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Music Literacy: A Multicase Study of Five Choral Directors' Use and Understanding of Choral Music Literacy in the Choral Classroom

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MUSIC LITERACY: A MULTICASE STUDY OF FIVE SECONDARY CHORAL

DIRECTORS' USE AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHORAL LITERACY IN THE

CHORAL CLASSROOM

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by

Alicia Romero-Sardiñas

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To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
        College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Alicia Romero-Sardiñas, and entitled Music Literacy: A Multicase Study of Five Choral Directors' Use and Understandings of Choral Music Literacy in the Choral Classroom, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

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DEDICATION

"Legacy is planting seeds you'll never see grow."- Hamilton

from <u>Hamilton</u> by Lynn Manuel Miranda

This manuscript is dedicated to my first teachers, Alina and Hugo Romero, who worked tirelessly, encouraged me, and always supported me throughout any endeavor I took on. It is dedicated to all the teachers who build up their students, who inspire and guide along the journey of life; and it is dedicated to all the music teachers who selflessly give of themselves daily so that their students may carry on their legacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally, I must thank all the teachers in my life; those who personally taught me, those who have been my colleagues and allowed me to use them as guinea pigs in the earliest moments of my research, and finally those who allowed me to observe and interview them. I think all of these individuals are rock stars who deserve many more accolades than our society permits. These are my heroes, and the people I hope to continue to learn from.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Linda Spears-Bunton, Major Professor

The purpose of the present multi-case study was to give experienced choral music educators a voice. It sought to describe, examine, and understand the perceptions and use of elements within choral music literacy of five choral music educators. These elements were specifically sight-reading, text analysis, and composition. Research questions included 1) What are the perceptions and understandings of choral music literacy held by these choral music educators? 2) How do these choral music educators design and implement their curriculum? and 3) How can choral music educators balance performance requirements and the elements of choral music literacy, which are invaluable in the creation of independent music making? The current research was guided by ideas grounded in constructivism, critical literacy, and transactional theory as a theoretical lens. Participants were selected purposively following the previous work of Garret (2013). Participants included three females and two males, two middle school and three high school choral music educators, with teaching careers ranging from eight years to 38 years in an urban city in the south with diverse populations. Five mini cases were

bound together including participants' interviews, observations, and lesson plans. The data collection included 15 interviews, 18 observations, and supplemental documents such as lesson plans and musical scores. Data analysis was inductive; 48 codes emerged and were gathered into five themes including musicianship skills and development, interpersonal connection, teacher qualities and responsibilities, student involvement, and growth mindset.

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INTRODUCTION

> *". . . the arts have been an inseparable part of the human*
> *journey; indeed, we depend on the arts to carry us toward*
> *the fullness of our humanity. We value them for themselves,*
> *and because we do, we believe knowing and practicing*
> *them is fundamental to the healthy development of our*
> *children's minds and spirits. That is why, in any civilization*
> *- ours included - the arts are inseparable from the very*
> *meaning of the term 'education.' We know from long*
> *experience that no one can claim to be truly educated who*
> *lacks basic knowledge and skills in the arts."*
> *–National Standards for Arts Education (1994)*

Literacy, in its various forms, is fundamental to the continuation of any civilization and is intrinsic to every discipline in the education of the human race (National Standards for Arts Education, 2014). Literacy is commonly referred to as a skill; the ability to read, write, understand, and interact with text of a community or discipline. Even so, the importance of literacy is often overlooked within the context of the arts. The 1994 passage of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act,* brought on a standards movement, which originally did not include the arts as a core content area. The arts were later adopted as a core content area in the final version of the act, and a consortium of organizations representing teachers of various art forms released the National Standards for Arts Education in 1994. The National Standards for Arts Education were revamped in 2014. A currently existing reality, the arts in general, must fight for representation and acknowledgement as a valuable and integral part of education. The current study was undertaken to elucidate literacy within the general context of music and music education, but more specifically within the context of choral music education. Music education is the large umbrella which includes all aspects of

music education; choral music education is specifically geared towards the choral art form. Literacy is necessary as a means of allowing people to think, understand, and create independently. In a world where so much information is constantly bombarding the populace, literacy provides humans with a tool to sort through the muck.

Arts education, specifically music education, provides a way of helping students develop and travel through the historical and artistic venues of humanity. It also prepares students to shape and create the future. The ways in which this is accomplished is first, in the recreation of music from the past or other cultures. The second, is by allowing students to play with, alter, or create new artistic forms. The notion is supported in the National Standards for the Arts Education (2014), which explained that the arts help our civilizations by communicating experiences and feelings that transcend specific points in time; ergo, we educate students in the arts for this reason. There is a convergence between the purpose of music and literacy in that both are forms of communication. Music communicates feelings, emotions, ideas, and sometimes stories to an audience as well as the performer. Literacy is a means of communication. As such, music education when intentional about enhancing student literacy, typically results in improved (reciprocal) outcomes in both areas. Krist (2002) defined literacy as "a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears" (p. 368). Through this lens of literacy as a means of communication, choral music education is then specifically presented in the current study as a form of literacy that teaches students to use their unique voices to better recover meaning from the past and communicate that meaning with the present, and future communities and audiences.

Choral Music Literacy as a term does not currently exist in the research literature. For the purpose of the current study, choral music literacy has been operationalized as the ability to independently (a) analyze the musical and textual information on the page, (b) evaluate and make choices about how to communicate this information to general audiences, and (c) assess the outcome of these choices. The English Language Arts Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019) state that students should be able to "read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it" (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R1). The standards also state that students should be able to "determine central ideas of themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas," (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R2) and that students should be able to "interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone" (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R4). These are all examples of what Rosenblatt (1995) describes as efferent reading. The efferent reading refers to the factual and functional aspects of a text. When choral students are performing their music, the National Arts Standards for Traditional and Emerging ensemble strands states that students should be able to "analyze creators' content and how they manipulate elements of music to provide insight into their intent and inform performances." In other words, the students should be able to recognize what the composer intended in the music, on the basis of both musical notation—the symbols on the page which denote units of time/measure, speed, volume, and pitch—as well as the words utilized in conjunction with the notes to share the intent with the audience during a performance. The National Standards also state that students

should be able to "make an interpretive decision based on their understanding of context and expressive intent." Again, students must look beyond the words alone, or the notes alone, to recognize the context and intent of the music they will perform and have a personal connection or engagement with the music, in effect an aesthetic reading.

Historically, music education classes at the secondary level sought to prepare students primarily for performances (Demorest, 2001; Freer, 2009). Beginning in the latter part of the 20th century and today, music education has recommended a comprehensive approach to teaching music, which includes music literacy–commonly understood as the ability to read and play or sing the notes on the page—and composition—the ability to create musical phrases, or even songs for others to perform. Unfortunately, the goal of this comprehensive approach is not always met because of limited rehearsal time, student skills, and performance expectations (Berg & Sindberg, 2014). Amongst choral musicians, music literacy is often limited to sight-reading— described as the ability to read and sing music at first sight. Sight-reading, while an element and important skill in a comprehensive approach to teaching music, does not necessarily allow the student to explore and understand all the nuances found on the page. The present study was conducted to understand choral music educators' perceptions of choral music literacy and the processes in the classroom that facilitate choral music literacy. The elements of choral music literacy include sight-reading, text analysis, understanding of musical information, evaluation on how to best communicate information to the audience, and assessing outcomes. The present study sought to describe, examine and understand the choral music educators use of literacy elements such as sight-reading, composition, and text analysis within the framework of choral

music. The next section examines some of the ways in which literacy and music literacy converge and diverge.

Literacy and Music Literacy: Differences and Similarities

Literacy is a term used to mean a great many things. According to Kist (2002), "in order to be read, a poem, an equation, a painting, a dance, a novel, or a contract each requires a distinctive form of literacy" (p. 368). Powell (2009) stated that "genuine literacy is purposeful and intentional; it is used to reflect, to express ideas, to entertain, to persuade" (p. 11). Writing, reading, listening, speaking, and thinking are all components of literacy that are developed through social interactions. Literacy is acquired through meaningful, authentic encounters with text, teachers, peers, and other adults (Hayes, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1994). Therefore, literacy implies the ability to decode, process, and synthesize information that is not necessarily verbalized or written, but is understood given context and/or subtext. Literacy is the ability to understand beyond the plain sense of the text or score, including nuance, sensibility, and sensitivity within a particular community.

Given this background, literacy in the current study was defined as the ability and volition to read and understand the symbols, sounds, and gestures within a community of "readers" and interact with them beyond the superficial. Simply stated, literacy is a means and form of communication. In this way, the general definition of literacy aligns with music literacy; which refers to the ability to read and write musical notation, to perform notation without the aid of an instrument, and to have a knowledge and appreciation for multiple musical styles. In other words, individuals who are musically literate can read and understand the symbols on the page, recognize the accuracy of the

sounds that are created, and understand the gestures of the conductors or other individuals who may be leading an ensemble or playing in the group with them. If the goal of literacy is to read and interact within a community beyond the superficial, plain sense of a given text, then music literacy cannot be limited to the notes on the page because notation—pitch and rhythm—is simply the lowest common denominator. Rather, music literacy must include auditory responses and musical collaboration or communication between students, director, the music, and the audiences. Music is complex, therefore music as a form of literacy is written, heard, and felt; it is through music education that this form of literacy is developed. General music education refers to all forms of music instruction, including but not limited to general concepts, choral, instrumental, or theoretical. Choral music education is specific to the study of choral music, which is a vocal art form in which multiple individuals sing together. In the current study, choral music education specifically was deemed as a vehicle that encouraged and built music literacy skills.

Choral Music Education and Choral Music Literacy: Similarities and Differences

Currently, choral music education in the United States of America primarily involves groups of students singing together, music reading, and varying performance opportunities. In 2017, the Give a Note Foundation conducted a survey of musical class offerings in public schools and found that at the middle school level, the most common music courses offered were band (91%) and choir (83%). The same thing was true at the high school level, with band (93%) and choir (89%). Participation in a choir requires individuals to sing in a group, with a variety of individual sections or parts, in multiple languages, with or without accompaniment, while maintaining a sense of unity in the sound that is produced. Unity here refers to blend, a technique which results in similarity

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of tone production—the way in which the sound is created amongst the group—and agreement on enunciation throughout the words. The choir must have a general agreement on how to pronounce all the words including vowel formation throughout the group.

Choral students and choral music educators are known to provide opportunities for performances for the parents, schools, and community in which they teach. The choral students and music educators also participate in adjudication events where they are judged in terms of their choral tone. Tone refers to the timbre or color created by the individual and ensemble when singing, and there are tones that are considered appropriate for different genres of singing. Norris (2004) posited that only 17 states include sight-reading as a part of the adjudication process, which means that this is an aspect of choral music that is not adjudicated as often as tone, an element of performance. As previously stated, sight-reading is the ability to see music for the first time, and produce the sounds intended by the notes on the page at first sight. Many of the secondary music components—Band, Orchestra, and Chorus—in multiple states have sight reading as an element in their adjudication process. Amongst musicians, music literacy is commonly understood to be the ability to read and write musical notation. Music literacy education reflects the voice of Hungarian music educator, Zoltán Kodály "who considered the goal of music literacy for everyone to be an ideal" (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 439). If music literacy was an important goal in choral music education, it would be a larger portion of the adjudication process throughout the country, as opposed to just within 17 states.

Today, music literacy in the choral classroom is assumed to refer to sight-reading or sight-singing music, which is the reading of the notes on the page and producing the sounds intended. Although sight-reading is considered to be an important component of music literacy, "surveys of choral directors [music educators] have found that while many favor sight-singing [sight-reading] instruction, few devote significant rehearsal time to teaching it" (Demorest, 2001, p. 1). In the scholarly literature to date, music literacy and sight-singing are interchangeable terms; music literacy is reduced to sight-reading. The consensus is that music literacy is important, but it specifically and narrowly means sight-reading in the secondary choral classroom. While sight-reading is important and valid, it is limiting. It means that literacy in the choral classroom stops at note reading and does not take into account the text choir students sing, or the aesthetic experiences they may have through their learning and performing of choral music.

Choral Music Literacy: Interplay between Literacy and Choral Music

The National Core Arts Standards Conceptual Framework (2014) stated that the arts are a form of communication with "unique symbol systems and metaphors that convey and inform life experiences" (p. 10) as well as a way of understanding. That is, depending on the art form, there are symbol systems that are particular to each strand. In music, the symbol system includes the notation that describes pitch, duration, and dynamics. Additionally, knowing what the symbols mean and understanding the context in which they are found, are a way of knowing the information that is particular to the art form. Taken together, choral music literacy should include the traditional view of music literacy as the ability to read the notes on the page; moreover, our understanding and

application of music literacy should additionally include what the students can do with that information.

A search of the research literature did not produce any results on the term "choral music literacy," which means, as previously stated, that the term is not currently in the scholarly literature. The searches that did yield results were when the terms were separated, "choral music" and "literacy" with results that discussed connections between the two as separate entities. Comprehensive musicianship did appear in a few articles, but never connected to music literacy or choral music specifically. Comprehensive musicianship is a term used in music education journals and it is derived from the idea that music education could be improved by "integrating aspects of music usually studied as separate and discrete subjects" (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 441). It integrates music history, theory, performance, and conducting. Mark and Gary (2007) pointed out that traditionally, "American school performance ensembles had no formal curriculum" (p. 441). While comprehensive musicianship sought to remedy some gaps in the curriculum, it is still very broadly used in music education journals and rarely specifically applied to choral music education. It is important to research the concept of choral music literacy further to build that bridge between knowledge from the educational spectrum, the music education spectrum, and the choral music spectrum.

To reiterate, for the purpose of the present study, choral music literacy has been operationalized as the ability to independently (a) analyze the musical and textual information on the page, (b) evaluate and make choices about how to communicate this information to general audiences, (c) and assess the outcome of these choices. Choral music educators have the opportunity to teach their students to sing melodies, which are

the main ideas of a musical work. They also have the opportunity to teach students to understand and sing harmonies, which are the supportive and sometimes implied parts of a musical work. Choral music educators also have opportunities to identify text within the musical works and teach students to respond to dynamics, how loudly or softly to perform a section, both marked in the score or requested by the director. Taken together, all of these things create an opportunity for an aesthetic experience—personal interaction—for students and audiences alike. When choral students are performing, they are interacting, with symbols, sounds, and gestures of the musical community. The musical community includes the composer, the conductor, the audience, and other students as musicians. It is the responsibility of the choral music educator to teach choral music literacy in all of the layers outlined above.

Problem Statement

The National Core Arts Standards (2014) stated that literacy in the arts includes creating, performing, responding, and connecting. Prior research states that choral music educators often spend the majority of their time in the classroom focused on the performance aspect of their subject matter, preparing students to perform for concerts and evaluations or competitions. Research into sight-reading demonstrates that choral directors do not spend enough time teaching how to sight-read (Demorest 2001; Freer 2009; Garret 2013; Ganschow 2014). Teachers working towards performance and not teaching sight-reading skills, contribute to the creation of a teacher centered classroom where performance is the end goal. The elements of choral music literacy include sight-reading, text analysis, understanding of musical information, and evaluation on how to

best communicate information to the audience. The aforementioned research does not include the voice of the teacher.

Choral music tends to have a text, often derived from poetry or storytelling. Choral music educators must therefore teach their students to sing the notation and understand and communicate the text to their audience. How can we understand the pedagogy of choral music educators in the classroom without the voice of the teachers? I believe that choral music educators need to be given an opportunity to explain what they do, and why they do it, as means of helping the profession. By providing teachers an opportunity to share their thoughts and work, concrete examples of teaching methods can be presented, and choral music educators are empowered. The problem is, how do exemplar choral music educators balance requirements that are historically, socially, and culturally understood as part of a choral classroom and the elements of choral music literacy, which are invaluable in a well-rounded education, and in the creation of independent music making?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was to give five experienced choral music educators a voice and thus describe, examine, and understand the use of elements within choral music literacy of five choral music educators. What are their curricular and instructional choices? Why do these teachers do what they do? How do they do it daily? The current study sought to identify whether or not choral music educators currently build choral music literacy in the classroom through classroom observations, interviews with choral music educators, and lesson plan analysis when provided. The present study investigated possible connections between music education and general education whose common

thread is literacy skills. The goal herein was to identify how choral music directors (a) teach in the classroom, (b) build understanding of the processes and curricular choices that lead to performances, and (c) provide examples from which other choral music educators could learn and grow.

Significance of the Study

Most of the previous research in the choral classroom is focused on the quality and/or priorities and approaches of rehearsal time (Ganschow, 2014), on the effectiveness of conductors (Silvey, 2014), on the use of nonperformance time in the choral rehearsal (Watkins, 1993), and on how teachers teach (Kratus, 2007). Topics included in quality of rehearsal time include, but are not limited to, musical repertoire, sight-reading inclusion, and critical thinking. Research into critical thinking and music education by Topoğlu (2014) discussed the teacher's role and ways in which critical thinking skills can be fostered within the music classroom. Topoğlu (2014) concluded that "assisting students in their development of critical thinking skills will help them listen, study a piece of music, and discover meaning beyond that which is elucidated by others" (p. 2255). In other words, teachers can and do build broad critical thinking skills in the choral classroom (Shaw, 2014; Topoğlu, 2014). Shaw (2014) argued that critical thinking in the music classroom is atypical, but it is not impossible and that "the balance between time spent on practicing skills vs. knowledge construction" (p. 69) needs to be considered carefully by choral music educators. Garret (2013) discussed the relationship between time spent in nonperformance and critical thinking skills in a high school choral rehearsal and found that teachers spend the majority of their time instructing rather than allowing

students to respond. Garret also noted that 46% of nonperformance rehearsal activity was spent on lower order thinking skills.

Choral music educators are often focused on performance and fail to engage students in the other aspects of choral music literacy. These include creating and composing, understanding and evaluating choral music meanings and intentions. Importantly, relating choral musical ideas to personal meanings and external context, and communicating these meanings are critical to building students' capacities for communication through the choral art form. "Concern remains that emphasis in choral music teaching is on the performance rather than on the knowledge and skills that young people can apply beyond their school's choral rehearsal room" (Freer, 2011, p. 166). Bower (2004) argued "a choral curriculum that focuses on performance without the integration of history, theory, and composition, or without providing opportunities for the singers to pose or to solve problems is limited in its effectiveness" (p. 3). Brinson (1996) stated "if choral music educators broaden their focus to include a systematic study of music reading, vocal technique, style, history, aural skills, basic theory, and music terminology, students are more likely to gradually learn important skills and acquire knowledge necessary to build a firm foundation for musicianship" (p. 56). However, the available scholarly literature strongly indicates that choral music educators are focused on performance and may miss opportunities to fulfill the scope of choral music literacy.

Research shows that many choral music educators work diligently on the performance aspect of the standards (Bowers, 2004; Freer, 2011; Garret, 2013; Watkins, 1993). As such, much of their class time is spent on learning notes, sight-reading, and vocal technique. While the literature explains what happens in the choral classroom, very

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few studies address the perspective of the choral music educator; that is who they are and why they do what they do. Considering all these factors, the present study sought to first give the choral music educators a voice in the literature. The present study also sought to find ways in which secondary choral music educators built choral music literacy. Finally, it sought to find how choral music educators developed an understanding of their curricular choices and definitions of choral music literacy.

Research Questions

Central Question

The central research question was: How do choral music educators balance requirements that are historically, socially, and culturally understood as part of a choral classroom with the elements of choral music literacy?

Sub-Questions

1. What are the perceptions and understandings of choral music literacy specific to choral music educators?

2. How do choral music educators design and implement their curricula?

3. How do these choral music educators balance performance requirements and the elements of choral music literacy that are invaluable in the creation of independent music making?

Organization of the Study

The study was a multi-case study analysis of five individual choral music educators. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define a case study as a "detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject" (p. 271). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) further defined a multi-case study as a study where two or more "subjects, settings, or depositories of data"

are being examined. Stake (2006) argued that the "single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases" (p. 31). Stake (2006) also referred to the multi-case study as the "quintain" or the group, category, or phenomenon to be studied, of which the individual cases are a part (p. 31). The present multi-case study began by examining the particularities, or unique elements, pertaining to each individual choral music educator's definitions of choral music literacy. Following that, the cases were examined to understand or note, "what is common among the cases as well as dissimilar" (Stake, 2006, p. 34). The current study sought to understand how choral music educators are teaching choral music literacy skills.

A case study should go in depth, but a multi-case study of two or three cases "does not show enough of the interactivity between programs and their situations" (Stake, 2006, p. 50). As such, the subjects were limited to five choral music educators. Given the sample size, the present study was not intended to be generalizable to the general population of choral music educators. The study began with an interview of each director for a minimum of one hour. The first interview explored the question of who these choral music educators are and their backgrounds in music in general and choral music in particular. Additional interviews were conducted to understand what the choral music educators perceived choral music literacy to be, as well as the understandings of how their perceptions influenced their pedagogical practices. In an effort to understand how the choral music educators designed and implemented their curricula, the study involved three to four live observations per director of their classroom and two 45-60-minute interviews, one half way through the observations and a final interview following the last

observation. As previously stated, choral music literacy is not currently a term used in the literature, the study sought to define it and describe elements of it in action.

There were three delimitations for this study. First, the possible participants chosen within the area were selected using the descriptions found in the Garret (2013) study on choral director's use of instructional time which included: (a) a minimum of five years teaching, (b) participation in regional choral music performance assessments, (c) minimum scores of excellent or superior at music performance assessments, and (d) students who had participated in all-state within the last five years. Second, a large portion of the research was derived from interviews of these five music educators. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) state that qualitative research interviews attempt "to understand the world from the subjects' point of view" (p 3). As one can never completely understand another person, extra effort was made to ensure that the subjects' point of view was clear. There was extensive use of member checking, whereby the subjects were continuously asked to read over their responses and provide further feedback as well as adjustments if necessary. Third, participants selected were public school choral music educators from a specific geographical area, an urban city of a southern state. The community of choral music educators is quite small as compared to general teachers. Given the requirement of maintaining anonymity amongst a very small subset of teachers, details that could threaten anonymity, such as specific location and ages, were removed.

Researcher in the Field

The subjects are in the same field as the researcher. As such, there was a prior professional relationship with most of these individuals. I have been working as a public-

school choral music educator in this community for the past 17 years and spent four years as the District Chairperson for the state vocal association. I am a person who has worked in the district, in the public schools for this long.

Summary

Music has been an official part of the public education curriculum in the United States of America since the early 18th century all the way through the 21st century to date. Choral music is currently one of the primary group courses offered in high school to teach music. The National Core Arts Standards (2014) stated that literacy in the arts includes creating, performing, responding, and connecting. The literature indicates that choral music educators often spend the majority of their time in the classroom focused on the performance aspect of their subject matter, and while performing is important, more time could be spent creating, responding, connecting, and communicating elements of choral music literacy. The purpose of undertaking this study was to give experienced choral directors a voice and thus begin to understand, describe, and examine choral music educators' perceptions and use of concepts within choral music literacy. The following Chapter 2 review of the literature gives a strong theoretical background and shows gaps in the literature that the current study was conducted to help fill.

CHAPTER TWO

EXPOSITION: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present study was grounded in three theoretical lenses: constructivism, critical literacy, and transactional theory. As such, this chapter is presented in four sections. First, I describe the theoretical perspectives that informed my research. Second, I give a historical context of music education within the United States and an understanding of Arts Curriculum. The third and fourth sections of the research, I point out the gaps in the voice of the teachers, as well as qualitative research.

Throughout the current study, choral music literacy was operationalized as the ability to independently analyze and realize musical and textual information on the page, evaluate and make choices about how to communicate the information for audiences, and assess the outcome of those choices. The study is a multi-case study of five experienced choral music educators in an urban, southern city, specifics have been omitted to protect the anonymity of the participants. The parameters set for a review of the literature were keywords: (a) literacy, (b) choral literacy, (c) music literacy, (d) choral music and literacy, (e) music and literacy, (f) critical theory in music education, (g) critical theory in choral music, (h) constructivism in music, and (i) constructivism in choral music. Together, these ideas created the focus for this chapter. The final parameter was set for research between 2002-2017, although for some elements the only articles or studies found were prior to those dates. Because of the specificity of my study, the review of the literature was concerned more about finding connections than finding full articles that discuss all the elements required.

Discussion of the Theoretical Perspective: Building Knowledge

As previously noted, given the definition of choral music literacy, the theoretical lenses that correlated best with my study were constructivism, critical literacy, and transactional theory. Choral music literacy includes the ability to analyze musical and textual information, and communicate this information. Therefore, choral music literacy is connected to constructivism, in that the student musicians co-create the information that is communicated to the audiences and how it is interpreted (Cleaver & Ballantyne, 2014). Choral music literacy is also connected to critical literacy, which is an instructional approach that encourages "readers" to analyze text and discover or construct, underlying messages. Choral students and their music educators must consider the musical notation and the text to recognize why the composer may have set the words to those particular notes; this discovery of the underlying meanings or messages are examples of critical literacy. Finally, choral music literacy is connected to transactional theory, which argues that it is in the interaction and the experience of the music that students are transformed. The interaction among the music, the text, and the performer, empowers the performer to choose how best to communicate the musical information with general audiences (Rosenblatt, 1995). All three theories work together and have similar tenets at their core and together provide a strong framework which helped to construct the study. In the following paragraphs, each theory is described in general, and then specifically within the context of the choral music classroom.

Constructivism and Choral Music: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Constructivism begins with the premise that knowledge exists in the mind of an individual. In an article called "Constructivism and Educational Practice," Hendry

(1996) argued, "constructivism represents a fundamental challenge to many aspects of educational praxis and may change significantly the ways by which young people are mass educated" (p. 19). The article described key principles of constructivism and how they can be applied in the classroom. The principles that are most applicable to the present study were: (a) knowledge exists in the minds of people only; (b) the meanings or interpretations people give to things depends on their knowledge; (c) knowledge is constructed from within an interrelation with the world; (d) knowledge is constructed through perception and action; and (e) construction of knowledge requires energy and time. Given these ideas, knowledge of choral music literacy exists in the minds of the teachers who teach choral music and the students in their classrooms who co-create the knowledge. The goal of the present study was to examine and understand choral music literacy knowledge from the teacher's perspective and give the teachers a voice. The voices of teachers are critical given the lack of literature.

Choral music educators and students interpret the music, or text, depending on their knowledge; knowledge is constructed by interacting with the music via listening, creating, responding, and recreating it. These are elements of choral music literacy that are common knowledge to those who practice choral music on a daily basis, such as individuals participating in the high school choral classroom. The choral music literacy knowledge is constructed through perception of the music, perception of directors' expectations, and the action of creating or realizing these sounds. Students bring with them their own knowledge, which can be as individual as each student; with their teacher, students can create a choral world in their classroom. Finally, within this context of choral music, construction of knowledge is dependent on energy and time given to the

art. Hendry (1996) stated that in constructivism, "curriculum is the materials, language and behavior which teachers use to promote students' construction" (p. 24).

Ylimaz (2008) described the basic features of constructivism and explained the assumptions and principles of constructivist pedagogy. While Hendry (1996) discussed the individual nature of knowledge, Yilmaz (2008) described the interaction between the teacher and the student in the creation of knowledge. Yilmaz (2008) stated, "the locus of intellectual authority resides in neither the teacher nor the resources, but in the discourse facilitated by both teachers and learners" (p. 163). Translated to the choral classroom, it is in the discussions and collaborative choices that directors and students make, that they co-create the music they present to the audience. Constructivism as applied to the choral classroom is an argument in favor of giving students more ownership of their musical experiences in the classroom. Yilmaz (2008) argued, teachers should "facilitate and guide rather than dictate autocratically." Autonomy, mutual reciprocity of social relations, and empowerment characterize a constructively conducted classroom.

Fox (2001) had a very different perspective concerning constructivism. In the article "Constructivism Examined," Fox (2001) argued that constructivism is an oversimplification of common sense. "Constructivism is basically a metaphor for learning, likening the acquisition of knowledge to a process of building or construction" (Fox, 2001, p. 23). Like Hendry (1996), Fox (2001) described a series of tenets that together define constructivist views of learning. Unlike Hendry, (1996) who noted six categories. They are: (a) learning is an active process, (b) knowledge is constructed, rather than innate, or passively absorbed, (c) knowledge is invented not discovered, (d) all knowledge is personal and idiosyncratic and is socially constructed, (e) learning is a

process of making sense of the world, and (f) effective learning requires meaningful, open-ended, challenging problems for the learner to solve. While they are not in the same order, these statements are extremely similar to Hendry (1996) and point to similar uses in the choral classroom. The difference between Hendry (1996) and Fox (2001) is in the overall tone as Fox (2001) concluded that while

> Learners do need to interact, to have dialogues, to solve problems and to make sense of new ideas; but they also often find it difficult to see why they should make the effort, fail to pay attention, misconstrue new concepts, forget what they learned ten minutes ago and fail to apply fragile new knowledge effectively to new contexts. (p. 33)

I found that constructivist research articles involving music educators were few and far between. In one such qualitative research study involving informal interviews of teachers, Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) discussed their perspectives on constructivism with a focus on how constructivism would look inside a classroom. Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) affirmed that "constructivism links the knower and known by assuming meaning to be a personal, individual construct rather than external to the individual" (p. 229). The goal of their research was not to find a correct approach to implementing constructivism in the classroom, but to explore the issues with which to continue dialogue. Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) found multiple ways in which music teachers use constructivist ideas in the classroom. My study was undertaken to document what choral music educators do in their classrooms, as well as to expand the Cleaver & Ballantyne (2014) study.

In an article entitled "Between Constructivism and Connectedness," Gordon (2008) posited the importance of understanding "who" the teacher is in addition to constructivist methods in teacher education programs. Much as Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) described, Gordon (2008) agreed that constructivist pedagogy is not meant to be prescriptive. Gordon (2008) emphasized that there must be room for teachers to teach in the ways that are most comfortable for them and that it is not enough to give future teachers a "how to" but also to help them see who they are. Gordon (2008) argued that in "most teacher education programs that emphasize a constructivist model of learning, the focus seems to be on helping candidates develop a deeper awareness of content knowledge, pedagogy, and students with diverse needs and to acquire the knowledge to help all students learn" (p. 327). However, "the ability to connect with one's subject matter, students, and self is more essential to good teaching than technique" (Gordon, 2008, p. 328). In other words, at the core, a teacher's knowledge of their students and subject matter are much more important than their knowledge of the best teaching tricks.

Hendry (1996), Gordon (2008), and Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) all concurred on the importance of the teacher in a constructivist classroom; yet they also noted the limitations. Hendry argued that, "in communication we generate meaning for the language used by others and partly to the extent that we attribute agency to ourselves and others, we evoke meaning in others" (p. 21). Hendry further noted, "knowledge exists in the minds of students and the teacher only" (p. 23); from a constructivist perspective, meaning is given to the curriculum presented by the students and the teacher, guided by their existing knowledge and beliefs. Hendry's theories applied to choir implies that it is in the everyday work of singing, sight-reading, analyzing text, and deciding musical

interpretation that teachers and choral music educators co-create the knowledge of choral music literacy.

Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) found that "it is often difficult for teachers who claim to be constructivist to teach constructively all the time, when dealing with the realities in the classroom" (p. 237). The realities of the classroom create a need for scaffolding and facilitating of learning, regardless of constructivist ideas and the appropriateness of teacher centered vs. student centered approaches to music teaching. Cleaver and Ballantyne concluded, "in order to close potential gaps between theory and practice, constructivism is best not studied as isolated, technical and methodological theory abstracted from reflective, self-inquiry" (p. 239). Constructivism works if there are conditions to support it in the classroom. "There is a need for a teacher to provide a supportive environment so that students can feel free to take risks" (Hendry, 1996, p. 28). Gordon (2008) concluded that "a constructivist classroom is one in which there is a balance between teacher and student-directed learning and requires teachers to take an active role in the learning process, including formal teaching" (p. 325). Constructivist ideas are embedded in critical literacy theory.

Critical Literacy and Choral Music: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Critical literacy is a term that stems from critical pedagogy, which was developed by Paolo Freire (1970) as a way of engaging economically and literarily oppressed Brazilian people in the process of learning. Critical literacy is founded on three guidelines, first that learners exist in a cultural context. Second, unless learning facilitates a change in the perception of reality learning has not occurred. Finally, students must realize and "know that they know" (Freire, 1970, p.?). Much like constructivism, critical

pedagogy is not intended to prescribe a particular curriculum, rather is a means of empowering students. Critical pedagogy encourages teachers to engage with the literacies of students. That is, the information and literacies students come to the classroom with and connect them to their own literacies as a means of facilitating growth. As Abrahams (2005) put it, critical literacy enables teachers to "create a rich and varied music program" (p.12). "Critical literacy provides a framework for helping students take greater control over their lives and can help to transform the world around them" (Thomas, Hall, & Piazza, 2010, p. 91). Thus, if we consider critical pedagogy in the choral classroom, we could anticipate gradual "transformative experiences for both students and their teacher" (Abrahams, 2005, p. 19). The students can have transformative experiences that could lead to conscientization, where they understand that they know; teachers could be transformed into facilitators encouraging students to grow and act independently. Critical pedagogy in the choral classroom would allow teachers to recognize the strengths in their students and learn from them. Critical pedagogy "nurtures critical feeling in the act of reproducing culture" (Abrahams, 2005, p. 19).

As an instructional approach, critical literacy encourages "readers" to analyze text and discover underlying messages. Critical literacy is not limited to text in the formal written words on the page. It can imply text in any context including but not limited to music. It provides "a framework for helping students take greater control over their lives and can help to transform the world around them" (Thomas & Piazza, 2010 p. 91). Critical literacy, like constructivism, begins with the idea that students have literacies thus empowering students. These literacies have been developed through their culture and background prior to their arrival in the classrooms. The goal is conscientization, whereby

students can learn to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Abrahams, 2005, p. 13). It is in conscientization or empowerment and encouragement that students will learn to explore, investigate, and identify the possibilities. "It is important to use texts [paper or musical] as a way of supporting students' evolving ideas and not as a set of ideas students must conform to" (Thomas & Piazza, 2010 p. 93). Critical literacy in music translates into recognizing that the text is not the ultimate authority as it has often been edited by someone, but it is the job of the students and the director to create musical experiences for themselves and the audience based on the knowledge they have and the choices they make together.

