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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, ADULT REFLECTIONS ON A HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL MUSIC PROGRAM: PERCEPTIONS OF MEANING AND LIFELONG INFLUENCE, by MELISSA TYSON ARASI, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the college of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

ADULT REFLECTIONS ON A HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL
MUSIC PROGRAM: PERCEPTIONS OF MEANING AND LIFELONG INFLUENCE
by
Melissa T. Arasi

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lifelong meaning and influence of participation in a high school choral music program. This study described and analyzed the reflections of adults who participated in one high school choral program selected by the researcher as meeting high standards of practice in choral music. The eight participants, who were involved in the choral program for at least three years and pursued careers in fields other than music, were selected via criterion sampling and interviewed regarding their experiences in chorus and how those experiences may have influenced their lives.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of investigation in this case study. The first interview began with a broad-scope, grand-tour question. Prior to the second interview, former-student participants reviewed transcriptions of the first interview. The second interview consisted of specific questioning around the possible lifelong influence of their choral experience. During the second interview, each former-student participant was asked to complete an evaluation survey of effective teaching strategies/dimensions based on their memories of their choral director. The data collection process took place over a period of approximately five months. The school's choral director was observed to verify teaching strategies consistent with criteria

established by the researcher and to provide contextual data for triangulation of former-student participant data. Interview data, field notes, and archival information were coded for analysis by relevant themes and narratives were crafted.

Findings suggested that the lifelong influence of this high school choral program was related to multiple social aspects, including a sense of pride and achievement, as well as to the learned ability to critique and evaluate. Participants valued the high expectations of the choral director and the exposure to many genres of music. Data revealed that some self-perceived outcomes of the program, such as critical thinking and self-confidence, were influential in the development of lifelong learning skills. Findings implied that traditional performing ensembles in secondary schools may not provide the greatest opportunity for engaging school musical experiences that encourage lifelong involvement in music. Additionally, the findings revealed that extra-musical benefits of the program outweighed the musical influence in adulthood.

ADULT REFLECTIONS ON A HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL MUSIC PROGRAM: PERCEPTIONS OF MEANING AND LIFELONG INFLUENCE

by
Melissa T. Arasi

A Dissertation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first objective of an act of learning is that it should serve us in the future.

Jerome Bruner, *The process of education*, 1960, p. 17.

My interest in the influence of school music on adult life stems from my reflections on my own high school choral teaching experience. I taught high school chorus for 14 years in a large suburban school district before moving to a music supervisory role in the same district. Thinking about a broader view of education beyond my own classroom and frequently seeing former students piqued my interest in two aspects of this topic: a) what students actually learn in a high school choral class, and b) whether and how musical and extra-musical knowledge and skills carry over and influence adult life.

During the years that I taught, I struggled with balancing the demands of creating high quality performances with the more general music education that I believed my students deserved. I felt that I had a responsibility to teach students as much about music in general as I did specifically about choral music. I believed that, for many of my students, this might be their last formal opportunity to study historical and structural aspects of music and different genres of music. With a teaching approach that embraced all aspects of music, word spread through the school that chorus was open to students such as rock guitarists and others who enjoyed popular music or desired careers in popular music. All students, experienced and non-experienced, were welcome in my classes. It was my desire that they become musically literate and leave high school with a lifelong love of music.

In an effort to accomplish this goal, I created listening tapes of multiple styles and genres of music that I knew the students probably had never experienced. One day a week we listened to a selection and discussed it. Sometimes we did this with the music we were singing and other times we compared and contrasted classical with popular music. I developed a scope and sequence for delivering music history throughout the four years a student was in my classes.

My choral classes also emphasized music reading. In the first few years of teaching, I taught the students to sight-read but quickly realized that they were not grasping the concept. I then altered my approach to teach theory in conjunction with sight-reading, which proved successful. This work included creating melodic and rhythmic lines, taking dictation, and improvising instrumental and vocal parts in multicultural and popular music.

Additionally, I believed it was important that my students learn life skills through my classes. Responsibility, cooperation, high standards, tolerance, broadmindedness, and self-confidence were all qualities that I believed were valuable and that could be developed in the context of choral music education. I tried to model these behaviors and to take responsibility for my own shortcomings while respecting each student for his or her individual contributions.

Over time, my program was recognized as highly successful in terms of the standard performance criteria associated with the music education profession. All levels of my choirs received superior ratings at performance evaluations; they were selected to sing at conferences, and they performed abroad. Administrators and parents were enthusiastically supportive, and being in chorus was a popular elective at the school. I knew that my choirs performed excellent choral literature at a very high level; however, though my choral program excelled and I diligently tried to incorporate multiple standards into my curriculum, I never felt completely successful in offering a complete music education to my students.

After taking a supervisory position, I often saw or heard from my former students. When I spoke with them, I was struck by their excitement and profound remembrances of their experiences in high school. The passion with which they discussed their memories led me to believe there was an important story to be told about the influence of choral music on peoples' lives.

My intrigue with this idea was significantly heightened one day by a chance encounter with a sales clerk in a local department store. While chatting over our transaction, the clerk mentioned that he had been in his high school choral program, with which I was familiar. When I asked if he had been a student of Mr. Johnson, he enthusiastically replied, "Yes!" Then, without prompting, he went on to explain that choir had been an important influence in his life and that he was still involved in non-professional music making. He shared that his choral director had "saved his life" because of family problems he had experienced as a young man. The sales clerk was obviously moved as he related the story of his choral director and the musical and emotional support that had been offered.

Whether meeting a former student or having a chance encounter with an adult who described being in choir, my interest in the lifelong influence of high school choral music intensified. As this interest grew, my focus moved increasingly toward the question of influence among students who did not pursue music professionally. Given the small percentage of students likely to choose music as a profession, I wanted to know how choral educators in high schools were potentially influencing the students they served. In contrast to instrumental performance classes, choral performance classes tend to offer opportunities to a wider range of participants who may have had no prior musical background. And, according to Tobias and Leader (1999) and Chorus America (2003), choral singing is overwhelmingly the music activity most adults pursue. As there are few professional choruses in the United States, this led me to believe that some percentage of adult choral participants may also have participated in their high school choirs. Students

who did not choose a professional music career may have found value in participating in music programs while in high school. These observations further strengthened my interest in the possible carryover and influence of knowledge and skills from high school choral music into adult life.

As I considered my own program and its implications for students beyond the classroom, I became increasingly concerned with adults' perceptions of their learning and how both musical and extra-musical learning may carry over and influence adulthood. I wondered whether my efforts as a high school choral educator had made any lasting difference in the lives of my students. Kidder (1989) solidified my interest with his reflection on teaching:

> Teachers usually have no way of knowing that they have made a difference in a child's life, even when they have made a dramatic one.... Good teachers put snags in the river of children passing by, and over the years, they redirect hundreds of lives.... There is also an innocence that conspires to hold humanity together, and it is made of people who can never fully know the good that they have done. (p. 313)

If the purpose of education is based on the idea that an act of learning should serve us in the future, in what ways might music students continue to draw on skills, knowledge, and attitudes learned in school to enhance their adult lives?

Statement of the Issue

Holmquist (1995) notes that music education purports to provide students an outlet for learning experiences after their formal education and to encourage the use of prior learning for lifelong enrichment; however, there appears to be an inherent contradiction between what the profession frequently purports and what practice suggests about the role of school music in providing a foundation for lifelong participation.

Rather than encouraging broad participation throughout the years of schooling, music education serves the entire population only at the elementary level and moves toward more selective participation in the large-group performing ensembles through

middle and high school. Some programs provide multiple entry points across grade levels, but the general message is that students who failed to elect participation in ensemble performance at an early grade level will have difficulty being successful in future music classes. Ultimately, music education in secondary schools is structured more as an exclusive than an inclusive practice, which limits to an even greater degree the opportunity to establish widespread benefits of participation in performance programs (Bartel, 2004). Additionally, many performance classes focus on the performance of particular pieces of literature and fail to give students an understanding of music that will encourage lifelong participation and independence in music study (Hoffer, 1990; Leonhard, 1981). This perspective, reinforced by more contemporary writers such as Bartel (2004), expresses how performance classes have perpetuated a rehearsal model of instruction. Zenker (2004) further addresses this topic by suggesting that our traditional paradigm of music studies and cuts in the availability of music programs limits the opportunities for students to have a lifetime pursuit of music.

Lifelong benefits of school music are a frequent theme in both the practical and scholarly literature in music education. A concern about this claim was made early in the 20th century by Peter Dykema, a leading music educator, who stated

> Most of us seem to be content to do our work with a supreme indifference as to the effects it will produce upon children.... It is time that we started to study what music is doing to affect life and that we state the results of our study in a definite, convincing form. (1927, p. 352)

Subsequently, Dykema wrote in 1934 that

> One valuable measure of the success of all teaching will be the voluntary continuing of it by the student. This would suggest in other words, that a teacher is successful from this point of view, whose pupils keep on singing or playing years after the lessons have been discontinued. (p. 35)

Though music educators consistently have researched and measured lifelong benefits in terms of a continuity of practice among adult amateur musicians (Holmquist, 1995; Ordway, 1964; Peterman, 1954; Stein, 1948; Tipps, 1992; Vincent, 1997), a related

but little researched topic has been the assumed benefits of school music based on cognitive, social, and psychological outcomes. These outcomes are also purported within the continuous debate around the inclusion and integration of music into the school curriculum. Much of the argument centers on whether music serves extra-musical learning needs (extrinsic) or whether the main value lies in content-specific outcomes (intrinsic). Winner and Cooper (2000) in a meta-analysis of studies that assessed the effects of arts education determined that

> [While we cannot] conclude that arts education causes academic skills to improve, it is certainly possible that studying the arts leads to the development of cognitive skills that in turn lead to heightened achievement in academic areas. It is also possible that studying the arts leads to greater engagement in school, which in turn leads to greater academic achievement. (p. 32)

Discussions of the inclusion and integration of music in the curriculum are rarely related directly to lifelong implications of music learning. Jensen (2001) points out, however, that the long term advantages of the arts are more compelling than immediate benefits, such as raising test scores:

> Arts are for the long term; and one should be cautious in claims about how they affect test scores.... The arts develop neural systems that often take months and years to fine-tune. The benefits, when they appear, will be sprinkled across the spectrum, from fine motor skills to creativity and improved emotional balance. (p. 1)

Additional studies have recognized further long-term benefits of arts education. Abeles, Hafeli, Horowitz, and Burton (2002) argued that the value of arts learning is inherent in the habits of mind that students develop in the context of a rich arts-learning environment. They found that the arts affect different aspects of students' abilities, including expression of thoughts and ideas, strong imagination and creativity, and the ability to take risks in learning. These practical, logical, and intuitive modes of thought are valuable aspects of lifelong human growth and development.

Eisner (1992) argued that the fine arts are multifaceted and have subtle and

ambiguous problems with multiple solutions. As life consists of complex human dynamics and structural and political processes that require resolving situations and creating alternative solutions, Eisner believes the arts may suggest an opportunity to prepare students better for real life situations; however, Eisner (2002) also indicated that the primary justification of the arts resides in the development of thinking skills in the context of an art form and the expression and communication of forms of meaning.

From a lifelong perspective, the issue is not an either-or argument about music's intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, but rather about understanding the genuineness of relationships between music and more comprehensive influences. Adults who have participated in school music might characterize the influence of their music education in a wide variety of reflections that combine intrinsic and extrinsic values. These influences could include lasting involvement in music making, social relationships or confidence, listening skills, or simply becoming a more educated individual. Their reflections might also extend to the benefits identified by Eisner and Abeles, Hafeli, Horowitz, and Burton.

Rationale for the Study

The fundamental issue that I investigated in this study was the meaning and value of high school choral participation among adults who have not pursued careers in music. Although a broad survey would have provided useful data, I sought to gather the richest possible data from select participants of a choral program that was recognized as having high value among experts. This criterion was intended to assist me in analysis of whether a generally recognized program of value seemed to render the lifelong benefits consistently advocated by the profession. The personal stories of individuals rather than responses from large numbers of participants were used to shed light on the carryover and influence of musical and extra-musical knowledge and skills. These personal stories were intended to assist in exploring not only perceptions of intrinsic musical value but also the complex socio-cultural and social-psychological context that plays a role in a high school choral experience. The importance of this context has been offered by

McCarthy (2002), who has suggested that the social aspect of involvement in an ensemble provides for interactions that give meaning and value to students' participation.

Although justification of music in the school curriculum is not my focus, music educators continue to struggle with issues of public perceptions of value and relevance of the arts in schools. Studies have concluded that the public generally endorses a balanced education that includes the arts (MetLife 2002; Public Agenda 1994, 1997; Rose & Gallup, 2000), yet music programs are in constant jeopardy in an age of accountability for academic achievement. The gathering of specific data on the perceived benefits of music education in high school may support the case for continuing school music programs as an essential facet of education.

This study may also provide momentum for a re-examination of how performance classes are practiced in high schools. Within a performance-based context, what learning opportunities seem to foster lifelong perceptions of value or provide evident carryover into adult life? When expressing the value of their choral experience, do adults identify lifelong influences, or do they simply reflect on choral participation as a facet of their education? Are there values that relate to the purported values repeatedly argued by the music education profession, or did the influence of choral participation end upon graduation?

To provide further context for this study, the next section focuses on historical aspects of singing in public schools in the United States.

Singing in Public Schools – Historical Context

Singing has a long tradition in the United States and was central in the development of school music programs. In 1639, the first book printed in the English colonies was *The Bay Psalm Book*. This song book served to unite the congregations who were using books with many meters (Mark & Gary, 1999). Singing schools, aligned with the church, were formed in the early 1700s by musical pioneers such as John Tufts and William Billings to improve congregational singing. Singing schools provided the

sole means of musical instruction and were the center of the social and religious life in the community (Birge, 1928). By the early 1800s, singing societies, such as the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, had been organized; also other private music instruction had elevated the value of music education. As music entered the public schools, singing schools were in decline in a turn toward more European traditions.

