design a multiple case study design with a high level of trustworthiness, I acknowledge the limitations and delimitations in this study. Firstly, in Chapter 3, I noted several limitations in selecting my participants and cases for this multiple case study. I selected teacher participants using maximum variation sampling with the following criteria, including: (a) geographical variation, (b) size of school and music program, (c) gender identity, (d) race/ethnicity, (e) stage in career, and (f) length of years teaching at their current school. Because of delimitations in participants who met the study's selection criteria and rejections from three school districts (namely because of COVID protocols and privacy concerns related to online interviews), I could not meet some points of maximum variation, most notably race and ethnic diversity of teachers and participants. All three participants identified as White, and their populations of students were also primarily White. One school district that enrolled primarily African American students denied the research request because of concerns around one-on-one interviews from an outsider to the district with a different racial identity. This experience illuminates important considerations about developing research relationships in school districts.

Both individual interviews and focus groups presented possible limitations. Schools and teachers often reward students to provide the correct answers. Because the

high school students I interviewed have experienced many years of convergent schooling, some may have felt a drive to provide good answers or correct answers during interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, my role as a professor and academic may have complicated the issue due to my position of power.

Next, researchers have raised questions about the external validity of focus groups, which I used throughout the study as a means of data collection. Some challenging social dynamics related to focus groups that I acknowledge are group think, passivity, dominance, and group silence (Cyr, 2019). Group think exists as a serious concern; the possibility exists that students might feel pressured to say something that does not represent their actual opinion. When group think occurs, it can also "create the illusion of consensus" (Cyr, 2019, p. 34). Though I probed for unique opinions and disagreement, some students may have felt pressured to hide their disagreement. To counter this effect, I asked the same question in different ways to "see if the group discussion waver[ed] or change[d]" (Cyr, 2019, p. 34). Dominance endures as another challenge to the external validity of focus groups. At times, certain students dominated the discussion. I attempted to mitigate this by asking the more passive focus group members if they had anything to add. Most times, the more soft-spoken students would add something meaningful when invited, though sometimes they would only offer passive comments such as "I agree" or "not really." The possibility exists that I could have learned more from those particular students in an individual interview setting. Finally, I noticed group silence on rare occasions, which may have led to a loss of data. When the group seemed quiet and hesitant to respond, I re-phrased questions and

provided a few examples of responses. Typically, this encouraged student participants to add to the discussion.

Suggestions for Future Research

The next several paragraphs include suggestions for future research related to inservice choral education. First, researchers should aim to understand how elementary, middle, and high school students are currently engaging in ILPP in choral classes. Thus, I recommend a survey of inservice choral music teachers in the United States to investigate their current practices. Second, researchers might consider a similar survey exploring ILPP in choral contexts in countries in which ILPP has been standard practice for years, such as in England and/or the Nordic countries.

Though this study's findings revealed musical and communal benefits resulting from a mutually-supportive IL-FL model, it was only one such example. Thus, researchers should seek to study other programs to explore their benefits. For instance, researchers might explore if participants perceive an improved full-choir sound as a result of ILPP in other mutually-supportive programs. Another study could explore the relationship between ILPP and group dynamics, senses of belonging, community, vulnerability, and trust.

This research suggests limitations to episodic incorporation of IL into choral classes, what I titled an "additive model." However, more research is needed to understand the choral experiences of students who participate in an additive or episodic model of IL in choir, including, but not limited to: student social identity development and feelings of belonging as well as the relationships between student motivation, choral community, life skills, and recruitment/program advocacy and IL in choir. Researchers

also might explore how concepts like democracy, self-efficacy, social identity, self-regulation skills, teacher goals, and other "life skills" interact with and relate to ILPP in choir. Finally, researchers might replicate this study to explore the short-term and long-term effects of student participation and engagement with mutually-supportive and additive models of IL- FL in high school choral classes. In response to questions about how to involve more students in school music, researchers should explore the relationship between IL in schools, recruitment, and advocacy.

Though this study presents an emerging model that encompasses the conditions needed in a choral classroom to allow IL and FL to be mutually-supportive, more research is needed to further explore these conditions. Among many findings, one implication from this study was that teachers might consider limiting student leadership in choral classes if they want to foster a space ripe for mutually-supportive IL-FL. In response, future scholarship might include exploring the relationship between student leadership and ILPP. Researchers should also explore how teachers might best prepare students to engage in ILPP in a choral setting: making their own choices, working collaboratively, sharing power, and learning by ear. More research is also needed to understand if mixed Choice, Ownership, and Learning Styles (e.g., Informal Learning Style with Formal Ownership) might better prepare students for more informal opportunities (e.g., Informal Learning Style, Ownership, & Choice).

Research is also needed to explore the challenges of ILPP in choir. In this study, students experienced many challenges, among them, challenges with motivation, self-regulation, social interactions, and challenging themselves musically. More research is needed to investigate how inservice choral teachers can most effectively facilitate ILPP.