In the theoretical article called "Critical and Transformative Literacies: Music and General Education," Benedict (2012) presented an argument which encompasses the status quo in music education and its relation to some of the requirements and methods that permeate most of education within the early 21st century. The intended goal of Benedict was to make educators, both music and general, aware of some of the assumptions made about each other. Additionally, the goal of Benedict was for educators to recognize ways in which functional literacy—also known as reductionist literacy, with an emphasis on the lowest levels of literacy—has pervaded all aspects of education. Benedict discussed what students come to school within terms of multiple literacies and musical understandings; "students are hearing and engaging with musics in their homes and communities that are as varied as they are multiple" (p. 156).

Benedict (2012), a professor of music educators, made a claim that many music teachers have not experienced literacy as critical or transformative in their respective

music programs throughout their careers. As a result of not having experienced literacy as critical, it causes a reliance on methods or teaching to standards that provides a safety net and confidence for those who observe them. However, this produces "particular kinds of learners and learning" which "denies and prevents engagement with critical or transformative literacies" (Benedict, 2012, p.155). Specifically, these teachers have learned that a "good teacher" utilizes a teacher centered decision-making role in the classroom and a more formal understanding of music, often limited to literacy as reading notes on a page or rote learning. Benedict concluded that the goal is not to see an end to some of the traditional music making and teaching programs which currently exist, but to have a more inclusive musical program which would make use of multiple literacies. Specifically, the current study sought to see what choral directors, in traditional music teaching programs, were currently doing in terms of choral music literacy, and how they spoke about their actions.

Another scholar researching critical literacy, Schmidt (2005) made a case for applying many of the perspectives of Pablo Freire to the world of music education in his theoretical piece. Schmidt referenced acceptance and encouragement of utilizing the music students come to the classroom knowing. Schmidt argued against some of the common practices in music education, such as teacher centered music selection and interpretation. Furthermore, he encouraged the reader to question what the purpose of music education is, how it should be approached, and the interaction of the word in the world. "Music education works to foster the reproduction of dominant ideals, while alienating dialogue and critical inquiry. Music needs to relate to the realities of individuals and communities in which it engages" (Schmidt, 2005, p. 3). Applied to the

choral classroom, teaching students from diverse communities nothing but Johan Sebastian Bach may be working to deny the student's their heritage. Thus, music teachers should learn from the students about the music that speaks to them. Schmidt proposed, "education can only be effective if learning is associated with creative acts that see expression as both connecting to the emotional and as a critical understanding of the relationship between word and world." Therefore, a student needs to connect emotionally and critically to the music they are learning and/or performing. This emotional and critical connection would help the students recognize the purpose it may have in their lives.

Choral music education provides an excellent vehicle for such work. "Music education as transformative practice embraces problem posing, thus offering a connection of word to world. It challenges teachers to engage in dialogues that conceptualize music not as an object but as a conduit for understanding" (Schmidt, 2005, p. 10). In other words, music can be a way of understanding and making sense of the world but is often focused simply on the recreation of music from the past. Although music education should be transformative, it is sometimes restrictive in the preconceived notions of how it should be done, both by the musical canon and by how "it should be taught." Music teachers often have an understanding of music as something that is taught first by learning notes and rhythms, then by watching a conductor dictate the emotional reactions and interpretations of the music. The teacher centered idea is not in line with the point Schmidt (2005) was trying to make. As Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) noted, "I have always found it odd that people, in such a subjective, emotional kind of subject, are so concerted and so restrictive in the way they go about it." Cleaver and Ballantyne's

statement refers to the idea of classical musicians, sometimes slaves to the written page, with a conservatory philosophy of how to best learn the material.

Articles in music education that include discussions on critical literacy are few and far between. Even so, there are opportunities for teachers to implement it. Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys, (2002) defined critical literacy as having four components: "(a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice" (p. 382.) Regeleski (2005) wrote about how critical theory could be considered in music education "due to its focus on empowering teachers and students to be effective agents of their own histories and satisfactions" (p. 15). The idea here is that teaching music could contribute to creating reflective practitioners. The difficulty Regeleski noted is that "People [teachers] will often resent and resist any perceived threat to the status quo" (p. 19).

While critical literacy as a theoretical perspective guided the present study, it was rarely found in music education and choral journals. When critical literacy was found, it was within the context of a theoretical or philosophical ideology, but not in practical or active research. That does not mean that critical literacy is non-existent. It does mean that it needs to be researched further and is a unique lens through which to view choral music literacy and practice. Although constructivism and critical literacy are not overtly related to transactional theory, it is nonetheless the missing component in choral music literacy. It relates to the self in the interpretation and performance of the choral music.

Transactional Theory and Choral Music: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

The theory of the literary transaction was first developed and explained by Louise M. Rosenblatt in *Literature as Exploration* (1995). Rosenblatt began by discussing the

intersection between two separate stances of literature. The two stances are first, the aesthetic stance wherein the reader's emotions and background interact with the text and the second, the efferent stance wherein the facts and functionalities of the text, or what is to be taken or carried away, exists. Rosenblatt likened reading to art stating, "art provides a more complete fulfillment of human impulses and needs than does ordinary life" (1938, p. 33). She argued that the literature teacher must begin instruction from the perspective of how a literary work moved, touched, or reached the student. Rosenblatt (1995) made a case for transactional theory via the aesthetic reading. Transactional theory is the interaction between the reader and the text, the reading is dependent on what readers bring with them and their focus during the reading during the reading. Rosenblatt argued that a book without a reader is much like a musical score without an orchestra. Without a reader's engagement, Rosenblatt argued, the text is just ink on a page; this includes where the reader comes from culturally, gender, race, and past and present preoccupations. Life experiences both lived and read, and how prepared the reader is to work with the text at a given time are also critical. All of these factors will impact how much the reader will be able to interact with the text and have an aesthetic response.

Choral music literacy can be examined through this transactional lens. Like literature, it has two primary stances, the first is the efferent posture—being the notes, rhythms, and harmonies found on the page. The second stance is the aesthetic posture that is evoked by the emotions and feelings that are experienced by the listener through the music and by the musician in the experience of making the music. The aesthetic stance in choral music specifically often has an added layer of poetry embedded in the music. While the harmonies can incite an emotional response on their own, they are often

inspired or augmented by the written text. An example is the first movement in Mozart's Requiem, "Lacrimosa." The strings begin the movement with rising and falling intervals; many listeners find them haunting on their own. The entrance of the voices is also haunting and impressive, but it is the text, which originates from the Latin Mass and states:

> *Full of tears will that day*
>
> *When from the ashes shall arise*
>
> *The guilty man to be judged;*
>
> *Therefore spare him, O God,*
>
> *Merciful Lord Jesus,*
>
> *Grant them eternal rest. Amen.*

First one must understand that the Requiem is the funeral mass, and the Lacrimosa is known as one of Mozart's last works, as he died before the work was completed. The text is powerful, describing man's judgment upon death. The text combined with the music becomes more powerful and one can almost hear the strings crying. The goal of choral music educators is therefore to help the students recognize these two stances, and not only interact with the music and the text, but also to impart this to their listeners or audience members. The more the students or musicians can recognize and understand the work, the more emotionally invested they may become; the more they interact with all of the parts, the greater the potential for an aesthetic experience for themselves and the audience. While the reaction of the audience may not be exactly the same as that of the performer, the goal is to create an avenue to an aesthetic experience for all parties involved.

Tony B. Perry (2006) wrote an article describing ways in which, recognition, acknowledgment, and incorporation of multiple literacies can help students as young as middle school to truly understand not only schooled literacies, but the world at large. Perry defined multiple literacies as "the meaning making systems (print and non-print) that are deeply enmeshed in culture and everyday lives of people" (p.329). Learning does not happen in a vacuum but within the context of the day-to-day living and interacting within a culture. Perry reiterated the idea that the most effective learning takes place when students can take specific content from their background and make generalizations and connections to their school concepts. "Students bring to school with them an understanding of literacy in multiple forms, but it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to access the hidden literacies students possess and integrate them into the learning environment to maximize engagement and learning opportunities" (Perry, 2006, p.331).

While choral music educators often believe they have the majority of musical knowledge in their classroom, many students have been interacting with and experiencing music long before they walk into the choral classroom. One particular statement made by Perry (2006) in the discussion of the gaps between hidden literacies and academic literacies is poignantly appropriate for choral music educators. "This gap, left un-nurtured and unattended by educators, can result in students who see little or no connection between themselves and school" (p. 331). To counter the phenomenon, choral music educators must find ways to recognize the musical knowledge or multiple literacies students bring and incorporate them into their classrooms.

Historical Context of the Study

Music Education in the United States

Music became a part of the public education curriculum in the early 1800s and began with singing (Demorest, 2001). Prior to the 1800's, music education in the United States came in the form of the singing school, which Demorest stated was "an idea that gradually spread throughout New England and beyond" (p. 6). It was comprised of traveling musicians who would offer individuals a "series of classes in the art of 'singing by note'" (Demorest, 2001 p. 6). The singing school had two primary goals, to teach choral singing and music reading; they had the tertiary goal of creating a social event where people with similar interests could interact.

Choral music has a long history that surpasses its arrival in the American public education system. Today it is one of three primary courses used to teach music at the secondary level. Choral singing requires individuals to sing in a group, in parts, in a multitude of languages, with or without accompaniment, while maintaining a sense of unity in the sound that is produced. The 2014 National Music Standards for ensembles states that students should be able to "create, perform, respond, and connect through music and to music" (National Core Arts Standards pp. 11-12). As previously noted by Watkins (1993) and Garret (2013), research regarding time use in both secondary choral and instrumental classes demonstrate that performance preparation is the main activity. Given the National Core Art Standards, it is the responsibility of directors to engage their students in other activities, such as creation, response, and connections.

Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) sought to find the significance of music and music education to middle and high school adolescents in their qualitative analysis of

student essays. Campbell et al. stated, "music plays a valuable and valued role in the individuals' social-emotional and intellectual-artistic domains" (p. 221). The study included 1,155 American Middle/High School students age 13-18. Each of them wrote an essay for a contest by Ban deodorant run by musicedge.com. Participation was voluntary and the enticement was a visit from a well-known violinist from the pop-punk band, Yellowcard. A MusicEdge representative mailed a hard copy of the adolescents' reflective responses to researchers. There were more female respondents (78%) and the samples included grades 7-12; however, 2/3 of the respondents were 14-16 years old.

Campbell et al. (2007) read the essays and identified commonly used terms and meaningful themes. They then met to compare noted terms and classifications and designed a coding frame. Five main themes emerged: (a) identity formation in and through music, solo (listening, vocal, instrumental) and group (band, choir, orchestra); (b) emotional benefits that span enjoyment, expression, emotional release, and control; (c) music's benefits to life at large, including the building of one's character and life skills; (d) social benefits encompassing camaraderie, acceptance of differences, high morale at school and at home, distraction from vices such as drugs and alcohol, and prevention of suicidal behaviors; and (e) music in schools including positive and negative impressions of the program, particular courses, and course content and teachers. The results demonstrated that students do find music important to their lives; 2/3 made references to the emotional meaning and value of music in their lives. However, secondary students tended to discontinue formal musical study by age 14-15 (Campbell et al., 2007). Somewhere, there is a disconnect between the importance of music in adolescent lives, and what or how teachers are teaching it in the classroom.

Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) believed that the respondent motivation was multifaceted. Regardless, "music still emerged as highly valued by this sample of self-selected adolescents as a central aspect of their identity" (Campbell, et al. 2007, p. 225). Over 1/3 of the respondents were currently involved or had been involved in music learning experiences, or the academic study of music history, culture, or theory. There was a general sense of music as culture and as a means of knowing their own and other cultural histories and beliefs. Campbell et al. concluded that music continues to be a necessary element in many adolescents' lives.

While Campbell et al. (2007) made a case for the value of music in general in adolescent lives, Kratus (2007) noted some of the pitfalls of music education in his article, "Music Education at the Tipping Point." Kratus discussed some of the methods that have been used for many years of teaching music education and explained that while music teachers may be good at teaching in this way, they are not necessarily culturally relevant methods. As such, Kratus stated that music teachers need to discover ways to evolve alongside teaching counterparts in other subject matters and in the music industry as well. Kratus provided some speculation on reasons for the decline in music education participation, but also made note of pockets where things have been booming. Kratus points out steel pan drum ensembles as well as the growth of mariachi bands, and teachers who have gone against the norm to create these programs. One of the elements Kratus pointed to is the Internet, which "has not only changed the way music is distributed, it has also encouraged the development of communities of mavens who may live thousands of miles apart" (p. 45). The argument Kratus made is that with technology, connections can be made across oceans and landmasses. However, the power of

technology is not being fully employed in music education classes for the sharing and making of music.

Kratus (2007) like Schmidt (2005) pointed out that it is easier to teach as we have been taught, and as such "the ensemble director sets the music, makes all the artistic decisions regarding interpretations, and shapes the resulting performance through tightly managed rehearsals to match a pre-conceived notion of the piece, correcting errors along the way. It is an autocratic model of teaching that has no parallel in any other school subject" (Kratus, 2007, p. 46). Ultimately, Kratus's article is a call to arms, for music teachers to recognize their flaws and strengths. Furthermore, music teachers are called to build off of their strengths as a means to remain relevant and continue to share their musical heritage and be a part of the current and future waves of music education. As Kratus stated, "the nature of music education should reflect the cultural and social milieu in which it exists" (p. 46). Ultimately, music education falls under a larger umbrella of arts education. The U.S. has national music standards that are guided by the National Arts Standards.

Arts Curriculum Theory

The National Arts Standards.org created a document that presents the reasoning and methodology utilized in creating national standards for the arts in general. It presents historical data, which state that arts education has had a formal place in American schools since the early 1800s and is grounded in educational research and theory. The National Arts Standards is a general overview that can be applied to any art form and allows space and understanding for the various terms that might be used in different art forms. Based on the Goals 2000 of the Educate America Act Title II, different arts organizations came

together on the basis philosophical foundations, established artistic processes. These processes were defined as cognitive and physical abilities by which arts learning were characterized: creating, performing, responding, and connecting.

The National Arts Standards (NAS) stated "artistic literacy is the knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the arts" (p. 17). NAS defined fluency in the arts as "the ability to create, perform, produce, present, respond, and connect through symbolic and metaphoric forms that are unique to the arts" (p. 17). The National Arts Standards further stated "for authentic practice to occur in arts classrooms, teachers and students must participate fully and jointly in activities where they can exercise the creative practices of imagine, investigate, construct, and reflect as unique beings committed to giving meaning to their experiences" (p. 17). These statements emphasize what has been stated before; the director must do more than rehearse music in preparation for a performance. The emphasis on "investigate and construct" used similar language to critical theory as applied to music; "critical pedagogues encourage children to gain the courage to grow by assigning activities that propel students forward to explore, investigate, and identify the possibilities" (Abrahams, 2005, p. 15). The goal of responding is reminiscent of transactional theory, as students can respond once they have interacted with the material. Finally, the goal to produce, present, and connect through symbolic forms particular to their art seem related to constructivism, providing opportunities for students to create new material. All of the research presented above is related to the lenses through which my study was designed. Below is a brief summary of other important related topics connecting music, literacy, and choral music.

Literacy and Music: Elementary Instruction

The most pressing time for literacy appears to be elementary school age given the number of articles that deal with literacy and music at the elementary level. However, when looking at elementary music literacy skills, one finds that they are primarily focused on the act of reading and writing, mirroring the non-musical research. In a short introductory article, compiled from previous research, called "Music and Literacy" Darrow (2008) discussed the use of a music intervention, "when music interventions incorporate specific reading skills matched to the needs of identified children or when music activities are used to reinforce reading behavior, then benefits for students are considerably more extensive" (p. 32). Darrow primarily dealt with literacy acquisition when literacy means learning how to read. The subjects were young students, in second and third grades, and exceptional education students. "Music and Literacy" was pertinent at the time of publication due to the impetus of No Child Left Behind and reading comprehension tests. Darrow stated, "a child's ability to read text has important implications for his or her success in learning to read music" (2008, p. 32). However, Darrow defines literacy at the basic state of reading, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, sight word identification, and decoding.

In a subsequent article discussing the extended study, Darrow et al. (2009) share the results. Their research looked specifically at word decoding, reading comprehension, and vocabulary skills as assessed by the Gates-MacGintie Reading Test given in group format pre and post music/reading intervention. Darrow et al. compiled the data from across the nation, including 458, second grade students as subjects. A music/reading curriculum was designed and implemented in five locations, 18 lessons for 30 minutes;

each which included literacy skills such as rhyming, letter sounds, vocabulary, and decoding. The music lessons also included the reading or singing of storybooks and singing, playing instruments, listening, and moving to music. Darrow et al. argued that the research "demonstrates the general benefits of music as a viable methodology for teaching reading skills at a comparable level while promoting enjoyment in an academic area that is receiving a great deal of national emphasis" (p. 13). The researchers pointed out that music should be taught for music's sake, but also made note of the fact that classroom teachers do not always perceive music as important on its own. The results proved to be inconclusive due to a variety of factors specific to each location. The Darrow et al. study does point out the more common understanding of literacy and is one of the first articles that appeared when researching the topics of music and literacy.

In a literature review of early elementary education, O'Herron and Siebenaler (2007) discussed the similarities of vocal skill development and early literacy instruction and described ways in which these commonalities can help young children's quality of speech patterns as well as auditory processing. The main goal was to provide the educational community with research as well as applications that could assist in the improvement and development of speech and auditory processing through the areas where language arts and vocal music overlap. O'Herron and Siebenaler described extensively how children begin to learn a language and connected this to how children learn how to sing. They claimed that these events are crucial for learning how to read and pinpointed key elements of development including phonemic awareness and fluency, which require auditory processing much like vocal production. The line was then drawn that while parents lay out the foundations at a young age, they are further developed by

teachers, and can be enhanced by music instruction, specifically singing. O'Herron and Siebenaler (2007) argued that students who participated in music instruction were "better able to hear a word and respond with its phonemes" (p. 19). They made a case for utilizing choral music style teaching as a means of improving prosody, which is the "intentional grouping of words into phrases" (p. 20).

In an action-research article "Reading and Rhythm: Binding Language Arts and Music in an Academic Notebook", Pearman and Friedman (2009) recommended the use of an academic notebook in an elementary music classroom as a means to integrate language arts into music instruction. The article is practical, offering teachers a way of improving their classrooms. Pearman and Friedman (2009) pointed out that "reading and writing strategies make content area instruction more comprehensible for students and makes content come alive in ways to make their own connections between their lives and the texts they read" (p. 13). Using the academic notebook engaged students further in music instruction and provided a means by which other teachers could recognize the learning and skills involved in music classes as opposed to viewing music merely as an enrichment class or an emotional outlet (Pearman & Friedman 2009). While many articles were available connecting music and literacy instruction at the elementary level, the research at the secondary level was more limited.

Literacy and Music: Secondary Instruction

In the field of literacy and secondary instruction, music is used as a tool to connect students and other subject areas. In "Using Music as a Second Language," Dethier's (1991) action research article described the use of music in a secondary English class. Dethier (1991) stated that "connecting the new to the known is the basis for all

learning, all education, yet most English teachers overlook what may be the easiest and most productive way to connect students to the terminology and processes of reading and writing—using music" (p. 72). Dethier (1991) made a case for utilizing music, something students know, as a means of making them feel more comfortable in an English classroom as well as making connections to the things literature has to offer. The article presented different ways that music can be used to bridge the gap between student and literature; that is analysis, artistic, context, and realizing that music is particular to a time period and a culture, just as literature has a context. Dethier (1991) went on to describe practical ways and reasons for music to explain images, irony, leads, metaphor, narrative and meaning, revision, symbol, theme, and voice. Ultimately, Dethier (1991) claimed that when students are connected and invested in what they are discussing, reading, or writing about, they are much more willing to participate. Dethier (1991) concluded that the students are listening, "the question is whether we're [the adults/teachers] willing to speak their language in order to help them learn ours" (p. 76).

In another action research piece involving secondary education, Hutchinson and Suhor (1996) begin with the premise that teachers of music and English Language arts can draw on rich traditions and on renewed interest in relationships between music and the spoken word to connect with their students and encourage understanding. Hutchinson and Suhor (1996) specifically named jazz and poetry and encouraged music teachers and English language arts teachers to collaborate or learn from each other ways in which students can participate in both. Hutchinson and Suhor (1996) made the music the accompaniment to the poetry of the students and advocated for creating a place where students can perform these creations.

Hansen, Bernsdorf, and Stuber (2014) wrote an outstanding text with research and teaching suggestions, that examined the connective threads that exist between literacy and music teaching and learning. It looked at these threads from different perspectives, how to use literacy in music classes, or how to use music in literacy classes. While the authors believed that music is important on its own, they saw the connections between these two "separate" educational planes. It is valuable work and it lays the groundwork for the current research, which is more specifically looking at choral music. "Children are learning valuable skills in music class that are an integral part of becoming a literate person. It is the definition of literacy that is critical here, and literacy extends beyond the regular classroom and reading instruction" (Hansen et al, 2014, p. 1). The key element to my study, on the basis of critical literacy, is that literacy should not be so singularly used to mean reading notation, or words. Literacy is a multifaceted concept that requires a broader and deeper understanding. My dissertation uses the standards set by the National Core Arts Standards (2014). These standards are comprehensive and allow for a more well-rounded education, with skills in music that can be transferable to other areas of life and learning. From these National Core Arts Standards (2014), we can begin to look at the specifics of choral music literacy as it currently exists in the research literature.

Choral Music Literacy

Given that literacy is defined as the ability and volition to read and understand the symbols sounds and gestures within a community and interact with them beyond the superficial. Choral music literacy must be examined with the same degree of analysis. Music literacy is generally understood to be the ability to read musical notation. Demorest (2001) began with "Music literacy is a means to musical independence" (p.1).

Steven Demorest's book presents an analysis of the historical role of sight-reading—the ability to read music and perform it upon first sight—in the choral classroom, followed by a review of the literature demonstrating what research says choral music educators do and how successful these things are. Finally, Demorest describes different ways in which this skill (sight-reading) can be taught in the classroom. Sight-reading is a great tool for any choral music educator and helps to challenge possible preconceived notions of sight-singing success in the classroom. However, it does not include teacher voices in the daily how to, or why of teaching sight-reading. Demorest claimed at the end of the first chapter that the current state of choral music education struggles to be "comprehensive."

Comprehensive musicianship seeks a balance among performance, analysis, and creativity in music education. Demorest (2001) argued "comprehensive musicianship developed in response to the performance-based focus of secondary music education at the time, both instrumental and vocal, that emphasized teaching literature rather than teaching music through the literature" (p. 15). Demorest reasoned that choral music education struggles due to a lack of teacher training activities to encourage this method of teaching. The emphasis on listening does not necessarily encourage transfer of the knowledge. Additionally, the role of performance does not necessarily seem congruent with the need for musical notation reading skills. "The conceptual organization of comprehensive musicianship encourages teachers not to just teach pieces but to use literature to explore musical elements through a variety of experiences" (Demorest, 2001, p. 15). Given this historical emphasis on performance with the current study's previously stated emphasis on creating knowledge and sight-reading, choral directors are tasked with finding a balance which leads us to the performance pedagogy paradox (Freer, 2011).

Music Teachers and Pedagogy: What is Known and What Needs to be Learned

The article "The Performance Pedagogy Paradox in Choral Music Teaching," Freer (2011) was a reflective and theoretical article. In it, Freer described how teachers' intentions may influence their choices and actions in the classroom. The article described the value of both performance and pedagogy and how a choral music educator must learn to straddle this fence. Like Demorest (2001), Freer stated that the emphasis in choral music teaching is on the performance rather than on "the knowledge and skills that young people can apply beyond their school's choral rehearsal room" (p. 166). Freer further emphasized that "choral teachers in the US generally focus on rehearsal of a limited repertoire with specific goals for performance excellence at the expense of any other educational goals" (p. 166). The focus on performance goals was the basis of the problem in the present study, how do choral music educators balance requirements that are historically, socially, and culturally understood as part of a choral classroom with the necessary elements of choral music literacy?

In another action research article, Goering and Burenheide (2010) asked "How does a teacher come to a new pedagogical approach?" Their article began with the idea of how teachers come to do the things they do in their classrooms. Two teachers specifically added music to their otherwise non-musical classes, found it to be a great tool, and published their results. Goering and Burenheide discussed the ways in which they used music, the reasons why they used it, and provided ideas for others to use it. Goering and Burenheide specifically stated that it was not music for music's sake, contrary to Hansen et al. (2014) who state that music should stand on its own. One's subject matter should exist and be validated on its own. However, it does not mean that

cross-curricular teaching is not valid. Goering and Burenheide (2010) described personal practical theory as

> an intense analytical look at one's own instructional practice and examine how a teacher can best enhance their instruction so that all students can learn. A teacher has a set of ideas that they believe are the best way to engage students and through experience, become the best way to reach students and guide their teaching. (p. 45)

Thinking about what teachers do results in **"**a teacher empowered to explore what fully works and respond to the information that is gathered through the process of teaching, self-reflections, and inquiry" (Goering & Burenheide, 2010, p. 45).

In "Strategies of Improving Rehearsal Technique: Using Research Findings to Promote Better Rehearsals," Silvey (2014) compiled a checklist of behaviors that may increase effectiveness of rehearsals based on a review of the literature. A secondary goal was to enhance expressivity of conductors and improve ensemble performance. The majority of these recommendations for directors, address literal comprehension on the part of the students; warm-up time, need for eye contact, specific feedback. There is one recommendation that functions on the inferential level of comprehension, moving beyond notes and rhythms, which recommended that directors address tone, balance, blend, and intonation. Silvey (2014) argued, "teachers need to instill the importance of how phrases and sections join together to create an entire piece of music, a concept known as comprehensive musicianship" (p. 15).

Ganschow (2014) conducted a quantitative electronic survey of 239 secondary school choral conductors from the United States in search of their choral rehearsal

priorities and approaches. The survey results showed that the most frequently cited rehearsal priorities were intonation and tone quality. Ganschow (2014) noted, "the way in which a rehearsal is structured combined with the conductor's interpersonal skills and the expressivity of the music, can create an aesthetic experience for students that is life changing" (p. 53). Ganschow (2014) noted that previous studies found that the fundamentals of correct rhythm, pitch, and pronunciation are generally given immediate attention. These are elements on the literal levels of comprehension. However, the elements that can achieve the choral sound and lead to an aesthetic experience, which live in the inferential and evaluative levels of comprehension are often left for last. Ganschow (2014) concluded that "further research investigating the relationships between conductor intention and conductor performance, and singer perception is needed" (p. 59). Ganschow (2014) further stated that a study concerning teaching beliefs and instructional practice and how they inform one another was important to add to the discussion because teachers need to be given a voice and further explain their choices.

In an article discussing the influence on curriculum choices of middle school choir teachers, Hamann (2007) noted that school music through the early 20th century was based on "singing and learning music fundamentals" (p. 65). Furthermore, Hamman (2007) discussed how the strongest influences on curricular choices were items within the school setting; things such as "developmental appropriateness, personal preference, budget, and available materials" (p. 70, 2007). Taken together, this demonstrates a gap in the literature. Although we have an idea of what the choral music educators are choosing to be their curriculum, the voice of the choral music educator in particular is missing. Their reality must be defined by their cultural and educational experiences to add depth to

the discussion. Additionally, all but one of the research studies presented above were quantitative in nature. Qualitative research in choral music education was limited during the time this research took place.

Qualitative Research in Choral Music Education

The aforementioned qualitative study looked at student responses to the significance of music (Campbell et al., 2004). Of the qualitative research studies in music education, one included "The Researcher as Instrument: Learning to Conduct Qualitative Research through Analyzing and Interpreting a Choral Rehearsal" (Barrett, 2007), which involved watching and re-watching choral rehearsals within the context of a qualitative research class. Graduate students used the choral rehearsal to learn about qualitative research methods. Another example was "Exploring Student Experiences of Belonging within an Urban High School Choral Ensemble: An Action Research Study", in which 26 tenth through twelfth grade students were interviewed to describe their experiences of belonging within an ensemble (Parker, 2009). One study that fulfilled the keyword requirements of qualitative research, and choral music educator voice was "The Experience of Creating Community: An Intrinsic Case Study of Four Midwestern Public School Choral Teachers" (Parker, 2016). The article interviewed four choral directors, who had taught either middle or high school and also interviewed students in their programs. Qualitative research is not typically generalizable; however, it provides opportunities to answer different questions.

Oldfather and West (1994) created a metaphor for understanding qualitative research functioning and sharing many aspects similar to jazz. The article begins by explaining how jazz functions among the musicians and participants and how it is a

collaborative act at the core. "Jazz musicians participate in a shared culture. They carry common (but not identical) repertoires, and a common body of knowledge that allows them to make music together" (Oldfather & West, 1994, p. 22). A big idea behind it is also that it is an improvisational activity that works under guidelines and certain structures that allow for the improvisational nature. Similarly, qualitative research is collaborative at its core, both between researchers and the participants being observed, as well as between researchers when there are more than one. It is also an activity, like jazz that is not solely found in one location, it has multiple venues: classroom, playground, meetings, or even a pub where people are swapping stories. Oldfather and West likened classical music to quantitative research, seeking an idealized perfect performance or research answer. "Jazz is adaptive and is shared by the participants. Their improvisations are collaborative and interdependent; the quality of the music depends on each musician's hearing, responding to, and appreciating the performances of the other players" (Oldfather & West, 1994, p. 22).

The present research study was designed with ideas similar to Oldfather and West's (1994); it was collaborative with the participants, it had multiple locations including the classrooms and places where the author conducted interviews. Additionally, while this research had guidelines and structures in advance, there was room for improvisation and adjustments that were made throughout the research study. Some of the reasons for this particular study are evident in the gaps in the research literature referenced above and further described below.

Identification of Gaps and Limitations in the Research Literature

As previously noted, when examining the literature, there were a few notable gaps. First, there were very few studies exploring secondary students and literacy. Second, the definition of literacy that was commonly used referred to literacy as a skill in its simplest form. In "Enhancing Literacy in the Second Grade", Darrow et al. (2009) demonstrated the more common understanding of literacy to mean the ability to read and comprehend at the literal level. This article showed how music could help with this skill and while it was invaluable, it also showed that there is a gap in the understandings of the depth of the term literacy amongst music educators. Third, in the field of choral music education, the studies that included critical literacy as a key element were few and far between. Benedict (2012) and Schmidt (2005) looked at critical literacy as far as general music education. Garret (2013) discussed the use of critical thinking skills in a high school choral program; however, there is a difference between critical thinking and critical literacy. Lastly, the perspective of the choral music educator was not often discussed, while there were studies and articles that described ways in which choral music educators could be better in the classroom, the director's perspective was mostly overlooked. Butke (2006) conducted a study of choral music educator's reflective journeys and Parker (2016) utilized a case study of four midwestern public school choral teachers.

The present study was different from other studies because it looked at how current choral music educators created and implemented their curriculum and their ideas of choral music literacy. It was similar to Ganschow's (2014) study, in that it focused on secondary choral music educators. However, the present study was not a survey but

rather an in depth look at what the conductors believe and how they behave. The biggest

contribution of the current study is giving a voice to choral music educators who are so

often overlooked.

In the following chapter there is an explanation of the research methodology, the

role of the researcher, as well as the criteria which guided the participant selection. There

is a brief description of each of the participants, as well as the tools and sources for data

collection.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPMENT: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my study was to give five experienced choral music educators a voice and describe, examine, and understand their perceptions and use of elements within choral music literacy. Specifically, the present study explored choral music educators' knowledge and use of sight-reading, text analysis, and composition in their classrooms as key components of choral music literacy. The study sought to identify ways in which choral music educators currently build choral music literacy in their classrooms. As previously stated, choral music literacy was defined as the ability to independently (a) analyze the musical information on the page, (b) evaluate and make choices about how to communicate this information to general audiences, (c) and assess the outcome of these choices.

In building a research approach, my conceptions of the self and the other, combined with the constructivist and critical theorist perspectives (Creswell, 2013), yielded an observational multi-case study analysis of five individual choral music educators. The multi-case study analysis "is a special effort to examine something having lots of cases, parts, or members" (Stake, 2006) provided the best way to understand how specific individual choral music educators perceive and begin to teach choral music literacy in their classrooms. The multi-case study was deemed appropriate because of its ability to research in depth a few cases, for a topic that is not broadly utilized yet in the research literature. Stake proposed that "for a multi-case study, the case records are often presented intact, accompanying a cross-case analysis with some emphasis on the biding concept or idea" (p. 34). The present study employed observations of the choral music

educators in their classrooms as well as formal and informal interviews with the choral

music educators both before and after observations to ensure maximum understanding

and provide opportunities member checking. As per Stake, each case is a complex entity

located in its own situation, each choral music educator had unique and different

backgrounds, upbringings, experiences, and goals. However, there are elements that are

similar or dissimilar between each case, including the reasons they teach as they do, and

the particular things that they choose to emphasize in their classrooms. An intended

outcome of the study was additional appreciation for what the choral music educators do;

how they accomplish musical performances, and their thought processes as they

accomplish the tasks of teaching choral music literacy. This approach allowed me to

grasp some of the possible definitions of choral music literacy, and how they affected the

classroom process. The central research question was: "How do choral music educators

balance requirements that are historically, socially, and culturally understood as part of a

choral classroom with the elements of choral music literacy?" The purpose of the

research was to give five experienced choral directors a voice and thus describe, examine,

and understand these choral music educators' use of elements within choral music

literacy. The three sub-questions that were explored through this research were:

1.   What are selected choral music educators' perceptions and understandings of

and towards choral music literacy? (sight reading, text analysis of musical

information, evaluation on how to best communicate information to the

audience, assessing outcomes, and musical independence)

2.   How do these choral music educators design and implement their curricula?

3.   How do these choral music educators balance performance requirements and
        the elements of choral music literacy that are invaluable in the creation of
        independent music making?

The methods used to achieve this goal were observations and interviews of choral
music educators; additionally, lesson plans and song selections were requested and
analyzed when made available as a form of triangulating the interview data. The data
were then read and reread to (a) identify how choral music educators taught in the
classroom, (b) understand the processes and curricular choices that directors and students
make that lead to performances, and (c) potentially recognize places in the secondary
choral music education classroom where more work may be necessary. To review, the
central research question was:

        How do choral music educators balance requirements that are historically,
        socially, and culturally understood as part of a choral classroom with the elements
        of choral music literacy?

Context of the Study

The scholarly research currently available indicates that choral music educators
spend the majority of their time rehearsing for a performance, and as such do not provide
enough opportunities for students to participate and grow in their use of choral music
literacy skills such as sight-reading, text analysis, and composition (Berg & Sindberg,
2014: Demorest, 2001; Garret 2013). Despite the literature, experiences as a choral music
educator have led me to seek to know if there were perspectives that had not been
addressed, specifically those of the choral music educators who do the work daily. The
use of the multi-case study provided an opportunity to not only observe the music

educators in their natural habitat, but to gain a deeper understanding of who they are, and how that affects their choices and their teaching methods.