Known as the "father" of music education in the public schools, Lowell Mason taught on an experimental basis at the Hawes School in Boston during 1837-1838 without pay. The results so astounded the school committee and community that on August 28, 1838, the Boston School Committee approved a motion to appoint teachers of vocal music in Boston's public schools. Lowell Mason based his instruction on the theories of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator who advocated vocal music in public education and developed basic tenets for teaching music. These tenets included: teaching sound before sign; encouraging listening and imitating sounds; and teaching one concept at a time (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1994). Using these principles, Lowell Mason later became the first supervisor of music in the United States (Mark & Gary, 1999). Lowell Mason believed that music benefited the well-being of the individual, creating better homes, better citizens, and happier human beings (Collins, 1999). Mason also believed that music was for everyone, not just the musically gifted; therefore, public schools were the perfect forum for the study of music.

During the late 1800s, the development of music education included the formation of the Music Teachers National Association, the creation of music curricula, the founding of the Potsdam Normal Musical Institute to train music teachers and supervisors, and the formation of school orchestras and bands. Although slowed by the Civil War, music education in the public schools continued to spread across the country. Many elementary schools developed graded music instruction, and the Ginn Company began creating materials for use in these classes (Keene, 1987). The need for teachers, including music teachers, led to the growth of teacher-training institutions called normal schools, which

were later called teachers' colleges.

During the early 1900s, John Dewey's influence on education encouraged further development of music in the schools, leading toward more secondary school opportunities. Between 1910 and 1940, over seven times the number of students remained in school through twelfth-grade, making the demand for all teachers, including music teachers, increase significantly. Many out-of-work musicians, due to the depression and the termination of silent movies, became music teachers. Some believe this movement turned the focus of school music more toward an emphasis on performance (Collins, 1999).

In the 1910s, oratorio performances with student orchestras were commonly presented by massed, mixed-voice high school choirs; and by the 1920s, there was tremendous growth of the a cappella choir tradition (Keene, 1987). High school choirs at this time typically consisted of mixed choirs and men's quartets, with solos in larger works being sung by student soloists. The choral art was also being advanced at colleges throughout the country. St. Olaf College in Minnesota, under the direction of F. Melius Christiansen, and Westminster Choir College of Princeton, under the direction of John Finley Williamson, were prominent in the advancement of choral singing and development of specific types of choral tone (Garretson, 1993; Hylton, 1995). These college choral traditions set a higher standard for performance that trickled down to high schools.

In 1928, at the Music Supervisors' National Conference, nine high school choirs performed in an effort to advance the understanding and quality of choral singing in schools. The attention placed on choral singing was due to the wide range of quality of literature and experiences that were being offered in schools. This growth and support of a cappella singing has been attributed to a concurrent national contest movement, the appearance of radio broadcasting, the desires of choral directors to compete with instrumental programs, and the rise of professional choirs. By the end of the 1930s, there

was a growing tendency toward expanding the choral program through a combination of accompanied singing incorporated with a cappella performance (Keene, 1987).

Music education during the 1940s and 1950s was challenged by an educational system with an ever-increasing focus on preparing children for specific occupations and the world of work. During the 1940s, choral music in high schools continued to flourish, and public recognition of choral music was high, in part due to the weekly radio broadcasts of Fred Waring and "the Pennsylvanians." Their semi-popular style and articulate diction expanded the appreciation of choral singing to a wider audience (Garretson, 1993). Continuing into the 1950s, the Robert Shaw Chorale and their choral techniques had a tremendous influence on choral music. Shaw brought American choral music to a higher level, encouraging the integrity of the musical score, a varied tone quality, and an emphasis on the performance of masterworks. The advancement of choral excellence also brought an expansion of graduate degrees in choral music. This growth led to the formation of the American Choral Directors Association in 1959, which created a community of choral directors across churches, schools, colleges and universities (Hylton, 1995). This community of choral directors contributed largely to a focus on the caliber of performance and the identity of the choral director as conductor over teacher.

While in the 1950s choral music was a basic fixture in most high schools in the United States, the efficacy of music education and its role in the school curriculum was questioned. In 1957, with the Soviet Unions' launch of the Sputnik I, the United States quickly responded with a movement to improve the educational system and to focus more on mathematics and science as not to fall behind other countries. Arguments for a balanced education followed, with events such as the Yale Seminar and the Tanglewood Symposium. During the 1960s and 1970s, economic issues and curricular changes in mathematics and science led to reform movements that often challenged music programs in the schools (Hylton, 1995). The rise of popular music in society affected choral

literature performed in schools. At the same time a philosophy of aesthetic education was moving the justification of music in schools toward articulation of its intrinsic and expressive qualities. With the quality of education considered in turmoil, the 1983 report "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform" (National Commission on Excellence in Education) listed numerous deficits in public education in the United States. This report did not identify the arts as basic curricular subjects, which has continued to place arts education on the defensive (Mark & Gary, 1999).

Comprising large ensembles, performances, and festival experiences, secondary school choral music programs today exist much as they did in the early twentieth century, Repertoire has expanded to include multicultural and 20th century music and teaching concentrates on vocal pedagogy and technique; however, the basic structure and philosophy of the choral program has not changed from a performance orientation. Efforts toward comprehensive musicianship have only minimally reached choral programs, and both choral and instrumental programs in secondary schools have continued with performance as the primary goal.

The question of school music's relevance to students is a sub-question of this study. Performance classes of traditional ensembles may only meet the needs of some students. In addition, the literature performed may also limit the relevance of a performing ensemble class to students. Britton (1961) pointed out that, ironically, the approach of the teachers of music throughout history has set the tone for the distance between the "music of the people" and school music:

> Music teachers found to be better music the blander and, to modern ears, more insipid music of English and third-rate Continental composers, and such music was gradually adopted, at least in the North, to replace the virile native product of the days of early sovereignty.... One result has been that music education, although created and nurtured by a popular love of music, has nevertheless always operated at a certain distance from the well-springs of American musical life, both popular and artistic. (pp. 214 - 215)

Britton was concerned that students were exposed to music and yet not engaged due to a lack of connection with the music they studied. This continues to be a concern for music educators today.

This brief account of the beginning of formalized singing instruction in the United States is not designed to explain fully the complexities associated with the development of choral music in schools; however, it does provide a glimpse into the heritage of singing in American schools over two centuries.

Research Questions

In this study, I focused on the reflections of former high school students on their choral music experience. Participants in this study did not major in music, nor were they professional musicians. The focus of the research is on the perceived musical and extra-musical carryover of knowledge and skills from high school choral experience and any lifelong influence that the participants believed the experience had on their lives. The research questions were based on an interest in determining the meaning and value that former students attributed to their choral experience.

The primary research question of this study is as follows:

> What is the perceived lifelong influence of high school choral music education among adults who participated in an exemplary choral program, and who did not pursue a music degree or career?

The subsidiary questions are as follows:

1. In what ways do adults view their high school choral music experiences as having carryover into adult life?

2. Is carryover considered to be positive, negative, or neutral?

3. What aspects or qualities of high school choral experiences transfer to lifelong learning?

4. What are the dimensions of a teacher or a program that may be influential through adulthood?

5. In what ways may a choral music education program influence an adult's perceived meaning of the relevance and value of participating in school music?

Research Design and Scope

A qualitative research design was developed in response to the nature of the primary research question. As the main data source was the adult reflections of their high school choral experience, I chose case-study design and the use of narrative inquiry, which will be explained in more detail in Chapter Three. To encourage meaning, I selected one choral program at a particular high school. The former-student participants in the study were members of this program for a minimum of three years. The criteria for recommending a choral program for this study were that the program focused on vocal pedagogy and singing technique, music reading skills, relevant historical and cultural connections, musical expression, and high-quality teaching strategies. An additional required criterion for the selection of the program was that the choral director remained constant throughout the time the research participants were in high school.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented my research orientation, the statement of the issue, historical relevance of singing in schools, the research questions, and the research design. I have explained that the focus of this study is on how former high school choral student participants describe the role and influence of their experiences in music on their adult lives including and beyond music. I presented the rationale of the study: perceived lifelong benefits of music education in high school may support the case for continuing school music programs as an essential facet of education, and reflective data of former-student participants may provide momentum for a re-examination of how performance classes are practiced in high schools. I believe that case-study research that focuses on personal stories of individuals encourages a deeper understanding of the meaning participants attributed to their experiences in a choral program.

The following chapter provides a literature review examining selected research concerning the purpose of education and music education, and evidence of carryover from school experiences and possible lifelong influences. I utilize, as a philosophical base, the works of Dewey, Jorgensen, Eisner, Apple, and other leading thinkers in education and the arts; and I discuss research studies on relevant topics for my study. Chapter Three describes methodology for this case study. Chapter Four is a narrative description of the choral program and choral director I examined. This chapter is meant to provide context for the stories of the former-student participants. In Chapter Five, I present narratives of the participants' reflections on their high school choral experience and influence in adulthood. Chapter Six provides my analysis of the data and in Chapter Seven I present my interpretations and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In an age of "American Idol" (Fremantel Media Productions, 2003) and a popular view that either one has talent and performs or one does not, music education often struggles to find its place in society. Is the purpose of music education to encourage society to listen to and understand classical music? To mold professional musicians? To engage children in meaningful musical experiences? Or, should there be a standard level of musicianship for all students? Should everyone be able to read music? Or perhaps, should our goal include instilling in all children the possible lifelong joy that comes from understanding and participating in music?

I ponder these and other questions as I embark on my daily routine as a music educator: observing an invigorating elementary Orff lesson with fourth-grade children, evaluating a high school choral performance, or engaging in a discussion with music educators regarding teaching strategies and desired outcomes for students. Have music students experienced "something special" others have not? My husband, a high school athlete, often shares his regret that he never took music seriously in school and thought music was not part of his identity. A random poll of adults might find that many believe they have missed out on special experiences through music. These are some of the thoughts that have focused my attention on the question of how individuals' lives are influenced by participation in school music programs.

The selection of a high quality choral program was also an integral component of this study. Many research studies have investigated the perceptions of adults, but have not verified the quality of their school experience (Faulkner 1957; Holmquist, 1995; Peterman, 1954; Stein, 1948). It is my hope that the voices of individuals who have experienced a high-quality choral program, as defined by generally accepted standards of professional excellence, can provide an essence of their experience that resonates with the general population rather than simply with music educators.

As a philosophical framework, it is important to consider the purposes of education and music education. Throughout history, there has been an ongoing debate over the aims of education in America and the importance of music education. If, as Ralph Tyler (1994) has said, "the American public school is responsible not only for educating citizens to develop and maintain a democratic society but also for engendering in individuals the desire to continue their education throughout their lives" (p.viii), then carryover from schooling and lifelong influence and learning are important aims of education.

Lifelong involvement in music is not only fulfilling for the individual but also extends to important aspects of social functioning, such as leadership. For example, Bolman and Deal (2003), as part of their reframing of leadership, regard music as an important aspect of the ethics of the spirit: "Music captures and expresses life's deeper meaning. When people sing or dance together, they bond to one another and experience emotional connections otherwise hard to express" (p. 407).

In order to conceptualize the topic, this review of literature focuses on research in lifelong learning and carryover. For the purpose of this study, lifelong learning is defined

as continued interest and investigation in learning and personal growth. Carryover indicates the retention and use of specific skills and knowledge that have been learned earlier in life. Lifelong influence specifies the lasting capacity of a past experience to cause an effect in indirect or intangible ways. When an adult carries over knowledge from his or her high school education to participate in a similar activity and expands that skill to learn more, he or she is participating in lifelong learning. Myers (1983) suggests that: "Our goal [as music educators] must be to provide significant worthwhile musical experiences so that their essence remains long after specific memory fades" (p. 47). Lifelong learning, carryover, and lifelong influence can be viewed from a general education perspective, as well as from the perspective of music education.

The review begins with an explanation of narrative inquiry and its role in the research design and continues with a contextual look at the purpose of education and schooling from the writings of Dewey, Goodlad, and Apple. This section briefly examines philosophical thought on the purposes of education, as well as studies that look at the perspectives of society, educators, parents, and students. The next section of the review describes research on lifelong learning and its findings for educational systems. I examine why lifelong learning is appropriate as a reference to educational purposes for an increasingly multicultural, technology driven society. Using research, I discuss problems with information literacy or 'back to basics' approaches in education, the need for teachers to act as facilitators of knowledge, and student transitions within the framework of lifelong learning.

The section entitled "The Purposes of Music Education" focuses on historical perspectives and current views on the philosophy of music education. The philosophical

writings of Jorgensen, Eisner, Dewey, Reimer, and Elliott, as well as the historical and practical commentaries of Earhart, Pitts, Dykema, and Mursell offer a broad and meaningful look at past and present thought on music education.

This chapter continues with the sections on research involving differing perspectives on the meaning and value of music education. The first section examines the perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators about the value of music education. The next section inspects adult perceptions of their music education experiences as they relate to lifelong learning experiences and evidence of carryover. I then look at studies of adult perceptions of their music experience that are most closely related to the present study.

Narrative Inquiry

In this study, I employed the methods of case study research and utilized narratives of the individual participants to establish an understanding of the data. These narratives "optimize the opportunity of the reader to gain an experiential understanding of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 40). The narratives of the participants focus on their personal stories and reflections of their high school choral experience. I fashioned these narratives with the goal of creating a readable story that would compel the reader and integrate important data.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualize narrative inquiry as "a way of understanding experience" (p.20). They believe that collaboration between the researcher and participants allows for the telling, reliving, and retelling of the stories of people's lives over time in a series of places and social interactions. This method of inquiry provides an opportunity to see experience as temporal and to understand "life as it is

experienced in the here and now but also...life as it is experienced on a continuum – people's lives, institutional lives, and lives of things" (p. 19).