Finally, researchers should further consider the challenges teachers encounter when attempting to implement mutually-supportive IL-FL in choral contexts, and how teachers might mediate those challenges.

This study also calls for additional research related to preservice teacher education. Most obviously, leaders in the profession should ponder how to break the cycle of institutionalization of choral music values such as sequential patterns of teaching/learning from a singular trained leader, Western Art Music (WAM), and polished products of music. Next, researchers should survey how current preservice teacher preparation programs engage students in IL themselves, as well as the opportunities that they provide for preservice teachers to facilitate IL. Subsequently, researchers should investigate the contributing factors necessary for preservice teachers to develop a musician and teacher identity that includes both IL and FL. Finally, a longitudinal study would be appropriate to study the relationship between preservice teacher preparation program curricula that include/do not include emphases on ILPP and their graduates' likelihood to center ILPP as inservice teachers.

Conclusion

"What can be done to re-orient a field of education like music, when far too many teachers teach the way they were taught using traditional procedures that stupefy and deaden students to the subject matter, rather than working creatively to invigorate and empower them to become thoughtfully engaged, independent music makers?" (Bradley & Goble, 2020, p. 1).

The aim of this qualitative multiple-case study was to investigate Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three public high school choral programs. Using a transformative paradigm, I embarked on this research journey seeking to enact change in music education and hoping to explicitly uncover issues of

power in choral music education. After talking to three teachers and their students, I believe that the time has come to challenge the status quo. I posit that choral educators in elementary, middle, and high school choral contexts should aim to embrace a new set of norms, specifically norms that (a) include democratic learning and mutually-supportive IL-FL, (b) decenter the teacher while centering student voices, and (c) validate each students' musical skillset. By embracing what students bring to the classroom, in-service choral music educators model radical acceptance of all students while providing tools to facilitate, make, and advocate for music.

To embrace this new set of norms, our profession must make some immediate changes. First, we must reassess the aims of choral music education, and ask if the purpose of school music classes is to indoctrinate students in the culture of replicating 'great works of art,' or to provide students tools that they can actively use to explore their present and future musical identities. If we believe that the aim is the latter, we must immediately cease privileging certain musics while discounting others. This practice of socializing preservice and inservice teachers to believe that some musics are inherently more valuable than others remains pervasive. The days of admonishing choral teachers and students for "poor musical taste" must come to an end.

Next, I suggest that the profession immediately move away from using the common term choral "director," as this term does not invite democratic processes, Informal Ownership, or Informal Choice. While on the topic of language, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that the very need to discuss IL and FL as separate entities is also problematic, as its very presence others practices associated with IL. However, formal learning is so pervasive in choral programs in the United States that to provide

space for IL, the two terms—IL and FL—remain necessary. Perhaps someday "ideal choral practices" will so deeply embed student choice, sharing power, and varied learning styles that we could simply refer to IL and FL practices and process as "choral practices and processes." However, for now, we continue to forge on with this model.

Recall that my intention from the outset was not to replace FL with IL, but rather to suggest some key changes in the structure of choral classes across the country. While this study presents compelling reasons to pursue an additive model of IL-FL as a stepping stone to a mutually-supportive model, those engaging in an additive model must remember that this model still privileges formal learning. Thus, the additive model is not adequate as a long-term solution to radical acceptance in choral music education. The work of centering mutually-supportive models of IL-FL must begin in teacher preparation programs; only when preservice teachers experience a mutually-supportive model of IL-FL will they have the self-efficacy to pursue this model in their future classrooms.

This vision of a mutually-supportive IL-FL model can offer many benefits to the choral profession. When engaging in mutually-supportive IL-FL in choral classes, students feel ownership and pride in their musical products while gaining feelings of self-efficacy in their musical skills. They report social benefits, including development of their social identity, closer relationships, and feelings of safety and trust. Finally, students gain life skills, such as the ability to self-regulate, set goals and follow through, and engage with social-emotional skills.

To truly serve all members of student bodies across the nation, the choral profession must decide how to move forward. I believe that young people—the youth in

our classrooms—hold the answers to what creates a relevant, engaging, and motivating choral music education. All we have to do is ask them.

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APPENDIX A

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ISBN/ISSN:	9780199328093
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University or institution	Temple University
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APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS

Confidential

Page 1

Informed Youth Assent: Choir Study

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. Please read carefully, contact the researchers with any questions, and fill in the fields provided. Thank you!

Temple IRB Approved

11/19/2021

Temple University (TU) Institutional Review Board
INFORMED YOUTH ASSENT

Study Title:

Informal Learning Practices and Processes in Three High School Choral Programs: A Multiple Case Study

Protocol Number:

IRB#:28917

Principal Investigator:

Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, PhD
Associate Professor of Music Education
Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts
Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University
2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122
elizabeth.parker@temple.edu

Student Investigator/Researcher:

Aimee D. Pearsall, PhD ABD
PhD Candidate of Music Education
Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts
Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University
2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122
aimee.pearsall@temple.edu

Revision Date: [INSERT REVISION DATE]
Date of IRB Approval: [INSERT APPROVAL DATE EXACTLY MATCHING IRB STAMP after obtaining approval]

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a participant in the choral program at your school.