Role of the Researcher

Researcher in the Field

As a choral music educator for over 18 years, as well as a member of American Choral Directors Association and the Vocal Association. I had a working relationship with most of the choral music educators who were interviewed for the study. My interest was in exploring what choral music educators are already doing in their classrooms that promotes choral music literacy. Additionally, I recognized the limited voice that choral music educators often have specifically within the research literature. As a past District Chairperson for the Vocal Association, the working relationship with these choral music educators was significant prior to the study. I had multiple emails, conversations, and dialogue concerning events within the community prior to the research.

Given these factors, there was a risk of research bias in the understanding I personally have of choral music literacy. For that reason, choral music literacy as a term was not used with participants until after the first classroom observation. As previously noted, it is not currently a term used in the research literature on choral music. A journal was maintained throughout the research process as a means of self-reflexivity and sincerity of personal biases and opinions (Tracy, 2010). While these biases cannot be completely stopped, they can be observed and noted throughout my research process. Additionally, transparency throughout the process means that I have included information concerning challenges as well as successes.

Personal Relationship to Music Education

Growing up, given both a paternal and maternal aunt who played the piano, I wanted to play the piano; at the age of 7, I began lessons. I participated in choirs throughout my K-12 education. For me, education was not complete without the musical component; for this reason, I enrolled in a choir class freshman year of college. In that class, I met someone who helped me decide on Music Education as a college degree and helped me audition for the school of music. I completed my course of study within four years of starting the degree, and immediately became a music teacher. Within many states, music education students get certified in Music K-12, without specifications as to their particular instrument. Although I was a vocalist, my first full time job included teaching Band, Chorus, Orchestra, Jazz Band, Marching Band, and Dance. During that first year of teaching, there was a community of musicians, music education majors, and current teachers, who helped me survive.

I have continued as a choral director for the past 18 years, teaching in various parts of the area, participating in all of the events run by the state and district vocal association. Within the last five years, I have joined and participated in events sponsored by the American Choral Directors Association.

Relationships with Participants

Throughout my career, I have had a working relationship with all of the choral music educators who were interviewed for the study. Some were established and were leaders of the vocal association when I began teaching, some began teaching when I was a young teacher, and some began teaching when I was considered a veteran teacher. One of the participants was a senior in the high school where I interned over 19 years ago. My

job as chairperson included running meetings for the district and voicing concerns to the state as well as scheduling events run by the organization where the teachers brought their students to participate.

Position within the Community of Choral Music Educators

As a veteran teacher, the district calls on me from time-to-time to participate in district events, or decision-making processes as a result of my consistent participation, and my own personal successes as a teacher. I have had the policy of helping anyone who requested help for a few years now. None of the participants have been official mentees. When I was a new teacher, and I struggled, my own internship supervisor became my mentor. Anytime I asked for help, he would answer my call, take time out to observe me and give me feedback in the classroom, or would stop by with a cup of coffee before a big event. My first year of teaching was especially difficult, as I was asked to do many things that were outside of my wheelhouse. My mentor was instrumental in helping me overcome the difficulties I faced and bolstering my confidence to continue in the face of adversity. He had a great deal of love and passion for music education. He has since retired and passed away, so my desire and willingness to help others who seek it, is my way of giving back and continuing the legacy of a person who helped me greatly in my career.

<center>**Participant Selection**</center>

The participants for my research were a convenience sample of five secondary choral music educators from an urban city in the south. As previously noted, specifics are being omitted to protect the anonymity of the participants. The rationale for five participants was proposed by Stake (2006); the "benefits of a multi-case study are limited

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if less than four cases are selected as 2/3 cases do not show enough interactivity between programs and their situations" (p. 50). In a qualitative study, the goal was to have a purposeful sample, which means that the sample is one "from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). In line with previous research by Garret (2013) the choral music educators each had (a) a minimum of five years teaching, (b) received consistently high-performance ratings at their District Music Performance Assessment (MPA), and (c) consistent student participation in All-State choirs. Similarly, the individuals chosen had a minimum of five years teaching choir at the secondary level, which could be either middle or high school. Garret's (2013) study included directors who consistently received high performance ratings at State MPA, however, this element was not required for this study. The Music Educators National Conference in the state has a website which confirmed participation and scores in MPA.

Given the purposive criteria—which means they were very specific—stated above, the age, gender, and race/ethnicity was not considered, but were noted once the participants agreed. One teacher was African American, two teachers were Hispanic, one teacher was White non-Hispanic, and one teacher was White and Asian. Three teachers were men, two were women. The youngest teacher was 29 at the time of the interviews and observations, and the eldest teacher had been teaching full time since the 1980s. All the teachers participated in the choosing of their pseudonyms. The following paragraphs give a brief description and introduction to each of the participants. Participants were listed in alphabetical order based on the first names they chose.

Description of Participants

Andrea Martinez (pseudonym) had been teaching for the past eight years, first in a local middle charter school and more recently in a local Title I public high school. She was native to the community where she taught, a product of the local school department, and a graduate of two public universities. She has a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Music Education with an emphasis in choral conducting. Her primary instrument was the piano and she has sung in choirs since elementary school. During her time as a teacher at the middle school, her choirs consistently received superior ratings at district MPA (Music Performance Assessment) and her students participated in the Annual All-State choirs. Upon her recent move to the high school, she introduced the school to MPA participation, where her choirs received Excellent ratings in 2017, 2018, and received Superior ratings in 2019. Additionally, she introduced the high school choral program to all the choral events in the district.

Chuck Harris (pseudonym) had been a teacher for 10 years, in six schools and had taught elementary through high school. He had been at his current school for 4 years, which is a high school and includes a magnet for the visual and performing arts. He was a graduate of a traditional public high school in the area where he resided, and a graduate of local private and public universities as well. He held a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting. His first formal musical training was in piano, but he later pursued a vocal career. Throughout his time as a teacher at this most recent post, his choirs had consistently received superior ratings at district MPA and overall Superior or Excellent ratings at State MPA. His students had participated in state ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) Honor choirs, as well as national

ACDA Honor choirs. His school included students in the All-State choirs for the past 3 years. While the school has been a magnet school for some time, his work there has been evident in the community as the school has been receiving more distinction.

Daniel Braunstein (pseudonym) had been teaching for the past 13 years and had taught both middle and high school. Another high school graduate of the public schools in the area, he also graduated from a local private university with a Bachelor of Music Education. Daniel's first instrument was the piano, but he sang in choirs beginning in middle school, and focused on both instruments (piano and voice) throughout his college career and beyond. His initial teaching position was at a local Title I high school, and more recently at a magnet middle school, teaching Grades 6-8. During his time at this school, his students had consistently participated in All-State Choirs, received Superior and Excellent ratings at district MPA for the past 5 years, and numerous choral and solo competitions throughout the United States.

Elizabeth Owen (pseudonym) had been teaching in the area for upwards of 30 years. She has taught both middle and high school throughout her career, in multiple neighborhoods. She was a graduate of a local traditional public high school as well as local private universities where she received a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Music Education. She has spent the last 15 years at a magnet middle school. Throughout her career, she has had students participate in All-State Choirs. Her choirs have received Superiors at district MPA events, and she participated in a number of state events when she taught high school. Elizabeth was originally a pianist; she majored in the organ and participated in the orchestra in high school. Her initial goal was not to teach

choir, but throughout her career, she has become a staple in the local choral music education community.

Ricky Miller (pseudonym) had been teaching high school in the South Florida area for the past 18 years. He was also a native of the area, having graduated from a local traditional public high school, as well as a private and public universities within the state. Ricky held a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Music Education with an emphasis in Choral Conducting. His primary instrument was the voice, although he was adept at the piano. He had been teaching at a magnet school for the visual and performing arts for the past four years. Overall, his choirs had received Superior ratings at district MPA as well as Superior and Excellent ratings at state MPA. Additionally, students from this school had consistently participated in All-State Choirs since his arrival.

The participants were interviewed in locations at their discretion, thus ensuring procedural respect and ethics for the human subjects. The participants were each observed while teaching a specific and previously agreed upon choral class period. The reason for asking the teachers to choose the times was to respect the subjects' time and work. The teachers were also very flexible and open to whatever worked best for all parties involved. While this choice may have affected their overall performance, the end goal was to see how they taught choral music literacy. Therefore, observing a class that had more behavioral issues might have obscured the goal of the study. The goal was for me to be "in the field where the participants live and work, in an effort to get as close as possible to the participants being studied" (p. 20). None of the teachers had any observable behavioral issues. All the teachers had a good rapport with their students; they were generally down to business and very respectful. The teacher's personalities shined

in different ways, but the end goal was always music making. The types of data that were collected were audio interviews, observations, and lesson plans as well as musical repertoire for analysis up to the teacher's discretion. While most participants were always available for interviews, there was one participant who requested email format for the second interview. Both the participant and the researcher were struggling to find time given personal circumstances. Data were secured in an external hard drive, which was stored in a locked office in my home.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

Interviews

The present study required the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews with each choral music educator a minimum of three times, for a maximum of two hours per interview. However, choral music educators were open to emails for member checking and confirmation of their intent when questions came up.

Table 1. *Participant Interview Questions by Category*

Category	Questions
What are the choral directors' perceptions and understandings of choral music literacy?	What does choral music literacy mean to you? How do you teach choral music literacy? Describe a typical lesson where you incorporate choral music literacy What do you think about the following statement - "The quality of the performance is a direct result of what has transpired in the rehearsal"? How do you get your students to connect with the music you are working on?

	How would you describe your repertoire?
	What stories do you tell through your repertoire?
	What stories are you teaching through music?
	When your students leave your program, what do you think they would have gained in their time with you?
How do these choral directors design and implement their curriculum?	What is your "curriculum" in your classroom?
	How do you think about your curriculum?
	What is your teaching philosophy? How does it guide your teaching?
	How did this theory come about in your work?
	How does learning occur?
	How do you facilitate the learning process?
	What do you start with when learning a new song? (notes, rhythms, text)
	How do you evaluate your students?
	How does technology play into your program?
What is the relationship between the directors' announced theory of teaching, design, and delivery of choral literacy practical learning experiences?	What have you learned in your time as a teacher? (Either about yourself as a teacher, your students, your subject matter.)
	What qualities do you think you bring to your choral students?
	How often do you allow students to participate in the selection of repertoire? What does that look like?
	How often do you allow students to be a part of the decision making process in the interpretation of musical works?
	What does that look like?
	Why do you establish the classroom culture and climate as you do?
	What do you value in your curriculum?
	How did your training help/hinder/ or shape the choices you make in your classroom?
	Who do you think you are as a teacher?
	What is your biggest strength and how does it translate into your teaching?
	What is your biggest weakness; does it affect your teaching? How do you work to overcome it?

Observations

Observations were agreed upon by joint decision of the choral music educator and the interviewer. The observations were mostly agreed upon after the initial interview as defined by each school's schedules. The high school directors, all chose their "women's choir" for observations. Each choir has a different name, but for the sake of anonymity, they are being called women's choir. The middle school directors chose their advanced mixed choirs for observations. The high schools were all on rotating blocks, which meant the groups met every other day. At both Chuck's and Ricky's schools, the class period ran for 2 hours, at Andrea's school, the class period ran for 1 ½ hours. Between September and December 2018, I visited classes a total of four times and observed, beginnings of songs, development of songs, and some final performances. The middle schools are on six period days, and the teachers see their students daily for an hour. Between the months of September and December, these schools were visited a total of three times. The third observation yielded little new information, after discussing it with a professor and given time constraints, I decided I had enough class material to reach data saturation.

Some issues that had been accounted for—block scheduling, holidays, teacher workdays and other general scheduling issues—caused some delay in the observational schedule and resulted in the period lasting from September to December. Two to three schools were observed per week and on one occasion, the teachers requested a rescheduling due to illness in the family, or general school events that would not have permitted an actual observation of classroom teaching. Observationally, I was looking for elements of choral music literacy, sight-reading music notation as well as elements of text

analysis. I was interested in whether or not they were engaged in discussions of text and harmonic coexistence? Meaning, as Giroux (1992) articulated, "teaching is about providing students with the knowledge, capacities, and opportunities to be noisy, irreverent, and vibrant" (p. 8). How do choral music educators encourage and guide students through understanding of choral music in all the layers that exist?

A note must be made about the iterative nature of qualitative research. While these methods mostly matched the proposed methods, accommodations were made, such as one email interview and a change in the proposed schedule. Additionally, whereas initially it was assumed each participant would be observed in one month, all participants were observed once, then all were observed their second time. Consequently, the second interviews were done, and so on and so forth. Following the qualitative research methods outlined by Ortlipp (2008), Creswell (2013), Tracy (2010), Merriam (2002), and Bogdan and Biklen (2007), room must be made for the ability to change questions and request additional observation time. The information found along the way and the accommodation of the participants guided the continued pursuit of research and methods throughout the remainder of the study.

Procedures

Following IRB approval, the first step was to confirm the participants who were willing to participate and who had met the criteria set beforehand. Recruitment of participants involved a preliminary email of all possible choral music educators fulfilling the requirements listed, which were seven in the immediate vicinity. An initial email requested their participation; while all responded positively, the first five to respond were selected. Following their confirmation of participation, each choral music educator

provided me with a day and time where we had our first interviews. These first interviews took place between the months of July and August, when teachers were still unsure of their schedules. Once the preliminary interviews had been reviewed and schedules were known, the next step was to agree upon observation times with each choral music educator. Due to the variable schedules at different schools, the goal was to observe each director for a minimum of 4 hours throughout the course of a month. These observational data from the field offered firsthand encounters with how directors design and implement their curriculum.

During each observation, field notes were taken, and once the researcher was home immediately transcribed to the computer, along with photographs of the classroom, lesson plans, and schematics of the classroom set up. Following two observations, the choral music educators agreed to a time when we could reconvene for the second interview. Almost all of the third observations happened during a time when my father was in the hospital, and two happened on the day of his passing. My loss slowed the process of data acquisition and brought it to a halt for almost a full month. Once ready to resume, I returned to the participants who were missing observation three. I discussed with professors, the possibility that I had reached data saturation since I had not seen anything new since my second observation. I scheduled observation four for the high schools and concluded that I was seeing more of the same amongst those participants.

Sources

The main data sources were individual interviews and observations; however, data analysis was simultaneous with collection, allowing for adjustments along the way. The use of both interviews and observations helped "enhance the validity of the eventual

findings" (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). The interview questions were validated via a pilot

study with colleagues willing to review the questions and their meanings. Two different

colleagues were interviewed a year prior to the study and helped to hash out which

questions were beneficial, as well as recognizing where more questions were necessary.

Initial interviews were recorded and later transcribed by an iPad application named

"Transcribe." The first interviews happened during all the teachers' down time in the

summer, and I personally listened and edited the transcribed versions. Fifteen minutes of

interview took me one hour of editing. The benefits to personally editing and listening to

the interviews multiple times, was that there were things discussed that I remembered

vividly during observations. The downfall was that time was a constraint; the process

took me roughly three months to go through and transcribe the data for all the interviews.

While this was a tedious and time-consuming exercise, it forced me to relive the

interviews, and understand nuance and emphasis in the voices of the choral music

directors.

The interviews were then coded and analyzed for themes. "Data analysis is an

inductive strategy" (Merriam, 2002) whereby the researcher is looking for patterns,

giving them codes, and refining and adjusting as the analysis proceeds. My study began

with a comparative method between the different participants. It was done in this manner

to determine similarities or differences which appeared throughout the interview

transcripts and observations of classroom instruction.

Analysis

Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that analysis "takes you step by step from the raw

data in your interviews to clear and convincing answers to your research question" (p.

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190). As per Rubin and Rubin (2012) the first step was transcribing each interview. Following that, there was an initial reading of each interview to see what words or phrases jumped out at me as repetitive or consistent. The first reading of a transcript was supposed to allow space for thoughts and comments that occurred throughout the reading. The second reading of the interviews looked for larger themes or ideas amidst those words or coding. Larger themes were made up of smaller themes that could be grouped together under a larger umbrella. Coding involved marking the transcript for words or phrases that represent what you think a given passage means (Rubin & Rubin, 2015). The third reading aimed to connect the similarities and differences from the themes that arose from the two previous readings.

Brinkman and Kvale (2015) recommended condensation categorization of transcribed interviews. Condensation builds off of coding and "entails an abridgement of the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 255). The whole process took place largely by utilizing the data alignment chart after multiple readings of the data. Although there may be many concepts or themes in the interviews, the goal was to focus on those that were relevant to the research problem at hand (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I began with the concepts and themes explicitly explored: teaching philosophy, music literacy, and choral music literacy. Following that I looked for concepts and themes that had been frequently mentioned by the participants.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommended sorting all the interviews by codes, and then summarizing the coded information. After coding was accomplished, my next task was to sort the material within and compare the results. My method used for sorting of

the material involved using the Data Sources Alignment chart. I created a chart for each participant, and included either direct quotes, or explain participant answers with a quote that demonstrated my interpretation, as well as observational situations that reinforced their interview responses. After that, the material was integrated into the narrative and was used to generate a hypothesis.

Five themes arose from the coding and summarizing. Four of these themes were overtly mentioned by the participants, the fifth theme was observed by the researcher after reading and re-reading the interviews as well as revisiting the observations and lesson plans. The five themes are: (a) musicianship skills and development, (b) interpersonal connection, (c) teacher qualities and responsibilities (d) student involvement and (e) growth mindset. The five themes were listed in order of repeated importance across participants. Each of these themes was designated as an umbrella under which a series of related topics had been discussed or observed.

Generalizability and Transferability

As previously stated, the participants for this research were a sample of five secondary choral music educators. The rationale for five participants followed Stake's (2006) recommendations and explanations of multi-case studies. Given the specific characteristics of the participants the sample size, and limited scope, the study was not designed with generalizability in mind. Rather, it was designed to begin conversations about the breadth and depth of what and how high school choral music educators work with students and think about their curricula.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness or credibility is achieved through "practices including thick description, triangulation or crystallization, and multivocality and partiality" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). Thick description refers to creating an in-depth illustration of what is happening as well as extensive details. "Thick description requires that the researcher account for the complex specificity and circumstantiality of their data" (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). The researcher must use words to make the reader feel as if they are in the circumstances being described. Triangulation has been used by qualitative researchers to mean many things, but the term is derived from the application of trigonometry to navigation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Tracy (2010) however, stated that triangulation assumes that "if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected, or researchers converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more credible" (p. 843). Multivocality refers to research that includes multiple and varied voices (Tracy, 2010). In this sense, the inclusion of the choral music educators' quotes, feedback, and edits assisted in adding their voices to this study.

Conclusion

This chapter presented in detail the methods which were used in conducting this study. It included the study design as well as a description of each participant. It also presented the questions and some of the data collection tools that were used throughout the study. The goal through this research was to give choral music educators a voice and to describe, examine, and understand five choral music educators' pedagogical methodology. The best way to accomplish this was through direct observation of five high school and middle school choral music educators, as well as in depth interviews and

lesson plan analysis when made available by the teachers. In the next chapter, there is a

more detailed description of individual participants with many of their own quotes, as

well as observational data as it related to the questions at hand.

CHAPTER FOUR

MODULATING TRANSITION: INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

The present chapter provides individual case reports on each participant. Participants chose pseudonyms for their first names and I assigned pseudonyms for their last name. Throughout the multiple iterations of the participants' stories, they were all made aware of their fictitious last names and made no comment about them. Throughout this chapter, I provide more detailed descriptions of the participants, taking into account biographical information, instructional philosophies, and classroom observations as they pertain to the research study. This chapter provides readers with a fully developed vision of the participants as musicians and educators and was designed to capture how participants think about what they do and why they do it. The chapter, therefore, exclusively presents each of the participants' backgrounds and philosophical standpoints within the field of choral music education as recorded and observed throughout their interviews and observations.

Each section begins with a biography of a participant. Due to the small size of the choral community, as well as the close-knit workings of the community, there are limitations to the biographical information given. The individual participants' anonymity must be protected; therefore, the biography of each individual does not include the individual's ethnicity. After the biography of each participant has been presented, the structure of each participant's case report follows this order: (a) participant's answers to interview questions pertinent to the bigger questions of the study, (b) an overview of each participant's teaching based on observations, and (c) a summary of each participant that synthesizes the previous sections from the perspective of choral music literacy.

Throughout this chapter, various forms of data collected during the study are presented to provide the reader with the participant's voice; observational data and interview statements were woven together to create the narrative. Finally, a synthesis of the previous sections is presented for each individual case to describe the participant's perceptions and use of elements within choral music literacy in their classrooms. It should be noted that because each case study is meant to provide a thorough analysis of each participant, various subsections have been added when appropriate that are based on critical themes found within each participant's narrative.

Andrea Martinez

Andrea Martinez has been teaching for the past eight years in a large urban city in the south. She began her career first in a local middle charter school and more recently in a local Title I public high school. Andrea, a product of the local public-school system, began studying piano after a summer spent with an older cousin.

> So, I was like six years old, and I spent an entire summer with my aunt and uncle who lived in Pittsburgh and they have five children, of which I'm really close to one of my cousins. And at the time, she was very serious about her piano studies with her piano teacher who is Russian and teaches at Carnegie Mellon. Very cool guy. She was vigorously practicing the piano and I came back home that summer after I had chickenpox and everything. I was like, Mom, I have to play piano, I have to play piano… I had just turned six over there.

By the age of eight, she had begun piano lessons; this gave her the ability to learn theory and impress her elementary school music teachers.

In elementary school, music classes became super easy. I was in the choir, I was in the bell ensemble, I was in the recorder ensemble. All at the same time while taking still my private piano lessons, which were weekly. I never changed piano teachers so that was a big deal.

Andrea continued her studies in piano and attended a magnet arts school for middle school and high school. While in high school, she had the opportunity to accompany many choir students individually as well as the full choir and began to recognize her affinity towards the choral art form. It was also during this time of her life, that a simple school project guided her towards her college acceptance requirements and her eventual career.

Andrea is graduate of two public universities; she holds a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Music Education with an emphasis in choral conducting. Her journey as a middle school teacher was challenging because the music culture prior to her arrival in that school did not have a choral emphasis, but which focused on the soloist. During her time as a teacher at the middle school, her choirs consistently received superior ratings at district MPA (Music Performance Assessment) and she had students participating in the Annual All-State choirs.

Andrea recently moved to the high school level, where she has introduced the school to Music Performance Assessment participation, an annual assessment for choral directors to bring their students for adjudication. Her predecessor at this school had a guitar emphasis, and while students were encouraged to sing in the choir, their expectations were contained to what they could accomplish within the classroom. This teacher taught four class periods of guitar, and only had one class period of choir. The

only outside performance for the students was at the end of the year during graduation. Since Andrea's arrival, the choirs have received Excellent ratings in 2017, 2018, and received Superior ratings in 2019.

The high school where Andrea currently teaches is a Title 1 school, with a 94% Hispanic population. When observing the classroom, there was a sprinkling of Spanish being spoken throughout, amongst the students, and sometimes Andrea used a few colloquialisms to really accentuate a point. This spoke to Andrea's willingness and ability to connect with the students and accept their backgrounds. When students would do something funny, or beyond belief, on more than one occasion, Andrea said, "no puedo," a typical saying which means, "I can't".

Andrea stated that the administration is very laid back yet "supportive of teachers when they see them working for the kids." Her classroom is a tapestry of students, Exceptional Student Education (ESE), advanced academics students, and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESL). Her students are mostly juniors and seniors, with fewer sophomores and freshman due to scheduling. Regardless of the students' exceptionalities or abilities upon entering the classroom, her students "seem to excel regardless of how rigorous I may or may not be with them." The goal is to improve, and her students respond. "I think my philosophy of teaching is definitely making a person better than when they walked in. Whether it's musically, or just personally, or just someone who can appreciate something different. I think that's my new philosophy."

Her passion is the choir, she works diligently to grow the choral program. Andrea also teaches beginning and advanced piano classes as well as beginning and advanced guitar classes. In her choral classes, her goal is to promote student independence, but as

music is both an auditory and visual subject, thus she begins by teaching rhythms. Every

observation included a rhythmic reading component. On the promethean board, a

rhythmic exercise would be displayed via a program called thesightreadingproject.com.

Andrea would guide her students through producing the sounds congruent to the rhythmic

symbols which were new. Rhythmic exercises were done utilizing syllables, but not

solfege syllables. Then, she would have them produce the sounds of the portion of the

exercise that was being displayed. Finally, Andrea would have the students speak through

the entire exercise, producing the rhythmic sounds represented. Her ability to scaffold her

classes provided every student with opportunities for success from the beginning levels

all the way up to the top levels.

What was most striking about this teacher, was the passion with which she

approached her students and the work that was teaching them to be better people through

music. She loved teaching at her first school but loves it at her new school even more.

And after teaching there [the new Title I school] for a year. I loved it. I realize

how much change I can instill in someone, whereas in my other school I was just

enriching people, here I was changing people's lives and giving them a ticket to

something different.

Classroom Set-Up and Preliminary Observations

Andrea's classroom was a bit like her, bright and orderly. Walking through the

building to the room, the old floor was an authentic tile floor, not the usual linoleum of

modern school buildings. Her classroom was on the second floor and had an entire back

row of beautiful windows that overlook the front lawn of the school. There were blinds

on the windows, but the room had a warm feeling with natural light. Throughout the

classroom, most wall space was neatly decorated with motivational quotes, pictures, and calendars.

On my first visit, I arrived during lunch time and students were hanging out in the classroom. This was obviously a place where they felt comfortable and were choosing to be. One student was playing the piano, short little clips of songs, and his friends were around him encouraging and recommending new songs. There was another group of students chatting with the teacher, discussing random things including the liver as she was trying to input grades from previous classes.

The room felt structured, but also had what I describe as a lightness and an element of fun. Andrea was consistently encouraging and modeling all the behaviors she expected from her students. The flow of the classes always included a great deal of questioning from the teacher, in an effort to remind and review previously learned information, but also allow students to catch up if they had missed something. One such questions, following a portion of the song that was out of tune, Andrea asked the students, "Does posture affect how you sound?" Later on, during that rehearsal, she announced where in the music she was beginning, as students were fidgeting and not everyone was paying attention, she asked the class, "bottom of page what?" and the students responded, "page 4."

Students and the teacher were allowed to make mistakes, and everyone was consistently supportive of one another. During the first observation, Andrea and the students were working on a Catalonian carol which had a strange rhythmic passage that did not seem to line up with the text. Andrea attempted to speak it for the students and made a mistake. The students tried to speak the text and did a better job than her. She told

the students, "you speak Spanish better than I do." Later on, while working on the same

musical piece, Andrea asked the students, "did I mess up," to which they responded,

"everyone makes mistakes."   Andrea was very animated throughout the class, reminding

me of a great cheerleader. But not only was she excited, she was very clear and spent a

great deal of time explaining. The room had risers and was very long, so student and

teacher mobility and flexibility within the room were limited. However, the teacher and

the students seemed very comfortable with the set up.
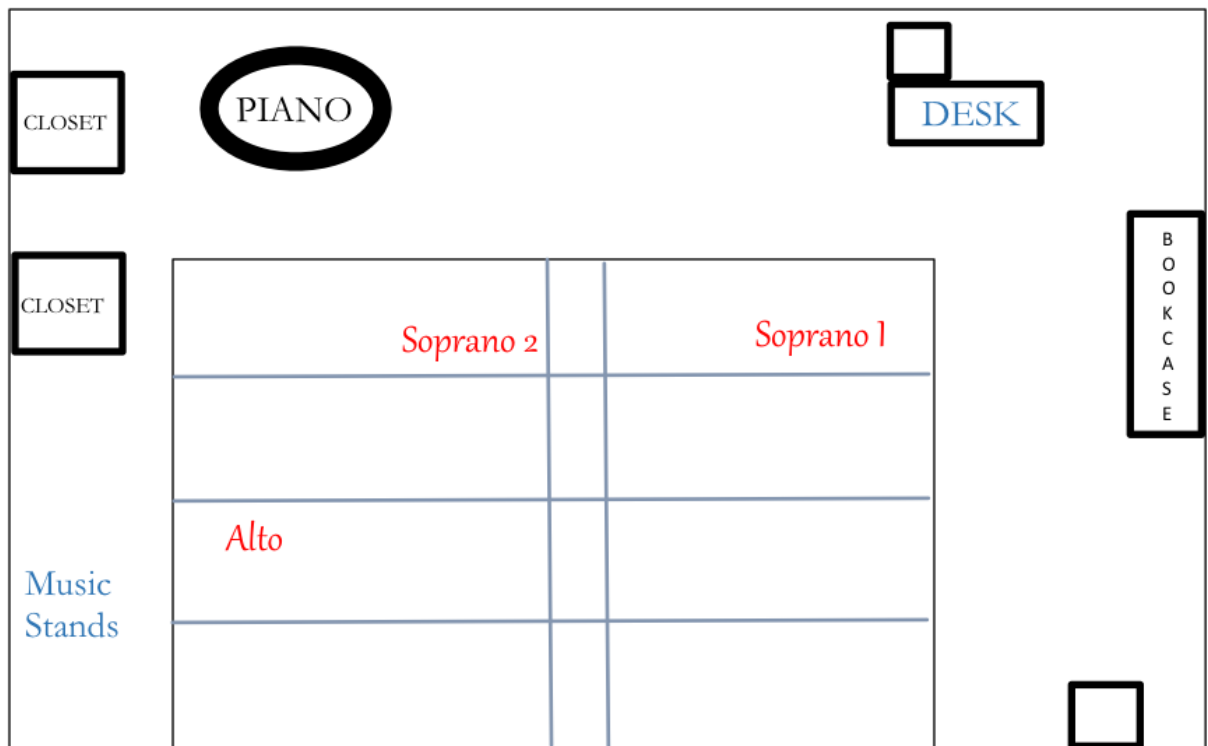
Figure 1. Andrea's Classroom Set-Up

Perceptions and Understandings of Choral Music Literacy

To understand Andrea's perceptions of choral music literacy, first we must

understand what her life at her school was like. Andrea taught four periods of choir, two

periods of guitar, and one period of keyboard. When asked, she explained that her

primary responsibilities on the job were to "teach them [students], keep them in my

classroom, keep them 'entertained,' give grades, give assignments, and measure their accomplishments in some way, shape or form." The job also included a performance at graduation and at the school's holiday show which is a performance during the day. She says her secondary responsibilities were to

> have a winter concert, have a spring concert, and make this school a competitive
> school. Because as large as this school is, as beautiful as the school is, as old as
> the school is, it's obnoxious that it doesn't have a competitive program.

The school was 115 years old, making it the oldest school in the city where the research took place. For Andrea, going to MPA—Music Performance Assessments—is a non-negotiable. So, while the school has certain expectations, she has added her own expectations to the program; participation in a fall showcase, a caroling competition, solo and ensembles, all county, and All-State auditions.

When asked who she is as a teacher, Andrea was unsure at first. She began by describing herself as a human being, "I think I am first just a regular, normal, human being, just trying to figure it out, just like everybody else." She also called herself an experimenter,

> I don't know if certain things are going to work for certain kids, or if certain
> things are going to be successful for them. I have to try it out and see if it works
> out, even if it is my eighth year.

She also believes that she teaches people how to read people through music. She said, "connecting people is such a big deal to me, making eye contact, whether through the music or just like when we're talking about the words we are saying." This idea of

connecting to people is related to Andrea's interpretation of choral music literacy and will be explored further in Chapter Five.

Throughout the interviews, it was obvious that Andrea held a great deal of respect for past teachers, and current mentors. She listed every teacher she ever had. One of the mentors recognized, is a teacher in a local private school. This teacher, who will be called Jasmine (pseudonym), helped ensure that teaching for Andrea was not just operating under trial by fire. Jasmine helped Andrea organize and structure her lessons, as well as prepare for classroom management issues; a huge portion of her pedagogy goes back to this organization and structure. For Andrea, Jasmine was a huge reason she was as successful as she was, early in her career. More recently, Andrea has another colleague who has helped her in the transition from the charter to the public schools.

Music Literacy and Choral Music Literacy

Andrea's definition of music literacy is "to read music just like you read a book. I want students to be able to pick up a piece of music just like you pick up a chapter book and start reading it." Teaching her students to read music is of the utmost priority for Andrea. It was evident not only in the interviews, but in every classroom observation. The beginning of her class, once attendance, announcements, and warmups had been completed, was teaching music literacy and sight-reading. As stated earlier, sight-reading refers to the ability to sing the notes on the page at first sight. The specific components of music literacy she taught were aural skills through scales and intervals, followed by rhythmic reading. In this way, she separated the rhythmic and melodic components. Following these preparatory skills, Andrea would present the students with a three-part melodic and harmonic exercise that students had to sing at first sight. She would scaffold

these components specifically, such that the music they were learning would include a component she had reviewed in the sight-reading exercises.

As previously noted, the term choral music literacy is not in the literature. Therefore, Andrea answered the question concerning the term with some trepidation.

> Choral music literacy would mean, as we harmonize through a piece of music, where your vocal part in the chord lies within that harmony. Because now not only are you okay, I have mi- Great. Who has Do? Who has Sol? That's your most important chord.

Andrea said that it involved not just knowing the notes and reading them, but also "knowing where the harmony goes." Harmony in music is generally made up of consonant and dissonant intervals and chords which have specific functions within the music. Intervals are the distance between any two notes, whether the notes are being sounded simultaneously or in sequence, and chords are generally built off of intervals. Based on her definition, she stated that it was an important part of her curriculum, but one she had not yet achieved completely. She explained that prior to understanding chords in the classroom, she was working on intervals for her students to understand, and these intervals were based off of the scales they were learning.

> It is something I'm still working on. So, right now we're still working on your intervals, your skips between, we've gone up to 4ths. This week now we're doing fourths in minor, with my, with those top two groups. With the beginning group they're now going to do thirds in minor.

While her definition of choral music literacy did not include references to the text that singers inevitably sing with, when asked about getting students to connect to the

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music, Andrea explained that her first goal was always to get students to experience the song first. "I don't like to give them a song, look how cool it is and play it for them. I feel like that gives it away." What Andrea is specifically referencing, is having a student passively listen to a song as opposed to interacting with the notes on the page and going through the process of figuring it out. When she says experience it, she means sight-sing through it first, and then hear as the students sing: working to get her students to sing parts of the harmony and engage them so that they will react. As she says, "then they're like, 'Oh that does sound cool, we need to fix that.'"