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) point out that the use of narrative in studies with multiple participants focuses on the behaviors and beliefs that connect back to the group or case being investigated. These behaviors or beliefs may then typify some aspects of the case. The uniqueness of individuals' narratives may also be critical to the understanding of a particular case (Stake, 1995). My use of a narrative approach is intended to reflect authentically the nature of choral music and choral programs in schools and to relate individuals' stories and experiences in meaningful ways. It is also meant to express the interpretive nature of this research and the construction of multiple realities among participants. Finally, narrative inquiry relates naturally to the philosophical framework for this study.

Context: Education and Schooling

Should education and schooling focus on individual needs or the needs of a society? (Dewey, 1938/1997; Goodlad, 1994). Public opinion has indicated that schools should ensure that all students master reading, writing, mathematics, and science in a safe environment, but that they should also have broader educational goals for a balanced education. These goals include enhancing students' social-emotional competence, building character that encourages young people to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways, teaching civic engagement, and supporting a healthy lifestyle (MetLife 2002; Public Agenda 1994, 1997; Rose & Gallup, 2000). Looking specifically at middle grades students, Jackson and Davis (2000) believed that to enable those goals and other goals, schools must be about helping all students learn to use their minds well.

Additional public opinion survey research has found that while adults view multiple purposes for schooling, "most [students] view their high school careers as an exercise in the art of getting by, doing as little as possible to get the grades they need" (Public Agenda, 1997, p.11). As it is difficult to separate the aims of schools from the needs of students, these same students indicated that the teacher was a significant factor in the quality of their education. They want "interesting, engaging teachers who care about them personally and have a special knack for getting them to do their best" (Public Agenda, 1997, p.25). It appears that these teachers do not have to be 'entertainer of the year' but need initiative and compassion while treating students with respect and taking the time to provide individual help.

Though public opinion is a valuable indicator of the national climate toward schools and their effectiveness, it is only one perspective. Johnson (1992), in a quantitative study of the purposes of public education, surveyed administrators, teachers, and parents of high school students. Johnson's review of literature indicated six purposes of public education: academic success; basic skills; citizenship; personal growth and fulfillment; and social and vocational preparation. Using these purposes as a foundation for his questions, Johnson's findings indicated that among policy makers, policy implementers, and policy users, there are considerable cross-purposes for education. The primary differences appeared in perceptions of basic skills and social preparation. With a lack of philosophical agreement among stakeholders, it seems that the schools are given a nearly impossible task of educating children in ways that meet everyone's needs and expectations.

Philosophical Thought on the Purpose of Education

Goodlad (1994) points out that the American public school was instituted after the War of Independence to educate children to assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy. While public opinion may validate the teaching of citizenship as an aim for education, Goodlad believes our fast changing society has focused primarily on the financial advancement of the individual and lost sight of the civic-mindedness needed for a true democracy.

For Dewey (1916/1944), democracy was "more than a form of government; it [was] primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 87). These experiences are not unlike the social process of education. Dewey's democratic ideal points to specific social traits: the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control; a freer interaction between social groups; and a change in social habit as a readjustment through meeting new situations (pp. 86-87). These traits provide a foundation for the development of a philosophy of education. Dewey indicated that rather than staying fixed on the democratic view of education, "[e]ach generation is inclined to educate its young so as to get along in the present world instead of with a view to the proper end of education: the promotion of the best possible realization of humanity as humanity" (p. 95).

Dewey was quick to point out that the there are no aims of education, only the aims of parents, teachers, administrators. The purpose of education is defined by the needs of society, but can society remain focused on the larger issue of balance in life and education and not get lost in the pursuit of financial gains? Individuals who believe they have a responsibility to their communities ultimately are more engaged in society.

Dewey goes on to point out the way education can assist this process:

> A society which makes provision for participation in the good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (1916/1944, p. 99)

For Dewey, the object and reward of learning is a continued capacity for growth. This seems to indicate that an educative experience is lifelong and involves carryover from experiences learned in schooling. Students must be prepared financially to be productive members of society but also socially, emotionally, and aesthetically. A society that values continued growth and development of individuals will embrace creativity and ingenuity as a foundation for educational endeavors.

Beane and Apple (1995) share a democratic vision for schools but, in addition, offer a challenge against social injustice. They warn:

> While democracy depends upon caring for the common good, too many schools, stimulated by the influence of political agendas imposed from outside, have emphasized an idea of individuality based almost entirely on self-interest. While democracy prizes diversity, too many schools have largely reflected the interests and aspirations of the most powerful groups in this country and ignored those of the less powerful. (p. 12)

Apple (2000) believes that democratic schools are communities of learning where the vision of purposes extends beyond improving school climate, enhancing students' self-esteem, or lessening the harshness of social inequities to the possibilities of changing the conditions that created them (Beane & Apple, 1995). Additionally, a "democratic curriculum invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of meaning makers. It recognizes that people acquire knowledge by both studying external sources and engaging in complex activities that require them to

construct their own knowledge" (Beane & Apple, 1995, p. 16). Realizing the national attacks on education, Apple does not encourage privatization of schools: "We must keep alive the long tradition of democratic school reform that has played such a valuable role in making many schools lively and powerful places for those who go to them" (p. 3). Apple (2000) believes, "One of the things a serious education should do is not only to provide us with the necessary tools to do something decent with our lives, but to destabilize our ordinary understandings of our own places in the larger society" (p. xiv).

With regard to education's focus on accountability, Eisner (2004) believes that we need an approach to accountability that is wider than measurement (testing) and more sensitive to nuances that make a difference. He believes:

> The major lessons of schooling manifest themselves outside the context of schools. The primary aim of education is not to enable students to do well in school, but to help them do well in the lives they lead outside of school. (p. 10)

Studies of Lifelong Learning

A great deal of research on the influences of schooling is rooted in the field of lifelong learning. For purposes of this study, the influence being examined is not merely about the pursuit of formal education but also intellectual engagement, not exclusively in music, that continues due to prior experiences. Many believe that the worth of education can be measured by the success of those who receive it: "The first objective of an act of learning is that it should serve us in the future" (Bruner, 1960). Schools that promote lifelong learning, according to Longworth (2003), are 'learning organizations' where the objective is to ensure that everyone within, and connected to, the institution is valued and valuable, and where the means of expressing this is through their love for learning and their behavior (p. 128). Longworth suggests several reasons why lifelong learning is

appropriate for the twenty-first century:

1. Fundamental global demographics
2. The pervasive influence of television and the media on the development of people's thoughts, ideas and perceptions
3. Environmental imperatives, new developments in all branches of science and technology
4. The explosion of information and knowledge through the use of the Internet and communications technology
5. The need for both industry and people to remain innovative and flexible in order to retain high employment
6. Increasing individualization and the breakdown in parts of Western society of religious and family structures (pp. 4-6)

This is not to say that technical skills must be developed for an 'ends – means' society that focuses on skills-based training sessions. According to Barrow and Keeney (2000), "it may prove very short-sighted to focus on skills and practical training at the expense of broader and deeper sorts of understanding which allow students to think for themselves and hence become 'lifelong learners' in a wider sense" (p. 193). These issues of society indicate a need to encourage an atmosphere that moves away from a 'back-to-basics' approach for education to a system that places more responsibility for learning on the learner. Classrooms that engage students to think beyond rote facts and coverage of materials to engage the learner in more thought provoking activities provide opportunities for students to develop an interest in learning.

Researchers of lifelong learning suggest that educators should be seeking to develop in students conceptual understandings that revolve around the ability to think critically, creatively, and with analytical acumen" (Barrow & Keeney, 2000, p. 193). If students develop a love of learning rather than a multitude of specific practical skills, they will be better prepared for an ever-changing future.

Barrow and Keeney (2000), in an analysis of lifelong learning in North America,

point to Dewey as an unknowing participant in the demise of American education for lifelong learning. They believe that the American tendency to try to solve social, political, and economic problems through educational means can be traced back to Dewey's principles of democracy in education and the social nature of schooling. They believe that an increasingly multicultural society has produced a "cacophony of voices concerning the ends and aims of schooling" (p. 197) that no longer allows for discussion of ultimate ends in education. Barrow and Keeney see this new social reality to have been supported by a belief among educators that their goal is to introduce the student to community life and responsibilities, providing an ethic of service. While some of their claims may ring true, I would assert that most of Dewey's practices and beliefs have never been adopted uniformly and therefore could not have had been the primary influence they have suggested.

Bryce (2004), conducting lifelong learning research in Australia, pointed out that adults in today's societies tend to work in a variety of occupations rather than the single career path of previous decades. Bryce indicates that knowing how to learn and to have characteristics such as curiosity, self-confidence and the ability to make connections from one area to another is more important than the possession of facts and ability to follow set patterns. In her qualitative research, Bryce viewed how secondary schools can develop lifelong learning characteristics in different settings. While investigating ways to orient students toward lifelong learning, she found that schools tend to place emphasis on information literacy, values and dispositions in keeping with a world of constant change, key generic skills (particularly problem solving, communication and reflective independence), making every student feel valued as a learner, helping students learn how

to learn, and teachers being models of lifelong learning. Bryce concludes that two impediments for schools focusing on lifelong learning include: 1) the influence of high stakes assessment at the end of secondary school, and 2) a reluctance or inability of teachers and parents to change their attitudes about teaching. Teacher change involves shifting from transmitting information to a facilitating approach to teaching. Parents must come to expect that their own child's school experience will be different from their own, to resist the temptation to compare their own child's progress to that of another, and to balance the expectations of graded assignments.

Bennett (1999), also a researcher of lifelong learning, looked at 21 adult reflections on school experiences in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Denmark. The primarily qualitative study focused on the entire educational life of the student, specifically investigating the 'fallow periods,' which were defined as longer spells of one or more academic years in which the learners felt that their own educational progress, by their own standards and judged in retrospect, had been substantially impaired. While this intriguing study revealed many details of individuals' pitfalls and progress in education, the primary 'fallow period' for most participants was during secondary school. Though developmentally, this might be suspected, Bennett points out that all participants clearly linked the problems they encountered in maintaining their sense of felt progress in secondary school clearly to facets of their formal educational experience.

At the age of nine, all participants reported a substantial degree of dependency on the teachers for determining the aims, goals, and the approach to the educational tasks. Bennett reported that, at some point, all students must have a 'transition of responsibilities' and that this must take place long before the end of secondary school.

He found that those students that completed this 'transition of responsibilities' at an earlier age were successfully equipped for the tertiary stage of schooling (college). An additional finding focused on the stringent academic pressure to excel in secondary school. One participant indicated that her constant, unrelenting hard work during this time created a surly, uncommunicative, eating-disorder plagued person. In mid-life, she had involved herself in the kind of personal work which allowed her to become a more rounded and effective communicator. This continuing research gives insight into the type of education that allows individuals to establish a desire to learn and a feeling of self-confidence.

Purposes of Music Education

In the 1930s, Peter Dykema shared some of what can still be believed about music education's purpose in schools:

> Why should people have music? First of all, because it is a great aid to sanity of emotional life and hence to all life. Secondly, because it tends to broaden sympathy and understanding of our own lives and the lives of other people. Thirdly, because it so wonderfully stimulates sociability and comradeship and fellowship. (as cited in Birge, 1932, p. 22)

This statement comes from a human perspective on the social and emotional benefits of music. McCarthy (2002) also valued the meaning of music education understood as a social act and music teaching and learning as a social phenomenon (Concluding section, ¶ 4). James Mursell (1958) saw the purpose of music stemming from a universal goal: "From the developmental point of view, the purpose of all music teaching must be to bring about the evolution of musical responsiveness or musicality" (p. 146). Still another long-touted benefit that in recent years has dominated thinking is the usefulness of music to aid the learning of other disciplines, such as math and reading (Arts

Education Partnership, 2002). Jorgensen (2003) clearly articulated the difficulty music educators face:

> Many voices speak of the intrinsic importance of music in general education and its humanizing qualities – its contribution to spiritual, imaginative, and social life. Yet these voices sometimes seem lost in the chorus of those demanding of the schools accountability, economic and technological supremacy and cognitive skills of the sort required for computation, reading comprehension, factual recall, and the like. (p. xi)

The various defenses for music education are often confusing to a school administrator and seem as a desperate attempt to offer music as the cure for all of society's problems.

Dewey believed that the intellectual demands of the arts are not only equal to other subjects, but perhaps more demanding:

> Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in the production of works of art is based upon identification of thinking with the use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words. To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical. Indeed, since words are easily manipulated in mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being intellectuals. (1934/1958, p. 46)

Elliott Eisner (2002) pointed out that "a school system designed with an overriding commitment to efficiency may produce outcomes that have little enduring quality" (p. xiii). He also agreed with Dewey about the intellectual nature of the arts:

> The tasks that the arts put forward, such as noticing subtleties among qualitative relationships, conceiving of imaginative possibilities, interpreting the metaphorical meanings the work displays, exploiting unanticipated opportunities in the course of one's work, require complex cognitive modes of thought. (p. 35)

Transmission of Culture

Jorgensen (2003) stated that the arts are an important part of cultural life and that all education should involve the transmission of culture. Jorgensen's concern is that our

society has grown primarily to be influenced by mass media operatives, talk show hosts, reality television, and internet advertisers. Perhaps the work of education, and specifically music education, has become irrelevant to society. Jorgensen stated that "crudity, crassness, banality, and incivility result when a society fails to take care of its culture (p. xii).

What is the culture of America? Much like other subjects in general education, music instruction remains very traditional and its rationale has changed little since the formation of public schools in the early 19th century (Jorgensen, 2003). If we, as music educators, react as Earhart (1958) suggested and teach music in a vacuum never connecting with other human interests and experiences, we ultimately will have no philosophy for music education.

Aesthetic and Praxial Philosophies

Any philosophical discussion in music education would not be complete without reflecting on the writings of Reimer (1970) and Elliott (1995). The aesthetic movement in music education gained influence at the time of Reimer's first edition of "A Philosophy of Music Education." Reimer believed that music is basic to education and serves an important cognitive role. He saw the education of human feelings as a valuable goal of music education and that the general music class provides the optimal experience for listening to a wide range of musical works and development of aesthetic sensitivity.