What should I know about this research?

Someone will explain this research to you. Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact the research team by calling 814-441-3237 or by emailing Dr. Elizabeth Parker at Elizabeth.parker@temple.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at 215-707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following:

Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team. You cannot reach the research team. You want to talk to someone besides the research team. You have questions about your rights as a research subject. You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand how adolescents feel about activities in choir that are led by students instead of their teacher. The researcher wants to understand the enjoyable parts and the challenges of these activities, as well as your feelings related to the experience in general.

Will being in this research benefit me?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, by reflecting on your own learning, you could personally benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of how you think about music how you learn best. This study could benefit others by raising awareness of Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the choral field, potentially leading to more student-centered practices within some classes.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no foreseeable risks or hazards related to your participation in the research. However, you may experience some discomfort discussing your experiences in choir.

How long will I be in this research? What happens if I agree to be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last until June, 2022. Data analysis is expected to conclude by the end of summer 2022.

If you decide to take part in this research study, you will first meet with the researcher for a 10-minute interview (either in person or on Zoom) in late 2021/early 2022 during the school day. These interviews will take place either in a small group or individually, depending on your preference. Soon after, if the researcher needs more information, she may request a 30-60 minute follow-up interview with you (either in person or on Zoom). Requests will be made either in person at your school, or via email/phone. Again, you may choose to interview individually or in a small group. If you are interviewed for a second time, the researcher will write down (transcribe) what you said. She may use a third-party transcription service for this purpose. If so, the researcher will de-identify all aspects of the audio recording before sending it to the transcription service. Next, she will ask you to look over the transcription for accuracy and completeness (again, via email). As the researcher starts to better understand the data, she may request a discussion with you (in a small group, either in person or via Zoom) to understand your thoughts and opinions about the accuracy and completeness of the results. All interviews will be prioritized to take place during lunch periods, free periods, before/after school, or during choir class. The researcher may access your school work, which may include grades/scores.

The researcher will also observe your choir class three to five times over the course of the study. The observations will center around student benefits and challenges with ILPP, as well as the roles played by student and teacher participants during periods of ILPP. You will not be asked to do anything different than normal during these observations. With school district permission, the researcher will also audio record the classes that she observes.

The investigators will also ask your parents or guardian for their permission for you to participate in this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions at any time, please ask us. You can contact us by phone or by e-mail.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research Temple University We may publish or present the results of this research in formats such as research articles, blog posts, conference presentations, professional development workshops, and social media. We may share audio clips from the music-making in class. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Data collected in this research might be de-identified and used for future research or distributed to another researcher for future research without your consent.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your choice to stay in this research.

Audio Recording:

We are asking for your permission to audio record the interview(s) in order to type your words into text. All audio files will be labeled with a pseudonym (a fictitious name). Pseudonyms will also be utilized in the transcripts. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in encrypted files on a password-protected laptop computer.

Student Contact Information:

I understand that the researcher will need to contact me by email to set up the interviews. I also understand that if the researcher is unable to reach me by email, she may contact me via text or phone call.

1) I allow the researcher to contact me via email.
   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No

2) I allow the researcher to contact me via text or phone call.
   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No

3) Student email address: ______________________________

4) Student phone number: ______________________________

Signature Block for Youth

Your signature documents that you agree to take part in this research.

5) I have read this document. All my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate.

○ Yes ○ No

6) Student First Name: __________________________________

7) Student Last Name: __________________________________

8) Student Signature: __________________________________
(Click "Add signature" and use your mouse (or finger on a touchscreen device) to sign.)

9) Date: __________________________________
(Date Signed)

10) Consent obtained by (researcher signature): __________________________________
(Leave blank for researcher to sign)

11) Date: __________________________________
(Leave blank for researcher to complete)

Parent/Guardian Consent: Choir Study

Your child is being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. Please read carefully, contact the researchers with any questions, and fill in the fields provided. Thank you!

Temple IRB Approved

11/19/2021

Temple University (TU) Institutional Review Board
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Study Title:

Informal Learning Practices and Processes in Three High School Choral Programs: A Multiple Case Study

Protocol Number:

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elizabeth.parker@temple.edu

Student Investigator/Researcher:

Aimee D. Pearsall, PhD ABD
PhD Candidate of Music Education
Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts
Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University
2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122
aimee.pearsall@temple.edu

Revision Date: [INSERT REVISION DATE]
Date of IRB Approval: [INSERT APPROVAL DATE EXACTLY MATCHING IRB STAMP after obtaining approval]

Research Consent Summary: Your child is being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This document provides a concise summary of this research. It describes the key information that we believe most people need to decide whether to take part in this research. Later sections of this document will provide all relevant details.

What should I know about this research?