Another way that Andrea got the students to connect to the music was by explaining why she had chosen a song; the students would become excited to perform and work on it. For Andrea, the text also helped the students to become engaged and connected to the piece, especially if it is in English.

> They do read it if it's in English. They'll read it and be like, especially with like
> Lully, "What, this king killed the children, but why?" And I'm like, I know right?
> So, I let them decipher things on their own first, and then obviously we'll talk
> about it as a group eventually.

Having the students connect with the music allows the students to perform better, as she says, "it'll move the music a little bit better."

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Andrea's philosophy of teaching is to, "make a person better than when they walked in, whether it's musically, or personally, or just someone who can appreciate something different." She explains that music did a lot for her, but it wasn't until her student teaching that she was able to realize all the things that music could provide for

others. According to Andrea, "Music connected me to people, it has connected me to my faith, and it emotionally speaks to me so much. This philosophy is embedded throughout Andrea's curriculum. Her curriculum is self-described, and observed by me, as sight-reading based. When asked, she explains that her steps are:

> We start with how to read rhythms. Quarter note, half note, whole note, eighth note, that's how we start. Four-fourths. Ta ti-ti- ta. That's what I use. We learn rhythms, we learn how to make a sound; so, I have them hum. Then I have them phonate. Not be scared of their sounds, I remind them of the first time you picked up that saxophone and their sounds weren't the best. Yeah, guess what, it's the same thing, look I'm yelling. And then they're like, she's crazy. So how to make a sound, and how to sight read; starting with rhythm then I add scale and arpeggio. Scale actually, just major scale, do-re-mi on solfege.

> Eventually we'll start skipping through the scale and then do the arpeggio. And then, stepwise motion of the notes. I tell them where Do is and then look, like it's going up, so the pitch has to go up, oh look the pitch is going down so we have to go down. So, we use that scale so, if this is do, that's re, that's mi, that's fa and so on and so forth. And then, we speak the solfege in rhythm.

In other words, the three steps to reading a piece of music are, speak the rhythm, then speak the solfege on the rhythm, and then sing the pitches using the scale. As per Andrea, "this is after a lot of step wise singing within the scale."

Once that skill—sight-reading—has been established, she moves to singing intervals within the song but that takes months to perfect. Using this system, choir classes with beginners start off by learning a unison piece, to build tone. Amongst choral

directors, tone refers to the timbre or color created by the individual and ensemble when singing, and there are tones that are considered appropriate for different genres of singing. Once the students have learned that unison piece, she takes that same unison piece and makes it a round or canon. Andrea's goal is to split that class into three parts by the end of the year, but that is dependent on the students' levels of success with the different steps.

When initially asked about these steps, Andrea noted that this was the basic way of teaching all students without prior knowledge. She was unsure with her women's choir if all the steps would be necessary. She did know, that depending on how the students responded, she would have to increase the level of difficulty. She said, "I kind of have to go with how they're doing. So, I don't know, I can't tell you because I haven't had a women's choir before." She explained that the group was going to be "treated more like a beginning choir, because if the women's choir didn't work out, beginning choir is the same exact thing, just with guys." Following the sight-reading skills and the unison song, Andrea moves on to pieces that are intended for performance. Again, decisions about whether the piece is unison, two part, or a partner song, depends on how the students react to the previous material. "I usually pick out two [songs] and just work on two and then if they are doing well, I'll pick out [songs] three and four. I've realized in high school, four [songs] is as much as I can do till December." Her goal is to push her students such that they can learn seven songs in the first semester, but given the emphasis on sight-reading and skill level as well as how consistent she is, her current students are not yet able to learn more than four songs within the first half of the school year.

Steps for teaching a song: a component of curriculum design and implementation. When introducing and teaching a new song, Andrea describes a few different scenarios:

Sometimes I do unison sections so that they have a good experience. It kind of depends on the day of the week, too. Another time I started in the middle section where they do split off into three parts. I was also trying to challenge that group to sight-read more. That's a hard group because I want to consider them intermediate so, it's just like trying to push them to the next level. So then always on solfege, finding the key, finding the first note in that section, and then let's sight-read by section. I will always give them the shot, let's try it. Ok, that didn't work out. So, then we start with one section and I make the other sections hum through. And then still try and do those hand signs, so that obviously muscle memory gives you a pitch. And then I make now that new section that we just, like let's say I was working with soprano II, now they hum, next section, out loud.

Andrea was very interested in ensuring that students have a positive experience from the beginning. Once the unison sections are learned, Andrea switches and provides each section time to work on their individual parts, depending on the classes' skill level. She will allow them to attempt to sight-read it together, or she will break it down and then put it back together. She encourages the use of hand signs—hand gestures used as a kinesthetic, tangible observation of the rise and fall of pitches on the staff as they are sung—throughout her teaching and insists that it helps the students with muscle memory and pitch. Even when working with only one group at a time, sopranos for example, the other sections are expected to be working on their parts either by using their hand signs,

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or by humming along with the group that is actualizing the pitches. Actualization of pitches refers to when a sound is made, whereas audiation is the ability to hear the pitches inside the mind, using the inner ear. When asked why she had students humming, Andrea explained that "it gives them a shot to actuate or sing out loud in some way. It also helps the students to hear some of the harmonies that the piece will have."

The major difference between her more advanced class procedures and her beginning choir procedures is that the steps are much more consistent and broken down with her beginning choirs. "What I do, because the beginning groups will have trouble obviously skipping, when we have a weird skip, so let's look at this phrase let's sing all the pitches in that phrase." Once the students are confident that they do in fact know all the pitches in the phrase, she begins to break it down especially around skips. "It's tedious, but it gets the job done, and they actually have gotten to their second piece and have learned both parts in that song."

When the students return in January, the sight-reading skills are transferred to paper. Prior to this, most of the exercises used in the classroom come from thesightreadingproject.com. After December, the class continues to work on sight-reading, as this is their sole method of learning music in class. However, they also add tone building into the mix in preparation for the assessments that are usually in March. Tone is a component all unto itself within the rubric used for MPAs.

Andrea reported that the curriculum has changed over time, primarily in the fact that there are more events. Each element that gets added to the curriculum directly correlates to specific events in the year. December's big goal is teaching the students how to perform and learning performance etiquette. As she explains: "by March, tone quality

is everything. So, a more unified sound happens in March and then by May they should be transformed. They should realize this is bigger than just them."

According to Andrea, the curriculum has also changed

> more in the sense of having fun and creating a safe space for students to express themselves, rather than being so competitive. This class isn't just music, it is about being a part of a team, having to work together, and having fun in the process.

> **Experiential learning: A component of curriculum design and implementation.** All of the events and activities that Andrea works toward, stem from a belief that learning occurs through experiences or by doing. As she explains, "you can tell someone how to hold a spoon 300 times, but until they do it, they didn't really learn it." Similarly, she doesn't believe students realize how much they've learned, until a performance. She facilitates learning by allowing her students to experience things for themselves. One of the things she does, is host open mic nights, which students must audition to perform in. Those who go and watch, can recognize that "it's possible. And if it's possible, then students realize they just have to continue learning." She also facilitates learning by giving students a step by step process. Her steps include the following questions. "Did you take a low breath? Did you bend your knees? Did you open your mouth and make sure that the soft palate was up?" She also has a step by step for sight-reading, "rhythm first, solfege syllables on rhythm, add the pitches. Do one step at a time."

> Andrea's evaluation system is very well thought out. First there is a class participation grade which "entails having your music, being actively participating by

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singing and standing up, and having a pencil." There is also a weekly assignment, which is often turned in via Onenote, an application offered to all teachers and students via Microsoft Word. It could be a theory assignment via www.musictheory.net, they could have to sight-read something and make an audio recording, a reflection of a recording, and finally, performances. Her goal is to teach for understanding, which makes teaching songs a slow process. This is something she recognizes as a current barrier, but she is also confident that once the students have fully bought into the sight reading and musical independence aspect of her teaching, the process will speed up.

Student involvement: A component of curriculum design and implementation. In this class, students were involved in the music making process primarily through discussion and offering suggestions for issues they may hear from recordings. Andrea admits to often recording her students, and then playing their performance back for them. As stated previously, it is a classroom where students seem to be very supportive of each other and where they want to work together to improve. Andrea also believed in giving her students opportunities to participate in the decision-making process of musical interpretation. She says that she often asks her students questions to help them get to the musical points, "because at the end of the day, the one who's performing is them. I'm performing with them, but they're the ones that are actually making the noise, so I need them to get that next level." If the students like the music, they will want to perform it and work hard on it. Andrea states that the ideal classroom climate for her would be "a safe environment for myself and my students to be able to not just learn, but that everybody understands that mistakes can happen, as long as we work hard to fix them."

She goes on to explain that it would be a place "where no one is judged for any reason, and we all work together, including myself and anyone who is there in that classroom setting, for the betterment of each other not just whatever exterior goal could be." Andrea feels that she is close to this goal, because students will invite other students into their classroom and call it home. (Remember on my first visit, students were hanging out there during their lunch hour.) She has created this culture in her classroom.

Growth mindset: An unexpected component of curriculum implementation. Although the term growth mindset is never mentioned specifically throughout the interviews, or observations, it is a clear idea throughout the conversations. The goal is not to have the most talented students, but to have students willing to work hard to improve. Everyone can learn. Andrea told me a story in her first interview, of a drama teacher she had in a high school musical theater wheel.

> In that class, at the start of the year, he told us to draw a self-portrait on a sheet of paper with pencil, you give it some time to think that, to draw it. We're all complaining about like, this isn't a drawing class, like why do we have to draw. And he was like, "ok, you should be done with your picture now". I can't draw, or so I thought. And he tells us to switch our papers with someone else. And, the person that got our paper has to then on the back, write how if you were to see this picture on a wall, based on skill alone like, how old would you think the person that drew it was. We had to write it down on the back, and then give back the paper. We did that, and then we were all like, can we see how old we are? And I think I got seven years old. I can't remember now, but he said, the age that you see on that paper is pretty much the last time you drew.

I started thinking about it. And I was like, oh my God yeah. It was

definitely a moment of silence in the class. I even remember going back

home and looking at my drawings, but I realized that oh yeah, I stopped

drawing. And he said, "usually, you stopped because someone saw your

drawing, and said that doesn't look like whatever it is that you're supposed

to be drawing. Or someone told you, you can't draw." And then he said,

"the same goes for singing, the same goes for acting, and you know it's not

that you can't. It's because you don't know how, it can be taught. You can

learn how to draw. If you drew every single day wouldn't you think you

would get better?

Andrea uses this idea at the beginning of the year with all her students. She

explains from the beginning, "It's not that we can't sing, it's that we don't know how to

sing, and anybody can sing if they can speak." This experience affected Andrea so much

in her way of thinking, that she has carried it with her and continues to use it year after

year. The other people that she believes have shaped her include her piano teacher who

taught her how to practice, and her high school directors who established a safe

environment for her to grow. As she explains,

they helped me flourish as a musician, and I'd like to do that for somebody else.

All these people were such great mentors, teachers, and people who I looked up to

so much, they gave me so many opportunities. It's just a pay it forward or a

continuing of that legacy like they did for me, and hopefully I can do it for other

people.

Choral Music Literacy and Performance Requirements

As previously described, the experience in high school with the musical theater wheel, taught Andrea that, "you may not be good at something because you don't know how, but it can be taught. You can learn. If you drew every single day, wouldn't you think you would get better?" Andrea's internship provided her with opportunities to learn time management and tough love. At her first job at the charter school, she was able to build a culture of choral singing and taught her students how to sight read despite feeling micromanaged. She eventually got a master's degree in choral conducting, and it was during these classes that she realized that she had been intuitively doing the right things all along—scaffolding, building confidence and giving students steps for success—and was able to work on her conducting skills.

Andrea schedules for her students roughly eight performances per year. These performances vary in purpose from community service experiences such as singing in the cancer ward at a local hospital, to recruitment performances for local middle schools, and competitions and evaluations. As previously stated, Andrea believes that students learn from experiences, and to her, "a performance is a complete experience. So, I don't teach to perform, but I do teach to try to get the best experience out of the performance." Her reasoning is, if the students were to have a bad experience, they won't want to perform again.

The repertoire choices in Andrea's classroom are very precise. Andrea admits to having a formula for her holiday concert. She begins by thinking about the voicing and level of the choir. Then she considers range, because not all students can sing all the notes of the range. Her holiday formula is a winter song, a world peace song is also

usually included. Then a Hanukah or Israeli piece, a piece with a djembe, and then what she calls "the Jesus song." Andrea does believe it is important that the students buy into the piece of music, "because if they hate it, they're not going to want to learn it." Often, she will give her students a few songs to choose from based on range, and level of difficulty, but allow her officers to pick from the options she provides. When asked about the relationship between rehearsals and performances, Andrea said, "the way someone behaves in rehearsal will then transcend to performance. Not at 100% because being in front of people puts you on the spot so you try your absolute best. But dealing with teenagers, they're not consistent."

Summary

Andrea is a teacher who as a person, is constantly seeking to be better. Throughout her educational career in high school and throughout college, she took pride in doing the best she could, and learning how to improve. At one point, she described being disillusioned with an aspect of her college career, but rather than quitting, she found an alternate avenue to push her to continue improving. So faithful is she to this ideal, that she continued on to get a master's degree, which proved to her all she was doing well; then she focused on improving her conducting skills. As I watched her in the classroom, it became clear that she approaches her job with this same zeal, seeking to be better. She also hopes to instill this drive in her students, as she teaches that it does not matter where you began, but that there is growth in each individual student, and in the group as a whole. She focuses much of her time on the basic building blocks of musicianship, but she also ensures that students feel a sense of safety in the steps established, safety in the group should there be a mishap, and confidence in all that they

have learned. Performances are not the goal, but a goal, as they help provide opportunities for the students to recognize how far they have come, and still how much farther they have to go.

Chuck Harris

Chuck Harris has been a teacher for 10 years, in six schools and has taught elementary through high school. His path to becoming a teacher was not necessarily a straight line. Chuck described his earliest memory of music,

> I think my earliest memories of singing come from my mom tucking my brother and me to sleep and singing nursery rhymes with us in our room. This would happen very often; I think probably every day when we were kids.

> As a traditional public high school student, he took piano classes and his senior year of high school, auditioned for a role in the school musical. Unexpectedly, he landed the lead.

> The director selected me for the lead of the show. And because of that I got my first formal singing experience. And through that my drama teacher, convinced me that I should audition for colleges… for scholarships and such. And that's what I did, and that's how I ended up starting my music education career in college, because I received the scholarship to sing.

> This one moment provided him with guidance from the drama teacher and opportunities for college scholarships. He then began to pursue singing as a career, but due to family situations, he felt he needed a more stable career than soloist.

> I wanted to sing professionally, but my parents divorcing, while I was in college made me change my mind. Where I needed, I felt like I needed to put my solo

career or solo studies on the back burner so that I could, so that I could graduate

from college and have a job teaching and help support my family.

Chuck had a choral director in college who provided him with countless musical

experiences. He graduated from a private university with a Bachelor of Music Education

and went into the classroom where he taught elementary and high school choir. He taught

for a few years, but left teaching and focused on his singing career for 15 years, traveling

and performing. Five years ago, Chuck returned to the classroom.

Chuck has been at his current school for four years. It is a high school and

includes a magnet for the visual and performing arts. He holds a Master of Music in

Choral Conducting from a public university, a degree he completed upon beginning his

job at this current location. Throughout his time as a teacher at this most recent post, his

choirs have consistently received superior ratings at district MPA and overall Superior or

Excellent ratings at State MPA. His students have participated in State ACDA (American

Choral Director's Association) Honor choirs, as well as National ACDA Honor choirs.

His school has had students in the All-State choirs for the past 3 years. While the school

has been a magnet school for some time, his work there has been evident in the

community because the school has been receiving more notoriety due to their growing

music program.

When walking into Chuck's classroom for the first time, the most striking thing

was his very neat, subtly colorful classroom. There were a few focal points. The school

demographic is "heavily Hispanic with African American and Caucasian students."   The

official report published for 2018-19 stated that the school was 58% Hispanic, 19%

black, 18% white, and 5% Other. The school has an administrative team that is

supportive of the arts "I feel that, for the for the most part the administration is very

supportive. They appreciate what I do, and how I represent the school to the public."

A unique component of Chuck's classroom is an emphasis on solo singing in

addition to choral singing. The students in his classes, depending on their year within the

group, must learn four solo art songs, one per semester. Chuck explains that many of his

students "do not have the ability to have private vocal teachers or coaches. They just

can't afford it. So, I think that part of my job is to teach solo voice." Another of the goals

he listed for himself as a teacher was to prepare students for their college auditions and

make them competitive and eligible for scholarships. Throughout the observations,

students seemed to have much to do in the classroom, yet Chuck's kindness and humor

made the work seem accessible. The focus in the classroom was evident, students had

folders, pencils, and were ready to go before the bell. Chuck was consistently

complimentary with the students, even when he needed to make corrections. Mistakes

were allowed and gently noted, but strengths were continuously reinforced and

recognized. There was one student in the group who had a paraprofessional assigned; she

was autistic. However, the structure of the class made the student's exceptionality

unnoticeable. The student worked and accomplished all of the tasks within the class, and

only required redirecting once, throughout the four visits.

Chuck's personality shined through regardless of the job at hand. He carried

himself with a sort of quick-witted kind humor, as well as an obvious commitment to

accomplishing the goals or task at hand. His work ethic was clear and consistent

throughout every rehearsal. The class I observed was an early morning class, and I

always arrived early enough for him to meet me in the office and walk me around before

we arrived at his classroom. He met everyone with a smile and a warm greeting, but always with that same sense of purpose. It was an interesting balance which made him seem approachable and yet no nonsense. Throughout our interviews, he would approach the questions asked with that same sense of humor, sometimes trying to self-correct. His instinct was usually one of joviality sprinkled with his obvious love for his job and his students.

Classroom Set-Up and Preliminary Observations

When I arrived for my first visit, Chuck was already waiting in the office speaking with an administrator. He was casually dressed in jeans and a button-down shirt with casual brown shoes. His classroom included a large mural in the back of the classroom, a red treble staff with musical notation that grows larger and expands to the left, that greeted everyone upon arrival.

Students knew upon entering the class where things should be; bookbags in one place, cell phones in another, music folders and pencils in hand. On the promethean board there was always a sight-reading rhythmic exercise page, ready for the students to do first, while the teacher took attendance. The classroom had an overall positive environment.
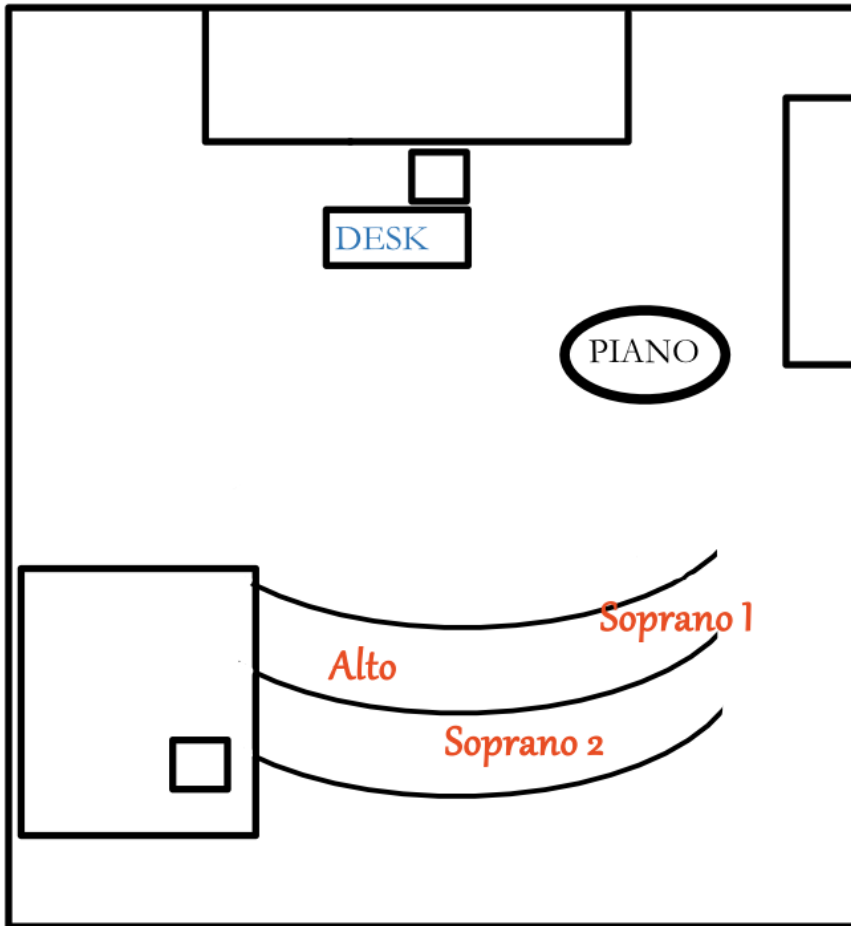
Figure 2. Chuck's Classroom Set-Up

Perceptions and Understandings of Choral Music Literacy

As previously noted, Chuck teaches in a high school magnet program within a

community school. During the 2018-19-year, Chuck taught five periods of choir and one

period of music theory. When he arrived at this school, he adjusted the curriculum for the

students in the magnet program and designed a scope and sequence that was competitive

with other magnet schools in the area.

When I decided to take the current, my current job, I made sure that I convinced

the administration to change their curriculum to a curriculum that I felt would

benefit my students, the way I wanted to teach them. So, I created a scope and

sequence for the choral magnet students to all follow, which would include the learning of music theory, sight singing, ear training, as well as a vocal techniques class. Where they would learn to use their solo voice and begin learning solo repertoire; art songs and arias, in various languages. And then also be introduced to choral music as they progressed through the sequence, they would then move on to the advanced choirs where they focus more on the choral music.

Chuck saw himself as "someone who helped students see potential that they don't yet see in themselves." He described himself as willing to give his time and talent above what the job description may entail: he loves his students, his job, and his career. As he says, "I'm proud of what I do, most of the time." For him, "my main goal is to help my students have a competitive edge when they are seniors, to be able to go to college auditions, and be accepted, as well as get scholarships for themselves." His secondary goal is, "for students to have an appreciation and love for the choral art form and singing in general; to feel pride in their art, what they do, and in themselves."

Chuck described a number of mentors and teachers who led him down the path of music. His first mentor was his high school piano teacher, "who instilled in me a passion for music. Thanks to her, I learned to play piano, music theory, and music history. She was always very supportive." His second mentor was the drama teacher at his high school who "helped me realize that I had a lot more talent and potential than I even knew." Chuck described both of his college choral directors with great admiration, "my first college professor exposed me to a lot of choral repertoire, which I fell in love with." His last college director at the university, is still a mentor and someone who Chuck

continues to look up to. "My last choral director was able to show the passion he had for music and then impart that on the people around him."

Music Literacy and Choral Music Literacy

When asked about music literacy, Chuck had an interesting answer. As he explained,

Language literacy means understanding words on the page, interpreting those words and creating sophisticated ideas about them. I think music literacy translates into something similar where, a musician can see a piece of paper and decipher what music is. It's the ability for the student to read the music, to interpret the music in correct cultural and musical styles, interpret styles, and performance styles.

Chuck explained that when he was helping his students to understand their music, in addition to sight reading and theory skills, he tried to give his students cultural historical background for the music. He described how often Mozart is placed in his own bubble and is disconnected from everything else around it. He explained to his students that Mozart was actually writing around the time of the American Revolution, by connecting it to "other subjects they might be familiar with, you give them a little bit of context."

Another way he assists his students in their music literacy development is by playing recordings for his students, various recordings of either that same song or that style of music. In this way, he provides his students with some context from which they can base some of their decisions. Each year, the students focus on different languages, and at the end of every nine weeks, the students were required to perform a jury "with a

report of the research on the style, composer, time period, and country of the aria they perform."

When asked about the differentiation between music literacy and choral music literacy, Chuck said "It's music literacy but specific to choral music. So, it's understanding what you see on the choral page, the text, composer's intention, the composers cultural background, historical background, and performance necessities for the appropriate performance of that music."   Chuck helps students connect to the music. In his words, "I tell the students at the beginning, that they don't have to love the music that we are singing, but they have to keep an open mind and to recognize its place and its value in our choral world."   Chuck is a firm believer that students cannot and will not love everything they perform, and as a performer himself, he has experienced performing some things he did not personally love. But he says, "that's ok. They [the students] should just decide not to make an opinion about it right away or give up on it, but they should keep an open mind."   For Chuck, by exposing his students to something they may not initially like, he believes he may sometimes change a student's perception of music when they give it a try.

Student leadership and music making: components of choral music literacy. Student leadership and a certain level of autonomy were obvious throughout the observations; it was impressive how seamlessly students took their leadership positions, and just as seamlessly returned to be student participants. Chuck explained

I give a lot of freedom for the students to do their own learning at the very

beginning. I give them some basic guidelines as to what needs to happen

throughout the day, but I let them decide how they're going to get to it, and I check in and I pluck out some notes here and there.

On three of the four observations, there was a point in the class period where students switched into sectionals. Chuck had written on the board their "goals" for their sectional work and then traveled between the rooms, ensuring the students were on track. From where I sat in the middle of the classroom, their work was bleeding through, and it was obvious everyone was on task. This kind of freedom amongst the students is dependent on having a good mix of both new and veteran students. However, for Chuck this is a productive way of using the time, "where the students are not just learning from their teacher but also learning from their peers. And the advanced students are learning by teaching, which is a huge component for them."

When asked about the definition of making music, Chuck described a video he showed in class:

> I remember showing my class a video of a robot playing a violin. And the robot was playing, I forget which composer, it may have been Bach or Mozart, mostly just plucking out the notes and it sounded far better than anything I could do because I don't play violin, but then I asked my students, is this music? And it was very interesting to hear their response because some of them thought that it was music, but some of them thought that it was sound but that it did not have a connection to emotions and feelings because it came from a robot. So, it opened up a discussion about what is music and how… and you know, are humans able to make sound which imitates music without actually being music. It became a huge conversation.

But you know music is, it has five components: it is sound that is created by a person that has a definite time, it has form, and an emotional connection. Those five components need to be present for a piece to be music and we always analyze are these five components there. And if they are, then we can define whatever we're doing, or hearing or producing as music or not.

Chuck believes that his most important work is that he helps his students become better people. In his words,

I think I help them work towards common goals, help each other, work with each other, feel compassion towards each other, develop a sense of love for themselves and for their music, for their art, and build a sense of pride in their school and their friends.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

In his classroom, Chuck always had a lighthearted joviality to his demeaner, amidst an obvious emphasis on making music and a great work ethic. At the end of class, he would tell his students, "I love you more than I love a cold sore." During the first few observations, a lot more time was spent on vocal technique and general warmups. As time passed, vocal warm-ups and technique were always discussed, and the priority slowly switched to more music learning, and later polishing in preparation for performances. The last observation included a mini performance as a means of school recruitment.

During the first observation, Chuck was simultaneously preparing his students for both state and national ACDA auditions, solo work for their end of the year assignment, and music for their performance at the annual state music conference which the group

had been selected to perform at. By the time the second observation came, these auditions had passed, and the main focus of the rehearsal was singing with the best technique possible. Some accepted behaviors that were noteworthy; singing, reading music, participation in music making, counting, tapping, snapping, and use of hand signs. Unacceptable behaviors included not being in rhythm and as Chuck said, making "bird beak" sounds. Students were constantly reminded of what a good sound and a bad sound was. Rehearsals were very productive and sprinkled with Spanish sayings. During my first observation, right before announcements were made on the speakers, Chuck said, "Oye! [listen!] Announcements." On more than one occasion, a student arrived late. Rehearsal procedures were so predictable, that these students did not take long to know what was happening and where they belonged.

Asked about his philosophy of teaching, Chuck said he believed every student was teachable. "I feel that, if you are able to spark interest in the students, then you're able to teach them, any of them. It's those students that you failed to grasp; it's not that they can't learn, it's that you can't teach them." Chuck believes it is the teacher's responsibility to be able to reach out to students. He says, "I think if you're really masterful, you might be able to reach every student in a certain way. Every student is teachable. Not everybody's going to win an award, but everybody's going to come out with an experience."

As previously stated, Chuck altered the school choral curriculum and explained throughout our interviews, how and why he changed the curriculum to what it is today. Prior to his arrival, "students were enrolled in various choirs, depending on what the previous teacher needed them to be in. And some students were enrolled in two or three

periods of choir, depending on how it could fit into their academic schedules." His concern was that there was no clear end goal as to the groups or ensembles the students were in.

The solution Chuck came up with was "to enroll every freshman in vocal techniques class and the music theory class as well." Students can take up to four years of Vocal Techniques, and through that class, the students not only learn choral music, but also solo repertoire that can be utilized for solo and ensemble performances as well as college auditions. They learn the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) as well as harmonic and interpretive analysis in addition to text analysis of the songs. The students also learn vocal health and basic anatomy as it applies to the human voice. If a student continues to take the class, each year there are different languages the student sings in. Freshman year the emphasis is Italian Art Songs; Sophomore year is German Diction and German Art Songs; Junior year continues with German and adds English Art Songs; and Senior year has a potpourri of languages, Spanish or French, English and Italian, and last but not least, vocal jazz.

> I think that, you know, it's nice that the kids get to perform in choir, and that kind of thing. But I think that, that most of my students particularly, do not have the ability to have private vocal teachers or coaches. They just can't afford it. So, I think that part of my job is to teach some quote-unquote literature and choral performance but also teach them solo voice… that's just part of teaching voice. Voice is also solo voice. And develop their solo repertoire and their solo technique, so that they can, you know, perform in solo and ensemble, and so on and so forth, and prepare them for their college auditions.

Changes over time to his curriculum include the addition of jazz, a better organization of the presentation of each language, and allowing students to take the AP Theory class or Music Theory II, allowing students time to prepare for the AP Theory class and test.

Teaching, learning, and evaluating: components of curriculum design and implementation. The ideal classroom environment for Chuck would be "a place where kids are excited to be there, enjoying themselves, learning with each other and helping each other, and a safe space for my students to express themselves." Chuck has officer positions and appreciates his students in moments when he needs to do non-music things. He sees these as "opportunities for me to put students to the test. And sometimes it's not an officer. Sometimes I'll say you, I know you have this potential that I'm going to exploit it so that you can build on it; do warm-ups today." This is good for the students because once the moment of shock has passed, they realize that they have "acquired information and materials which now they're able to then transfer to other students."

When teaching a new song to the group I observed Chuck began by assigning students to write in their solfege— system of syllables used to represent the notes of a scale, often used to teach sight-reading—for their individual parts. During one of the observations, students had to demonstrate that they had completed this task, and Chuck would input a grade for each student. In this way, he ensured that students were cognizant of the choral score or road map as he called it. He admitted that he does not check the assignment for accuracy but for completion, because as they begin to sing, the mistakes become clear and students can fix through the rehearsal process. He tends to assign the

students three songs to work on per class period during sectionals, and they are given a timeline for the sectional work.

Beginner groups have the same system in place for learning new music; however, sectional time is shorter as the student skills may be more limited. In this way, he can double check or correct things along the way. Despite having more limited skills, he still ensures that they experience being independent learners through the allotted sectional time. Chuck gives the students a lot of freedom to participate in their own learning. As he describes it, he gives them some

> basic guidelines as to what needs to happen throughout the day, but I let them
> decide how they're going to get to it, and I check in and I pluck out some notes
> here and there, to make sure that they are on track, but then leave again so they
> can continue to work on their own.

For Chuck, learning is a two-part process; "for learning to occur you teach the material to the students who are receptive to receive that information. And those students then take ownership of that information." This is the most important element, "it's when the students take ownership of that information that learning occurs." According to Chuck, learning occurs when students create something personal with the information and the best way to facilitate this learning is to just "get out of the way." He insists that he places the onus on the students, "at some point, you have to allow kids to take the information you've given them and run with it." These ideas are what allow for student leadership; he encourages students to teach each other, to correct each other, and to push each other. "Sometimes the kids can communicate better with each other than I can communicate with them." Chuck also asks students about their opinions and tries to

incorporate these ideas into his decision-making process. He admits, that sometimes he doesn't ask for student's input, but when that happens, it usually is an issue of time. As he so aptly explains "sometimes it's not easy to hit every single point at every single time."

When asked about evaluating his students, Chuck answered first with a joke, "I tell them not to make my ears bleed. If you do not make my ears bleed, you're ok." His serious answer, however, was much more thought out than he realized. Chuck recognizes that every student is different, and as such it the teacher's responsibility to really know their students. In order to evaluate students, "you have to give them a baseline of your expectations, and then you have to see how they progress from that baseline." Chuck explained that everybody is going to have different capabilities. As an example, he tells the story of a student who might have trouble singing an ascending major scale. The major scale is one of the building blocks of tonal harmony as understood in the western traditions of music. This scale is often sung on solfege syllables, but the pitches have a specific pattern of whole steps and half steps. Although his neighbor can sing ascending and descending scales without a problem, "when the next week this kid comes in and has finally mastered his ascending scale, that was progress for that kid." This statement reflects how Chuck evaluates learning

Chuck did not feel that he necessarily told stories through his musical choices; as he explained,

> I want my students to experience various things. So the choir that you observed is preparing for a performance, and the music that I selected has components that have very different messages; everything from an homage to matriarch family

members, one that is a cultural Japanese fisherman song, one describing magic in

the Arabic worlds, a fun whimsical song about choosing the right guy, and a

holiday carol that has significant historical importance.

Chuck's goal in choosing such a varied repertoire is that the students have a vast source

of experiences and that they can learn to perform the different styles correctly.

Choral Music Literacy and Performance Requirements

Chuck has been teaching music for a total of 10 years in a number of different

schools and grade levels. The group I observed had six or seven scheduled performances

throughout the school year. Some of these performances were as a group, others were

regrouped with other students from the overall choral program. In this way the teacher

provides opportunities for students to perform pieces that might not be performed at

MPA (Music Performance Assessment). It also provides students with ownership of the

music when it is performed in smaller ensembles, as well as a sense of community

beyond their classroom when they are combined with other groups within the school.

When choosing repertoire, his first step is figuring out what voices are in the

group and if it is a balanced group. A balanced group would include roughly similar

numbers of students on each voice part. Questions choral directors often have to ask

themselves include, "am I able to perform music that has a lot of the divisi? [Divisi refers

to one voice part such as alto or soprano, that is further divided within the piece into two

groups] Or, do I have enough kids in men's chorus to do two part or three part?"