Elliott (1995) found great importance in the process of music making. He, too, believes that musical involvement is a cognitive human activity, but perceives the process as crucial to the development of musicianship. Musical works are for Elliott the practices of musical thinking in action. He believed that music education is a means of

enculturation and that music is a human activity that should be accessible, achievable, and applicable to all. It has been Elliott's belief that culturally diverse musical experiences in education can engender personal growth, greater self knowledge, and increased enjoyment.

Lilla Belle Pitts (1944), who did much to develop general music in the middle grades during the 1930s, saw a key issue that has continued to challenge music educators- the need to teach all children music, not just the talented:

> If the aims and purposes of music education are identical, ultimately, with the aims of education in general, music is but another, though powerful means of making a difference in the way children conduct themselves and their lives; what they are inside of themselves and what musical expression can do to enlarge the personalities and enrich the social living of all, not just a few children. (p. 44)

Perspectives of Students, Teachers, and Administrators

More than a generation ago, researchers became interested in the value or meaning of music education from student and adult perspectives. Several studies have investigated the influence, meaning, or purpose of music education looking through the lens of a student perspective. Hylton (1980) surveyed choral music students to gain their perspective on the meaningfulness of their experience. Much earlier, Stewart (1961) used survey research with personal interviews to study the influence of music on music and non-music students in high schools. Hylton's findings support a multi-dimensional meaning of the choral music experience: "A philosophy of music education whose emphasis is entirely on the musical-aesthetic outcomes of music education experiences ignores equally meaningful outcomes related to other dimensions of the meaning construct" (p. 301). Stewart found that the primary influence on student participation in music was connected to home environment. Those students who experienced music in

their homes were far more likely to choose to be involved in school. Stewart's interview questions proved far more valuable than his quantitative research in this study. He was able to analyze student quotes such as the following:

> I would still like to take band, but my father urged me to quit because I have no talent.
> I enjoy playing concerts because they give you a chance to test and show yourself.
> I like the music we play in orchestra because it is involved and not all on the surface.
> I disliked a particular school ensemble because everyday I was made to perform by myself.
> I don't think I've missed much by not being in music because it wouldn't help me in the field I plan to enter.
> School music is a help toward learning and understanding new music...otherwise, you might know only the music that your parents like. (p. 76)

Payne (1990) looked at the beliefs of selected school personnel concerning the value of music in the school curriculum. His survey of more than 300 superintendents, school board presidents, building principals, and music teachers ranked justification statements for music education in order of importance. Payne found that aesthetic values of music education ranked first among music educators and superintendents. The top-rated statement for board presidents and principals was the value of improving self-esteem. While intriguing, this type of research primarily indicates that there are multiple views in society regarding the purposes of music education.

Adult Perceptions

Studies in adult perceptions of music education have been investigated as they pertain to lifelong learning and to the carryover and influence of music skills and knowledge further in life. Charles Leonhard (1958) stated:

> The ultimate criterion for judging the success of musical learning lies in the kind of habits that are developed. Does the learner develop the habit

> of pursuing musical learning further on his own? Does he habitually put to use in his living the musical learning that has accrued from his education in music? Does he share his musical ability with family and friends? Does he habitually participate in music with increasing pleasure? Does he constantly seek to refine his musical behavior? Does he seek opportunities to play and sing with others? Does he have a record collection? Go to concerts regularly? Support community and school music programs? The answers to such questions as these reveal the extent to which the music education program is affecting the lives of those who participate in it. (p. 332)

These questions, asked in 1958, are still relevant today if one replaces the term 'record' with 'compact disk.' Certainly one measure of value in music education is the influence a music education has on any future involvement with music.

Several studies that addressed issues of carryover and lifelong influence in music have looked at convenience samples including audience members, community choirs, and adult learning situations (Bowles, 1988; Richards & Durrant, 2003; Vincent, 1997). These groups of adults offer perspectives of those who for some reason are already interested in music. Their self-perceived influences and motivations may include private or public music instruction, but family music experiences appear to be critical in decisions regarding music participation, music study, and music support throughout life (Bowles, 1988; Vincent, 1997). These studies seem to indicate the primary motivation for participation in musical activity is related to the love of singing, making music, or the beauty of music for personal enjoyment. While the acquisition of skills was important, it was not the primary motivator of the adult music participant.

Richards and Durrant (2003), in a British study, wanted to better understand the adult perspective that not all are born with the ability to sing. Their qualitative research looked deep into the long held beliefs of adults that they were not able to sing. They found that these erroneous beliefs stemmed from childhood and some careless negative

comment made by a teacher or parent. In London, a college course guide listed the "can't sing choir" as one "for those who really feel they can't sing or pitch a note properly" (p. 78). When asked why they had signed up for this course, many replied for "pleasure" and or "self-confidence" (p. 84). These singers faced many obstacles, one of which was fear of making mistakes and embarrassment. Richards and Durrant believe that for some adults the psychological barriers to singing are greater than the physiological ones. They found that the choir director could be a key to the success of these singers, offering her musical skill, ability to communicate without patronizing, and her understanding of vocal development. These participants learned that "singing is a developmental process and that their perceived failure need not be lifelong" (p. 86). Richards and Durrant believe that this type of instruction removes the shame associated with internal, uncontrollable causes and creates a new history of success and a genuine sense of confidence.

Several studies have focused on the effects of skills that carry over from formal music education. Faulkner (1957), Ordway (1964), Lawrence and Dachlinger (1967), and Holmquist (1995) looked at carryover in very different ways. Holmquist focused on community choir participants, while Faulkner, Ordway, and Lawrence and Dachinger investigated graduates of high schools in various communities and parents who were paying for their child's music instruction. Holmquist's multi-faceted study found recurring themes involving an amateur singer's 'insider language,' 'belonging to a reference group,' a desire for 'capable choral teachers,' and 'increased involvement' (p. 81). These themes, developed through interviews of 40 participants and questionnaires from 244 singers in select community choirs, found that the love or charismatic personality of a teacher did not endear unswerving loyalty from participants, but rather, a

learned commitment to music performance motivated their carryover behaviors from high school (pp. 89-90).

Faulkner's (1957) study was one of the first of this nature in music. He collected data from personal interviews with four groups of people: 1) those who have chosen music as their profession, 2) those who actively engage in music, but do not depend on it for their support, 3) those whose interest in music is demonstrated by regular listening and/or attendance at live music performances, and 4) those who have no active interest in music. Findings of this research indicated that the reason for failure to have deep interest in music was that the respondent had never experienced an emotional or intellectual reaction to music. This need for an emotional or intellectual connection to music indicates that the meaning or purpose of music may as Eisner indicated, reflect the "complex cognitive modes of thought" involved in participation in the arts (2002, p. 35).

The lack of continued playing of band instruments presented a need for carryover research for Lawrence and Dachinger (1967). They looked at parents in New York State who were paying for music instruction for their children. These parents were assumed more likely to have played an instrument themselves. An interesting finding was that every person who had been a self-taught musician was still playing their instrument, while many others were not.

An additional finding was the influence of piano instruction concurrent with playing other instruments on the continued involvement with an instrument. Ordway (1964) found two communities with graduates from 1937, 1947, 1952, and 1955 and reported that those who were actively participating in music making also studied piano in addition to another instrument or singing in chorus. This finding is especially meaningful

in regard to the need for students to gain musical independence from their musical instruction. Piano can offer the ability to play and enjoy music alone. Although a person can play by ear, many students learn the concepts of music through instruction on the piano keyboard. These skills may allow individuals to develop musical independence.

Studies of Adult Perceptions of Combined Carryover and Lifelong Learning

In 2003, Chorus America, a non-profit organization whose mission includes strengthening choruses and increasing appreciation of choral music so that more people are enriched by its beauty and power, released a study of singers in professional and volunteer choirs across the United States. The primary purpose of this study was to document the level of participation in choral singing, survey certain attitudes and motivations of choral singers, and to compare these data with specific behavior of the general public. The mixed method design included telephone polls to the general public, six focus group interviews in differing regions, in-depth telephone polls of 623 singers across the United States, data collection from arts organizations, and telephone surveys of 347 singers in two regions. The results of this study indicated that far more people participate in choral singing than any other performing art.

Of particular interest to my study, findings of Chorus America revealed that most singers were exposed to or participated in choral singing early in life, with 56% growing up in homes where another family member sang in chorus and two thirds frequently hearing choral music at home. Additionally, 69% of singers had their first choral experiences in elementary or middle school. Participants indicated that "choral participation inspired them to improve a range of skills useful in their social and professional interactions" including teambuilding, listening and following, creativity,

social interaction, and discipline (p. 4). The chief motivating factors of choral singers were found to be tightly intertwined among: "the music itself, the personal fulfillment that it brings, and the sense of beauty and power it imparts to the audience" (p. 5). It was also found that choral singers are likely to be active in their communities and to volunteer in other activities. They are well informed and politically aware. Regrettably, while this study is a fair representation of choral singers in the United States, it does not reflect the multicultural nature of the country's population. Ninety-three percent of participants were white, 94% had education beyond high school, and 41% had household incomes at or above $75,000.

Two early studies by Stein (1948) and Peterman (1954) looked at high school graduates who had studied music and those who had not participated in music classes. Each used questionnaires and interviews to collect data, with Stein looking at graduating classes from 1935 – 1945 at one high school, and Peterman studying the graduating class of 1947 at six Milwaukee high schools. Similar questions were asked and similar results were found. Once again, the importance of home musical experiences on the selection of music participation in school was evident. Most non-music graduates indicated that they would choose music if they had the opportunity again and that music students tended to have more out-of-school music experiences than non-music students.

While both Peterman and Stein found that most adult musical activity centers on listening to music, Peterman suggested the need for a closer liaison between schools and community groups, as well as a need for additional opportunities for adult music engagement. Peterman went further by looking at the implications for music education from the comments of participants. He found that the high school music student is taught

how to participate in a music activity, but not how to understand fully and realize music in all of its manifestations:

> The whole music educator must reconsider the whole music curriculum for the whole student for a whole lifetime; only then will there be in practice, as well as in theory, the guiding principle of the Music Educators National Conference, 'music for every child, every child for music'. (Peterman, 1954, p. 129)

Tipps (1992) studied community choir members to describe their personal and educational characteristics, to determine their levels of participation in music during school, and to describe the content of those school music experiences. This survey research of ten community choirs in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama looked at twice as many females as males, a majority having at least a bachelor's degree, and being primarily Caucasians. The study reported that most participants had been involved in school music programs, and an additional finding pointed to the importance of sight-singing skills developed during school as having an influence on future participation in choral ensembles. Tipps relates this to previous studies that have indicated that a perceived lack of skill results in non-participation by adults (p. 114).

Finally, a recent study by Turton and Durrant (2002) in England sought to investigate the reasons for decreased participation in school choral ensembles in England. It should be noted that some participation in music classes is required in secondary schools and that a nationwide test is given in music. Individuals were interviewed in various locations, including a Burger King restaurant, a local park, pubs, outside of a grocery store, a sports and recreation centre, homes with various service personnel (plumbers, electricians, carpenters), outside a university library, the foyer of a theater, an office supply store, and on the telephone to friends and family. This random questioning

of eighty adults was used to develop a final questionnaire, which was administered to sixty participants: 15 males (20 to 30 years of age), 15 females (20 to 30 years of age), 15 males (30 to 40 years of age), and 15 females (30 to 40 years of age). Interview questions were broad and left much room for participant reflection. Questions included:

> What types of music do you listen to? What did you listen to as a teenager? Did you enjoy singing at school? Did you sing outside of school? Do you sing in any way now? What do you remember about the teacher who taught you to sing? What was your voice like then? What kinds of songs did you sing? How could singing at your school have been improved? (pp. 36-37)

This study included a comprehensive look at the many implications behind the stories told. One story in particular was recorded at a karaoke bar where a finalist in a karaoke competition indicated that he had received a very low grade on his school music report. He had beaten over 100 contestants in this competition with his exquisite voice, yet he had not sung in school and the music teacher did not know he could sing. The primary reasons indicated for not enjoying school singing included the following: "[We] didn't sing my style of music" and "[I was] insecure about my voice" (p. 38). Enthusiasm was the most remembered teacher characteristic, with negative remembrances including the following: "[T]oo strict and uptight," "verbally and physically aggressive," "not much charisma," "inability to motivate," "and old looks and clothes" (p. 45). Many who responded that they 'could not sing' were influenced by the act of being separated from others, being different in ways such as being chosen for a solo or not being allowed to join the choir. Regarding the quality of the program, findings indicated that participants believed singing is a worthwhile activity in schools but perhaps the curriculum should be reconsidered:

> It is clear that people want a more up-to-date and varied repertoire of

> songs to sing. Also, they want to see more up-to-date teachers who are good communicators and motivators. It may be surprising that so many cite teaching vocal technique as desirable. Perhaps most surprising is adults' call for singing to be given higher profile, with more singing happening in schools, more pupils taking part and more support from staff and head teachers. (Turton & Durrant, 2002, p. 46)

Participants believed that singing in school contributed to personal confidence and a sense of corporate identity. They felt a need for vocal training and development to occur rather than just having a sing-along.

This study has made me aware of the benefits of studying a particular choral program. Turton and Durrant were able to collect diverse and meaningful data, but have very little knowledge of the quality of the experiences of each participant. These factors have led me to limit my study to a particular choral program that teaches sight-reading and vocal development and that provides a high quality choral learning experience.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed a contextual look at the purpose of education and schooling from philosophy and studies in education on the perspectives of society, educators, parents, and students. I have also described research on lifelong learning and its value in a changing multicultural society. This research naturally led to a review of the purposes of music education and how carryover and lifelong learning have important implications for music education. The primary focus of this literature review centered on research that examined the perceptions of adults about their experiences in formal music education. The studies I reviewed have indicated that adults value music and music education and see many musical, social, and intellectual benefits of participation in it.