Someone will explain this research to your child. Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether your child takes part is up to you. If your child doesn't take part, it won't be held against you or your child. Your child can take part now and later drop out, and it won't be held against you If you don't understand, ask questions. Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your child's participation will last until June, 2022.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three high school choral programs. Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) in music education are often characterized by learning songs by ear, teacher as facilitator, student autonomy, and the integration of listening, performing, improvising, and composing.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

If your child decides to take part in this research study, the general procedures include: (a) a 10-minute initial interview, (b) potentially a 30-60 minute follow-up interview, (c) reading over a copy of a transcript of their interview and providing feedback to the researcher about the accuracy and completeness of the data, and (d) possibly a final meeting in a small group for students to provide feedback to the researcher about her emerging understandings of the topic.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no foreseeable risks or hazards related to your child's participation in the research. However, student participants may experience some discomfort discussing their experiences in choir.

Will being in this research benefit me?

By reflecting on their own learning, students could personally benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of how they learn best. This could prove helpful both in- and out-of-school.

Additionally, this study could raise awareness of informal learning within music education, potentially leading to more student-centered practices within some classes.

Detailed Research Consent: The rest of this document includes detailed information about this study (in addition to the information listed above).

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

In this consent form "you" generally refers to the research participant. If you are being asked as the legally authorized representative, parent, or guardian to permit the participant to take part in the research, "you" in the rest of this form generally means the research participant.

What should I know about this research?

Someone will explain this research to you. This form sums up that explanation. Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you don't understand, ask questions. Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three high school choral programs. Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) in music education is often characterized by learning songs by ear, teacher as facilitator, student autonomy, and the integration of listening, performing, improvising, and composing. There is a need to better understand these practices and processes in choral classes.

About 20-80 students will take part in this research at your school. Your choral teacher will also participate.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last until June, 2022. Data analysis is expected to conclude by the end of summer 2022.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

If you decide to take part in this research study, you will first meet with the researcher for a 10-minute interview (either in person or on Zoom) in late 2021/early 2022 during the school day. These interviews will take place either in a small group or individually, depending on your preference. Soon after, if the researcher needs more information, she may request a 30-60 minute follow-up interview with you (either in person or on Zoom). Requests will be made either in person at your school, or via email. Again, you may choose to interview individually or in a small group. Parents may request a copy of the interview questions that will be administered. If you are interviewed for a second time, the researcher will write down (transcribe) what you said. She may use a third-party transcription service for this purpose. If so, the researcher will de-identify all aspects of the audio recording before sending it to the transcription service. Next, she will ask you to look over the transcription for accuracy and completeness (again, via email). As the researcher starts to better understand the data, she may request a discussion with you (in a small group, either in person or via Zoom) to understand your thoughts and opinions about the accuracy and completeness of her analysis. The timing of all interviews will be prioritized to take place during lunch periods, free periods, before/after school, or during choir class. The researcher may access your school work, which may include grades/scores.

The researcher will also observe your choir class three to five times over the course of the study. The observations will center around student successes and challenges with ILPP, as well as the roles played by student and teacher participants during periods of ILPP. You will not be asked to do anything different than normal during these observations. With school district permission, the researcher will also audio record the classes that she observes.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible to commit to interview meeting dates and times. Interviews will be held in a setting which allows for confidential interviewing. You will also provide consent for the researcher to audio record the interviews.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no foreseeable risks, hazards, or discomfort to the subjects related to your participation in the research.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

Taking part in this research will not cost you any money.

Will being in this research benefit me?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, by reflecting on your own learning, you could personally benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of how you think about music how you learn best. This study could benefit others by raising awareness of Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the choral field, potentially leading to more student-centered practices within some classes.

What other choices do I have besides taking part in this research?

You do not need to take part in this research. It is your decision, and you have the right to stop your participation at any time. Instead of being in this study, you can choose to continue to participate in your choral program as you typically would.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

Your private information may be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

Although this is not the purpose of this research, we are required to report instances of child abuse and/or neglect to the relevant university and law enforcement agencies.

We may publish or present the results of this research in formats such as research articles, blog posts, conference presentations, professional development workshops, and social media. We may share audio clips from the music-making in class. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your choice to stay in this research.

What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team by informing Dr. Elizabeth Parker (elizabeth.parker@temple.edu). If you decide to stop participating in the study, we will shred your consent and assent forms and delete other data collected that involved you. If you decide to leave the research early, there will be no negative consequences. It will not influence your current or future standing in the choral program at your school or your relationship with Temple University.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research.

Audio Recording:

This research includes audio recording of interviews for transcription purposes. Your identity will be kept confidential throughout. All audio files will be labeled with a pseudonym (a fictitious name). Pseudonyms will also be utilized in the transcripts. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in encrypted files on a password-protected laptop computer.

Participant Information:

1) First Name of Participant (Child): ______________________

2) Last Name of Participant (Child): ______________________

3) Age: ______________________

Student Contact Information:

I understand that the researcher will need to contact the student participant by email in order to set up the interview(s). I also understand that if the researcher is unable to reach my child via email, she may contact my child via text or phone call.