Additionally, depending on the skill level of the group, the repertoire chosen must have

elements that are challenging to the students, while also teaching them cultural, historical,

and musical elements. And finally, "hopefully it is enjoyable to both the students and I."

Although Chuck would like to have students at the level that they could assist in the repertoire choices being made, he admits that currently he does not allow for much student input on that front. He says, that it is "something that I look forward to once my program grows and the students are reaching a certain level where I think that they can participate in some music selection." When asked about rehearsal and performance results, Chuck says "practice like you would perform and perform as you practice. So, the two should not disconnect." Because the students are in fact not professionals, it doesn't always happen, but it is the goal.

Summary

Chuck is a kind choral director, who wants to ensure he provides for his students as many opportunities as his music teachers provided for him. He has a love of choral music, from a number of different cultural and historical backgrounds, and in an effort to expose his students to as much variety as possible, presents different songs to his students. Although he does not use the words constructivism or critical literacy in his interview, his definition of learning makes it clear that these are practical parts of his philosophy of teaching. Chuck also recognizes that time constraints, and other responsibilities make it so that he may not get to all the specific goals he may deem important. His main goal, of teaching students and preparing them to be competitive when they leave the building, is evident in his interviews, as well as in his classroom teaching. Beyond that, his secondary goal of building student appreciation for, and love of the choral art form and singing were evident in the classroom I observed.

Daniel Braunstein

Daniel Braunstein has been teaching for the past 13 years and has taught both middle and high school in an urban city in the southern United States. His musical background began when an elementary art teacher, having known his older brother, assumed he would be a problematic student and sent him out of the classroom. While waiting in the hallway, the music teacher found him and gave him refuge in her class. This offered Daniel an opportunity for two music periods per week in elementary school. While in elementary school, a neighbor was teaching piano lessons, and his brother had begun lessons. That provided Daniel with an impetus to further his musical studies, because as he put it, "as siblings do, I saw him and monkey see, monkey do."

These early experiences led to his auditions and acceptance to his magnet middle school for music. While in middle school, his teachers offered him countless experiences in both piano and choral music, including a situation that still influences him today. Daniel tells this story; all names have been changed to protect anonymity.

One time in Honor Choir we were all monkeying around, and I got in trouble with Jennifer Fuentes. The director was Camila Pemberton at the time, but Jennifer Fuentes called us out on our behavior, and Camila Pemberton reamed us a new one. I had not been used to that kind of approach to teaching before, it was a very in-your-face approach. I didn't take it well and I got upset with everybody, my friends and Camila Pemberton. Because of my reactions to the situation, Camila Pemberton, who was a no-nonsense type of person, promptly put me in my place by kicking me out of Honor Choir.

As I sat there waiting for my parents to come pick me up, I had to wait for my dad to get off work to come on over. I was sitting in the audience kind of moping and regretting my actions, because all my friends got to stay. Another teacher walks over to me, and I don't even know what she was doing there. She came on over and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" Now I tell her what happened and then she said, "Well, you're here anyway. Why don't you make the most of your time?" That just really resonated with me, and is something that has stuck with me since then... Well if I'm here anyway, I might as well make the most of my time; no matter what it is that I'm doing, regardless of how I feel, regardless of what's going on. It really stuck with me, so I pulled out my music, and rehearsed the rest of the day.

Dad didn't come pick me up until an hour before the concert anyway, so by that point I had actually gone through the entire rehearsal process, but from the back of the auditorium instead of with everybody else in the choir. Personally, I'm really thankful for that experience.

Daniel went on to attend a magnet high school in the area and then attended a local private university where he received a Bachelor of Music Education. Daniel's first instrument was the piano, but he sang in choirs beginning in middle school, and focused on both instruments throughout his college career and beyond.

His first teaching position was at a local Title I high school where he spent 8 years. The school had a very active piano and band program, and he was interviewed to teach guitar and choir. However, he worked with his administration to teach choir full time and rebuild the program into an award-winning choir with numerous accolades. He

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says his first job was where he considers he learned a lot about classroom discipline. He also thinks he learned that "a big part of student engagement is related to student motivation and student success. When students feel empowered, they're much more engaged and they become less of a discipline issue." This first job also taught him how to motivate students even if they had not initially chosen his class. "You're not just teaching the curriculum in the classroom; you're teaching the students that are in front of you at that time."

For the past 5 years, Daniel has been teaching at a magnet middle school, teaching Grades 6-8. During his time at this school, his students have consistently participated in All-State Choirs, received Superior and Excellent ratings at district MPA, and numerous choral and solo competitions throughout the southern United States. At his current location, the environment is different because it is a magnet school, and the school has challenged him as a musician to "constantly push these students to achieve higher levels." He explained, "there's definitely an expectation of success, an expectation of doing well, and an expectation of being on top. And if it's even close to not being on top, there's concern."

When you walk into the classroom, it is a relatively small room with risers that have been added. The room feels tight. There are windows, but they sit behind the students and the risers, and they are closed. The room has very little storage, many things are stacked and stored behind and around the risers. Once the students enter there is a relaxed and jovial attitude amongst the students. The most impressive thing is the amount of autonomy these middle school students are afforded. There is a student leader and when the bell rings, she begins the class by explaining the sight-reading elements

included in the exercise on the board. Students then sing through the exercise. On every occasion, the student leader makes notes to the class, and they are then given an opportunity to fix their errors. Students in this room seamlessly flow from leadership activities to student group activities. The classes run for one hour, so there is a fast pace, but students were active throughout the class period. The variety of activities make this a very dynamic class.

Classroom Set Up and Preliminary Observations

When I first arrived at Daniel's classroom on that first day, it was during his planning period. I checked into the office, and after the secretary had ensured that I was supposed to be there, a student walked me to the room. The teacher looked very polished and professional, a white-collar shirt, a blue blazer, green jeans, and light brown dress shoes. He was writing on the board a sight-reading exercise and preparing for his class. What was most striking was how small the room seemed. There were two pianos in the room, one in the front of the classroom and one off to a corner. The room had a lived-in feel, with a lot going on, but still relatively organized. The compactness of the room could lead one to believe it would have limited movement. My observations would soon prove otherwise.
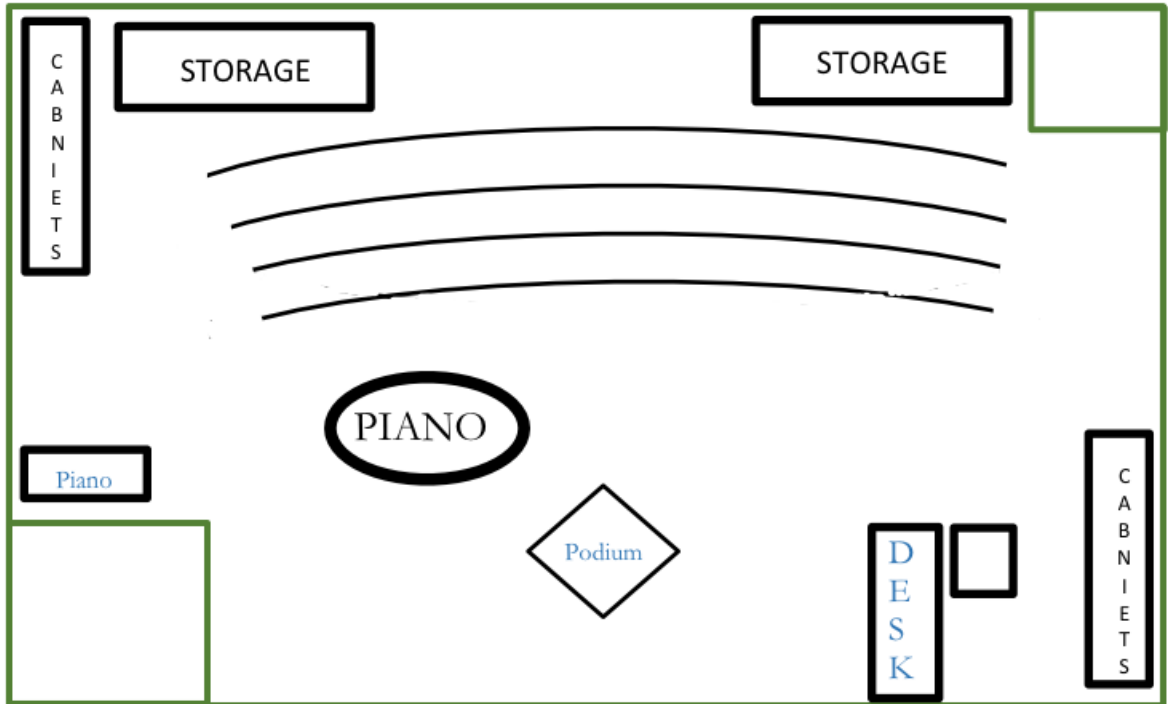
Figure 3. Daniel's Classroom Set-Up

As students entered the class, the atmosphere felt comfortable, there was a conversational tone amongst the students. Some students greeted me before heading to their seats. Some walked up to the sheets of paper on the wall behind me and discussed their successes with their fundraising activities. Once the bell rang announcing the beginning of class, the student leader ran through the sight-reading exercise on the board. It was four measures in three voices, soprano, alto, and baritone. The student leader gave the class their starting pitches, and the students began humming and singing through the exercise independently. While this was happening, the teacher would take attendance and redirect any students who may be off task. This use of leadership was consistent throughout every observation. The classroom was an active room, with obvious student engagement throughout and evident participation based off of student facial expression, reactions to the conductor, and singing.

Perceptions and Understandings of Choral Music Literacy

Daniel is a choral director at a magnet middle school. He teaches five classes a day; music theory, vocal techniques, vocal ensemble, treble choir, and a mixed choir class. He believes his primary job is to "teach the students that are in front of me at that time and prepare them for what their next route is going to be." He also believes that it is his job to "create as many open-door opportunities for the students so that they can choose where they want to travel on their path." Daniel strives to provide his students with a well-rounded curriculum, explaining that music is easily integrated with other subjects. He also wants his students to feel confident and comfortable to go wherever they choose once they leave his classroom.

When asked about his role as a teacher, Daniel chose to describe himself as a guide. As he explained,

> I am a guide along the process [of learning]. It's a space for them to make their own choices, and to go along with what they believe. I mean, being the guide, I do set forth the guidelines and rubrics of what's expected, and it's their choice to match to that expectation.

As he further explained,

> I think that my goal is always to help them [the students] become them and that goes vocally, characteristically, and behaviorally. I try to help them understand that their actions are impeding what they're doing, to get in the way of themselves along that journey.

He believes his job is to help his students find the best version of themselves possible.

His mentors included (a) elementary and middle school teachers who pushed him in the direction of music in the first place, (b) a colleague who "helped me feel more confident in my skills as a musician and as a teacher," (c) his high school director who was someone he could turn to when he had struggles, and (d) his college professor who showed him "what dedication and discipline can actually bring. The guy's a beast, a monster. I've seen him conduct a five-eight pattern in one hand and a three-four in the other hand simultaneously." Conductors learn patterns related to the number of beats per measure, although these patterns tend to be consistent. When describing the five-eight and three-four patterns, these two patterns would be different, but must include the down beat at the same time. It is not commonly done and would require a great level of skill and practice.

Music Literacy and Choral Music Literacy

Music literacy, to Daniel, is "the ability to read, analyze, compose, dictate, something that's black and white on the page, and turn it into colors." He considers it to be an important part of his classroom but has the benefit of a theory class where he can give the "basic understandings of things," which are then "further developed in the choral classes." Daniel believes that composition and dictation are great tools for using sound before sight. For him, sound before sight "works really, really well, to the point that, by the time they've finished that first year, they can start to piece together symbols when they're encountering other things. They can take what they know and stay within their zone of proximal development." Daniel says that because "I choose all of the songs with something that they [the students] need to learn, then it allows the music literacy to be at the core of it. They see it, they analyze it, and then they can figure out what's going on."

When asked about choral music literacy specifically, Daniel responded it was the same as music literacy except for the added element of text. He believes that it is easier for choral directors, because "we see the text, we know, we read the text. This helps us figure out what the composer meant. What do you think, how do you think the composer interpreted this line?" From Daniel's perspective, text connection is very important because as he put it, "I can't sell text that I don't believe. If I think it's hokey or not very good, then that's going to play a factor in their [the students'] success."

Daniel strives to get his students to connect with the music, but states that it has to begin with him. "if I don't connect with it, then there's almost no way that they're going to connect with it. It's very, very rare, I would say that they are going to connect with something that I don't connect with." He does believe that student connection is important because as he puts it, "that's our job as performers. That's part of what we're training them to do. If you can't connect to the text, then you can't perform that text." Daniel explains that there is a difference between presenting and performing. In his words, "you can present the text, but that's not performing. There's a difference between your science project presentation versus your choral performance." When students connect to the text, it allows them to access a part of themselves that doesn't necessarily always have an outlet, no matter who you are.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Observing Daniel was sometimes personally overwhelming, not because of what he was doing, but because of how much was going on in the classroom. What was most fascinating was how unfazed the students were with all that was happening. As previously stated, there was a lot of student leadership. There were also a lot of teacher

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led activities. The teacher always led the vocal warm-ups and had an obvious emphasis on vocal health and technique. Upon that first arrival and walk through the room, there were remnants of a previous project where students had to create a 3D model of the vocal tract and the breathing mechanism.

The first observation included time for sectional work; one group outside with two student leaders, and another two groups inside simultaneously. The men with the teacher, and two student leaders running the alto rehearsal. The teacher later ran the two groups that were inside while the sopranos outside continued to work independently. The second rehearsal began similarly but went straight into the teacher running through all the music listed on the board. After that, the teacher did part check tests. While he was at his desk listening to the groups performing, the rest of the room was a chaotic cacophony of sound: students rehearsing the portion to be tested, groups forming and reforming, students at a piano, another student organizing music. As each group performed for the teacher, they got feedback, and received a grade. The student leaders who were tested first, then began running mini sectionals with students who had not yet been tested. It was fascinating to see how many students were consistently working either independently or for the good of the group. It was a hub of activity, both separately and then coming together into small groups.

Daniel's philosophy of teaching has changed over time. His current philosophy is to teach students to love music and to be very accomplished in music. His original philosophy of teaching was "music is for everybody." While he still believes this, as he explains "because I'm at a magnet school, and there is an expectation of success, my

philosophy has had to change to. Music helps provide the structure and motivation to help students succeed at their highest aspirations."

When Daniel entered his first position, there were no expectations of what he should or could accomplish with his students. This lack of external expectation allowed him to focus on creating experiences for his students with an emphasis on learning to love music. When he began at his current position, however, the previous teacher had established a program that was already successful in the eyes of the students, parents, community and administration. At this point he realized that success is based on how you define it. As he explains, "there was an expectation amongst the parents and administration, 'we know what quality is, and we know what quality is supposed to be. So, if you're not that, then what are you doing?'" This reality pushed Daniel personally and made him more driven. Ultimately, when at his first school Daniel's goal for music was about "helping them [the students] realize a different level of love for music. A love beyond turning on the radio when you're driving in the car." He described his goal for music at his new school saying, "I want you to love it [music] and be really damn good at it."

Daniel's curriculum in the classroom is primarily, based on the end goals. As he explains, "I always start at the end and then work my way to the front. What skills do I want my kids to learn by the end of the year, and then how am I going to get them there?" The class I observed was the mixed choir class which includes all the male students in his program and mostly second- or third-year female students. As Daniel explained, "I choose to mainly focus on the higher level of the students, so the younger kids that are in there have to catch up or take their questions and ask their student mentors. If their

student mentors can't help them, they'll bring it up in their theory class." The students learn how to sing their parts and how to match along things by listening to the other kids, which as Daniel explains is "sound before sight, which means that the students always hear a musical element or aspect first before they see it on the page."

The curriculum in his class has changed over time, specifically his pacing, difficulty, and motivation. Daniel's first full time teaching experience was at the high school level. When he began teaching middle school, he was not sure how far he could push his students. He explains that, "I started off I think easier when I first started here, and then have grown into accomplishing more difficult things since then." His middle school students often sang high school repertoire, and Daniel now feels comfortable tackling mixed meter and more challenging harmonies with his middle school students.

Teaching, learning, and evaluating: Components of curriculum design. Daniel's ideal classroom climate would be "a place where students are open and willing to accept failures as an action, rather than a source of identity. And through that, be willing and able to grow, to improve on their actions." In his ideal world, it would be a place with a hundred percent engagement of all the tasks and an understanding and acknowledgement as to the amount of work that is necessary outside the classroom. In his classroom, Daniel has created a sense of independence not often associated or expected amongst middle school students. As he explained,

> I think that a lot of times we don't give them [students] enough credit to believe that they will make the right choices. I think we feel that the only way that the right things can happen is if we are in absolute control.

Daniel describes a metaphor and says,

> I think when that happens, we become like an apple tree. We drop the apples right
> by our trunks and we think that it's the safest place, but the truth is that tree will
> never grow to be as large or as great as its parent tree. We need to be more willing
> to let them [students] fly so that they can grow and become better than we are.
> True to his previous interviews, when asked about how to teach a new song,

Daniel stated that he doesn't actually teach song to his students,

> It's more like we come to realize the song together. And I try to create that kind
> of environment, prompting questions to get them thinking about their parts, or get
> them thinking about the text, or why a composer might have written something
> this way.

He explains that he has to introduce aural concepts students may not be familiar with
whether they are rhythmic or tonal and tends to guide the students to recognize places
where they similarities either to other sections in the song or to other parts within the
group. As he explains, "I think all learning is pretty cyclical." The only times when he
may teach a piece by rote, is if it is culturally appropriate to do that. As he explains, he is
always thinking sound before sight before symbol. Daniel clarifies that the major
difference in how he begins a piece is related to the level of the group, and that beginners
have more auditory stimulus. In his words, "beginning groups definitely need a lot more
sound before symbol. I don't necessarily rote teach them, but I do make sure that they get
accustomed to a certain tonality."

Daniel believes that learning occurs through experience. "When you have an
aesthetic process that clicks within you, it makes connections in a way that… I mean, I'm

not a neurologist, but I think there are connections going on inside your brain that will cause you to learn easier, more efficiently, and more often." Based on this idea, he facilitates this learning process by choosing music that will help reach goals. Every day he asks himself, "what kind of experience can I set forth, to help the student to gain the element I want to focus on?"

Within his classroom, Daniel has formal and informal assessments to help him evaluate students. Informal assessments are usually within the context of the class at large, based on what's on the page, "are they doing correct rhythms? Are they doing the right pitches?" Formal assessments are part checks, like the one observed on the second day of observation. Students are given a specific date; they are called up to sing in octets and are asked to sing a specific set of measures. "They [the students] have to be able to know their part well enough that even if the person next to them messes up, they still keep going." Meanwhile, once the section leaders have done their test, they are to go out and run sectionals.

Student involvement: a component of curriculum design and implementation. For Daniel, student leadership was a huge component in his own high school experience but not in his middle school experience. He explains that this reality gave him an incentive for sneaking around and some misconduct on his part. Having had leadership positions in high school, he felt that he could provide that experience for his current students, regardless of their age level.

Daniel involves his students in the music making process in a very unexpected way at the middle school level. Daniel explains, "at the superficial level I have student leadership positions going on. I have two soprano section leaders, two male section

leaders, and two alto section leaders. And then I also have a student conductor as well."

Daniel believes that there is a difference in the way kids interact with their peers as opposed to how they interact with adults who are "constantly barking at them telling them what to do." Daniel perceives that when students have someone that is their own age in front of them, it works as a sort of inspiration. "I think it provides students with an opportunity to get on board and try to figure out." His idea is, that when a student sees another student leading, it may help the student realize that it could be an opportunity for themselves as well. Additionally, Daniel teaches in the class that "the weakest person in your group or in your area, is the person who needs the most help." Student leaders and non-leaders alike are challenged to help build up students who need help. "If you happen to be sitting right next to that person, then that's your job. Because everybody has something to offer at all times."

Daniel involves his students in the music making. His leadership component is exceptionally interesting, students help choose the other students who will lead them, and past leaders help choose future leaders as a means of leaving their legacy. Students connect to their music via text and understanding how the text works with the composer's musical ideas. The job of choral directors, from his perspective, is to help teach students how to perform and performing requires a connection to the text. "If you can't connect to the text, then you can't perform that text."

Daniel also allows his students to participate in the decision-making process regarding interpretation of the music. One example he gave was in the learning of a piece called "My Lord what a Morning." In that piece, students must repeat the phrase, "my lord what a morning" three times. So, Daniel describes a scenario where students may

repeat themselves three times, and the class discussed and decided together, which word or words should be emphasized in each repetition of the phrase. Following that group decision, it became his job to "ensure the students perfect that choice in the sense of consistency. Constantly being mentally and mindfully aware of those three words that we chose. One per phrase to make it the apex of the phrase."

When asked about stories or messages, Daniel explains that he begins with themes in his classroom which help him choose his repertoire throughout that year. One year the theme was "believe the world can change, but the subtext was 'Be the Change.' The class did repertoire that focused on how you treat other people. What are some grievances that other people may have gone through, and what are some situations and how would we deal if something similar was happening inside our area?" Daniel did explain his own idea that "I think life doesn't happen to people, life happens because of people."

Choral Music Literacy and Performance Requirements

Daniel's description of his musical background was very complete. He went as far back as elementary school. As previously noted, he had two periods of music per week and private piano lessons during his elementary years. He auditioned and attended a magnet middle school where he played piano and sang. He then attended a magnet high school as well. A common thread throughout his story were the times he made poor choices in his behavior. One of these occasions previously mentioned, he felt had a huge impact on his life.

Daniel could not confirm the number of performances he schedules in a year, because there are many, and always added opportunities. On the day of the second

interview, he had just completed another performance the day before with a smaller ensemble of students. For him, performances are the "culmination of everything that's coming together. It is a way to showcase to the parents and get them hyped up about the program, so they hopefully spread the word."

Daniel chooses his repertoire based on themes. He tends to choose a theme for the year, and then begins to choose music first, based on the theme, then based on the goals for the group.

What are the elements that I'm looking for to make sure that my students have access and experience with like, dotted quarter, eighth note rhythms. I need that to be something that I'm doing. And finally, I need to ensure that my students have enough in class experiences such that I can have a more supervisory role for all the extra things they may choose to participate in, such as All-State.

One other question he poses to himself while choosing the repertoire, "can the choir handle the pieces, or can I stretch them this far?"

This particular year, the theme Daniel chose for his class was passion and purpose. As a result, his students were going to have a more involved part in the choosing of the repertoire. He admits to not giving the students a bigger hand in the process due to the fact that his choral pieces are his vehicle for bringing specific concepts to life for the students. He was going to use their passions to guide their musical selections for the choir this year. Outside of the choral pieces, students are allowed to choose solos for winter concerts, Federation, and coffee house.

Although Daniel does agree that performances are related to rehearsals, he does recognize that there is a nerve situation. He admits,

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The times that I've been nervous in a concert, or performance, or solo, it's been

because of my lack of preparation. When you come on stage and you realize that

everybody is looking at you, all of your insecurities are, magnified. If you are so

focused on those magnified insecurities, it becomes easy to forget what you've

practiced.

Summary

Daniel is a driven teacher, who believes his actual role in the classroom is that of

a guide, presenting opportunities and experiences, but ultimately allowing students the

freedom to choose their path and be the best they can be. He strives to help students be

independently successful in their future choices, and also tries to balance the definitions

of success as established by the community, administration, and parents. He approaches

teaching his students utilizing a sound before sight system, similar to the way students

learn a language. Although the word constructivist was never used, the classroom

teaching style is constructivist. Additionally, his emphasis on student leadership and

ownership has components of critical literacy.

Elizabeth Owen

Elizabeth Owen has been teaching upwards of 30 years. She began teaching part

time in the early 80s and eventually began teaching full time. She has taught both middle

and high school choir throughout her career, in all corners of an urban city. She is a

graduate of a local traditional public high school where she played piano in the orchestra.

She participated in middle and high school orchestra, and even did orchestral All-State

while in high school. She had originally believed she would go to college as a piano

major. She ended up being an organ major. "I really did not have any interest at that point in becoming a choral director."

Elizabeth went on and graduated from private universities where she received a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Music Education. When asked about how her prior experiences affected and impacted her career as a choral director, she said, "I thought that my background had given me the right experiences to produce a choral program and in fact it was the exact opposite." She began her career believing that the best way to teach choir was to play out the parts for the students to learn by ear. However, as she says, "I was successful at it, but it was not literacy-based teaching." It was not until she began teaching at a high school with students who did not want to cooperate, that she changed her teaching style to solfege.

> At my second long-term high school job, I inherited very hostile aggressive students who were not used to rehearsing every day, much less cooperating. I basically went home, and I thought what is the worst thing I could come up with to punish these children? Their previous teacher had done numbers, so I announced that we were starting solfege syllables. And lo and behold, all of a sudden, my choir started getting really good. And it was a learning experience because I had sung syllables, solfege in college. But because I was really not chorally based on sight reading, I didn't really have that experience.

Elizabeth has spent the last 15 years at a magnet middle school in the same urban city. Regardless of the school, throughout her career, she has had students participate in All-State Choirs, her choirs have received Superiors at district MPA events, and she has even participated in a number of state events. As a music teacher who has been teaching

for a number of decades now, Elizabeth tells of a time when music education was not really a field. As she said, "music ed[ucation] people were the performance kids who couldn't get gigs."

The classroom I walked into was a long room, and the seats are all on a flat surface. The classroom was very orderly, with little to no storage area. Students have new seating arrangements every time they walk in the door. As the students walk in, the teacher is announcing who sits where. Once that has been made clear, she began the class by singing a four-measure melody. This was the most unique aspect of her classroom, the melodic dictation activity which begins the class period. She sings the melody on solfege syllables: the students echo it back on solfege syllables while also using their hand signs. During the next minute or so, students quickly write down as much of the melody as they have retained using musical notation. Meanwhile, the teacher has on the board a sort of "cheat sheet" which the students can reference, and the teacher is giving them portions of the answer. This call and response of the melody happens a total of three times, after which everyone should have their answers. On that first day, the students then played composers, and had to complete the exercise by creating the last measure.

In that short 10-minute opening of class, this teacher has reinforced melodic reading, writing, creating, and composing. It was inspiring to watch the engagement of the students. This experience happened on every observation, as well as warmups to help students learn and retain all the scales and modes. Although this teacher may have begun with a more rote form of teaching, she has evolved to a completely literacy-based teaching style.

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Classroom Set-Up and Preliminary Observations

The first time I visited Elizabeth's classroom, she had prepared a desk for me in one corner of the room, behind the students. Elizabeth was dressed professionally; black slacks, smart flats and a green top with earrings to match. It was clear she had taken the time to match her earrings to her shirt. Her hair was neatly picked up in a bun. On the desk was a copy of the lesson plans for the day, as well as copies of the music she would be teaching throughout the class period. Her room was orderly, rectangular, with limited space. The classroom does not have risers. Elizabeth taught bell to bell, gave students cues for everything she wanted to accomplish, and went through the entire lesson plan with seamless transitions from activity to activity. Every observation was pretty much the same, she was clearly a teacher who has her system down.
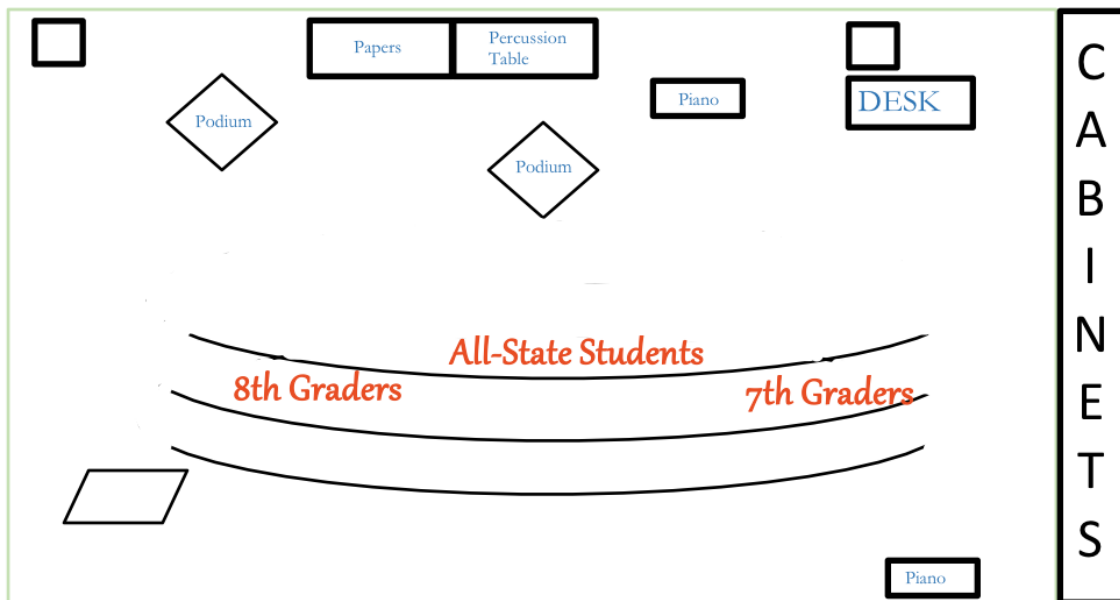
Figure 4. Elizabeth's Classroom Set-Up

The classroom felt clean and neat; students were engaged from the beginning to the end of the class period. Participation was evident due to the use of hand signs throughout their singing and writing. Things that caught me off guard upon my first visit included the warmup comprised of singing all the scales and intervals. It was clear from that first observation, that the emphasis in this class, just as Elizabeth had shared in the first interview, was on theory and sight-reading, decoding, audiation, and tracking. The classroom felt like a no-nonsense class, but there were moments of fun interspersed throughout. Elizabeth was precise when she gave a compliment to a student, there was no question as to what she was encouraging.

Perceptions and Understandings of Choral Music Literacy

Elizabeth's job is to teach middle school choir to students in a magnet school. She teaches five periods, four of them are choir, and one music theory class to the beginners in the group. Her primary responsibility "is not to teach choir, is not to teach voice. It's to develop musicianship and core values through music." Elizabeth defines musicianship as creating musical readers and having students who are engaging in the creative process. She declared that her job was to "create experiences through the music where they [students] are engaging in the creative process, even if it's at a very simple level." She was very explicit in her expectation; as she said, "I try to make connections with the students to emphasize that music must have a purpose, and the music has to get off the page." She also states that her secondary responsibilities in her job is to demonstrate values and vulnerability. "Creating an environment where people can build each other up." Elizabeth's mentors included a Spanish teacher who was "very charming and

charismatic, and made you want to learn." He was the teacher she wanted to emulate; she is a firm believer that teachers have the power to produce quality programs.

Elizabeth believes that "choral music literacy must include solfeggio, ear training, composition, and dictation. It must be engaging melodically, rhythmically, and textually." Students in her program learn how to "audiate, identify intervals, tune chords, shape phrases, compose, listen to their recordings and critique, and how to make music." Elizabeth believes that the best way to get students to connect to the music is to first choose worthy literature (repertoire). "If it is worthy repertoire, it must last throughout the learning process. I don't want to insult their [students'] intelligence. I give them substance and tell them they are worthy." According to Elizabeth, middle school choral repertoire leaves much to be desired:

> Middle school repertoire is the worst; it is condescending, trite, and lacks
> integrity. I am determined that my students will have repertoire that has a
> message, is meaningful, challenging, and lasting. When we had our eighth-grade
> farewell circle on the last day of school last year, their overwhelming choice of
> favorite song was "When He is Silent" by Arnesen, that we had sung at the
> Orlando Holocaust Memorial. They may look young, though most are taller than
> me, but middle school kids are capable of deep thought and vision. Many of them
> have experienced much more "life" than we did when we were their age. I find
> they appreciate being valued enough to sing complex rhythms, challenging
> melodic passages, dissonant harmonies, profound texts, and especially the
> challenge of foreign languages!

I am a proponent of SSAA, or 4-part soprano and alto music. Also, of

changing keys! Teachers limit their students by not being innovative. Why make

the smallest part of your mixed choir, the guys, try to outbalance the largest part

of the choir on lousy literature? Rather I choose to find quality rep, find the key

that my few guys are comfortable with, and build confidence.

Elizabeth began her third interview by saying "I'm an imperfect teacher, living in

an imperfect world, teaching imperfect students." She said "sometimes I don't think of

myself as a music teacher. I'm more of a teacher with music." The qualities she claims

she brings to her students are the ability to challenge them and prepare them for high

school. She also brings her students fairness. "I'm fair till it hurts, and I don't play

favorites."

Music Literacy and Choral Music Literacy

When asked about music literacy and choral music literacy, the two terms were

one and the same for Elizabeth. For her, music literacy is

Ground Zero. We must educate administrators that music literacy is not for band

and orchestra. When will be rid of the myth that chorus just sings by ear, no skills

needed? Choral literacy is the foundation of our success. Can you take

multiplication out of algebra?

As previously stated, for Elizabeth, choral music literacy is synonymous with music

literacy. It is "solfeggio, ear training, composition, and dictation." It must be engaging

for the students not only melodically and rhythmically, but also textually.

Elizabeth's focus in her classroom is clearly reading and singing musical concepts

with the use of solfege; there were a few noteworthy components she shared about text

analysis. After discussing how she helps her students analyze text, Elizabeth shared a graphic organizer she uses with her students. The organizer includes the text of a song called "I Am Not Yours." This particular text is by lyricist Sara Teasdale, set to music by composer David Childs.

Write 2 sentences about the lyricist Sara Teasdale. _____ _____ _____	**I Am Not Yours** I am not yours, not lost in you, Not lost, although I long to be Lost as a candle lit at noon, Lost as a snowflake in the sea. You love me, and I find you still	Write 2 sentences about the composer David Childs. _____ _____ _____
List all tempo words and definition: _____ _____ _____		List all dynamics words and definition: _____ _____
	List all expression words and definition: _____	
Critique a youtube performance. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		Critique your performance. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
	List any similes or metaphors: _____ _____ _____ _____	

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Figure 5. Elizabeth's Middle School Choir Graphic Organizer

The organizer has a box with the text and includes a series of questions for the students to answer based on the text and listening to the song. As Elizabeth had explained, she will not shy away from challenging texts or music, but she tries to find ways to help students understand the layers of meaning within the music they listen to and perform.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Elizabeth's philosophy of teaching is that music is for every child. "My door is open." Her ideal classroom climate is one in which "everybody wants to be there and wants to learn." "The ideal classroom rehearsal would be where people got something out of it. Where they have shown me that they are capable of growing. So not necessarily, the most difficult musical challenge, but getting it, and creating. Developing this environment takes a long time for Elizabeth. She claims "I kind of have to put on my used car salesman, televangelist, cheerleader face with my beginners, especially because we need the numbers. The school where Elizabeth teaches is currently under enrolled at 1320 with a capacity for 1690.