Aspin (2000) sees the arts offering special value in the 21st century. He sees the world of technology and employment changing the needs for workers. Greater numbers

of jobs will require skills, creativity, imagination, and thinking. Workers will need to be articulate speakers, divergent thinkers, and effective communicators. Aspin believes the arts provide an excellent education for these needs. "Work in the arts brings all our learning, knowing, and understanding together in one complex web of thought and action, creation, and imagination" (p. 78). He goes on to point out an important conclusion:

> Experience in the arts requires students to acquire knowledge and develop a range of skills that can be transferred to the workplace. Many forms of artistic activity and creation call upon and develop highly complex skills in the management of time, space, resources, and personnel. (pp. 81-82)

The development of these behaviors is crucial to the conception of a responsible and fulfilled life.

There are many benefits from having a strong philosophical position regarding the wide-ranging returns from music education and providing an education that meets the learning needs of students. Some benefits may be the ability to gauge the effectiveness of a music program by the carryover of those skills and to encourage the involvement in lifelong engagement in musical activities. Music skills and the extra-musical benefits that surround a high-quality music education offer individuals opportunities to enhance their lives and to realize "associated living of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 87). The present study builds upon this prior research to enlighten our music profession to aim for higher goals of musical independence and lifelong understanding and appreciation, if not participation, and to examine the influence music education has on the extra-musical lives of individual.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I present the research methodology for the study, as well as a brief description of a pilot study based on the same research questions as the main study. The focus of the main study is on the perceptions of adults regarding their experiences in and influences of a particular high school choral program. Participants' beliefs, values, and past experiences provide a unique lens through which to view the influence of a choral music program. To examine these perceptions, I conducted an in-depth exploration of former students' reflections on their high school choral experience.

I was interested in discovering what the former-student participants felt they had learned in chorus, if they remembered and/or used the knowledge, skill, feelings, and attitudes learned and if theses factors had influenced their adult lives. It should be noted that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired were not assumed to be only musical but also emotional and social influences.

In the next section of this chapter, I will provide a brief description of procedures and findings from the pilot study, followed by a discussion of the methodology of case study research and the research questions. I will describe criteria for program selection, the timeframe, data collection and analysis procedures, and a brief description of the participants. This chapter concludes with assumptions and limitations of my study.

Pilot Study

Miles and Huberman (1994), as well as Yin (2003) encouraged the routine use of pilot procedures to test interview questions, participant selection, coding themes, analysis and verification procedures. The purpose of this pilot study was to assess the feasibility of the main study and the usefulness of the methods I was planning to implement in the main study. My pilot study centered on the Danville High School Choral Program (pseudonym) and was bound by place and time, as I only studied the reflections of participants from the time that Mrs. Peters, the choral director, had been at Danville High School.

I selected Mrs. Peter's program because I knew it to be an excellent choral program that focused on learning to read music and technique for singing and because Mrs. Peters is known for using high-quality teaching strategies in the classroom. I found research-based aspects of effective teaching to provide a framework for the selection of the program and verified these aspects of effective teaching through observations and interviews with Mrs. Peters and through the participants' completion of a chart of the effective teaching characteristics exhibited by Mrs. Peters (Baker, 1981; Borst, 2002; Brand, 1984; Grant & Drafall, 1991; & Porter & Brophy, 1988).

Mrs. Peters provided contact information and access to her former students. This was a limitation of the study. In an ideal situation, the teacher would not select the participants, as her bias, whether explicit or implicit, influences the selection. The two selected former students participated in two recorded interviews on two separate occasions. I observed and interviewed Mrs. Peters on three different days and collected artifacts and school materials.

The findings and interpretations of the pilot data indicated that the most obvious musical carryover of this program was participation in church choir. Both participants also indicated that the social involvement involved in choir participation was crucial to their development as adults. Questions were asked about any benefits regarding higher academic achievement due to involvement in music classes. Each participant felt the structure and high expectations of their choral classes did affect them in other studies and in their approach to adult life. Other broad findings indicated that the participants related meaning or value placed on the choral program to the quality of the choral music experience provided by the teacher. Additionally, the philosophy of the teacher toward lifelong learning, care for the individual student, and development of independent learners was evident in the interview data; and Mrs. Peter's creation of a social atmosphere that was inviting, safe, and encouraging was crucial to the positive effects from the experience.

These data preliminarily tended to suggest that a high-quality high school choral program did influence the lives of the former students involved in my study. There was carryover of knowledge and skills, but the level at which these skills were further developed is in question. This study also suggested that the particular teaching strategies and philosophy of the teacher may have greatly influenced the amount of carryover and lifelong influence of the program and experience.

Findings of the pilot study indicated that I successfully established a comfort level for the participants. Participants were cooperative and positive. Each participant realized he/she had learned things in chorus that they were unaware of until our interview. Participants openly shared their thoughts and indicated that the reflective nature of this

process required them to mentally stretch and grow as individuals.

My own growth as a researcher and interviewer increased through the process of this pilot study. I realized that although I had prepared a formal script of questions for the interviews, it was important to create a less-formal, conversational atmosphere in order to gain the trust and acceptance from each participant. Being truly interested in their responses and not merely recording the interview and checking off a list of questions provided the opportunity to learn more about the participants and allowed for a greater understanding of their perspectives and perceptions.

The process of a pilot study also allowed me to improve my interview questions and re-evaluate their value to the study. I expanded the second interviews to include more research-based questions that focus on lifelong influence. Also, I confirmed that the extensive round of questions that dealt primarily with historical reference and remembrances was valid not only to encourage the participants to think more intensely about their recollections but also to encourage them to think more during the break between interview periods.

Additionally, the pilot study provided me with an opportunity to practice my skills of observation and the taking of field notes. It is easy in a classroom setting to be preoccupied by issues that are not relevant to the research questions. This process helped me learn to absorb as much information as possible without judgment and later to determine the value of each field note.

In summary, the pilot study pointed to the importance of examining the perceptions of former students to obtain an honest picture of the quality and long-term effects of a choral music education. In addition, the pilot study offered me the

opportunity to test my interview questions and to learn how to conduct an interview in a conversational style.

Case Study Research

A case study is the investigation of a bounded system based on a diverse compilation of data collection materials that is situated within a larger context or setting. A system may be an event, a process, a program, or several people (Creswell, 1998). "The case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing...it as an object rather than a process" (Stake, 1995, p.2). In this study, the bounded system is the high school choral program during the period of 1988 to 1998.

Employing qualitative inquiry for this investigation allowed for the use of life histories, storytelling, artifacts (such as concert programs and newsletters), and reflective personal analysis. Case study research results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon based on real life situations (Merriam, 1988). To gain in-depth perspective, I undertook an exhaustive investigation of the perceptions and perspectives of the participants. Interviews and observations allowed for the development of a thick, rich description of the participants' experiences that focused on carryover and lifelong influence from high school (Creswell, 1998). A thick description "presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships" and provided that the perceptions of individuals were heard (Denzin, 1989, p.83).

The design of this study allowed me to interpret the meanings others have about the world and, rather than starting with a theory, to develop a pattern of meaning from the perspectives of others about their choral music experience (Creswell, 2003). I believe this knowledge can help music educators to become more aware of the influence they

have on the lives of their students and to reflect on their instructional strategies for enhancing overall learning, encouraging a lifelong enjoyment of and attachment to music, and building a sense of value about the role of music in people's lives.

The focus of this case study was on the reflections of adults regarding a particular high school choral experience. The questions I asked centered on how participants' choral experiences have carried over into their adult lives and their perceptions of any possible lifelong influence from those experiences. Case study research is "a preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 1).

Case studies increasingly have been used in educational research. Case study research is not selected to optimize production of generalizations, but rather particularization. "We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others, but what it is, what it does" (Stake, 1995, p. 8). This process allows the researcher to focus on detailed data to examine the uniqueness and commonality of a case.

Main Unit of Analysis

The main unit of analysis in this study was the previous experiences of adults who participated in a particular high school choral program. I explored this case searching for an understanding of lifelong influence as primarily substantiated by multiple interviews with former choral students. This built upon Stake's (1995, p.64) assertion that "the interview is the main road to multiple realities." It was understood that the participants have their own perspectives on their high school experience, thereby creating rich data

sources.

The Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study was: *What is the perceived lifelong influence of high school choral music education among adults who participated in an exemplary choral program, and who did not pursue a music degree or career?* The goal of this research question was to reveal the perceived value of the participants' high school choral experiences on their adult lives. I was interested in how these experiences may have translated to adult behaviors and perceptions, both musical and extra-musical. To explore this question, the interview questions centered on specific recollections of high school chorus and the perceived connections from participants' past to their present lives. Relative to the research question, the following definitions were used for this study:

Carryover:	The retention and use of specific skills, knowledge and feelings or attitudes that have been learned earlier in life.
Lifelong Influence:	The lasting capacity of a past experience to cause an effect in indirect or intangible ways.
Lifelong Learning:	Continued interest and investigation in learning and personal growth.

Five subsidiary questions were developed to focus more directly on the kind of influence that may have occurred:

1. *In what ways do adults view their high school choral music experiences as having carryover into adult life?*

I was interested in learning how individuals who did not choose music as a major in college or as a profession valued their high school choral experience and how knowledge and skills learned in chorus may have carryover into adult life. Specific evidence of carryover could take many forms. Musical skills that have carryover could manifest themselves in ways such as singing in a community or church choir, or in being an avid consumer of music and attending concerts and purchasing recordings. Other types of carryover could reflect how choral experiences have influenced the way individuals think about music and arts or involve an understanding of social and emotional issues learned through choir experiences that have led to behavior changes and development.

2. *Is carryover considered to be positive, negative, or neutral?*

I was interested to know if the carryover from experiences in high school chorus were perceived only as positive or if some lasting remembrances had negative or neutral feelings, such as a belief that the skills and knowledge were not useful or that reflections of the program held negative connotations. I was curious to know whether the participants viewed the knowledge and skills they retained as beneficial to their current lives.

3. *What aspects or qualities of high school choral experiences transfer to lifelong learning?*

In addition to the possible carryover of knowledge, skills and attitudes, I was interested in the aspects of the choral experience that may have influenced a learner's interest in continuing to learn and grow, not just musically but in all areas of life. Lifelong learning indicates a continued interest and investigation of learning and personal

growth. I was curious whether the choral music experience was perceived as enhancing this desire for further growth.

4. *What are the dimensions of a teacher or a program that may be influential through adulthood?*

Through this question, I wanted to examine aspects of the teacher, who remained constant throughout the high school choral careers of the participants, which may have influenced knowledge, skills, and attitudes into adulthood. I also wanted to see if dimensions of the choral program itself influenced the way individuals viewed and addressed their adult lives.

5. *In what ways may a choral music education program influence an adult's perceptions of the relevance and value of participating in school music?*

This question was intended to reveal how the adult participants in this study viewed the relevance and meaning of their choral experience as an indicator of the value of school music participation. I was curious to see if they believed this experience was relevant to teenagers today and if they thought choral music currently has a valid purpose in schools.

Introduction to the Case

In the following section, I will describe the process for the selection of the choral program, my role as the researcher, and a brief introduction to the participants. I will also describe the data collection methods and analysis procedures. As part of my agreement with the Institutional Review Board at Georgia State University, I have used pseudonyms for the names of all participants, the school, and all recognizable locations in the pilot and main studies.

Selection of the Choral Program

Criteria

Research on effective instructional strategies and teacher behaviors in choral classrooms has indicated that knowledge of content and student needs is high among effective teachers. Additionally, teachers who possess a warm personality, care for and take a personal interest in students, are enthusiastic, and love music are considered more effective. Studies (Baker, 1981; Borst, 2002; Brand, 1984; Grant & Drafall, 1991; & Porter & Brophy, 1988) have also indicated that teaching for metacognition, a balance of praise and criticism, good communication of goals to students, strong discipline, structured learning, moving at a brisk pace, and providing feedback and correction regularly with active practice are indicators of effective practice in choral classrooms. These research-based teaching strategies and teacher qualities were used to establish high-quality teaching as one criterion for selection of a choral program. Additional criteria for program selection were established in accordance with the National Standards for Music (Music Educators National Conference, 1994).

The criteria established to select the choral program for this study were the following: 1) the same choral teacher directed the program for at least 15 years, 2) the instruction in the program focused on vocal pedagogy and singing techniques, music reading skills, relevant historical and cultural connections, musical expression, and high-quality teaching strategies, and 3) the program had a superior reputation among peers and colleagues for high-quality performances. These criteria served as the basis of my search for a choral program that would be the case in my study.

Procedures

To eliminate bias, I used a 3-stage process to select the program I would investigate. Due to my knowledge of choral programs in the state of Georgia, I searched for a choral program in another state. I began by composing a letter that I sent via electronic mail to 11 prominent figures in the choral music profession (Appendix A). These conductors, all from highly respected programs at colleges and universities, were contacted and asked to submit names of high school directors who they believed to have at least a 15-year tenure at their schools, to be exemplars of a high-quality choral program, and to have a superior reputation among their peers and colleagues. I also requested, due to the cost of travel and time, that the choral programs be located in the central or eastern portions of the United States.

Each of the nine suggested programs was investigated regarding its appropriateness for my study through examination of respective internet websites. I further narrowed the search by reviewing factors including: 1) types of experiences and curricular offerings indicated on the web-site; 2) size of the program as suggested by the number of students and choral directors in each program; 3) musical quality of recorded performances provided on the website; and 4) the basic philosophy of the choral program as indicated in introductory statements about the program. Additionally, in an effort to gain as much information as possible, including choral musicians' perceptions of the programs for my study, I questioned 10 colleagues regarding their knowledge of the choral programs while attending a national American Choral Directors Association conference. Through these procedures, I was particularly looking for a choral program whose philosophy focused on high-quality performance and a balanced and

comprehensive music education. I contacted the four programs most consistent with my criteria.