4) I allow the researcher to contact my child via email.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

5) I allow the researcher to contact my child via text or phone call.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

6) Student email address: ______________________

7) Student phone number: __________________________________

Signature Block for Adult Parent/ Guardian Capable of Consent

Your signature documents your permission for your child to take part in this research.

8) I have read this informed consent document. All my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose for my child to participate.

○ Yes ○ No

9) Parent/Guardian First Name: __________________________________

10) Parent/Guardian Last Name: __________________________________

11) Signature of Parent/Guardian:

____
(Click "Add signature" and use your mouse (or finger on a touchscreen device) to sign.)

12) Date:

____
(Date Signed)

13) Consent obtained by (researcher signature):

____
(Leave blank for researcher to sign)

14) Date:

____
(Leave blank for researcher to complete)

Teacher Consent: Choir Study

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. Please read carefully, contact the researchers with any questions, and fill in the fields provided. Thank you!

Temple IRB Approved

11/19/2021

Temple University (TU) Institutional Review Board
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Study Title:

Informal Learning Practices and Processes in Three High School Choral Programs: A Multiple Case Study

Protocol Number:

IRB#:28917

Principal Investigator:

Elizabeth Cassidy Parker, PhD
Associate Professor of Music Education
Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts
Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University
2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122
elizabeth.parker@temple.edu

Student Investigator/Researcher:

Aimee D. Pearsall, PhD ABD
PhD Candidate of Music Education
Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts
Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University
2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122
aimee.pearsall@temple.edu

Revision Date: [INSERT REVISION DATE]
Date of IRB Approval: [INSERT APPROVAL DATE EXACTLY MATCHING IRB STAMP after obtaining approval]

Research Consent Summary: You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This document provides a concise summary of this research. It describes the key information that we believe most people need to decide whether to take part in this research. Later sections of this document will provide all relevant details.

What should I know about this research?

Someone will explain this research to you. Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you. If you don't take part, it won't be held against you. You can take part now and later drop out, and it won't be held against you. If you don't understand, ask questions. Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last until June, 2022.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three high school choral programs. Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) in music education are often characterized by learning songs by ear, teacher as facilitator, student autonomy, and the integration of listening, performing, improvising, and composing.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

If you decide to take part in this research study, the general procedures include: (a) two interviews of approximately an hour in person or via Zoom, (b) potential follow-up conversations, (c) reading over a copy of a transcript of your interviews and providing feedback to the researcher about the accuracy and completeness of the data, (d) allowing the researcher to observe and potentially audio record 3-5 class periods of your choir class, and (e) providing feedback to the researcher about the analysis as themes emerge.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no foreseeable risks or hazards related to your participation in the research. You may experience some discomfort discussing your teaching practices.

Will being in this research benefit me?

By engaging in reflective practices, you could personally benefit by experiencing professional growth, which will ultimately benefit your students. This study could raise awareness of Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the choral field, potentially leading to more student-centered practices within some classes.

Detailed Research Consent: The rest of this document includes detailed information about this study (in addition to the information listed above).

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

What should I know about this research?

Someone will explain this research to you. This form sums up that explanation. Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you don't understand, ask questions. Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to better understand Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the context of three high school choral programs. ILPP in music education is often characterized by learning songs by ear, teacher as facilitator, student autonomy, and the integration of listening, performing, improvising, and composing. Despite ensemble classes existing as the most common course offerings in secondary schools in the United States (Abril & Gault, 2008), most studies about ILPP in school music have taken place in a general music setting. There is a need to better understand ILPP in choral classes.

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last until June, 2022. Data analysis is expected to conclude by the end of summer 2022.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?

Your Role as a Participant:

If you decide to take part in this research study, you will formally interview with researcher Aimee Pearsall at least two times. Your first interview will most likely take place on Zoom in late 2021/early 2022. The second one-hour interview will take place after student interviews conclude, and will take place either in person or via Zoom.

Both interviews will be audio recorded to allow for further analysis. After each interview with you, the researcher will have your interview transcribed. She may use a third-party transcription service for this purpose. If so, the researcher will de-identify all aspects of the audio recording before sending it to the transcription service. Next, the researcher will send you the transcript via email, asking you to read it for accuracy and completeness. As the researcher starts to analyze and better understand the data, she may request a discussion with you to understand your thoughts and opinions about the accuracy and completeness of this analysis.

During the time period of the interviews, the researcher also expects to conduct three to five observations of the student and teacher participants engaging in ILPP in choir. The observations will center around student successes and challenges with ILPP, as well as the roles played by student and teacher participants during periods of ILPP. The schedule of these observations will vary depending on when you have your students engaging in activities that invite ILPP. They will be scheduled for times that are convenient for you and your students. With school district permission, the researcher will also audio record the classes that she observes. During the observational period, the researcher also expects to engage in some conversational dialogue with you. Finally, the researcher will ask you to provide her with artifacts such as curricula, syllabi, and past concert programs.