As previously noted, the focus in this classroom was clearly sight-reading and theory based. During every observation, students were given seating instructions as they arrived. Whichever student had the most impending event or activity, that was the student who sat in the front. Elizabeth confirmed my observation, and explained that when there is no upcoming event, the students who do not have two periods of choir sit in the front.

During my observations, what Elizabeth had previously described was evident. Once the students had reached their seats, before the bell rang, she began to sing for her students a melodic exercise on solfege. On the board, there was information that the students could use as a sort of guide. First, a staff with the key signature and the starting pitch clearly established. Second, another staff with all the notes of that scale drawn as whole notes, labeled with solfege above the note heads, and the letter names below. The exercise was in six-eight time, four measures were prepared for students to begin their notation. She would sing the exercise with hand signs, the students would echo it with

hand signs, and then they would begin to notate what they had sung and heard. The first time it was listened to, students were to only notate the note heads. As the students were notating, Elizabeth was providing students with a sort of cheat sheet. The answer was slowly being notated by her on the board, using the same steps she announced they should use. Elizabeth sang the melody a second time, the students echoed it, and then proceeded to notate as much as they could recall. This time, she announced that they should go ahead and place the stems on each note. She sang it one more time, students echoed. This time, everyone was to add the names of the notes below the pitches, and the solfege syllables above the pitches.

Once this was finished, she said, "come up with a new ending… make it practical since you have to sing it." As the students were working diligently to compose the ending of this exercise, she announces, "what do you have to end on?" The class responded, "Do." She helps the students by allowing them to use previous parts of the melody in their response. And then, students offer to sing their compositions. Elizabeth would sing the original melody, and the student volunteers would answer with their responses. Her feedback was always precise, "Love it, do we have a Ti on level 3?" She was referencing the sight-reading criteria for the All-State test the students take in early September. The class knows the rubric from memory, and she reinforces this knowledge by asking the students what elements of composition they are using.

Following this bell ringer activity, Elizabeth goes into warm ups. The students sing through the Major Scale in half notes and use their hand signs throughout the warm-ups. Following that, they sang the chromatic. The major scale, the arpeggio, the whole tone scale, minor scales in all their forms, back to the major scale, and then they sang

through the interval song. The teacher would periodically change the rhythmic patterns in which they sang the scales, would alter the tempo, but it did not matter, the students kept singing and kept using their hand signals.

Elizabeth describes her curriculum very plainly as solfege-based studies. Just as what I observed during every visit, she describes it specifically as "dictation, eight bars, melodic and rhythmic." Students in her classes do one of these daily and have a quiz Friday, which will be a repeat of any of the previously used exercises. It also includes warm-ups which includes all the scales. "We go through major, chromatic, the three minors, we do the whole tone pentatonic, then we sing through all the modes starting on low G." Her students are "run of the mill, off the street kind of group. The one thing that I can say, that really helps my program is having them twice a day."

Curricular changes over time: rote vs. literacy based. The curriculum in Elizabeth's classroom has changed over time. As previously stated, her initial mode of teaching was primarily rote, very dependent on the piano, and people singing by ear. It was not what Elizabeth refers to as literacy-based teaching. Elizabeth does not do anything the way that she did it as a student. She explains that the methodology of music education while she was going through schooling was very rote based.

> I emphasize to my students that we reference, we use our resources, and that we
> use the whole hierarchy of rote all the way up to transfer. I think we need to teach
> administrators what we do. Because we're tracking and decoding, tracking and
> decoding, or transferring.

In other words, Elizabeth believes the act of learning to read musical notation teaches and builds skills which are used in the reading classroom, namely tracking and decoding.

Today, Elizabeth rehearses primarily without the keyboard. The use of solfege in the classroom forced her choirs to improve. At that time, a friend recommended that she try hand signals. "I thought well that's stupid, that looks goofy. But I tried it and my choirs kept getting better. Elizabeth says the practice of the hand signs give teachers a visual clue as to student participation.

When you sing on the solfege, it's like brain glue. Now I don't remember the words to those songs, I don't remember the French. But those kids could stand up and with their hand signs they could sing the whole song, in tune… that's scary.

Elizabeth asserts that learning occurs when she sees that students are not copying the board. When she can see that "their hands are moving and not writing. Audiation [the ability to hear the pitches inside the mind, using the inner ear] separates the piece of wood, from the musician. Because anybody can write it down. I want to see what they're doing." For her, the hand gestures indicate that students have learned something and are internalizing the pitches and relationships between the notes. "Learning occurs when they can be independent of me." She facilitates the learning process by promoting an engaging, nurturing atmosphere and by encouraging independence of reading and composition. "By the middle of the year, it's amazing because they are creating. They are starting to get a sense of melody and harmony in a predictable sense and cadences." Elizabeth assesses her students through weekly interval quizzes, classwork assignments, and singing for homework which includes sending the recordings via email.

Beginning to teach a new song depends on a variety of factors for Elizabeth. Sometimes it begins with having the students watch a video on YouTube. Once the

students have the music in their hands, it is always using solfeggio. Elizabeth insists that everyone sings all the parts, beginning from the bottom up, and then stacking upwards adding voice parts thus "giving confidence to the boys." Male participation in choral programs is often significantly smaller than female participation. As a result, teachers are often trying to find ways to ensure the boys are comfortable enough to continue singing. She sometimes uses part circles within the classroom and slowly transitions to a big circle. She will also sometimes add a singer after beginning with a quartet of strong voices, adding parts until all are singing. Also, sometimes beginning on the last page first.

The variations in teaching methods depends on the level of the students. Younger groups might begin with tracking. "I play and ask them to track and identify where I stopped with bar and beat or word, leading to what solfeggio I stopped on. I may do some echo phrases by rote before that." Older or more experienced students are expected to be able to sight read using the solfege tools Elizabeth teaches. All of my observations were of the older seventh and eighth grade classes.

Elizabeth doesn't involve her students much in the music making process. While she doesn't often ask her students to help in the decision-making process, she does ask them what they think or if it was better or worse. She recognizes that she may not have these conversations often enough. When she has these discussions, she insists that the students not imitate her typical responses. She will say to the students "you must use your own words and use details."

For Elizabeth, the definition of what it means to make music is "the ability to audiate, identify intervals, tune chords, shape phrases, compose, listen to recordings and critique, and thus they make music." The stories told in her classroom depends on the

intended purpose of the music, but ultimately Elizabeth believes that "our music must have a purpose and intent." This was a point she iterated a number of times.

Choral Music Literacy and Performance Requirements

Elizabeth's musical life began as a pianist. Although throughout her early experiences, she did not have any interest in becoming a choral director, it was only after some college experiences that she changed her mind. She has been teaching full time for 36 years; the last 15 of those years have been spent at this particular location.

She teaches middle school music and her primary job responsibility is "developing musicianship and core values through music." Her secondary responsibility is to teach team building, respect, leadership, and create an environment where people can build each other up. Elizabeth schedules roughly eight or nine performances throughout the year with a strong focus on academics. Elizabeth is a teacher who insists that her students are not only good musicians, but good at their academics. Students who are not achieving minimum marks in their academic classes are not allowed to perform. Performances include college tours and community service performances as well as Music Performance Assessment. There are also in-class performances and recitals to "give deserving students performance opportunities." Performances with outside sources provide the students with opportunities to "be in the community, get good press, have a fun day out, and sing some fantastic literature."

For Elizabeth, "middle school repertoire is the worst. It is condescending, trite, and lacks integrity. I am determined that my students will have repertoire that has a message, is meaningful, challenging, and lasting. Her students do not participate in the selection of repertoire. While the performance quality is related to the rehearsal room, Elizabeth

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explains that "middle school students have difficulty adapting to different acoustical environments. Their confidence is easily shaken, and as such, I try to psychologically prepare them so they will feel and sound different."

Summary

Elizabeth is a serious, no nonsense kind of teacher, with high goals and aspirations for her students; both academic and musical. Her classroom was efficient, little time was spent on transitions, and included multiple opportunities for success for students. Although she teaches in a magnet school, she does not exclude students from other magnets, if they want to participate there is a place for them and she believes they can be successful. Her successes are well known amongst her colleagues and within the state, where she has been a teacher for so many years. Her high standards provide her students with consistency within the classroom and success beyond the classroom. Her ultimate goal is to provide her students with opportunities to become musically independent and to teach students to be good human beings.

Ricky Miller

Ricky Miller is a shy, business-like, no-nonsense gentleman. He has been teaching high school in an urban southern city for the past 18 years. He is a native of the area, having graduated from a local traditional public high school, as well as private and public universities. When asked about his early experiences with music, he described aspiring to be like his uncle, who was his biggest influence. "When he joined the choir of the church, I wanted to join the choir at church, even though I was too young." Ricky describes an event at his middle school that required guys to sing, but the choir had no guys. His friends told the teacher, "Ricky can sing." Ricky denied it, not wanting others

to know about this side of himself. However, the teacher and other girls in the choir proved to be convincing, and he got a standing ovation. As Ricky puts it, "I was hooked. I started thinking, maybe I can sing a little bit." In high school, Ricky tried to stay away from choir, choosing drama instead. However, the class was full, and his counselor recommended choir. His choral experiences in high school choir were so great, to this day he recognizes and tries to bring many of these components into his daily teaching.

Ricky didn't know he could major in music in college. Thanks to his guidance from his voice teacher and his high school choral director, he auditioned for voice and got accepted to most schools where he applied. Although accepted as a singer, he realized, "I did enjoy singing a lot, but I got my thrills when I was in choir." Ricky soon recognized that he wanted to be a teacher, "the idea of conducting, and directing, I felt was really challenging and I thought that would sustain me in music." He graduated with a bachelor's in music education and eventually got a master's in music education with an emphasis in choral conducting.

For the past four years, he been teaching at a magnet school for the visual and performing arts. Prior to this position, Ricky taught at another high school for 14 years. Throughout his career, his choirs have received Superior ratings at District MPA as well as Superior and Excellent ratings at State MPA. Additionally, students from this school have consistently participated in All-State Choirs since his arrival. The demographics at his school as per Ricky are "75% Spanish or Hispanic and about 15% black, the rest other, non-Hispanic, non-black." The actual numbers are not that far off with 68% Hispanic, 17% white, 9% black, and 6% multiracial/other. He teaches an intermediate Women's Chorus class and intermediate Men's Chorus class, two advanced choir classes,

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an elective choir class for students who are not a part of the music magnet but want to sing, and a theory class for ninth and 10th graders in the program.

When I walked into his classroom, there is a lot of visual stimulus. At the entrance is a large bulletin board that says, "Welcome to Chorus." There is a calendar of birthdays on the back wall of the room. On the white board in the front of the class, Ricky lists the songs that will be addressed for the day and in what order. The room is long, the piano and teacher desk are in the sunken portion of the room, and the students sit on built in risers facing the middle. There was a lot of work that was constantly being done. During my first observation the pace was fast, going from song to song with very little time in between. Students had leadership roles, and when a need arose, they quickly jumped to the task. Singing well, with an active body was the main goal throughout the rehearsals observed.

Ricky's shy personality can initially come across as aloof. After three interviews, it was obvious that he was far from aloof. His passion for choral music, healthy singing, and teaching in general is clear, engaging, and exciting; when asked to help out beginning teachers, he has always said yes. A side conversation with his department head prior to one of his observations, gave a clue into his biggest passion, the students. The department head informed me that this teacher was aware of his students needs beyond the classroom, situations of home life that needed school assistance, financial or otherwise, and his willingness and commitment to provide for his students was impressive to her. This choir director is all in, heart, mind, soul, and action.

Classroom Set-Up and Preliminary Observations

As an observer, my first time in Ricky's classroom immediately felt comfortable. After a few hiccups in traffic and parking restrictions, I arrived at the front gate. Ricky had sent two students to greet me at the front office and walk me to his room. There was a seat ready for me in the back of the room, facing the teacher, but behind the students. Ricky was wearing a pair of jeans, a Star Wars t-shirt, and high-top sneakers. The main focus of the classroom was in the front where there is a mural on the wall to the far right. It says the name of the choir with two hands in front of a sunset. Scanning that same wall from right to left, next to the mural was the promethean board, the white board, the teacher's desk and a copy machine. Every visit included a list of songs on the white board. This was the agenda for the teacher and the students to stay on task and be reminded of the goals for the day. In front of the board, center stage in a sort of sunken pit was a grand piano. Ricky spent most of his time walking around the piano or at the piano. The rest of the classroom is set up with built in risers or steps, all facing that center position where the piano sits.
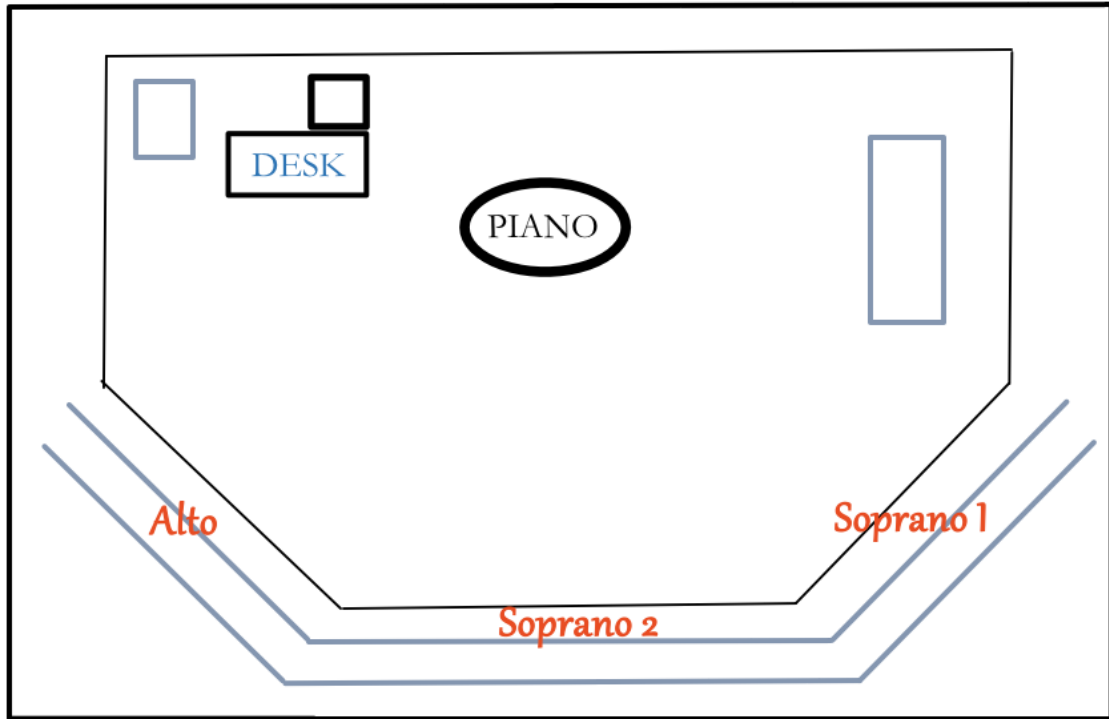
Figure 6. Ricky's Classroom Set-up

It was clear that students had a lot of leadership roles, they knew what to do and jumped in without direction. The chorus president was seen passing out papers, setting up chairs for guests, and helping to clean up a spill that happened. Throughout the rehearsals, students were constantly asked to think about dynamics and phrasing, being reminded of their role as individuals in the musicality of the group. Students were very engaged, as evidenced by movement, singing, and attentiveness to the director or each other during a sectional.

Perceptions and Understandings of Choral Music Literacy

Ricky's mentors included his uncle, and his high school choral director. His high school director was very influential "in everything that I do as far as a teacher. Her discipline, how she teaches music, everything. If it wasn't for that, I definitely would not be the choral director I am today."

Ricky believes that he is fair, disorganized with organization, demanding, passionate, patient, and forgiving. He says that he's disorganized because "it's all up here (points to his head). So sometimes, it looks like I'm disorganized, but I know what I want to do. The how it comes into play doesn't always fit everybody's timeline, but I do get it done." He also says he's very meticulous and specific. "I know what I want, and I have to get it." When asked about the qualities he brings to his students, Ricky says his biggest quality is passion, "I love what I do, I believe it's just bringing passion about what I do by showing that I care for my students." Of interest, Ricky doesn't know if his students recognize his passion, care, and concern for them. He hopes they do but doesn't feel as if this particular group of students shows him the appreciation.

When asked about primary responsibilities, Ricky said, "My primary responsibility is to ensure that my students have a well-rounded music curriculum. That's my biggest responsibility." For him, music learning can help his students not only in music, but as human beings. Part of his primary responsibility is that his students "become better people, better leaders, and better musicians." For Ricky, this means that his students are able to excel in any form of music, whether it be classical, pop, or musical theater.

Ricky provides something for every student in his program, "any child can come to my school and feel like they were able to focus on what they loved; that they're better at whatever they loved before they got to my program." Ricky is trained classically and uses classical techniques in voice for his students but does not limit the repertoire they perform to classical music. As he explains, "my kids will be prepared for college, and that's why it's my responsibility for it to be a well-rounded curriculum." All things

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paperwork are secondary in his eyes. "My secondary responsibilities are all the silly grading and all that stuff. I don't know if I can say that, but that's kind of how I feel. Grading and paperwork, in the county I work in is terrible."

A big part of that well-rounded music curriculum is music literacy. Ricky explains it with a sports analogy:

I got to prep my kids for college. So, they got to have a curriculum that is able to teach them and so they can feel prepared. And music literacy obviously is important because, you want your kids to have tools. You can't have a football team and a quarterback who doesn't know who to throw to. You didn't teach him, you didn't teach him coverages, you didn't teach him formation. You didn't teach him anything, you just gave it to him. Like you know, teaching just by rote is the same as if you just kind of told the quarterback everything in his ear. So, in his ear piece you'll say okay, when you hike the ball, I want you to take three steps back, I want you to look to the left and I want you to throw up to the tight end.

I don't teach like that. I try to give them [students] all the tools so that they are able to be professionals on their own. For this reason, literacy for me is extremely important. And I want them to feel like it's important too.

One of the goals for Ricky's students is that they are prepared for college, and that requires sight reading skills. So, there is always a push to sight read better. A large percentage of his students, based on his report, make concerted efforts to continuously improve their sight-reading skills. Although, he began with defining music literacy in terms of sight-reading, later in the conversations he says this, "I think that's what I provide them through everything we do; working for concerts, how we learn our music,

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all that stuff. I think all that entails music literacy. The history, all of that, the terminology." Although he began by describing the need for sight-reading, he continued through and described other aspects such as vocabulary, history, and performing, which he considered to also be a part of the music literacy.

Music Literacy and Choral Music Literacy

Ricky acknowledged that he taught music literacy at various times throughout the school year. He explains "I teach it through the music that we learn." Ricky explains a tradition that has kind of begun in his classroom. When students in his program are sophomores, they take a music theory honors class. So, in the choral room, he asks questions and reinforces terminology, but only sophomores are called upon. "Ask anyone in my select women class, or my select mixed, all my sophomores; they are the only ones allowed to answer any question about theory or terminology." As he explains, in this way he ensures that the sophomores are getting ready for leadership opportunities or more advanced choral ensembles. It also allows the older students to recognize the sophomores and creates a camaraderie as the students can relate, and they root for each other to be successful.

While Ricky doesn't believe that choral music literacy and music literacy are separate things except for the repertoire that is used in the respective groups, he does state that it is a part of the literacy. "I think the only thing I would say would be different in regard to choral literacy vs instrumentals, is repertoire because I do feel that's part of the literacy." Although Ricky teaches in a magnet setting, he admits that he doesn't necessarily choose the hardest repertoire.

You can set your students up to do a lot of things in a song even if it's the easiest song. It goes right back to your musical literacy questions. I can ask them about the crescendos, I can ask them how to phrase.

Ricky believes that musical challenges exist in all music, and a good teacher will help their students find and meet all those challenges, regardless of the level of difficulty in the music.

Music literacy and choral music literacy are one and the same for Ricky. However, he acknowledges that the best way to get students to connect to the music they are working on is through the text and musical phrases. "Just challenge them to feel phrases. Feel what a crescendo does to your body. Why am I accentuating this particular word?" Throughout his rehearsals, this physicality was evident, Ricky would consistently and intentionally add movement as a form of emphasis depending on what he was teaching. He explains that "I really try to teach them about connecting to the music through the text. Why am I crescendoing here? Why am I cutting you off like that here?" Ricky tends to pose questions, and he reported that one of his methods for involving students is probing. When trying to get students to connect to the music, Ricky says, describes the value of the text and having students understand what the text is doing within the context of the music.

Ricky believes that student connection to the music via text or otherwise is valuable because the audience should be able to relate and feel something. "I feel like my students should be able to sing a song that the audience can to relate to. The audience should be connected to something, something that we're doing." Ricky explains to his students his own concert going reactions, "When I go to a concert, I want to be fulfilled. I

want to feel something; I want it to be memorable." With this idea in mind, he challenges his students to help the audience feel something, connect to something in their program.

The day before our second interview, Ricky had his fall concert. That concert included music the different groups had been working on, but also included songs students had composed. During the interview, I noted his joy and pride in describing the concert. It was evident in both his energy and his vocal inflection, "You should see how the kids were singing their songs. Or how they're writing, they're personalizing things. And the way they express it, you can see it. So, it's all working." Ricky recognizes that the way he approaches his program is different, but he feels that it works for him. His favorite choirs provide him with something emotional. He describes being able to watch the choirs and enjoy them because he feels something in their expressiveness, so he challenges his students to do the same. "You know, we are trying to be able to express our song in that way; visually, everything." These interviews and the observations I had gave me the impression that Ricky has a holistic view of teaching choral music literacy.

Ricky involves his students in the music making process primarily through probing questions. "I probe them [students] about phrasing. Sometimes I ask them 'how, how should I phrase this?' because sometimes I get stuck and I ask, 'What do you think?'" Ricky describes one song during that fall concert, where he was not sure of whether he wanted to cut off the students all at once or have them sing longer. So, he tried it a number of different ways, and allowed the students to give their feedback. He does wonder, did they really like the one they chose or "maybe it's because they kind of

know how I am, what I like." But his primary method for involving his students is giving them opportunities to voice their opinions.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Observing this classroom was very dynamic, it was fast paced and energetic. The second observation provided me with a view of how the students entered the classroom. It was an empty room, and the students quickly set up their seats and also a few extra seats. As the students set up, Ricky went into his office and then proceeded to write out his list of songs in the order they would be worked on. As the names of the songs would appear on the white board, the students began putting their music in that order. That morning, the student leader was asked to lead the class in physical warm ups. The teacher followed that with vocal warm-ups, which lasted roughly 17 minutes. Every visit, the teacher and the students ran through a minimum of six songs in the 2-hour block. While the first visit was shortened due to another presentation Ricky had planned for, the second and third visits had more student interactions with Ricky, asking questions, reminding the teacher about things that had been addressed prior. As the weeks passed, the teacher became more complimentary and encouraging with the students.

Ricky's ideal classroom climate would be an accepting or comforting place. A place where students feel comfortable, but also are down to work and are efficient in the learning process. He wants students to also feel accomplished and recognize their own strength and knowledge independently of their teacher's knowledge, elements of critical literacy. According to Ricky, students "can be more expressive if they feel free, free to be themselves." His own high school experiences have guided Ricky throughout his teaching. His high school director was strict, and everything was very fast paced. He

admits that while that is his guide, he does give his students a bit more freedom, and allows his own students more outlets within his classroom rather than outside his classroom.

The curriculum in this class includes musicianship skills, vocal production, singing with emotion or understanding, performance practice, leadership, and self-discipline. When asked if this curriculum had changed over time, he said it hadn't. He described arriving at this curriculum through past experiences, learning from other teachers, graduate and post graduate work and through intuition. "By believing in my system, believing that it works. I guess that's kind of how I got to it. Hours and hours and hours of working at it just like, self-correcting. I just need to do that better." Ricky's philosophy of teaching is his love of the music and passion for teaching. I cannot properly share with you the emphasis in his voice as he repeated the words love, each time growing in volume. It is one of the reasons why I am glad that I transcribed the interviews myself. In his words,

> Passion guides everything for me. I love, love, love what I do. I can't expect my students to give a hundred percent, if I'm at home being lazy. I can't do it. I feel like I'm selling out. I have to practice what I preach. Look at the best athletes, the best lawyers, the best doctors, they love what they do. People can do this thing, do teaching and so forth although they don't love it. But at some point, there's a limit. I don't have a limit. If you have a limit, you don't love it, you're not in love with it.

According to Ricky, learning occurs "through influences, through community, and sacrifice." He explains, that if you want to really learn a song, you have to sacrifice a

few extra minutes and sometimes a few extra hours. For him, learning also requires "self-discipline, you got to want it. You got to have the need or the yearning for something. If a person doesn't want to learn anything, they're going to just be ok." And finally, curiosity and love of the subject are important parts of learning as well.

He facilitates this learning by giving his students tools and opportunities. The tools Ricky shares are confidence, and the system he uses which includes music literacy components, individual attention and responsibility, and vocal production. As for opportunities, he gives many performance opportunities and leadership opportunities. "Student-led things, like the end of the year show, which is a student-run production. It's basically my senior leadership that does it. They get the opportunity to use the tools."

Evaluating students requires knowledge of the students in the first place. Ricky claims that he evaluates students by "noticing improvement in whatever their weakness is. I get to know my students, all my students. I just have a knack of knowing what their strengths and what their weaknesses are very quickly." Given that knowledge, it is easy for him to recognize individual growth over time.

Teaching a new song: component of curriculum implementation. Teaching a new song in Ricky's classroom is dependent on the difficulty level of the piece. When pieces are more difficult, the process is more streamlined for students beginning with rhythms, followed by tonality and pitches, and then putting those pieces together to hear how the piece works as a full piece. "I don't believe in playing parts for my students, but sometimes you have to give them a little support when it's weird [harmonically]. I mean, not everyone can sing seventh chords and all this crazy stuff, so you have to be realistic." Although when pieces are simpler for the students, he may ask them to write in their

solfege, or ask the students to just sight read the piece slowly without rhythms, so they get a harmonic vision of the piece. If it is more challenging what he will do is, "I'll write all the rhythms down on a sheet of paper, I'll pass it out to them, and then we'll patch, and we'll work through the rhythms before they even know what it is." And then after that, on the other side of the paper the solfege would have been written down and the students will sing the pitches in quarter notes to get a feel for the intervals that may give them trouble. Once all of this has been done, "we just do it really slow. And then from there, then I start to try to transfer it to the music."

He tries to make the parts of learning the song easy enough that accomplishing one goal will feed into accomplishing the next goal. Otherwise students use a lot of solfege, are sometimes given a time limit and told to write in as much of the solfege as they possibly can within that limit. The ultimate goal is college readiness. Since he cannot predict where the students will go for college, or the systems particular to each college, he tries to use all the tools at his disposal. "I want them to be comfortable when they go to college, regardless of where they go."

The only variation between groups is the degree to which he breaks things down. For his younger/ less experienced classes, he will write out all the rhythms and the solfege, but Chuck "believes in accepting students even if they don't sight-read well, because he knows the student will work hard to overcome their limitations." Ricky doesn't believe in getting upset with students who are trying, but it means he must provide these students with the tools necessary to be successful. However, students must work with him. "We will have to fix it. But you're going to have to work. You have to practice too. You're going to have to spend time at home, and you're going to get

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assessed, and I'm going to have a vocal test." Although this teacher works hard and tries to help all his students reach his high expectations, he does require that their work ethic matches his.

Storytelling and connecting: component of curriculum design and implementation. When asked about stories or messages that Ricky is trying to teach through his repertoire selections, he describes how choral music allows people to "relate on so many different levels." He describes a song done early in the year, called "Until All of Us Are Free." That song inspired discussions in class about being individuals, "living in the world, focusing on being you and being happy with yourself." These conversations included topics on the environment created within the choir program, how to feel free to express yourself, and learning how to express yourself in front of other people. In this way, Ricky is preparing his students for the real world, so that they might feel like they can conquer it. The goal through the repertoire selection is to help students relate. "This is how we can really connect, so much through choral music." According to Ricky, when students know what they're singing about, they sing better. Getting students to connect to their music is "all about the story telling and then connecting. They need to feel the phrase move, know what they're singing about, and enjoy the music."

Ricky allows his students to be a part of the decision-making process by allowing them to help choose articulations in the music such as crescendo, decrescendo, etc. He also likes to stay out of the way sometimes, "when they're doing their own thing, I kind of try my best to stay out of the way and try to see what they do." In this way, he can evaluate if the tools he has been teaching are actually becoming a part of the student's musical development. He describes an innate need to be in control at times, but

recognizes, "I know sometimes I got to let them be involved. And it helps, I think they retain better too, if they felt like they were part of it."

Choral Music Literacy and Performance Requirements

As previously stated, Ricky's main instrument is his voice and he began singing in the church through a family connection. "My uncle is the person that I wanted to follow his lead in everything and he's an amazing singer. So, I just followed his lead, and I did everything that he did." His high school choral experiences got him hooked. "I just had an amazing experience in high school. My choral director, how she teaches music… everything. If it wasn't for that, I definitely would not be the choral director I am today." He has been teaching for 18 years, the last 4 years at his current posting.

Ricky's primary responsibility is to provide his students with opportunities to become well rounded musicians through his curriculum. The term well-rounded musicians means that "when my students graduate my program, they will be able to excel in any form of music, whether it be classical, pop, or theater." His goal is that students have access to an individualized curriculum with opportunities for all to pursue their musical passions.

Throughout the school year, this choir director schedules roughly eight performances for his students. The roles these performances play are all different, some are for assessment. "The fall concert helps me kind of assess where my choirs are right now, because they all have to have their two songs. And I've been working on tone, been working on initial conducting mannerisms, dynamics." The fall concert also provides students with an "opportunity to feature their music." Performances also provide opportunities to do extracurricular things, "so if they want to do opera in college or

musical theater, it's preparing them for that atmosphere because of the rehearsals, not everyone is required to do it. It's teaching them commitment." Other concerts provide students with goals, "kids have to have something to do." And finally, some performances prepare students for the second half of the school year. "A lot of it is prepping for the spring. When the spring comes, we're all on the same page with everything." Ricky doesn't do concerts because he has to. He likes to change up the concerts so that they are different; always providing the students with something to look forward to. Finally, the spring concert is an opportunity for students to celebrate everything that they've done all year. "Students need to feel like there's a finish to the school year."

When asked about his repertoire selections, Ricky says "I pay attention to what type of story is the music telling? I take an account of my students." Not only must he like the music, but he has to think, will the students appreciate it? He recognizes that music must also take into account the different levels of musicianship within the different choirs. "Since I have different levels for my women, I have to make sure that what I select is good for each choir."

Students participate in the repertoire selection as officers, and for the end of the year show. "Just before State MPA's, I'll let my officers be in on the decision. I give them options, and they tell me which ones they like. And that's how the third piece is determined." This is a new occurrence, but one that helps Ricky put into action his belief in student leadership and involvement. "I didn't always do that, but I decided that I needed to practice what I preach, because I want my officers to be involved." The end of

the year show is also where the students get to choose the repertoire and they have complete freedom there, "They do the directing, teaching the music, and stuff like that."

Summary

Ricky is a veteran teacher; a shy, serious, no nonsense teacher, with a clear passion for what he does. His priorities are his students, their well-being, and their ability to grow within his program, such that they feel confident taking advantage of any and all opportunities presented to them. His emphasis in the classroom is on healthy singing, making music, connecting to the music, and relating to audiences during performances. His successes throughout the years, make him knowledgeable of repertoire, and his passion for the choral art open him to helping other teachers who reach out. And although his training and background is in classical choral music, he does not limit his students to any one vocal genre and works to make his students successful in the music world, without limitations.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECAPITULATION: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the five themes that appeared throughout data analysis across the different transcripts and throughout observations are presented and analyzed. The themes are ordered based on how often each came up throughout the interviews, and then corroborated through observations and lesson plans when they were available. The last theme, growth mindset, was not overtly mentioned by any participant, but appeared as an underlying theme in all of the participants' answers. Each theme is also analyzed for connections to constructivism, critical literacy, and transactional theory, although theories are not always present for every theme. Following the presentation of the themes, are my responses to the research questions from the perspectives of the participants.

As previously noted, the term choral music literacy was operationalized by this researcher as the ability to independently analyze and realize—sing or perform—musical information on the page, evaluate and make choices about how to communicate the information for audiences, and assess the outcome of those choices. The purpose of this research was to give five experienced choral music educators a voice and thus describe, examine, and understand these choral music educators' use of elements within choral music literacy. With these ideas in mind, the themes that arose and were most related to the topic at hand were

1. musicianship skills and development,

2. interpersonal connection,

3. teacher qualities and responsibilities,

4. student involvement,

5. growth mindset.

All participants discussed elements of musicianship skills and development and interpersonal connection often and extensively. Components of teacher qualities and responsibilities were brought up moderately but consistently by both Daniel and Ricky; student involvement was an important topic for Chuck, Daniel, and Ricky.

Theme 1: Musicianship Skills and Development

The most prevalent and expected of themes found throughout all of the transcripts, observations, and lesson plans was musicianship skills and development which included discussions on: (a) sight-reading, which is the ability to sing musical notation at first sight; (b) theory or the rudiments of musical notation, both rhythmic and melodic; (c) music history; (d) audiation which is the ability to hear the sounds represented on the page within the mind without actually singing them; (e) terminology or musical vocabulary; (f) composition which is the creation of musical phrases; (g) performance; and (h) vocal pedagogy, which is the study of how the voice works. Elements of these components were discussed and clearly observed within the lessons of all the participants, as well as notated within the lesson plans that were submitted. Ganschow (2014) stated that the fundamentals of choral music—rhythm, pitch, and pronunciation—were generally given the most attention. These components are elements on the literal levels of comprehension and are also listed as the first part of the definition of choral music literacy. Examples from each teacher are shared below.