From the four programs I contacted, one choral director declined to participate. Because the choral director would serve as the gatekeeper for my access to the participants (Creswell, 1998), I interviewed the remaining three teachers by phone to assess the following: a) the program's adherence to my selection criteria; b) the teacher's enthusiasm for the study and the topic; c) the teacher's tenure of at least 15 years; d) the teacher's philosophy of teaching; e) the curricular offerings; f) the availability of alumni information; and g) the director's willingness to assist in the development of lists of former students who could be potential participants. By examining the director's explanation of his/her philosophy of teaching and how it paralleled with criteria defined for the case selection, I was able to consider the appropriateness of each program.

The School and the Choral Program

The choral program that I selected was at Maple Valley High School (MVHS) in the northeastern United States. Built in 1953, MVHS is one of two high schools in the small school district. There are approximately 1650 students in grades 9 - 12. During the time the former-student participants were enrolled (1988 – 1998), MVHS experienced some growth and rose from an enrollment of 1400 to 1700 over about 10 years. Primarily a middle class community, most families have two incomes with a median income in 1990 of $61,080. Ethnicity is mixed, but most students are Caucasian. The music department includes curricular experiences in band, orchestra, and chorus.

The choral program at MVHS currently has 330 students enrolled in four choral classes (Vocal Workshop, Concert Choir, Chansons, and Maple Valley Singers). In

addition to the choirs that meet during school hours, there are three extra-curricular vocal ensembles (Vivace, Noteworthy, and Chamber Singers). This organizational structure is much the same as it was during the enrollment of the study's participants. The MV high school and choral program are described in detail in Chapter 4.

The Choral Director

The choral teacher at MVHS, Mrs. Katherine Wood, was a participant in the study and provided my access to necessary sources of data. She provided the initial contact with former students and gave three interviews about the program. Mrs. Wood allowed me to observe her classes during a period of three days to establish a deeper understanding of the structure and philosophy of the choral program and her teaching strategies. Additionally, Mrs. Wood provided printed materials such as syllabi, concert programs, and various class handouts. This information assisted in validation of curricular offerings, and provided historical reference for a greater conceptualization of the overall approach and structure of the choral program.

Selection of Former-Student Participants

The former-student participants in this study were graduates of MVHS who were also members of the choral program throughout their high school experiences. I required that the participants had been in chorus at least three of their four years in high school and that they were between the ages of 23 and 35. This age range was selected to allow the participants to have finished college and/or to have begun their adult careers, encouraging more reflective responses. An additional requirement was that these individuals did not major in music in college and did not become professional musicians. Several former students were willing to participate in the study but did not meet the non-

music major or professional musician requirement. My goal was to have participants representing divergent occupations and varying ethnic and social backgrounds.

Procedures

I used criterion sampling techniques to select the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, I asked the choral director for names and contact information. Also, I searched available alumni information and developed a list of over 300 electronic mail addresses. A request for participation in the study was electronically mailed to all addresses identified (Appendix B). This request included criteria that would determine the eligibility of the former student for participation. The criteria included determining: a) each student's year of graduation; b) the number of years the former student was in chorus; c) each student's ethnicity (which was optional) and current occupation, both of which were used to assist in the creation of a diverse sample. Additionally, I logged on to www.Classmates.com as a visitor of MVHS and located public electronic addresses of several former students. My objective was to sample for greatest variation, selecting a small sample with as much diversity as possible.

Criterion sampling was used to narrow my sample because it allowed for participants to be selected who are of a particular age range and attended the same choral program. It was my goal to have a sample of six to ten participants. Although the exact size of the final sample could not be predetermined, "the criterion invoked to determine when to stop sampling is informational redundancy, not a statistical confidence level" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203).

I received 14 responses to my electronic mailing. I contacted the 14 possible participants via electronic mail and telephone conversations and determined the

candidates who best met the criteria for the study. Of the 14 former students, two were professional musicians, three were only in high school chorus for 2 years, and one did not respond to subsequent electronic mailings to participate in the study. My doctoral advisor reviewed the selection criteria and prospective participants to help formulate the sample. This process of elimination provided me with the eight former-student participants for my study. Though I would have preferred to have had a more ethnically diverse sample, the occupations of the selected participants were varied. The eight participants included five females (four Caucasians, and one Philippine) and three Caucasian males that completely met my criteria. It was my belief that any additional participants would not necessarily add more depth to my understanding of this choral program and its influence on participants' adult lives. Criterion sampling provided strong quality assurance to the responses. I scheduled the first round of interviews with the former-student participants to take place during June and July 2005. I traveled to their cities and conducted the interviews at locations most convenient for them.

Introduction to the Former-Student Participants

The former choral students of MVHS participating in my study were scattered in three states across the United States. I traveled to meet with each for two interviews. Following all Institutional Review Board procedures, the participants signed consent forms to participate in my study. The participants' years in high school ranged from 1988 to 1998, allowing them several years to establish themselves as adults. The selected participants included: 1) Brian, 2) Shellie, 3) Rebecca, 4) Hannah, 5) Dylan, 6) Andrew, 7) Rachel, and 8) Sharyn. In the following section, I will briefly introduce each of the former-student participants. I provide information regarding occupations, years in chorus

during high school, and family background. This information gives the reader a few distinguishing characteristics providing a snapshot of the individual. Chapter 5 will provide an in-depth description of the interview data for each participant.

Brian

Brian is 30-years-old and was the oldest participant in the study, having graduated in 1992. Brian is attending classes at a local college. He has been a firefighter since shortly after graduating from high school. Brian does not see himself remaining in this profession forever but enjoys his job and serves as a lieutenant. Brian is divorced with one small son and lives and works in a town neighboring Maple Valley. Brian's parents were divorced when he was in high school and he does not appear to be particularly close to his mother and father.

Shellie

Shellie graduated from MVHS in 1994. She is 28-years-old and lives hundreds of miles from Maple Valley. When Shellie graduated from high school, she attended college to become a nurse, as her father wanted her to have a medical profession. Shellie is currently changing careers from nursing to interior design. She is married to a professional trombonist she met in college. Shellie is very close with her family members. Her parents came from the Philippines to provide their children with a better life in America. Only recently having lost her father, Shellie freely shared the musical influence her father had on the lives of his children.

Rebecca

Rebecca also lives hundreds of miles from Maple Valley and is a television writer. She graduated from Maple Valley High School in 1994 and went on to college to

pursue a career in writing. She is single, outgoing, and friendly. Rebecca appears to be close with her family, and her younger siblings were also in chorus at MVHS.

Hannah

Hannah, who also graduated in 1994, is married and is completing her certification as a middle grades science teacher. She majored in theater for her bachelor's degree but has gone back to school to become a teacher. She indicated that her parents were always supportive of her dreams and ambitions and encouraged her pursuit of an acting degree. Hannah is married and lives about 50 miles from Maple Valley.

Dylan

Dylan works as an assistant to an art museum director and graduated from MVHS in 1995. Dylan has held several prior jobs in his life: acting, working with a writer, and working in an art gallery. Dylan's major in college was photography, which is his passion. He has a small darkroom in his apartment. Being immersed in the arts is part of Dylan's way of life, so his involvement in this study was a natural fit. Dylan is single, has a twin sister, and has moved away from Maple Valley and his family, although he often speaks of his family.

Andrew

Andrew, who identifies himself as self-professed "rocker" because of his preference for rock music, also graduated in 1995. He is single, and is currently working as a network administrator for his father's business, which is located about forty miles from Maple Valley. Andrew attends night classes to further his knowledge of computers. He has expanded the courses he is taking to include those dealing with music recording and technology. Andrew also has an entrepreneurial interest and runs a seasonal retail

business at a local mall. Andrew is in frequent contact with both parents, who divorced when he was 5-years-old.

Rachel

Rachel graduated from MVHS in 1998 and has been teaching art in schools for a several years. As a new teacher, Rachel has experienced some of the usual challenges of teaching. She currently teaches in a small Jewish school but spent the past year in a very challenging urban high school. She lives in Maple Valley with her husband. Rachel's family valued music, and she experienced music in her home throughout childhood. She hopes to provide this same atmosphere for her own children some day. Her husband plays saxophone and also sang in his high school choir.

Sharyn

Sharyn graduated in 1998. She has been in school continuously since that time and is working toward a Ph.D. in political science from an Ivy League university. Sharyn was married between our two interviews, so her life was extremely busy during the span of my study. She is close with her family and wishes to move to a major city close to Maple Valley.

Time Frame

The preparation, fieldwork, and completion of this study spanned approximately 1 year (Figure 1). Once I determined the choral program for the study, I asked the choral director, Mrs. Wood, to provide contact information for her former students from the choral alumni association. I selected participants during the late spring and began the fieldwork during the summer of 2005. During this time, I communicated with each participant through electronic mail communications and traveled to complete the first of

two sequential, face-to-face interviews. During the fall of 2005, I completed the second face-to-face interview with each participant and traveled to MVHS for 3 days of observation; I also interviewed Mrs. Wood. While collecting data, I began initial coding and analysis and continued my research journal entries. The process of identifying and sorting initial and emergent themes among the data continued through the writing process in expectation of the final conclusions and implications of the study.

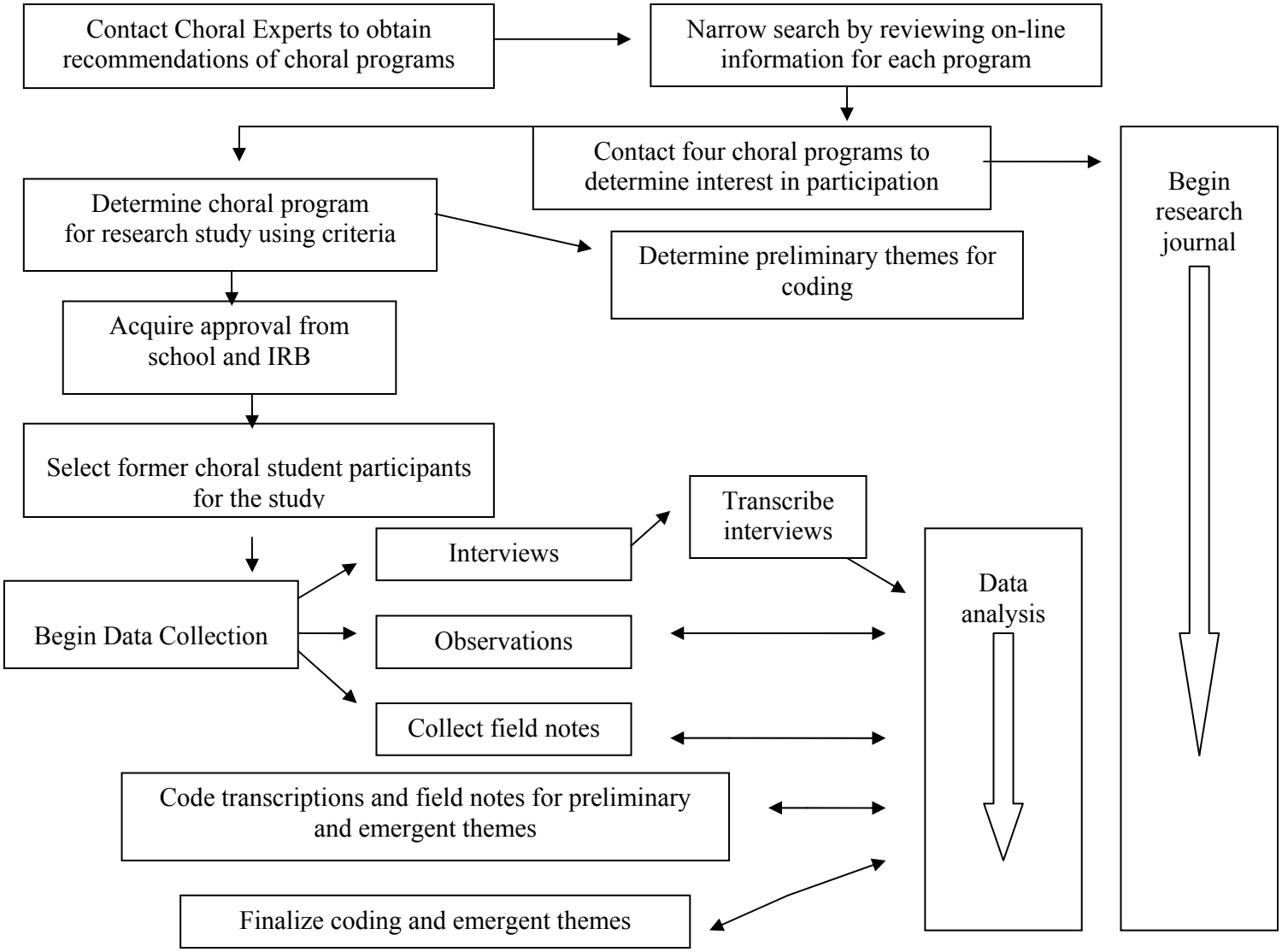

Figure 1. Case-Study Research Design

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews, observations, and review of documents and artifacts. Interviews were conducted with the eight former-student participants and the choral director of the MVHS choral program. Questions for the interviews with former-student participants and the choral director were tested in a pilot study. I conducted two interviews with the former-student participants in order to develop a familiarity with me and to create a more comfortable atmosphere for the sharing of personal stories and reflections. The questions in the first interview focused on specific recollections of chorus. Questions in the second interview were influenced in part by the work of Abeles, et al (2002), which identified general outcomes of school-based arts education. Outcomes included an ability to express thoughts and ideas, strong imagination and creativity, and the ability to take risks in learning.