Your Role as a Facilitator of Student Participation:

At the beginning of the study, you will be asked to identify your choir that is most involved in ILPP during the data collection period. The researcher will sample student participants from this choir only. After your first interview, the researcher will visit the selected choral class via Zoom (for no more than 5-10 minutes) in order to explain the study to the students. The researcher will reach out to the parents and students via email with a link to to the e-consent and e-assent form. After, the researcher may ask you to follow up by sending or posting a reminder using your school's Learning Management System (LMS). The researcher will subsequently conduct initial 10-minute exploratory interviews with small student focus groups consisting of student participants who consented/assented. If these 10 minute interviews take place in person, the researcher will visit the school in order to set up the interviews (prioritizing them for lunch periods, free periods, before/after school, or during choir class if the teacher agrees). If the 10-minute exploratory interviews take place on Zoom, the researcher will ask you to create a "Zoom station" in a private area during choir class (and other free periods), to which student participants could report to interview for 10 minutes. After the researcher concludes the initial interviews, she will then select approximately 10-20 student participants for a follow-up interview. If this interview takes place in person, the researcher will either email the student participants or visit the school to establish an interview time. If this interview takes place via Zoom, the researcher will email the student participants to establish an interview time. After the researcher has begun the analysis, she will form a small group of students to ask about their thoughts and opinions about the accuracy and completeness of the analysis. All interviews will be prioritized to take place during lunch periods, free periods, before/after school, or during choir class if you agree.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible to communicate your availability and commit to interview meeting dates and times. Interviews will be held in a setting which allows confidential interviewing. You will also provide consent to audio record the interviews.

Additionally, you may be asked to help inform parents/guardians and students about the availability of the consent/assent forms by posting on your Learning Management System (LMS).

Finally, the researcher may ask for help with locating an available space for students to interview within the school, and you may be asked to help facilitate student attendance at interviews.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no foreseeable risks or hazards related to your participation in the research. You may experience some discomfort discussing your teaching practices.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?

Taking part in this research will not cost you any money.

Will being in this research benefit me?

By engaging in reflective practices, you could personally benefit by experiencing professional growth, which will ultimately benefit your students. This study could raise awareness of Informal Learning Practices and Processes (ILPP) within the choral field, potentially leading to more student-centered practices within some classes.

What other choices do I have besides taking part in this research?

You do not need to take part in this research. It is your decision, and you have the right to stop your participation at any time.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

Your private information may be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research Temple University Although this is not the purpose of this research, we are required to report instances of child abuse and/or neglect to the relevant university and law enforcement agencies.

At the conclusion of the study, you will receive a final report. We will also offer to give a final presentation to your students. We may publish or present the results of this research in formats such as research articles, blog posts, conference presentations, professional development workshops, and social media. We may share audio clips from the music-making in class. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your choice to stay in this research.

What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?

If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team by informing Dr. Elizabeth Parker (elizabeth.parker@temple.edu). If you decide to stop participating in the study, the researchers will delete your consent and assent forms and delete other data collected that involved you. If you decide to leave the research early, there will be no negative consequences. It will not influence your current or future standing in the choral program at your school or your relationship with Temple University.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

You will not be paid for taking part in this research.

Audio Recording:

This research includes audio recording of interviews for transcription purposes. Your identity will be kept confidential throughout. All audio files will be labeled with a pseudonym (a fictitious name). Pseudonyms will also be utilized in the transcripts. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in encrypted files on a password-protected laptop computer.

Signature Block:

1) I have read this informed consent document. All my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate.

○ Yes ○ No

2) First Name: ______________________________

3) Last Name: ______________________________

4) Participant Signature:

____
(Click "Add signature" and use your mouse (or finger on a touchscreen device) to sign.)

5) Date:

____
(Date Signed)

6) Consent obtained by (researcher signature):

____
(Leave blank for researcher to sign)

7) Date:

____
(Leave blank for researcher to complete)

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects Research that Does Not Require Continuing Review

Date: 19-Nov-2021

Protocol Number:	28917
PI:	PARKER, ELIZABETH
Review Type:	EXPEDITED
Approved On:	19-Nov-2021
Risk:	Minimal risk
Committee:	A1
Sponsor:	NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR
Project Title:	Informal Learning Practices and Processes in Three High School Choral Programs: A Multiple Case Study

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The IRB approved the protocol 28917.

The study was approved under Expedited review. The IRB determined that the research **does not require a continuing review**, consequently there is not an IRB approval period.

If applicable to your study, you can access your IRB-approved, stamped consent document or consent script through ERA. Open the Attachments tab and open the stamped documents by clicking the View link next to each document. The stamped documents are labeled as such. **Copies of the IRB approved stamped consent document or consent script must be used in obtaining consent.**

Note that all applicable Institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation. These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees' websites for further information.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:

- **Modifications - All changes to the research must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.** Changes requiring approval include, but are not limited to, changes in the design or focus of the research project, revisions to the consent document(s) for participants, addition of new measures or instruments, increasing the subject number, changes to the research funding, and changes to the personnel. Changes made to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects and implemented prior to IRB approval must be promptly reported to the IRB.
- **Reportable New Information** - Using the Reportable New Information e-form, report new information items such as those described in HRP - 071 Policy - Prompt Reporting Requirements to the IRB **within 5 days**.
- **Closure report** - Using a closure e-form, submit when the study is permanently closed to enrollment; all subjects have completed all protocol related interventions and interactions; collection

of private identifiable information is complete; and analysis of private identifiable information is complete.