Andrea prepared her students for music, by ensuring rhythmic or melodic components of the songs were included in warm-ups as well as sight reading exercises at the beginning of each class period. Andrea described music literacy as the ability to read

music as you would read a book. Chuck used rhythmic sight-reading exercises as his bell ringer, he used daily melodic and harmonic sight-reading exercises, and students were expected to sing and write in their solfege pitches in their music prior to singing a piece for the first time. Daniel had a daily sight-reading component as well as a separate theory class for beginners, ensuring students had the opportunities for musicianship skills necessary to succeed regardless of the level of difficulty placed before them. He emphasized that the music chosen for his students was the vehicle through which he taught the skills which he deemed necessary for their success. Elizabeth had a melodic dictation component as part of her daily routine which included a compositional element an example of synthesizing their previous knowledge with the information given and creating as well. She stated that students have learned when they no longer need her to figure out a score. Finally, Ricky required that sophomores answer all questions related to theory and terminology, in an effort to certify the students are ready for music leadership in the future. Taken together, all of the teachers emphasized and made space in their lessons to ensure sight reading as part of an exercise, or as part of learning their music was presented to the students. All of the teachers worked to varying degrees on components of music theory as applied to their music. These teachers were also interested in helping their students become successful in learning these components of choral music literacy.

Another component included under the umbrella of musicianship skills and development was vocal technique. Vocal technique refers to the different techniques that can ensure proper vocal production. This particular component was not evidenced in observations for Andrea or Elizabeth. However, Chuck, Daniel, and Ricky had specific

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phrases, activities, or warmups designed to build the understandings of vocal techniques amongst the students. Chuck asserted that one of his jobs was to offer students solo vocal lessons and described the difference between choral sound and solo sound. As Chuck described it for his students,

> Part of your job as a choral student is to make sure that you are a member of the ensemble, of the whole. That you're performing with proper vocal technique, understanding that you have to be a part of the texture. Your voice and the voice of your neighbor need to be matched, vowels, balance, etc. etc. When you are a solo performer, you take away those ingredients and focus on the best projection as a solo singer. And then you add all the colors of your voice that maybe you need to kinda hang on to with your choral voice.

Daniel also had a vocal technique component in his classroom. Although I did not observe the lesson, I caught a glimpse of the results in Daniel's class, where students had to create a 3D model of the vocal tract. When conducting his students, some of his feedback was related to breathing, vocal placement of sound, and vibrato. These are all elements related to vocal techniques. Ricky spent a great deal of time on vocal warmups and recommended that students have motion in their bodies as they sang. He often discussed connecting the breath to the body, a basic component of vocal technique. The common thread between the teachers who included this component, is that their primary instrument was the voice. The two teachers, Elizabeth and Andrea, whose primary instruments focused on the organ and piano, spent much more of their time on theory and sight singing skills. Andrea did say on occasion, "sound like a human not like the piano." Hamann (2007) stated, the strongest influences on curricular choices were items within

the school setting; things such as "developmental appropriateness, personal preference, budget, and available materials" (p. 70). The fact that these teachers seemed to emphasize the material with which they were most comfortable is in line with Hamman's (2007) statement.

Performance was also included under the umbrella of musicianship skills and development as each but Elizabeth described performances as the culmination of the skills the students had been taught. Andrea included performance etiquette—walking on and off stage, bowing for applause, and not waving at the audience—as a goal and said, "I think students learn from experiences and a performance to me is a complete experience." Performances for these teachers were many, but they were varied and included civic and social additions to the curriculum. Performances were not limited to holiday events and evaluations or competitions. Andrea had her students carol at a cancer ward and Chuck had students sing for a senior home center. Elizabeth included a stop at Ronald McDonald Houses regardless of where the spring trip took them and even encouraged the students donate supplies for that visit. Ricky arranged for students to perform for a church as a community service event. In this way the traditional view of performances for evaluation only is different. These teachers included performance as a part of their curriculum, but it is not the competitive aspect alone that drove them. It was the human aspect of choral music that ultimately guided the experiences these teachers provided for their students.

While these teachers did succumb to performances prescribed by their schools or their community, each one described other performances for student growth and to present opportunities for independence and responsibility. Ricky discussed giving

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students a venue for their own compositions, Daniel, Chuck, and Andrea had coffee houses as venues for students to be more autonomous in their musical selections as well as inspiration for other students. Taken together, there were many reasons, beyond the expected, explaining why these teachers scheduled and prepared for performances.

Connections to Constructivism

Musicianship skills and development included discussions on sight-reading, theory, music history, audiation, terminology, composition, performance, and vocal pedagogy. These translated into the basic curriculum in these classrooms. These classrooms were at least in part, constructivist in nature. Each classroom was unique in the teacher's approach to the material, which aligns with Hendry (1996) who asserted that in a constructivist classroom, "curriculum is the materials, language and behavior which teachers use to promote students' construction" (p. 24). There were commonalities in the emphasis in musical notation and interaction with that notation; all teachers used solfege and sight reading as important components of their curriculum. Gordon (2008) emphasized that there must be room for teachers to teach in the ways that are most comfortable for them. The specific components which were emphasized had a connection to the training and primary instruments studied during their respective teacher preparations; teachers tend to teach what they taught. Andrea and Elizabeth as pianists, mentioned vocal technique in reference to vowels, while Chuck, Daniel, and Ricky emphasized breathing, phonation, and the vocal mechanism. They also provided the students with exercises and tools to help them improve their vocal technique.

Two of the tenets of constructivism as per Fox (2001) are that learning is an active process, and knowledge is personal, idiosyncratic, and socially constructed. These

are elements of each of the teacher's responses. The principles of constructivism as defined by Hendry (1996) that were most applicable to this study were: (a) knowledge exists in the minds of the people only; (b) the meanings or interpretations people give to things depends on their knowledge; (c) knowledge is constructed from within an interrelation with the world; (d) knowledge is constructed through perception and action. When asked about how to define learning, Andrea and Daniel both said learning occurs through experience, a constructivist idea. Chuck and Elizabeth said that learning occurred when students take ownership of the material and can be independent, another constructivist idea. Ricky's definition was the only one that was very separate, he said that learning occurred by influence, community, and self-discipline. It is worth noting that his definition, it included a constructivist component. Even so, these teachers never specifically said that they had a constructivist philosophy in their teaching or development of their curriculum, there were clear components of constructivism throughout their discussions as well as in their classroom observations.

Hendry (1996) stated that "knowledge exists in the minds of students and the teacher only" (p. 23). Therefore, from a constructivist perspective, meaning is attributed to the curriculum enacted by the students and the teacher, guided by their existing knowledge and beliefs. These teachers acknowledged that much of what they were teaching had been learned through experiences, colleagues, experiments, and most compellingly, by focusing on the needs of their students. Throughout observations, teachers and students began the work of co-creating knowledge in the everyday work of singing and sight-reading. The components that were not observed were analyzing text and determining musical interpretation. Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) stated that it was

almost impossible for teachers to constantly teach constructively. In accordance with this idea, the constructivist perspective was not evident in every activity. However, it was still a guiding force in the participants' definitions of teaching and learning. The realities of life—recognizing where students were and where they needed to be—provided needs and opportunities for teachers to scaffold and build skills in a variety of methods. "In order to close potential gaps between theory and practice, constructivism is best not studied as isolated, technical and methodological theory abstracted from reflective, self-inquiry" (p. 239). In one of his interviews, Chuck said, "Sometimes it's not easy to hit every single point at every single time." Although he was referencing the time permitted to have discussions with students on how to best bring the music to life, that sentence applied to many more issues that teachers face.

The first theme, musicianship skills and development, encompassed a number of different elements that the teachers focused on in their classrooms and constantly emphasized throughout their interviews. While these teachers never once stated the word constructivism, it was clear that there were elements of constructivism inspiring and affecting how they taught in their classrooms and how they understood learning. Additionally, these elements can help guide and inspire other teachers in the field.

Connections to Critical Literacy

Critical literacy in music translates into recognizing that the text or notes on the page are not the ultimate authority as it may have been edited by someone. However, it is the job of the students and the director to create musical experiences for themselves and the audience based on the knowledge they have and the choices they make together. It is also a literacy of respect for the learners and the process involved in learning. Critical

literacy connections were harder to find in the teachers' descriptions of what they do, and in the observations I was present for. However, there were little glimmers of critical literacy throughout.

The director who more obviously seemed to touch on components of critical literacy was Ricky. In one of his interviews, he specifically described asking his students to consider reasons why they may not honor the notations of dynamics or accents written on the page. He described posing questions to his students, reminding them to recognize the meanings of the text as a better guide of what dynamics or articulations they may want to use. Chuck made a statement in one interview, which taken at face value seemed commonplace. Upon a second look, it was more powerful than he may have even realized. Chuck stated that when he allowed students who were not officers to lead a sectional, it provided the students with an opportunity to realize that they had "acquired information and materials which were now able to transfer to other students." In other words, he was providing his students an opportunity to "know that they know" (Freire, 1970). Schmidt (2005) contended that although music education could be a vehicle through which students can use to understand the world, teachers are often unable to engage in dialogues to help students accomplish this goal. The teachers observed mentioned class discussions, but these were not observed.

Connections to Transactional Theory

Transactional theory is the interaction between the reader and the text. The reading is dependent on what the readers bring with them and their individual focus during the reading. It is not a common idea amongst music educators. I anticipated that finding connections to this theory might be more challenging. In Daniel's definition of

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music literacy however, I saw a connection. Daniel stated, "music literacy is the ability to read, analyze, compose, dictate, something that's black and white on the page and turn it into colors." For Daniel, Choral music literacy, has the added component of text, and without connecting to the text, you cannot perform that text, "you can present the text, but that's not performing. There's a difference between your science project presentation versus your choral performance, or there should be." Furthermore, Daniel stated, "when you have an aesthetic process that clicks within you, it makes connections… I think there are connections going on inside your brain that will cause you to learn easily and, more efficiently."

In other words, choral music literacy implies that students perform and may have an aesthetic experience in that performance, if they can connect to the text. Like Daniel, Rosenblatt (1995) argued that art and aesthetic experiences are more fulfilling, or perhaps human, than efferent experiences. Rosenblatt regarded reading and response to literature as a work of art. She stated that the literature teacher must begin instruction from the perspective of how a literary work moved, touched, or reached the student. Rosenblatt made a case for transactional theory via the aesthetic reading, she argued that a book without a reader is much like a musical score without an orchestra. Daniel's explanations of choral music literacy and performances specifically, seem to be in line with transactional theory when applied to the choral realm.

Theme 2: Interpersonal Connection

The theme of interpersonal connection was an unanticipated theme, yet it was consistently presented and discussed throughout all the transcripts with slight variations amongst the participants. Interpersonal connection grouped together ideas such as

confidence, comfort in the classroom, use of icebreakers, building trust, community outreach, and classroom environment. Many of the teachers described having students in the classroom who may not have chosen their classes. Chuck explained,

> I need to help my students feel comfortable that they're in chorus, and not make them want to run away. Because many of them didn't choose to be in chorus. So, during the first few days and weeks, my job is to convince them that they don't need to be afraid of being in choir and that they might actually enjoy being in my class.

Daniel explained that his male students are all in one class because "it allows the kids to psychologically feel more comfortable; they can look around and see other kids or older kids that have gone through the same changes as them." Again, all of the teachers made statements describing reasons why or ways in which they tried to ensure students were comfortable and willing to take risks in their classrooms. At their core, they all considered the students to be their primary goal.

During all of the observations of the participants, the students appeared content as evidenced by their general facial affects and manners of engagement with the teachers. The classroom where the students' arrival was the least relaxed was Elizabeth's room. The lessons began before the bell rang; there was no time to chit chat upon entering the room and students were not late. Although that room had a lot of structure, she was kind, complimentary, and consistent with the students. She had explained, this was a more advanced group, many of whom had been with her for at least one year prior. Elizabeth mentioned having a different approach in her personality with beginners; she said, "I kind

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of have to put on my used car salesman, televangelist cheerleader face with my beginners."

Almost all the participants made statements such as music should make students "changed human beings, they should realize that this is bigger than just them," (Andrea). Chuck said,

I think I help them [students] become better people. I think I help them work towards common goals, help each other, work with each other, feel compassion towards each other and develop a sense of love for themselves, for their music, for their art.

Elizabeth stated that her students should "have gained confidence in themselves, established a solid foundation of musicianship, and most importantly become incredible human beings—a microcosm of what society could be if the world had the right priorities." Ricky stated, "my primary responsibility is to ensure that my students have a well-rounded music curriculum…and through that they become better people, better leaders, and better musicians." The idea amongst almost all of the participants was that music learning and education, should be a tool to make the students better humans. Elliot (2005) appears to have had similar ideas when he wrote, "music has many important values. Self-growth and self-knowledge—and the unique emotional experiences of musical enjoyment that accompanies these—are among the most important values of music and music education" (p. 10).

Connections to Constructivism

This theme was important to all the teachers and had a clear connection to constructivism. "There is a need for a teacher to provide a supportive environment so that

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students can feel free to take risks" (Hendry, 1996, p. 28). I believe that one of the reasons this was important to all the participants is that all of them had prior experiences with students who did not want to be in their classrooms. Additionally, their intrinsic belief that music education, specifically choral music education is important, suggested that they want to teach anyone. Elizabeth specifically said that her philosophy of music is that "music is for every child; my door is open." An article by Hendricks et al. (2014), offered a practical model for creating a safe space in the music classroom. The authors stated, "teachers can foster emotionally safe learning environments and instill music students with a positive sense of self-belief, creative freedom, and purpose" (p. 35). Each of these teachers, had their own methods for creating these safe learning environments; it was an overtly stated goal by each one.

Chuck and Ricky both described the use of icebreakers at the beginning of the year in an effort to get students to feel comfortable. Elizabeth acknowledged that the first few times the composition element of her bell ringer was presented, she affirmed all students for the attempt, regardless of errors. Personally, I witnessed her praise of students, amidst an error correction. Andrea created an environment whereby students laughed at themselves and her. She made it a point to show that she was "human" and capable of making mistakes. During the first observation, Andrea was struggling to give the pronunciation of a text in a foreign language while also emphasizing the rhythm on the page.

 Of note, all of these teachers have had students in their classes with exceptionalities, but it was not obvious during the observations. Andrea had a blind student. Chuck had an autistic student with a paraprofessional. The student was only

redirected during class on one occasion; during all other observations, the student participated well, and the exceptionality would not have been noted. Hendricks et al. (2014) stated, "learning environments foster intrinsic motivation and musical engagement when students are treated as unique individuals" (p. 36). I believe these teachers understood this to their core, and although they are teaching group ensembles, the students appear to feel important, welcomed, and were treated as individuals.

Theme 3: Teacher Qualities and Responsibilities

Four out of five participants overtly discussed elements of teacher qualities and responsibilities; these included discussion topics such as classroom management, how to teach, providing students with opportunities, love and knowledge of students, pride, patience, passion, and professionalism. Throughout the discussions and observations, it was clear that these teachers took their jobs seriously, cared for their students, and worked diligently to ensure their classes ran smoothly and efficiently. A snapshot of each of their personalities was evident in their classroom procedures and composure; there were no behavior issues observed.

Andrea discussed teacher qualities and responsibilities such as classroom management and paperwork throughout the interviews. When I walked into her room, the organization and calendars around the room allowed everyone to recognize what was due, when it was due, and what the long-term goals and short-term goals were. During the second interview, she attempted to define differentiated instruction and described scenarios where she might have used those strategies. As Andrea explained:

> a great example would be, I don't care how you get me answer there are multiple
>
> ways of getting the answer. I just need you to get the answer sometimes this

works for some people sometimes this works for other people. Example, finding the key. I show them two ways to do it. And then, you use whichever way is better for you. One way is the order of the flats, go back one, bro that's so easy, for some. Some people don't like memorizing. Another way is ok, your last flat is fa, find do.

Andrea further explained student capabilities, and the need for the teacher to understand what students could do before, and how to direct instruction to different student aptitudes.

Chuck, like Andrea, had a similar opening of class. Students had prescribed locations to put away their belongings, thus ensuring absolute attention to the task of singing. He described some attributes he remembered from his own piano teacher in high school and stated that some of these were his own goals in the room.

She [the piano teacher] had a way of encouraging her students in a positive way. She always made us feel capable and important, and had a lot of energy in her teaching, and I know that I do use a lot of those techniques and methods.

Daniel described the role of the teacher as first a guide, second a creator of opportunities, and third a motivator of passion and for additional work beyond the classroom. He explains that, ultimately, "you're not just teaching the curriculum in the classroom, you're teaching the students that are in front of you at that time and what they need is what you're there for." When observing Daniel, his words rang true. He allowed the students a lot of freedom, but the guidelines he established were clear and observable to an outsider concerning student behavior and participation.

Ricky had a lot to say about teacher qualities and responsibilities. He holds himself to a high standard of work and research for his students. Words he used to describe teacher qualities were accepting, energetic, fair, and demanding, but the word that continuously came back, he emphasized this the most, was *passion*. In response to the question of what qualities Ricky brought to his students he said, "Just the passion of what I do; I love what I do."   In another interview, he described how much he loves what he does, and how because he loves it, there is no limit for him.

> Now people can do this thing, do teaching so forth well, although they don't love it. But at some point, there's a limit. I don't have a limit. If you have a limit, you don't love it. You don't. You're not in love with it.

Although Elizabeth did not overtly discuss teacher qualities to the same degree as the others, there were mentions of related topics. For example, Elizabeth explained that her job was to make sure her students were successful. "If you buy into the program, you're going to be successful and they all have choices. My goal is not to get kids into high school. My goal is to have successful students." In her classroom, classroom management was evident, her assessment procedures were clear, and the goals for the students were attainable as made clear by the constant "key" and assistance she shared on the board. When describing the few issues that arise in general, she says, "focus on the good kids, document, contact parents, move on."

Connections to Constructivism

Throughout the interviews, Daniel consistently referred to himself as a guide rather than a teacher. "My job is to create as many open-door opportunities for the students so that they can choose where they want to travel on their path." (July 13, 2018).

"I am a guide along the process [of learning]. It's a space for them to make their own choices and to go along with what they believe" (January 11, 2019). "I don't teach a new song to my students, it's more like we come to realize the song together" (October 11, 2018). Yilmaz (2008) argued, teachers should "facilitate and guide rather than dictate autocratically" (p. 169). Throughout his interviews and after observing his classroom, it is evident in words and actions that Daniel is a constructivist teacher.

Connections to Critical Literacy

Throughout our discussions, Daniel pointed out an intrinsic belief that "life doesn't happen to people, life happens because of people." This idea guided Daniel's teaching, as he wanted to inspire his students and empower them to choose their paths through life. "Critical literacy provides a framework for helping students take greater control over their lives and can help to transform the world around them" (Thomas, Hall, & Piazza, 2010, p. 91). In his belief that students should be empowered; he is beginning to provide students with additional components of critical literacy.

<center>**Theme 4: Student Involvement**</center>

The theme of student involvement came through with greater prevalence in three of the five participants. Student involvement was evident both in the classrooms, as well as through discussions on student ownership, leadership, and independence. Chuck, Ricky, and Daniel all had obvious examples of student involvement during observations and explained through the interviews, ways in which this was a part of their classroom.

Chuck's classroom consistently had sectionals—students working in smaller groups based on voice parts such as soprano, alto, tenor, or bass—embedded within the class period. Student ownership was a big element as Chuck stated on multiple occasions

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that he placed the "onus of music learning" on the students early on. Officers must apply

and are selected the year before; these students have a biweekly meeting, and even

students who are not officers are sometimes selected to help run sectionals or warm-ups.

When asked how this culture arose in the classroom, Chuck claimed that it was not a

conscious effort. It was more of a need that arose,

> I think that at one point I said to my students, you know I need your help with
>
> this, and they were more than happy to help to do it. And I knew that they were
>
> capable of doing it. I think that they just feel a sense of responsibility toward each
>
> other, towards the group that it's kind of seamless.

The level of student involvement in Daniel's class was most impressive because

they were middle school students. He explained in the third interview, "I think that a lot

of times we don't give them [students] enough credit to believe that they will make the

right choices." The student leadership model for Daniel, (a) provides other students with

easier communication as they can relate to their peer leaders, (b) provides aspirations for

students, recognizing that if a peer can be in charge, so could they, and (c) gives the

students a voice in the choosing of their leaders, and those leaders help Daniel monitor

the feelings and motivation amongst the students.

Like Chuck and Daniel, Ricky has section leaders, a choir president, and other

officer positions. Unlike Chuck and Daniel, Ricky allows his students to assist in the

choosing of repertoire for MPA. Ricky presents the students with a list of two or three

songs, and the officers choose which one should be used for MPA States. This is a new

occurrence for Ricky. He explained,

I'm going to need to practice what I preach because I want my officers to be

involved. So, I'm like you know what, they can be involved in saying we like this

song. And most of the time the choir did like the song.

Ricky also reported that although he wanted to be in control at times, the best way to

ensure student learning was to stay out of the way and observe what they had learned and

could put into action.

Andrea identified officers and sectionals, but this element was not as prevalent in

her discussion, nor was it observed in the classroom. Through her interviews, she stated

that one of her weaknesses was the ability to delegate. She also stated that she was trying

to remedy this. Although this was not a huge component of her interviews or the classes

observed, she did share that, like Ricky, she periodically allowed students to assist in the

choosing of their musical repertoire. Like Ricky, she presented her officers with two or

three song selections, and the students then voted on the best one for the choir to perform.

All four of these teachers, also have solo and ensemble opportunities where the

students are free to choose their own music. Coffee House or Open Mic Night as Andrea

calls it, is an event hosted by Daniel, Chuck, and Andrea separately in their respective

schools. This event functions as both a fundraising activity, and also an opportunity for

student performances of their own choosing. Andrea reported it functions as a way of

encouraging other students to strive for new experiences, by observing others like

themselves accomplishing it. Ricky allowed for students to perform their compositions or

music of their own choosing during the fall performance, and also had an end of the year

show during which student leadership is completely in charge, from selecting the

repertoire to the costumes and sometimes even choreography.

The expectation based on previous research was that "the teaching model most emulated in secondary ensembles is that of the autocratic, professional conductor of a large, classical ensemble" (Kratus, 2007, p. 45). While there were occasions when this was observed, it was not the only thing observed. These teachers embraced a more modern role in their teaching practices while also retaining a dominant role more closely related to the past.

Connections to Constructivism

The practice of constructivism in the choral classroom allows discussions and collaborative choices that directors and students make, as they co-create the music they present to an audience. Yilmaz (2008) described the interaction between the teacher and the student in the creation of knowledge and stated, "the locus of intellectual authority resides in neither the teacher nor the resources, but in the discourse facilitated by both teachers and learners" (p. 163). While the participants did describe these components, they were not described as a daily occurrence, and they were not observed. This does not mean that it is not happening. Rather, it suggests it is not a high priority for the teachers, because they must teach the other components before they can get to the point of discussion. My experiences in these classrooms, and after the interviews lead me to believe that this is a work in progress. Gordon (2008) concluded that "a constructivist classroom is one in which there is a balance between teacher and student-directed learning and requires teachers to take an active role in the learning process, including formal teaching" (p. 325). This balance may not have been reached yet, but it appears to be a goal for these choral music educators.

Connections to Critical Literacy

A component of critical literacy is understanding that the teachers do not own all the musical knowledge, and that the students do come to class with musical knowledge. These are the hidden literacies that students arrive with. One particular statement made by Perry (2006) in the discussion of the gaps between hidden literacies and academic literacies stated, "this gap, left un-nurtured and unattended by educators, can result in students who see little or no connection between themselves and school" (p. 331). Some of the teachers who had student involvement as an important theme, were trying to find ways to recognize their students' critical literacies. As previously stated, Andrea, Chuck, and Daniel's Coffee House or Open Mic Night events, provided a venue for the students to showcase their critical literacies, and sometimes the new literacies they have added to their knowledge base. Ricky's composer element in the fall performance is another way of bridging these gaps. As he noted, some students wrote pop songs, rap songs, or collaborated with other instrumentalists to create the music they performed. Based on the interviews and what was observed, these teachers are not critical literacy practitioners. Even so, there were components of critical literacy taking place.

Theme 5: Growth Mindset as a Philosophy of Teaching

The theme of growth mind-set was unexpected, like the theme of interpersonal connection. In fact, it was not until the third time reading the transcripts, and then synthesizing the data that it became obviously something that was worth discussing. The idea of fixed mind-set versus growth mind-set is a relatively new one; fixed mind-set is the belief that intelligence and talent are "fixed" or inherent, and hard work would have little to no effect on success. Growth mind-set is the belief that effort and practice has an

effect on skill and achievement. This idea is usually viewed as a personal one; however, I think that personal belief has an effect on the teacher. Teachers who have a growth mindset may be more likely to believe that students are only limited by their willingness to work on the task at hand. Throughout the interviews, the idea that learning was an experience, that it is ok to fail, came up consistently. In an article in the *Choral Journal*, Potterton (2019) wrote, "learning is a process and getting an answer is not a failure—it's a not yet" (p. 61). This idea comes through in the language of each of the participants.

When asked about their ideal classroom climate, each participant described mistakes or failures. But that was not what stood out. Rather, it was how to deal with them. Andrea said, "my ideal classroom climate would be a safe environment for myself and my students to be able to not just learn, but that everybody understands that mistakes can happen, as long as we work hard to fix them." The component that is most obvious if you met Andrea, is her work ethic. It was evident in everything observed, and she was trying to instill this work ethic in her students. The work ethic was more important than "talent." Andrea taught in a regular public high school, and her students came with some prior knowledge in the music she's was teaching, but more often than not, very limited prior knowledge. She was not auditioning students seeking out talent, she just wanted students who wanted to be better and improve.

Chuck had a similar statement, "my ideal classroom would be a place where kids are excited to be there, enjoying themselves, learning with each other, and helping each other." Davis (2016) stated, "growth mindset creates a hunger for learning rather than approval." Chuck wanted students who want to learn. The theme of growth mindset in

Chuck's philosophy of teaching became even clearer when he was asked about his weaknesses. Chuck said,

> sometimes I have to take a step back and remember that I don't have to have the best chorus in the city. I don't have to have perfection every single moment… I have to have a little bit of wiggle room to let the kids fail a little bit and learn from that.

Although Chuck taught in a magnet program where he auditioned students, he had many students who have never sung before who were combined with those in the magnet program. Like Andrea, Chuck's work ethic was also evident. He recognized, that the students can learn through the failure.

Like Chuck, Daniel believed failure is not an end, but a step along the path to success. His ideal classroom climate would be "a place where students are open and willing to accept failures as an action, rather than a source of identity, and through that be willing to grow and improve on their actions." Although Daniel taught in a magnet school, he had taught in a regular high school before. Truthfully, his track record of success had been relatively similar regardless of his location. Students in his program have been able to participate in all state events, have received excellent or superior ratings at district MPA's, and have been able to choose the next steps along their paths.

Elizabeth's ideal classroom climate was "one in which everybody wants to be there and wants to learn." On a number of occasions Elizabeth stated that music was for every child. Her door was open to any student. Elizabeth, like Daniel and Chuck, taught at a magnet school, but allowed non-magnet students to take her classes, and accepted

new magnet students regardless of their grade level. She taught for many years at a regular public high school, and again, her success rate was fairly similar.

Ricky taught for many years in a regular public high school, and even at this new location, he stated that he does not always choose a student based on prior knowledge or talent, but their willingness to work. In another interview, he stated, "I don't believe in getting upset with students who are trying." But if a student is trying, then it is his job to help the student be successful.

All of these teachers had a strong personal work ethic. It was not their pedagogical background that made them successful as teachers. It was this belief in themselves, in their ability to work and improve, and growth mind-set which pushed them to work with any student present before them. They believed that if the student wants to work, the student will succeed. They believed earnestly that success can be measured in many different ways, and you must look at where you began as a measurement of how far you have come. They instinctively gave students praise for their effort as opposed to their talent (Potterson, 2019).

Research Questions Answered Through the Data

The general goal of this study was to describe, examine, and understand choral music educators' perceptions and use of elements within choral music literacy. Specifically, the study explored five choral music educators' knowledge and use of sight-reading, text analysis, and composition. This study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1) What are the choral music educators' perceptions and understandings of and towards choral music literacy? (sight reading, text analysis of musical

information, evaluation on how to best communicate information to the audience, assessing outcomes, and musical independence)

2) How did these choral music educators design and implement their curriculum?

3) How did these choral music educators balance performance requirements and the elements of choral music literacy, which are invaluable in the creation of independent music making?

The following paragraphs are data-based responses to each of the questions based on all the data that has been presented.

Choral Music Educators' Understandings of Choral Music Literacy

Choral music literacy was operationalized as the ability to independently analyze and realize or sing musical information on the page, evaluate and make choices about how to communicate the information for audiences, and assess the outcome of those choices. These choral music educators' perceptions of and understandings of choral music literacy were that music should be read and understood much as you would read a book, while recognizing cultural and historical origins and honoring them stylistically, as well as honoring composers' intent and textural emphasis. The participants of this study agreed that the music must be analyzed and realized or sung. This is the component that the teachers spent the most of their time addressing, as evidenced in their discussions and observations. The participants agreed that the ability to make choices about how to communicate the information was also necessary. This component was not as evident in the observations, and the ways they accomplish this goal was not as clear in their discussions. The final component, assessing the outcome of those choices was not discussed or observed at all. Andrea and Elizabeth both stated that on occasion, they

would record the students in class and ask the students to evaluate themselves in a group format. This, however, was not evident in the limited observations that took place.

Choral Music Educators' Curriculum Design and Implementation

These choral music educators' design and implementation of their curriculum had similarities in that all the teachers used solfege as a tool for theory and sight reading. There were differences in how that was observed in each class. Andrea had a three-step system for sight reading new music: (a) read the rhythm on a neutral syllable or syllable system, (b) speak the solfege in rhythm, and (c) sing the solfege in rhythm. Once the song had been learned, the next point to be learned and worked on was tone. Regardless of her system, she believed that part of her curriculum was to create better people who had a continued thirst for learning. She evaluated her students with a weekly participation grade for having all materials in class and participation, a weekly written or sung assignment, usually submitted digitally, and finally performances.

Chuck's curriculum contained a theory and sight-reading component. It usually took place prior to warm-ups. He also had an additional component of vocal techniques, harmonic, interpretive, and text analysis of a song. Additionally, he included the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet and vocal health and basic anatomy. His evaluation system was much more dependent on student's abilities and skills when they entered as compared to their individual successes over time.

Daniel's curriculum discussion was much more generalized, but he described that it was developed backwards, beginning with the skills he wanted his students to learn by the end of the year. Due to the mixed group I observed, he explained that he would aim for his higher leveled students but had a system in place whereby the younger students

would be mentored. These mentors were supposed to help the younger students should they be unsure of some material that was discussed in the classroom setting. Additionally, his curriculum included auditory input in concordance with his "sight before sound" ideology, as well as class discussions about text and composer's intent. His assessments were informal, based on the group's knowledge of notes and rhythms. His formal assessments included part checks—where students sing their individual part while others sang their respective parts simultaneously—an activity that I witnessed during my second observation.

Elizabeth's curriculum was described by her as "solfege-based studies" which included dictation, scales as part of the warm up, and the use of hand signs. These three components were combined and utilized throughout all the of the music learning that took place. Her assessments were weekly interval quizzes and dictation quizzes, classwork assignments, and singing for homework which consisted of recordings submitted digitally. Students in her program learn all the parts of a song and are later assigned which part they will permanently sing. All of the elements discussed during interviews were witnessed during observations and noted in her lesson plans.

Ricky's curriculum was self-described as musicianship skills, vocal production, emotion or understanding, performance practice, leadership, and self-discipline. Musicianship skills were further explained to be solfege, sight-reading, and harmonic context. Ricky explained that the degree of breaking things down is what differed between classes, depending on the skill level of the group.

All of these teachers encouraged and used solfege as a means of teaching and reinforcing sight-reading skills. During observations they consistently used these skills in

the classroom to learn music. Chuck and Ricky included components of vocal technique or production within their curriculum. Chuck, Daniel, and Ricky employed the use of sectionals or mentors as a means of having student leadership and engagement throughout the learning process. These elements were not only discussed but observed. All the teachers acknowledged choosing the bulk of the repertoire in the classroom, if not all of it. Additionally, while the teachers did ask the students for their input on the interpretation, this was not a consistent occurrence. Personally, I did not witness this in the observations. Schmidt (2005) argued against some of the common practices in music education, such as teacher centered music selection and interpretation. Overall, these teachers did not employ one system of teaching, and while there were components of teacher centered style teaching; there were multiple examples of student centered or flipped classroom teaching.

Choral Music Educators' Balance of Performance Requirements and Elements of Choral Music Literacy

Traditionally, choral music educators spend a great deal of time preparing for performances. Freer (2001) stated "orientation toward performance might lead a teacher to deemphasize music reading skills in favor of rote teaching for the sake of expediency even when the comprehension of notation is clearly within the students' potential grasp" (p. 165). In other words, the focus on performance could create a scenario where teachers spend more time on performing, and less time on understanding and interacting. Freer's (2001) perspective was not observed and did not come through during my interviews with these teachers. Additionally, while performance was an important component for

these educators, they were balanced by spending the time to reinforce sight reading skills through the learning of the music.

For Andrea, "students learn from experiences, and a performance is a complete experience. So, I don't teach to perform, but I do teach to try to get the best experience out of the performance." Her students spent the bulk of their time in class learning to read the musical notation they would perform and discuss the meanings of the text as a final component in preparation for performances. For Chuck, performances included opportunities for students to take ownership of their music, in smaller ensembles, as well as opportunities to recognize a larger community of singers beyond those in their classroom when combined with other classes. His goal was to ensure the musical selections provided students with knowledge that is cultural, historical, and musical as well as enjoyable. Daniel, like Andrea, believed that performances provided a culmination of everything that had been taught, coming together. It provided an opportunity to showcase for parents and the community what his students had been working on, but also, the music that was performed presented vehicles through which Daniel taught the skills he had deemed necessary for his students.

Performances for Elizabeth were a privilege. Students who did not have good grades in all of their classes were not allowed to perform. The songs that were learned, were a vehicle for learning harmony, and reinforcement for the solfege-based teaching that she was doing daily. Her repertoire selection must have a meaning and must be challenging. Ricky on the other hand, believed that each performance provides a different goal. As he described it, the first performance in the fall "provides students with an opportunity to feature their music and assess their tone development." Performances for

Ricky also provided opportunities for celebration, unity, extracurricular events, and ultimately for meeting goals.