Once former-student participants were selected, I solicited consent for participation in the study including two interviews and a survey of effective teacher strategies and dimensions that they remembered of their choral director. All research protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Georgia State University. Negotiating entry and providing a trustworthy atmosphere were crucial to the success of the interaction with all participants. To make participation less invasive in their lives, I met the participants at locations and times that were most convenient to them.

Observations were conducted during the choral classes at MVHS to verify teaching effectiveness and program structure. Documents and artifacts included concert programs, handbooks, teacher handouts, calendars of events, promotional materials, etc. These materials provided historical reference to corroborate the information obtained

from interviews. The documents also allowed me to better understand how the choral program was structured as well as how it likely functioned during the time the participants were in school. As I remained open to emergent sources as they appeared, I was also given access to photographs, syllabi, and grade recording materials. I kept a research journal of my impressions during the study and took extensive field notes during all planned and unplanned observations.

Interviews and Observations

The first recorded interview was semi-structured and began with a grand tour question (Spradley, 1979) about participants' reflections and remembrances of chorus (Appendix C). The purpose of the first interview was to gain knowledge of the structure of the choral program and to provide an opportunity for the participant to remember specific events along with feelings and attitudes about the program. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. Prior to the first interview, I created a code sheet to identify anticipated codes. During the first interview, questions were grouped into the following categories: a) specific information about the choral program; b) the influence of family and friends and their involvement with music; and c) the participants' thoughts on school music (Appendix C). The specific information about the choral program provided an understanding of the participants' perceptions of the program and an opportunity to remember more by talking about specific information. The questions regarding family and friends allowed the participants to elaborate on other influences in their lives and the investigation of generational influences. Questions regarding their impressions of school music and its benefits concluded the interview and provided a bridge to the second interview which focused on the adult influences of the choral program.

Protocol for the first interview was as follows: greeting the participant, asking him or her to review and sign the consent form, reminding him or her of the 1 hour timeframe, stating the issue and objective of the interview, asking for permission to record, beginning questions with casual conversation leading to the grand tour question, finishing the interview within the timeframe, thanking the participant, describing the second interview and discussing possible dates for follow-up interviews (Spradley, 1979).

Immediately following the first interview, I completed a contact summary sheet and made an entry into my research journal. I began transcribing the interview upon my return home. After transcriptions were completed, initial coding began. During initial coding, other coding themes evolved as was anticipated.

Two months later, I conducted a second, 1 hour interview with each participant (Appendix D). The second interview was planned to give participants time to further reflect on the earlier questions and to establish a stronger bond between myself and the participant. I asked each participant follow-up questions from data gathered in the first interview and continued with specific questions about carryover and the influence of choral music in their lives. In addition to the interview, I asked each participant to complete a survey regarding Mrs. Wood's teaching (Appendix E). This survey was based on research of effective teacher strategies/dimensions and was used to verify the quality of Mrs. Wood's teaching. After the second interview was transcribed, all data were re-coded to verify placement within the code. In addition, I listened to the recordings again in search of changes of inflection, mood, and inconsistencies with the transcript.

Each participant's transcribed interviews were electronically mailed to him or her to check for accuracy and clarification. Member checks of the interviews establish

credibility and encourage trust and reflexivity (Creswell, 1998), and allowed me to verify data and offer the participants insight into the procedures for this type of research; moreover, it afforded me opportunities to ask questions, correct mistakes or statements that were unclear, and allowed the participants to reflect on their statements. To verify the data, participant interview transcriptions were crystallized with observation notes and interview transcriptions of the choral director, other participant data, and data from artifacts. This is in keeping with Richardson (2000) who indicated that the crystallization process "defines no single truth and recognizes a variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach" (p. 934).

I visited MVHS in October, 2005, to interview and observe the choral director, Mrs. Wood, in her choral classroom (Appendix E and F). During observations at the high school, I remained a quiet observer, taking field notes, sketching the classroom, and following the choral director through her daily activities. My interviews with Mrs. Wood were spread over the 3 days that I observed her classes. She allowed me to interview her during her non-teaching periods and after school. The interviews with Mrs. Wood, observations of her teaching, and the documents and artifacts that she provided were helpful in verifying structural and contextual aspects of the program.

Coding of the Data

Methods of analysis assist in sequencing the actions, categorizing the properties, and allowing for some intuitive aggregation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the use of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification to determine what issues to emphasize, to organize that information, and to verify the findings in a systematic and disciplined manner.

My analysis began by establishing *a priori* coding themes developed from my pilot study. Data were coded and reviewed under various possible interpretations. I searched for patterns of data using the pre-existing codes, and also searched for new coding themes. As interviews were transcribed, the thematic coding was indicated using a multicolored coding sheet. Each participant's interviews were printed on differing colors of paper with color coded text based on themes. The color coded data were cut and sorted into folders.

After initial placement in themed folders, I reviewed the coded data and re-evaluated placement and added additional themes. The information in each folder was then analyzed again for accuracy and for conflicting thematic information. This process allowed me the opportunity to stay highly connected to the data and to synthesize the information around the themes. I then created participant information sheets for each former student and the choral director that listed the key aspects of the choral program and the corresponding thematic coding. This organizational tool provided me with the framework to organize the participant narratives. I sought linkages among the various data sources, drew tentative conclusions, and organized themes, deliberately seeking disconfirmation of findings (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

I also presented portions of the data for peer review, which provided reflective opportunities for my coding themes and analysis. I looked for comparisons of the participants' experiences and crystallized (Richardson, 2000) the data with observations and interviews of the choral director. The process of crystallization moves beyond triangulation, which compares data from three sources, to a realization that there are more approaches to this topic. To further crystallize the data, I utilized a chart of effective

teaching strategies to verify the quality of teaching from both former students and the choral director (Appendix F). This procedure was important, as it relates to the selection of the choral program and the influence of teaching quality on meaning of the program for the former-student participants.

Crystallization

"Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know" (Richardson, 2000, p. 934). In my study, crystallization involved the analysis of multiple data sources including: interview data, observations of the choral director, interviews with the choral director, analysis of the choral department website, analysis of archival materials, peer review, member checks, and researcher journaling (Figure 2). These sources provided multiple opportunities to corroborate evidence and to shed light on themes of the study. It is my belief that the use of the crystallization process has encouraged an emergent approach that is open to discovery and that utilizes all possible data sources and their meaning to this study.

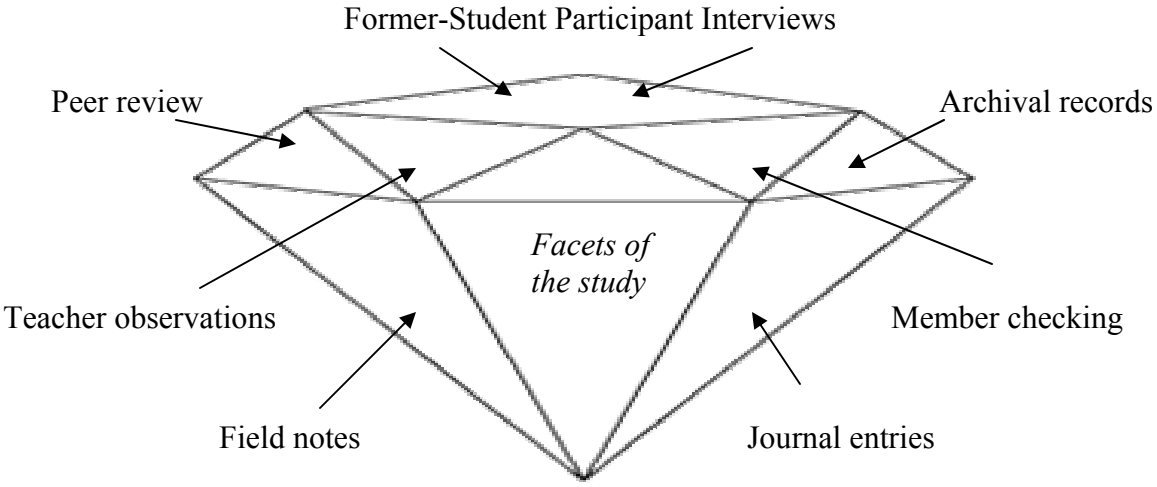

Figure 2. Crystallization of data sources

Assumptions and Limitations

Some participant risk was possible in this study; however, the pilot study indicated that participants likely benefited from self-reflection and awareness of personal growth and development. An assumption of the study was that adult reflections are an accurate means of acquiring data. I assumed that human experience makes sense to those who live it and that human experience can be consciously expressed (Creswell, 1998). I believed that the participants in this case study have valuable perspectives on their experiences and that their remembrances may have been affected by their intervening experiences. Although a conceptual and philosophical framework was determined from related literature, I was open to new theories and possibilities as they emerged.

I am a musician, therefore, I do not presume to know the perspectives of non-professional musicians. It was important for the success of my study that I establish an environment of candor and honesty with the participants. Though the participants initially were unknown to me, after the first interview, I felt more comfortable with the participants; likewise, they seemed to feel free to share their experiences. It is crucial to the study that the participants are able to trust that the researcher does not know the answers and authentically needs their expertise in their own perspectives. The participants in this study were told that they were the experts in explaining their experience and that there were no wrong answers.

Regarding the selection of the choral program, it should be noted that although criteria were suggested for choral experts to recommend choral programs for this study, their recommendations may have been based on their personal judgments and the reputation of the choirs' performance rather than experts' awareness of the classroom

procedures and overall music learning in the program. Although the MVHS choral program is currently focused on a balanced approach to learning in the choral classroom that includes teaching toward the National Standards, during the years that the former-student participants were involved the program was primarily performance-based and only in the beginning stages of developing a balanced, comprehensive music education.

The Role of the Researcher

The value of a choral experience from a choral director's point of view is not an impartial outlook. As I am a choral director, this bias is evident. To view the experience from the lens of former students allows for a more balanced and objective point of view. My role as researcher is to state my biases and assumptions regarding my beliefs about the value of a choral music education experience and then bracket or suspend my preconceptions in order to fully understand the experience of the participants and not impose an *a priori* hypothesis on the experience (Creswell, 1998). I have done this by acknowledging these biases, values, or interests, and have systematically reflected and been sensitive to how my personal biography can shape this study (Creswell, 2003).

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a pilot study and a rationale for selecting a case study design. I have discussed the methodology for this research. I presented the research questions and provided a detailed explanation of my interest in each. I continued with a description of the criteria for the selection of the choral program and provided a brief introduction to each of the participants. Next, I explained the timeframe for the study and provided a chart of the research plan. I provided descriptions of my data collection and analysis procedures, including sources of data and the organization,

coding, and analysis process. A description of the limitations and assumptions of the study and the role of the researcher completed this chapter. In the next chapter, I will describe the setting and the social, educational, and musical context for this case study.

CHAPTER 4

REALIZING VOICES: A CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL, THE CHORAL PROGRAM AND DIRECTOR

This chapter provides a contextual reference for interpretation of the data collected from the former-student participants. Understanding the setting, features of the choral program in years past and present, and the teaching style of the choral director provides an in-depth understanding of the former students' reflections. My review of artifacts and observations and interviews of the choral teacher and former choral students have provided information to establish the setting. An understanding of the function of the choral program and the philosophical beliefs and teaching strategies of its director provided perspective for the research questions. Using these data, I have verified the quality of the choral program and investigated the dimensions of an effective choral director that influence adult lives.

When I first spoke by telephone with Katherine Wood, the choral director at Maple Valley High School (MVHS), I was encouraged by her enthusiasm and interest in my topic. We discussed her recent master's thesis on differentiated instruction in the choral music classroom and how this investigation has driven her teaching to a new level. I was interested in her obvious desire for continuous personal growth and the development of her teaching. Our electronic mail correspondence continued sporadically through the spring and summer of 2005, initially to provide former student information and then to build rapport between us. In September, we planned my visit to the high

school to observe her teaching and the school setting.

Setting

The township of Maple Valley was only a stone's throw from a major city in the northeastern United States. The community had the feeling of a small town despite the national chain retail stores, fast-food restaurants, and office complexes that I passed as I drove along the main highway entering the town. The congested highway gradually gave way to quaint small-town streets. Eventually, as the road wound inward, the high school appeared. MVHS is one of two high schools in the district. This 1950s, one-story structure looked similar to many high schools across the country, with small windows, a brick outer wall, and multiple additions that indicate less of a plan for growth than a reaction to it. I arrived on a crisp fall morning when the sun was shining brightly through the falling leaves of the trees. As planned, I arrived at the high school after the school day had begun. On this day, I had the opportunity not only to observe the choral classes but also to go with two small ensembles to hear a performance for the local retired teachers' association.

As I entered the front office, the secretary was alone, and the building was extremely quiet. A tall, dark-skinned, young man wearing a school football jersey came to the office to walk me through the maze of tiled floor hallways to the choral rehearsal room. Beginning in the oldest portion of the school, we eventually entered a new, modern wing that houses the choral room and auditorium. I entered a choral rehearsal in progress. The young man quickly took his place in the choir. While the current choral room was large with a high ceiling and was bright and clean, the classroom that the participants of this study experienced was the previous print shop classroom with low

ceilings, narrow width, and very little space for movement or growth. The tremendous growth of the choral program necessitated the addition of a choral rehearsal room and a larger, state-of-the-art, auditorium for the school performances (Figures 3 and 4).

The classroom was busy with movement and talking as chorus class was just beginning. On the walls were trophies from festivals and competitions, group photos from years past, and student-made collages, all of which exuded a sense of history and tradition. Most of the items in this new room came from the first choral room, maintaining a connection with the history of the program.