For the complete list of investigator responsibilities, please see the HRP–070 Policy – Investigator Obligations, the Investigator Manual (HRP-910), and other Policies and Procedures found on the Temple University IRB website: https://research.temple.edu/irb-forms-standard-operating-procedures.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.

If you would like to tell us how we are doing, please complete this 5-minute Satisfaction Survey: https://forms.gle/9EcgYGDEEANnvMw37

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Hi! My name is Aimee Pearsall, and I am a music teacher and also a researcher at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. I'm interested in learning more about what students think and feel about choir classes that contain activities that are student-directed, or student-led. I believe that you may participate in some of these activities in your chorus classes, so I'm looking for volunteers to participate in my research study.

If you and your parents/guardians agree to have you participate, I would schedule a 10-minute interview (either in person or on Zoom) in spring 2022. Soon after, if I need more information, I might request a 30-60 minute follow-up interview with you (either in person or on Zoom). You can choose to participate in these interviews alone or with a small group of your peers. Following this interview, I'll will write down (transcribe) what you said. When I write down what you said, I'll assign you, your teachers, and your school fake names (called pseudonyms). Therefore, you will not be identifiable by name in any documents or presentations related to this research. After, I'll ask you to look over the transcription to make sure it is accurate and complete. As I start to better understand the information from the interviews (called data), I might ask you if you might be willing to talk with me once more to understand your thoughts and opinions about the accuracy and completeness of this analysis. In short, if you choose to participate, most of you will be interviewed between one and two times. I'll speak with a couple of you three times. In addition to the interviews, I'll observe your choir class between three and five times. During the observations, you won't be asked to do anything differently than you normally would in choir class.

While I can’t promise any direct benefits, I know that by reflecting on your own learning, you could personally benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of how you think about music and how you learn best. Additionally, this study could benefit others by raising awareness of student-centered learning within the choral field, potentially leading to new practices in some choral classrooms.

I will send your parents an email with a consent form. A consent form is a form for parents and guardians to fill out that gives their permission for you to participate in this research. I will also send you an email with an assent form. An assent form is a form that you fill out to tell me if you give your own permission to participate in this research. If you are interested in participating in this study, have your parents/guardians sign the consent form. Additionally, I would ask that you sign the assent form. Once the consent and assent forms are signed, I will contact those of you who have permission to participate, and we will set up interviews. If you or your parents/guardians have any questions about the study, feel free to contact myself or the other researcher for this study, Dr. Parker, by emailing us. I’m thrilled to have the chance to learn more about your school and your music classes and I look forward to speaking with many of you.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

*Note: These protocols are intended to be implemented in a semi-structured interview format. The researcher may ask additional questions or eliminate/slightly modify some questions, depending on the responses of the participants.

First Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Teacher Participant

1. *Disclaimer:* I will audio record this interview to review and analyze the audio later. This audio will only be shared between myself and a peer researcher at Temple University.

2. *Demographic Questions:*
    a. What pronouns do you use?
    b. Do you mind sharing your age with me?
    c. How many years have you been teaching?
        i. How many years have you been teaching at this school?
    d. Tell me about your musical journey with making music formally and informally.

3. *Questions Derived from Research Purpose and Research Questions:*
    a. Tell me about the choral program at your school.
        i. How has the program developed over time?
        ii. What are your goals for your students and your choral program?
    b. Tell me about your understanding of informal learning (IL) and informal learning practices and processes (ILPP).
    c. How do you incorporate IL/ ILPP in your choral program?
    d. Why do you incorporate IL/ ILPP in your choral program?
        i. Why is IL/ILP important to you?
        ii. Did you always incorporate IL/ILPP in your choral programs?
    e. What are the benefits of incorporating IL/ ILPP in your choral program?
    f. What are the challenges of incorporating IL/ ILPP in your choral program?
    g. Do you notice students changing their behaviors in or outside of school because of ILPP?

4. *Closing:*
    a. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
    b. Would you be willing to share examples of your curriculum, prior concert programs, calendars, syllabi, or any other materials or artifacts that reference IL/ILP in your program?

c. Lastly, I'm going to be assigning pseudonyms to everyone involved in the study. If you'd like, I'd love to invite you to create and suggest a pseudonym for yourself.