As evidenced in their interviews and observations, these teachers believe in process over product. The performance was not *the* thing, it was *a* thing. The thing is all the steps that lead up to the performance, which include sight reading, theory, discussions, text analysis. Although not all the elements were observed, they were discussed. The question was, how do these teachers balance the performance requirements and elements of choral music literacy. The skills and goals these teachers had, took precedence. They were both necessary, but ultimately, the performance was not greater than the learning process.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe, examine, and understand choral music educator's perception and use of elements within choral music literacy. Through the interview, observation process, and data analysis process, five themes emerged. These themes were,

1. musicianship skills and development,

2. interpersonal connection,

3. teacher qualities and responsibilities

4. student involvement and

5. growth mindset.

As expected, the theme that was the most prevalent amidst the participants was the musicianship skills and development theme. An unexpectedly important theme for all

the participants was interpersonal connection. Growth mind-set was another unexpected find amidst these teachers' philosophical views.

The research yielded some answers to the sub questions. First, the choral music educators chosen for this research agreed that choral music literacy should include the ability to read and understand music symbols on the page, understand cultural, historical, and stylistic expectations of that music, and the ability to honor composers' intent and textural emphasis. Most of the time in class was spent on the first element, the ability to read and understand the symbols on the page.

Secondly, these choral music educators had similar designs and implementations of their curriculum; they all included the use of solfege as a tool for theory and sight reading. All of the teachers recognized that they made the majority of the choices when it came to repertoire. Additionally, and perhaps most telling of this set of individuals, they all believed that a part of their curriculum was to help create better people.

Finally, these choral music educators did not have an issue in balancing the performance requirements with elements of choral music literacy. Throughout interviews and observations, it was evident that the goal was helping create musically literate individuals. The performance was a part of that, but it was not the ultimate goal. In the next chapter, I discuss some limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

CODA: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Aim and Research Questions of the Study

The purpose of this research was to give experienced choral music educators a voice and thus describe, examine, and understand five choral music educators' use of elements within choral music literacy. The intended outcome was a deeper understanding for what these choral music educators did, how they accomplished their goals, and their thought processes as they accomplished the tasks of teaching choral music literacy. As such, the research method used was a qualitative, multi-case study. Qualitative research is defined as a "means to study research problems inquiring into the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Through this method of study, I was able to give each individual participant a voice and context for their respective answers and choices in their classrooms.

The main question was, "How do choral music educators balance requirements that are historically, socially, and culturally understood as part of a choral classroom with the elements of choral music literacy?" Within this question, three sub questions helped to formulate an overall description. These questions were:

1. What are the choral music educators' perceptions and understandings of and toward choral music literacy?

2. How do these choral music educators design and implement their curriculum?

3. How do choral music educators balance performance requirements and elements of choral music literacy, which are invaluable in the creation of independent music making?

Findings

Constructivist Curriculum Designs and Development

The choral directors involved in this research project were varied as to age, personality, and experiences. Moreover, their respective race/ethnicities were Asian, African American, white, and Hispanic. Similarly, their teaching styles were as unique as their personalities. Despite this, they all had intended goals of teaching the students in front of them, trying to create experiences for them, and making them independently knowledgeable. The purposeful sample created a group of teachers with similar successes, regardless of their differences; teaching students choral music literacy. As previously noted, this researcher operationalized the term choral music literacy as the ability to independently analyze and sing musical information on the page, evaluate and make choices about how to communicate the information for audiences, and assess the outcome of those choices.

Given these teachers' responses to interview questions and observed teaching methods, they agreed that music and more specifically choral music, must be analyzed and realized or sung. This was the component that the teachers spent most of their teaching time on, as evidenced in their discussions and observations. They agreed that the ability to make choices about how to communicate the information was also necessary, although this component was not as evident in the observations. Due to gaps in the visitations, a limitation of the study, how they accomplished this goal was not as clear in interview discussions nor was it ever observed. The final component, assessing the outcome of those choices within a performance, was not discussed or observed at all. Some teachers reported recording their students within the classroom rehearsal and

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having the students give feedback and assessments in the moment, but this was also not observed. The time frame for observations offered me the opportunity to observe the teachers beginning a piece and working through the piece. These teachers did not typically move to the text until the musical notation of the pieces was learned. The time period where the discussions and text development would have taken place, coincided with a temporary hiatus in the research due to situations beyond anyone's control. Finally, assessing the outcome of choices was difficult to observe, as I imagine these are conversations and discussions that could happen in preparation for, or after a performance.

Each teacher approached this idea of choral music literacy from a different perspective, whether it was because they were most comfortable with that approach or because they believed it was the most important or the most fruitful tool to teach. The design and implementation of their curriculum had similarities in that all the teachers used solfege—a system of syllables as part of the scale—as a tool for theory and sight reading. There were differences in how that was observed in each class.

While Elizabeth spent time on dictation and composition skills daily, Daniel gave a preliminary sight-reading exercise at the beginning of class, in three to four-part harmony. Meanwhile, Chuck and Andrea tended to break down the music learning further, ensuring the use of both rhythmic and melodic sight-reading review at the beginning of class. Andrea broke it down even more extensively, ensuring that the elements that would be found in the musical rehearsal of the day, were included in the sight-reading exercises at the beginning of class. All of the teachers had students sing in

scales. Elizabeth ensured that her students could not only sing the major scale, but also, all the forms of the minor, as well as the chromatic, and modes—different scalar patterns used in a variety of different musical styles. While many of the teachers encouraged hand signs, Elizabeth enforced it, and used it as an informal method of assessment, thus making certain all students were participating. Chuck, Daniel, and Ricky included components of vocal technique or production within their curriculum. They also employed the use of sectionals or mentors as a means of having student leadership and engagement throughout the learning process. These elements were not only discussed but observed. Andrea also had officers, but their jobs were not as clearly defined in the classroom observations. As previously noted, all the teachers chose the bulk of the repertoire in the classroom, if not all of it. Although there were a variety of approaches, one of the major commonalities was that learning music was a process.

As evidenced in their interviews and observations, for these teachers, the performance is not the thing, it is a thing. The thing is the process, all the steps that lead up to the performance; these include sight reading, theory, discussions, and text analysis. For these teachers, music is a process rather than a product (Bower, 2004). Although not all the elements were observed, all were discussed. The question was, how do these teachers balance the performance requirements and elements of choral music literacy. The skills and goals these teachers had for their students, took precedence over the performance requirements. Performance and the skills were both necessary, but ultimately, the performance was not greater than the learning process. In this way, all of these teachers had a constructivist method of teaching, which emphasized process over product and created a rehearsal environment where "students apply knowledge to real-life

problems and solve those problems with analytical and evaluative thinking and action"
(Bower, 2004, p. 4).

Critical Literacy in the Choral Classroom

Schmidt's (2005) argument against teacher centered music selection and interpretation stated that students need to connect emotionally, intellectually, and critically to the music they are learning and/or performing and recognize the purpose it may have in his/her life, or the life of his/her audience. While all the teachers in the study generally chose the music, their students were learning and performing, they reported working to assist students so they may connect to the music emotionally and intellectually. However, observations of discussions and lessons that included the teachers working toward the goal of students connecting to the music were missed. Nevertheless, everything else the participants had mentioned in the interviews was observed. Therefore, I must give them the benefit of the doubt, at the very least it was an intention. Verification would require further research. I believe, that missing component is more related to the time period where I could not visit the classrooms. In one interview, Elizabeth told a story about how students had learned a challenging piece, the title is, "Prayer of the Children," by Kurt Bester. The text of the first verse and chorus reads:

> Can you hear the prayer of the children?
>
> On bended knee, in the shadow of an unknown room
>
> Empty eyes with no more tears to cry
>
> Turning Heavenward, toward the light
>
> Crying Jesus, help me
>
> To see the morning light-of one more day

But if I should die before I wake,

I pray my soul to take

Post February 14, 2018, her students gathered in her room and sang this piece for one another, not for performance, but as a form of healing, after the tragedy of the Stoneman Douglass High School shootings. This was a literal connection of the music they had learned to an experience that these students and the teacher had through witnessing the news.

While I agree with Schmidt (2005) that there are ingrained systems in our educational culture, I also believe we do not need to throw out the "baby with the bathwater." Why must music be changed, and transformed? Why can't it be redefined, and understood to be used for a multitude of purposes, including those in the past, those in the present, and those in the future? Limiting ourselves to the new is still a form of limitation. We cannot grow if we do not know where we came from. There must be a way to balance all the components of our past and history, with the future we are trying to build in the classrooms. My observations and discussions with these teachers lead me to believe that they walk that line carefully and thoughtfully.

In today's complex realm of education, scripted curriculums and pacing guides are established to help ensure that teachers are adequately preparing students for state and national exams. There are scripted curriculums that exist for music teachers as well. At the secondary level, in the area where the research took place, teachers were allowed to develop their curriculum as they see fit. With this particular set of teachers, there were overarching goals that were similar, but they were not dictated by any supervisor. Scripted curriculum was defined by Benedict (2012) as teacher proof curriculum.

According to Benedict (2012), an unconditional reliance on scripts train students and teachers to produce particular kinds of learners, disinterested and uncreative. The teachers interviewed, did not outright say they used differentiated instruction, and some of them even struggled to define it. Despite this fact, they stated that they taught the students in front of them and they adjusted the curriculum based on the needs they felt the students had. They believed that students' learning successes were based on individual starting points. They stated that students who work hard, may need more support, but it was their job to provide that support. As Chuck describes a student,

> I know she's trying and she's giving it a go. She's not shying away and trying to
>
> shut up, she's actually trying. Like, you can't get mad at your kids when they're
>
> trying. You know, so I'm saying to myself okay, so I got to provide her the tools
>
> in order for her to be successful.

These teachers were trusted to teach as they see fit, and their results are evident. Perhaps teachers in other subject areas deserve that same kind of trust, to be treated as professionals. Teachers feel so unempowered, the classroom is the one place where I think they should feel like kings/queens of their dominions. But they should be like Camelot, with the students being the knights of the round table.

Of note, there were two components of this research which I had not accounted for in advance, nor had I thought about until I was firmly entrenched in the task. First, these teachers do so much that is not discussed in the research literature or in preparatory classes for teaching. These teachers participated and did all the things that are required

and expected such as: (a) teaching the musical concepts necessary to make sense, or have understanding, of the music on the page, (b) teaching the students to connect these musical elements to the words on the page, (c) teaching the students to find an emotional connection to the words on the page, (d) having performances to make the subject matter they teach real to their students. In addition to those things, they also had to fundraise, in order to purchase the long list of things they want and need for their programs. Every teacher took time out of teaching, during at least one observation to discuss fundraising activities. They needed to promote themselves and their program by participating in school events and activities to show that they are a worthy and integral part of the school life. Additionally, they must wear all the other hats that all teachers must wear: nurse, psychologist, parent, friend, and educator.

This is literally the impossible task. Higgins (2012) called music teaching the impossible profession, "the music teacher finds him/herself trying to craft her story in two genres at the same time, like someone trying to combine the mission statement and the warning label" (p. 225). In watching these teachers, I was overwhelmed by the extra hats that they had to wear. While I wear them myself, it is a component of teaching I forget. It is like putting on pants in the morning. You do it without thinking about the how. It was in watching these teachers do it as well, that I was reminded of these added components.

The second component I had not accounted for was the idea of the music teacher as an island. At the conclusion of every interview, I asked the teachers if they had any questions for me, and if there was anything else they would like to share with me. Often times, the teachers thanked me for making them think about these components of their

daily life. The teachers wanted to have conversations with me after observations, often times asking me for feedback on their teaching, or their student attention. When I looked at the research, I discovered that teacher isolation is an issue in the literature. Sandberg and Lipscomb (2005) stated that the "isolated conditions in which teachers practice prohibits professional growth by making it difficult for teachers to exchange ideas and places teachers in a position in which their primary mode of learning successful teaching techniques is through trial and error" (p. 46). Andrea had made mention of a mentor who helped her through her first years of teaching, so that it was not trial and error. Music teachers specifically are often the only individual in their building who does that job. Unlike English or math teachers who all have colleagues on campus, the music department, if there is one, will include a variety of different specific ensembles. On my campus, there is a band and orchestra teacher, a piano teacher, a guitar teacher, and a choral teacher. As Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) stated, "teachers work in a culture of isolation, and opportunities to engage in meaningful professional dialogue are rare in the schools" (p. 47). While we all know and teach music, there are nuances that are specific to each area. Organizations like American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and state and local organizations can help offer teachers professional developments particular to their field but can also offer spaces for camaraderie and brainstorming. The concern is how do we find and ensure we retain new teachers?

Teachers are the sole proprietors of their specific musical knowledge and skills. They hope to share this with their students. But because these teachers were alone in their worlds, they seemed to be eager to share glimpses of their classrooms, and their thoughts on what they were doing. The participant teachers claimed that they enjoyed being able to

reflect on their teaching and their ideas about teaching. But it felt as if they enjoyed having someone who knew what they were doing in the room. When music teachers are observed by administrators, these administrators often are just happy that the students look engaged, and do not tend to understand the dynamics of the work or ask relevant questions. As Sindberg (2011) stated, "some of the stressors they [music teachers] encounter include a lack of understanding of what they do on the part of their colleagues, lack of administrative support, and workload" (p. 18). The teachers in this study did not seem to feel a huge lack of administrative support, except for Elizabeth. Much like Kratus (2007) recommended, all the teachers wanted to learn from their strengths and weaknesses and sought out feedback. Kratus's (2007) article recommended learning from strengths and weaknesses as a means to remain relevant and continue to share our musical heritage as well as be a part of the current and future waves of music education; "The nature of music education should reflect the cultural and social milieu in which it exists" (p. 46). Our interviews never felt rushed, participants always seemed at ease and comfortable explaining exactly what they did in their classroom. Furthermore, it was exciting, and I was reassured when I was able to observe them doing exactly what they had described in their interviews.

Recommendations for Future Research

More Observations and/or Longer Time Period

Previously I stated that the goal of choral music educators was to have the students not only interact with the music and the text, but also to impart an aesthetic experience to their listeners or audience members. The more the students or musicians can recognize and understand of the work, the more emotionally invested they are, the

more they interact with all of the parts, the greater the potential for an aesthetic experience for themselves and the audience. Throughout the interviews, all the participants stated and emphasized the importance of having the students connect with the text of the music and/or understand what the text is saying. I observed most of the preparations, the learning of notes and rhythms, teaching and building of vocal skills. I had the opportunity to watch a mini performance in one school. However, I missed the month where the discussions about the text, where the emphasis on connecting would have been made. Looking back on the design of the study, I recommend more time allotted for each participant observation and build in more flexibility to accommodate for unprecedented life events. Additionally, perhaps the specific time period half way between concert season and the beginning of the year may be a better focus.

Music Teacher as an Island

I also believe that the idea of the music teacher as an island needs to be explored. As I looked into this phenomenon, I found some research. This is a question for another study, because it is important to note that teachers in the present study enjoyed the process of being listened to and observed. I kept wondering, why? I was thankful, but it struck me. Was it validation, was it being seen, or was it perhaps just being given the space to reflect on their practices with what they imagined was a sounding board? In the process of thinking about what these teachers did, were they inadvertently "empowered to explore what fully works and respond to the information that is gathered through the process of teaching, self-reflections, and inquiry" (Goering & Burenheide, 2010, p. 45). These are questions that should be explored in future studies. Furthermore, perhaps we need to research ways to remedy this situation.

Teacher Survey – Choral Music Literacy

Scholarly research indicated that critical literacy was not commonly practiced, especially in traditional ensemble classes (Schmidt, 2005). Scholarly research also showed that choral music rehearsals were focused on performance outcomes much more so, and thus did not incorporate music literacy skills into the rehearsal (Demorest, 2001, Freer, 2009, Ganschow, 2014, Garret, 2013). Although most teachers may in fact be concerned with the performance outcome, how many of them use sight reading skills as a means to learn the music? How many of them spend time discussing, analyzing, and interacting with the text once the musical notation has been learned? How many of these teachers are seeking to create better humans through their teaching?

The specific participant criteria yielded a unique result, these exemplary teachers may or may not be the norm. However, if someone wanted to find if these results were more generalizable, one recommendation would be a larger sample, with a survey of what teachers are doing in their classrooms, using some of the interview questions used in this study.

Student Interviews or Survey

During each of my observations, I purposefully changed the location of my seat to get different perspectives on the classroom setting. One day I sat where I could watch the students' faces. As I watched I thought, "I wonder what the kids are thinking of while they're going through all the warm-ups?" Of course, this question was not part of the present research study, because it was about the teachers. But teachers are not teachers without students. Therefore, another aspect of a future study should be interviewing and asking the students to describe their performances, rehearsals, etc. A series of questions

could be designed to see how the students interact with their music and the text, and how they interpret the process of learning music. Another study could also include integrating the students' as well as the teachers' understandings of choral music literacy.

Limitations

There were several limitations for this study. First, the possible sample within the area was limited. While the teachers had all chosen pseudonyms and their descriptions had been purposefully vague, the choral community in the district is small, and I feared they would be recognizable. Due to the small number of choral music educators within the area where the research took place, not to mention the state, maintaining confidentiality was a limitation. To assist with this, the choral music educators were asked to choose their pseudonyms within the text. While a description of their school demographics, and specific systems within the schools were included, the names and locations of their schools were not shared. Additionally, as previously stated, specifics about each participant's racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds were not shared.

Another limitation for this research was the time requirements and constraints. Each teacher had a different schedule, the high school educators were all on block scheduling, while the middle school educators were on 7 period schedules. Additionally, time after school for interviews became a challenge given personal responsibilities that both the researcher and the participants had.

The intended benefits for the participants were the possibility of a professional development activity of their choosing. The participants however, felt that the ability to think about what they do, the opportunity to ask for and receive feedback following their observations, and their opportunities to discuss ideas not often discussed was beneficial

to them. Every participant thanked me for the ability to participate and the time to think about their work. The documents were kept secure on an external hard drive, which was locked in my home office.

A large portion of the research was based on interviews of these five music educators. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) stated that qualitative research interviews attempt "to understand the world from the subjects' point of view" (p 3). As one can never completely understand another person, extra effort was made to ensure that the subjects' point of view was clear.   As a means of remedying this, there was member checking, whereby the subjects were asked to read over their responses and provide further feedback as well as adjustments if necessary. Daniel did have some feedback on details that had been missed. Chuck and Elizabeth commented that they believed they had never thought of all they did and how successful they seemed when reading it. In other words, the process of being interviewed and observed, and reading their results helped them reach conscientization. Another way of ensuring that the subject's point of view was clear, were the multiple opportunities for clarification made available both in person and via email. All the participants reported that the narratives were good representations of themselves, and that their quotes were explained appropriately.

Conclusion

The teachers in this study did not speak of critical literacy or transactional theory throughout interviews. These theories were also not obvious in their teaching. What was evident was the groundwork for these theories being laid down. These teachers made it apparent that they were trying to help their students to become better humans through the important work of choral music education. The individual participants of this study were

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a unique grouping. Despite obvious differences in methodology and curriculum design, their similar philosophies of teaching created a similar path to learning choral music, and considerably similar end goals. Throughout the interviews, they made statements and created lessons that firmly established them as constructivist practitioners and alluded to tenets of critical literacy practitioners. They did not, however, name these things as parts of their philosophies of teaching when asked. Perhaps now they have these terms at their disposal. Although these teachers do not currently have major issues with their administrators, the tides can change quickly. If teachers can speak to the important work they do, they can better advocate for themselves, and their students.

It is significant to me that these exemplary teachers could not name the theories they appeared to be using as part of their teaching philosophies. In a world where the arts are constantly under attack, arts teachers need to be able to defend and explain their own validity to the administrators who have the final say. What these teachers are doing is invaluable. Although the music portion of what they do may not be understandable to an administrator, constructivism, critical literacy, transactional theory, should be, and could be a means of validating the subject matter's importance in the lives of the students.

Throughout this text, "choral music literacy" was used to mean the ability to independently analyze and sing musical information on the page, evaluate and make choices about how to communicate the information for audiences, and asses the outcome of those choices. Based on the interviews, observations, and lesson plans provided by the participants, this seems to be a goal they each have in their classrooms: teaching choral music literacy. The participants never stated this and struggled with defining choral music literacy; but it seemed evident that they were doing these things. I had anticipated

that defining choral music literacy may be difficult for the teachers, as it has been operationalized by this researcher. However, even music literacy, which is a term in the literature, was difficult to define by the participants. Again, this is something they were teaching. If an administrator asked, could these teachers speak in a way to defend and truly help others understand what they did? In having the words, the teacher voice in practice becomes more powerful.

The defining factor of good teachers is their ability to connect to their students, to their material, and to their community. In the classroom interactions I observed with these teachers included a variety of different methods to connect to their students, to accept their students, and to connect their students to the material at hand, choral music literacy. These teachers tried to ensure the students connected to their school community and a larger community. These teachers were using choral music, to teach their students how to communicate and to be better citizens. They were appealing to their students on an aesthetic and efferent level, and they were empowering their students to continue to make music beyond themselves.

The goal of this study was to give the teachers a voice, to understand what these teachers are doing in their classrooms. The voices of these exemplary teachers is important as it is underrepresented in the scholarly literature. At the time of writing this, a new school year begun. I am in my classroom as usual, but I have adopted many of the teaching techniques I observed. Like Andrea and Chuck, my students are now expected to leave their bookbags in designated spaces. My students are using hand signs daily. My classes always began with vocal warm-ups and sight reading, but Elizabeth's melodic dictation component has been added to the routine. Like Daniel, student leaders are

beginning my advanced classes while I take attendance. Although I have borrowed and implemented many of these techniques, I know that I have altered them slightly, so that they work for me and my population. This research can help other choral teachers to see some examples of best practices. But ultimately, it gives these teachers a voice, and it is important because, these are the people who do the hard work of educating students daily.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol #1: Introductions/ Pre- Observation

1) What's your name? (Please come up with a pseudonym)

2) What can you tell me upfront about your program?

    a. Demographics (School's/Classroom)

    b. Administration

    c. Schedule/courses taught

3) Describe your background in terms of musical experiences, main (primary) instrument, and any other details that you think play a role in your work as a choral music educator.

    a. How long have you been teaching?

    b. How long at this particular location?

4) Describe how you became a music teacher and what led you to this job you currently hold.

5) Describe your "job" in all of its detail. What are your primary and secondary responsibilities?

6) Is there a teacher or mentor who has made an impression on you? What kind of impression was it? How did it influence or affect you?

7) Describe a "first day" in your class. What are the procedures you establish and why?

8) What is your "curriculum" in your classroom?

9) Has this curriculum changed over time?

10) How do you think about this curriculum?

11) What guides your teaching (i.e. a philosophy of teaching)? How did you arrive at this?

12) How does learning occur?

13) How do you facilitate the learning process?

14) How do you evaluate your students?

15) As we look towards the upcoming observations, is there anything in particular you want me to look for in your observations?

16) Can I have copies of any of your past or upcoming lesson plans?

17) Is there anything else you would like to add to anything we've discussed today? If so, what would you like to add?

18) Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I haven't asked you about? If so, what would you like to share?

19) Should I have any further questions about this conversation, can I email you follow up questions?

Interview Protocol #2: Post 2 Observations

1) Have you been able to look over our previous interview transcripts? Is there anything you would like to clarify or add?

2) How many performances do you schedule for your class in a year? What role does performance play in your curriculum?

3) How do (describe an observed moment in the classroom) align with your curriculum goals?

4) Going back to your curriculum, how do you begin to teach a new song to the group previously observed?

5) Is there a variation depending on the groups, and if so describe it.

6) How would you describe the repertoire most often chosen for your classroom? How are these pieces or works chosen?

7) How often do you allow your students to participate in the selection of repertoire?

   a. What does that look like?

   b. If so, how is it similar/different from choices you would have made?

8) What does the term music literacy mean to you?

   a. Is this an important component of your curriculum?

   b. How do you teach this?

9) What does the term choral music literacy mean to you?

   a. Is this an important component of your curriculum? How?

10) How do you get your students to connect with the music you are working on?

   a. Do you believe this to be an important element in teaching?

   b. Why or why not?

11) How do you involve your students in the music making process?

    a. Describe what it means to make music?

12) What stories or messages if any, are you teaching through the repertoire chosen?

13) What do you think about the following statement- "The quality of the performance is a direct result of what has transpired in the rehearsal."

14) When your students leave your program, what do you think they would have gained in their time with you?

15) As we look towards the upcoming observations, is there anything else you would like me to look for in your observations?

16) Is there anything else you would like to add to anything we've discussed today? If so, what would you like to add?

17) Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I haven't asked you about? If so, what would you like to share?

Interview Protocol #3: Post Observations/ Closing Statements

1) Have you been able to look over our previous interview transcripts? Is there anything you would like to clarify or add?

2) What is your ideal classroom climate? (These are the elements that I have observed) Why/ how do you establish this classroom culture/climate?

3) Think back to your experiences as a student, student teacher, and time as a teacher. How have these experiences affected or shaped the choices you make in your classes daily?

4) Who do you think you are as a teacher?

5) What qualities do you think you bring to your choral students?

6) How often do you allow your students to be a part of the decision-making process in the interpretation of the music you work on?

7) What is your biggest strength and how does it translate into your teaching?

8) What is your biggest weakness; does it affect your teaching? How do you work to overcome it?

9) Looking back on the observations and or lesson plans, is there anything you think I may have missed?

10) Is there anything else you would like to add to anything we've discussed today or in the past? If so, what would you like to add?

11) Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I haven't asked you about? If so, what would you like to share?

12) Are there any questions or comments you would like to share or ask me about this process?

13) Moving forward, is there anything I can do to help you?

Table for Alignment of Data Sources

Research Question	Instrument	Data Source
What are the choral music educators' perceptions of and understandings of choral music literacy?	*Interview Protocol 1*	**Questions** 1. Describe your "job" in all of its detail. What are your primary and secondary responsibilities? 2. Is there a teacher or mentor who has made an impression on you? What kind of impression was it? How did it influence or affect you?

	Interview Protocol 2	1. What does the term music literacy mean to you?
		    a. Is this an important component of your curriculum?
		    b. How do you teach this?
		2. What does the term choral music literacy mean to you?
		    a. Is this an important component of your curriculum? How?
		3. How do you get your students to connect with the music you are working on?
		    a. Do you believe this to be an important element in teaching?
		    b. Why or why not?
		4. How do you involve your students in the music making process?
		    a. Describe what it means to make music?

	Interview Protocol 3	1. Who do you think you are as a teacher? 2. What qualities do you think you bring to your choral students?

How do these choral music educators design and implement their curriculum?	*Observation 1- 4*	See Observation Protocol
	Document Analysis: *Lesson Plans*	See Document Analysis Protocol
	Interview Protocol 1	**Questions** 1. What is your "curriculum" in your classroom? 2. Has this curriculum changed over time? 3. How do you think about this curriculum? 4. What guides your teaching? (i.e. a philosophy of teaching) How did you arrive at this? 5. How does learning occur? 6. How do you facilitate the learning process? 7. How do you evaluate your students?
	Interview Protocol 2	1. Going back to your curriculum, how do you begin to teach a new song to the group previously observed? 2. Is there a variation depending on the groups, and if so describe it 3. How do you get your students to connect with the music you are working on? a. Do you believe this to be an important element in teaching?

		b. Why or why not?
		4. How do you involve your students in the music making process? a. Describe what it means to make music? 5. What stories or messages if any, are you teaching through the repertoire chosen?
	Interview Protocol 3	1. What is your ideal classroom climate? (These are the elements that I have observed) Why/ how do you establish this classroom culture/climate? 2. Think back to your experiences as a student, student teacher, and time as a teacher. How have these experiences affected or shaped the choices you make in your classes daily? 3. How often do you allow your students to be a part of the decision making process in the interpretation of the music you work on?

How do choral music educators balance performance requirements and the elements of choral music literacy, which are invaluable in the creation of independent music making?	*Interview Protocol 1*	**Questions**
		1. Describe your background in terms of musical experiences, main (primary) instrument, and any other details that you think play a role in your work as a choral music educator.
		    a. How long have you been teaching?
		    b. How long at this particular location?
		2. Describe your "job" in all of its detail. What are your

		primary and secondary responsibilities?

	Interview Protocol 2	1. How many performances do you schedule for your class in a year? What role does performance play in your curriculum?
		2. How would you describe the repertoire most often chosen for your classroom? How are these pieces or works chosen?
		3. How often do you allow your students to participate in the selection of repertoire?
		   a. What does that look like?
		   b. If so, how is it similar/different from choices you would have made?
		4. What do you think about the following statement- "The quality of the performance is a direct result of what has transpired in the rehearsal."

	Interview Protocol 3	1. What is your biggest strength and how does it translate into your teaching? 2. What is your biggest weakness; does it affect your teaching? How do you work to overcome it?

Table 2
Participant Data

Teacher (Pseudonym)	Total yrs. teaching/ Yrs. at current school	School enrollment	Classes taught	School racial/ethnic demographics	Free/reduced priced lunch eligibility
Andrea Martinez	8/3	2985	Beginning keyboard (unauditioned), beginning choir (unauditioned), women's choir (auditioned middle group), advanced choir (auditioned), beginning guitar (unauditioned), advanced guitar	94% Hispanic 4% Black non-Hispanic 2% White non-Hispanic	83%
Chuck Harris	10/4	2100	Elective choir, Magnet Women's, Magnet Mixed, Select Vocal Ensemble	58% Hispanic 19% Black non-Hispanic 18% White non-Hispanic 5% Other	41.6%
Daniel Braunstein	13/5	880	Music theory, vocal techniques, vocal ensemble, treble choir, mixed choir (all groups are auditioned)	76% Hispanic 14% White non-Hispanic 9% Black non-Hispanic 1% Asian	58%
Elizabeth Owen	38/15	1320	6th grade general choir (all students are auditioned), 7th and 8th grade general choir	41.8% Hispanic 32.4% White non- Hispanic 22.7% Black non-Hispanic 2.9% Asian/Pacific Islander 0.2% American Indian	Data unavailable
Ricky Miller	18/4	3400	Intermediate Women's (9th-12th grade), Intermediate Men's (9th-12th), Select Mixed Choir, Select Women's Choir, Music theory honors, elective choir (unauditioned)	68% Hispanic 17% White non-Hispanic 9% Black non-Hispanic 6% Other	51%

Source: Public School Data and *US News and World Report,* "2019 Best High schools

Musical Terms

1) Actualization- or realizing a sound, when a sound is made versus audiation.

2) Audiation- the ability to hear the pitches inside the mind, using the inner ear.

3) Blend- relationship of one voice to those around it

4) Choir- group of voices singing as one

5) Choral Music Literacy- the ability to independently analyze and realize musical information on the page, evaluate and make choices about how to communicate the information for audiences, and asses the outcome of those choices

6) Composition- an original work or piece of music, written in musical notation

7) Comprehensive music

8) Divisi- one voice part such as alto or soprano, that is further divided within the piece into two groups

9) Duration- length of time a pitch or tone is sounded.

10) Dynamics- degrees of loud and soft

11) Hand Signs-

12) Harmony- generally made up of consonant and dissonant intervals and chords which have specific functions within the music.

13) Intervals- the distance between any two notes, whether the notes are being sounded simultaneously or in sequence.

14) Literacy- ability and volition to read and understand symbols, sounds, and gestures within a community and interact with them.

15) Melodic Dictation- involves the ability to hear a piece of music and quickly play it back or write down the notes of the melody.

16) MPA- Music Performance Assessment- an annual event held within the area; teachers bring their students to perform two pieces. A panel of three judges listen to the choirs with a rubric and score the choir as well as give feedback on ways in which they could improve.

17) Musical Notation- the symbols on the page which denote units of time/measure, speed, volume, and pitch

18) Musicianship skills- skills understood as necessary for creating and performing music, these include but are not limited to sight-reading, theory, harmony, audiation, and performance.

19) Part checks- small group vocal testing where students sing their individual parts while others sing their respective parts simultaneously

20) Pitch- how high or low a note is be played

21) Repertoire- body of choral and solo music that is regularly performed

22) Rhythm-a strong, regular repeated pattern of sound represented by symbols demonstrating duration (length of time).

23) Sectionals- students working in smaller groups based on voice parts such as Soprano or Alto.

24) Sight-Reading- the ability to read music and perform it upon first sight

25) Solfege- system of syllables used to represent the notes of a scale, often used to teach sight-reading

26) Theory- rudiments of music including rhythmic and melodic notation and time and key signatures.

27) Tone- refers to the timbre or color created by the individual and ensemble when singing, and there are tones that are considered appropriate for different genres of singing.

28) Vocal Pedagogy- study and science of vocal instruction as applied to singing technique.

29) Vocal Techniques- the different techniques that can ensure proper and healthy vocal production.

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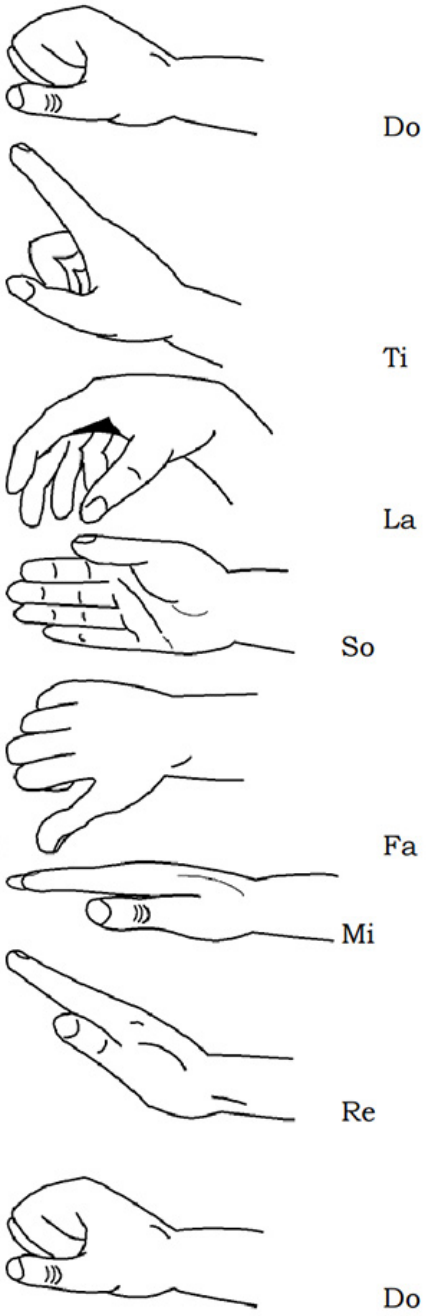
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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Firestone, E., Marchese, A., Romero-Sardiñas, A. First (2018). *Alternative Performance Opportunities: How to Get Started*. Presentation at the Annual Conference of the Florida Music Educator's Association.

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