Second Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Teacher Participant

Overall Questions

1. What do you enjoy most/ find the most rewarding about being a choral teacher?
2. When you reflect your choral program, what are you most proud of?
3. When students reflect on a year of choir, what do you think they feel most proud of?
4. Can you tell me a little bit about your teaching philosophy?
    1. The data suggests that you value the following [insert emerging values here]. Would you agree/disagree? Do you have anything to add?
5. Tell me a little bit about your expectations for students when they're in choir and the discipline of achievement.
6. What do you want students to take away from their choral experience at your school? Do you have different goals for students in each choir?
7. Talk to me about how you choose repertoire for each group.
8. How do you facilitate buy-in from all students?
9. [Insert school-specific follow-up questions here].

Informal Learning

11. Tell me how you think the [insert Informal Learning focus activity] went last spring.
    a. If you were to do that again, what would you do similarly/differently next time?
12. Talk a little bit about how it feels to have students work in groups as you facilitate.
13. It seems like students had trouble with the following [insert student challenges here]. Did you notice this? Do you have anything to add?
14. From your perspective, what "groundwork" do you try to establish prior to starting [insert IL focus activity here] to ensure student success?

Member Checking

15. [Davis High School Only]. Here are a few draft statements about emerging findings [read draft statements aloud and show on screen]. Would you agree with these? Do you have anything to add?
16. [Morris and Davis High Schools Only]. Look at these code clouds. Tell me what you see. What resonates with you? Is there anything you have to add? Anything with which you disagree? What's missing?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Exploratory Interview with Student Participants

On the day(s) that the researcher conducts the 10-Minute Exploratory Interviews, the researcher will have the students fill out a short form with the answers to the following demographic questions:

a. What is your name?
b. What pronouns do you use?
c. How old are you?
d. What grade are you in?
e. Do you have an assigned voice part in choir? If so, what do you sing?
f. How long have you participated in school choirs?

When the students enter the room, the researcher will ask the following questions:

2. *Disclaimer:* I will audio record this interview in order to review and analyze the audio later. This audio will only be shared between myself and a peer researcher at Temple University. Your teacher will not hear your responses.

3. *Questions Derived from Research Purpose and Research Questions:*
   a. Do you ever participate in activities in choir that are led by students instead of your teacher? If so, can you talk about them?
   b. How do you make music outside of school?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Second Student Interview

Disclaimer: I will audio record this interview in order to review and analyze the audio later. This audio will only be shared between myself and a peer at Temple University. Your teacher will not hear your responses.

1. I will ask you some of the questions I asked last time because I'm looking for more details this time.

2. *Questions Derived from Research Purpose and Research Questions:*
   a. Tell me about the choral program at your school.
   b. How would you describe what happens in a typical choral class?
   c. How would you describe the choir setting for your choir classes and performances?
   d. Do you ever participate in activities in choir that are led by students instead of your teacher? If so, can you describe them?
      i. What does it feel like to participate in these activities?
      ii. What are the benefits of the activities you described?
         1. What do you enjoy about these activities?
         2. What have you learned by participating in these activities?
      iii. What are the challenges of the activities you described?
         1. Is there anything about these activities that you don't enjoy?

iv. How do those activities impact your experience in the choral program at school?
v. Do those activities impact your actions, thoughts, or experiences outside of school?
vi. Have you developed any skills or grown in other ways as a result of these activities?
vii. Why do you think that your teacher incorporates these activities into the choral program?

e. Describe your ideal music class.

3. *Closing:*
    a. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Third Student Interview (Davis High School Only)

1. How did you feel about the Spectacular performance?
2. Tell me about the process of preparing for the Spectacular.
3. Is there any advice you would have for other choir teachers who want to do informal learning, meaning learning directed by students in choir?

Semi-Structured Member Checking Interview with Students

Davis High School

1. [Researcher shows students a series of code clouds]. Look at these code clouds. Tell me what you see. What resonates with you? Is there anything you have to add? Anything with which you disagree? What's missing?
    a. Overall Classroom Culture
    b. Teacher Values/Attitudes/Beliefs
    c. Overall Spectacular
    d. Benefits Spectacular
    e. Challenges Spectacular
    f. Overall Talent Day
    g. Benefits Talent Day
    h. Challenges Talent Day

East High School

1. [Researcher shows students a series of code clouds]. Look at these code clouds. Tell me what you see. What resonates with you? Is there anything you have to add? Anything with which you disagree? What's missing?
    1. Overall Classroom Culture
    2. Teacher Values/Attitudes/Beliefs
    3. Overall Senior Tributes
    4. Benefits Senior Tributes
    5. Challenges Senior Tributes

6. Overall Large Group Arrangement
7. Benefits Large Group Arrangement
8. Challenges Large Group Arrangement

Morris High School

1. [Researcher shows students a series of code clouds]. Look at these code clouds. Tell me what you see. What resonates with you? Is there anything you have to add? Anything with which you disagree? What's missing?
    a. Overall Classroom Culture
    b. Teacher Values/Attitudes/Beliefs
    c. Overall Team-Time
    d. Benefits Team-Time
    e. Challenges Team-Time
    f. Overall Make Something Sessions
    g. Benefits Make Something Sessions
    h. Challenges Make Something Sessions