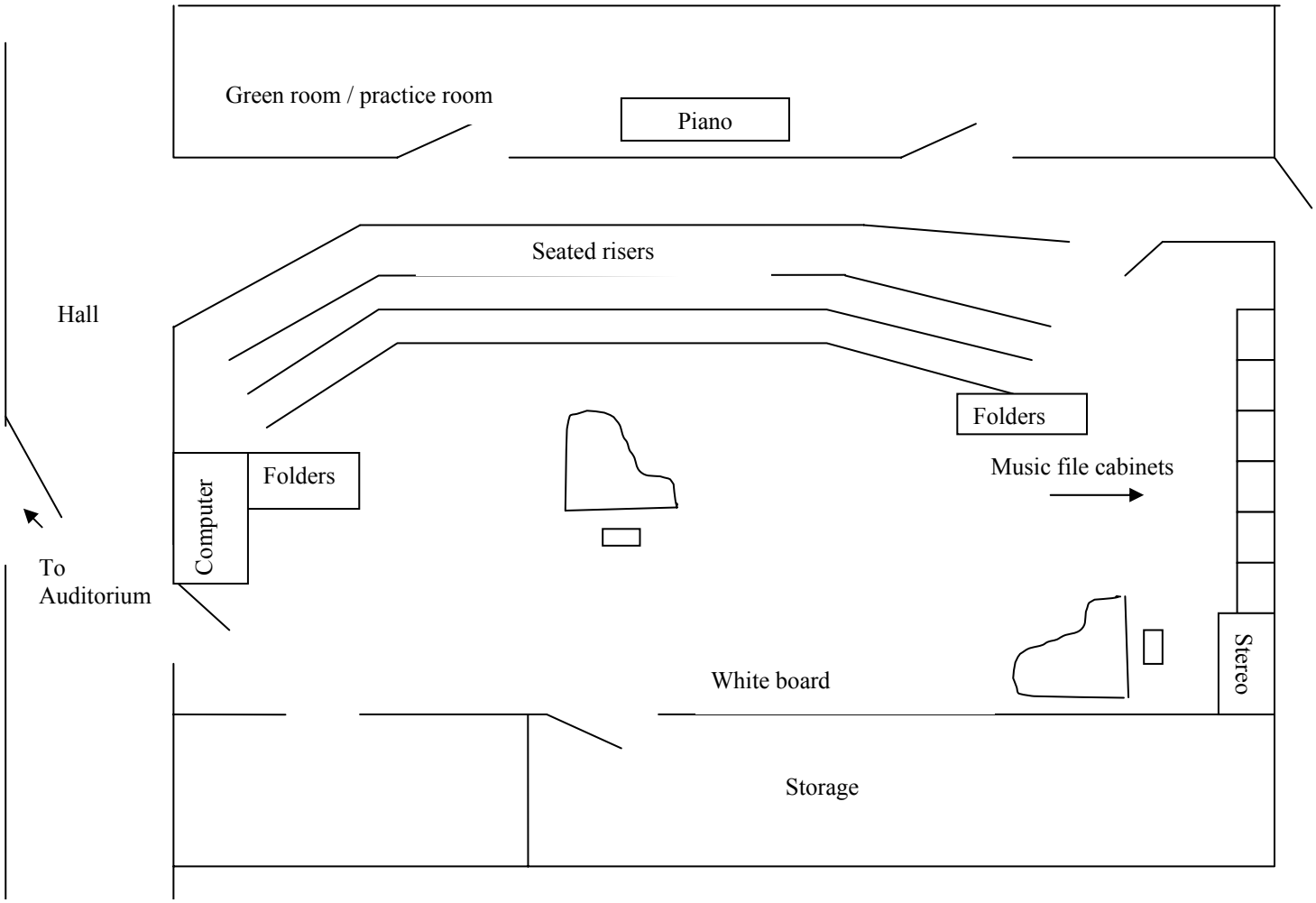

Figure 3. Current Choral Classroom at Maple Valley High School (2002 – present)

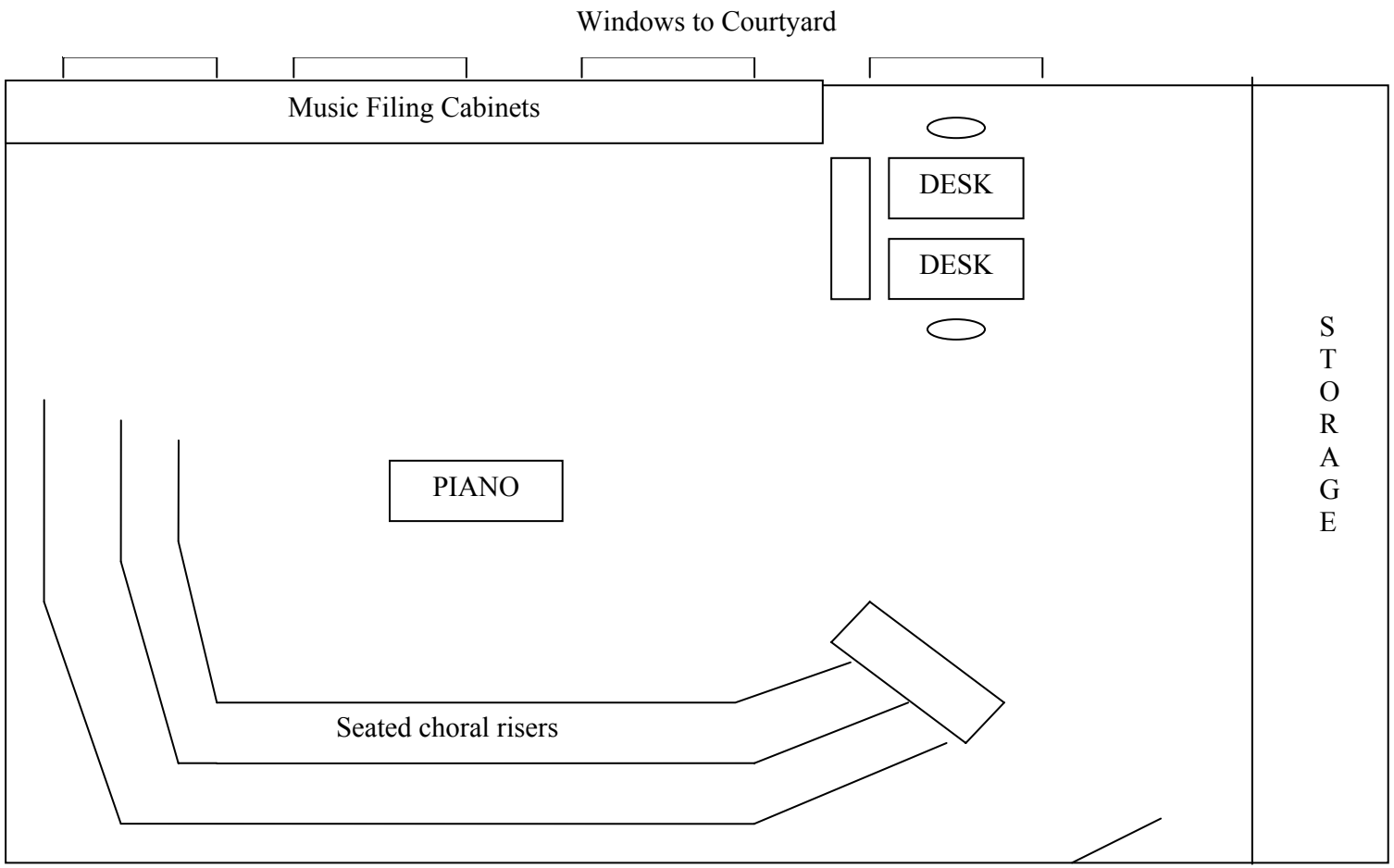

Figure 4. Choral Classroom at Maple Valley High School from 1989 – 2002 as described by Mrs. Wood

The organization of the choral program has remained largely consistent throughout the years of Mrs. Wood's tenure, with slight changes for growth in numbers of students. During the time the participants were in the program, there were four curricular choirs that met during the school day: "Vocal Workshop," an entry-level choir split into two class periods and consisting primarily of 9th grade students (115 students total); "Chansons," an auditioned, cross-grades women's choir of approximately 45 students; "Concert Choir," an auditioned, cross-grades mixed choir split into two class periods totaling about 90 students; and "Maple Valley Singers," the highest level choir of auditioned, cross-grades mixed voices consisting of approximately 75 students. The program also had three extracurricular ensembles: "Chamber Singers," a mixed a cappella group; *Noteworthy*, an 11 voice male a cappella group; and "Vivace," an 11 voice female a cappella group (Figure 5).

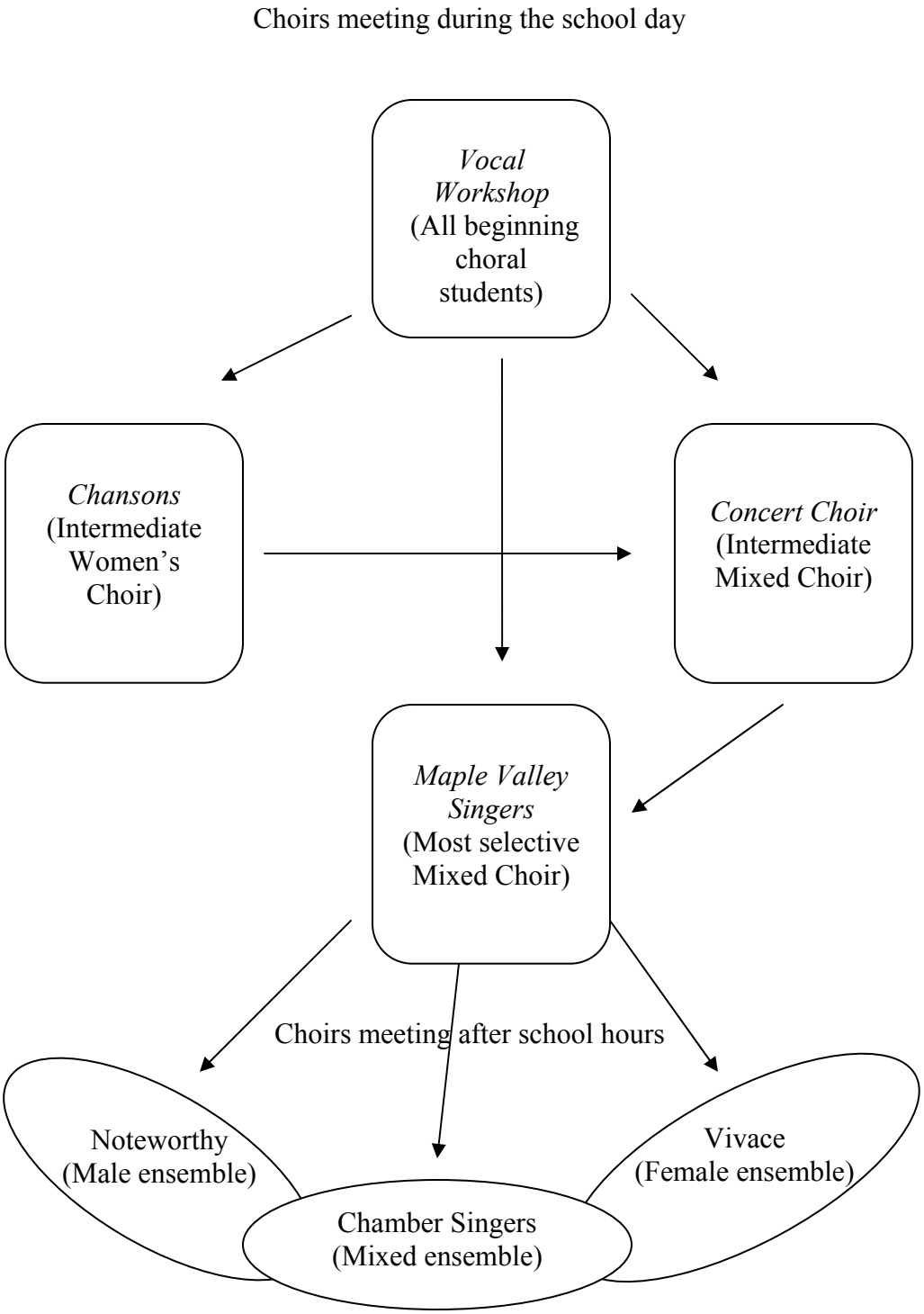

Figure 5. Organization of the Maple Valley Choral Program (Arrows indicate typical student progression)

Another important aspect of the program was the rotating lesson schedule in which each student participated. The rotating lesson schedule was in place prior to Mrs. Wood's first year of teaching. In this schedule, each choral student missed another course once per week to have a group voice lesson. The rotating lesson schedule allowed students to meet with the other students of the same voice part in their respective choirs (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass). Each choir typically performed in three distinct concerts per year: a Winter Concert; a Spring Concert; and Broadway Night, which occurred three evenings and consisted of popular and Broadway music with solos, small ensembles, and massed choir numbers. Additionally, the choirs annually traveled on a spring trip that included performing at a festival and/or competition.

During my 3-day visit I observed the obvious consistency in Mrs. Wood's teaching. The basic structure of all of Mrs. Wood's choral classes was the same: she began playing the piano as the students entered the room and moved to their seats, then immediately sang warm-ups and sight-reading exercises, then began choral repertoire. This approach, although differentiated for the levels of the students, was well-planned, methodical, creative, and engaging. The atmosphere in the classroom was relaxed yet focused.

The Gatekeeper: Katherine Wood

> The important thing and key to my success is to keep on changing and adjusting! I am not set in my ways except in the things that I prize: vocal technique, great repertoire, student leadership. You know you've got to own it.... It has been a really great journey, and all along the way there have been changes, and I have grown so much as a teacher; things that you can't learn except by doing, except by being thrown in there...are you going to adjust or go down with your plan? (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 143 – 155)

Prior to coming to MVHS, Mrs. Wood taught chorus in a junior high school for 4 years and for 2 years in a high school. When her second child was born, she resigned from school teaching and began teaching private voice lessons and working with a church music program with her husband, who also is a musician and recording artist. In 1989, after being out of teaching school for 7 years, Mrs. Wood decided to take the choral position at MVHS and quickly began sharpening her skills by attending choral workshops and questioning colleagues about their programs.

Building a Strong Choral Program

When Mrs. Wood began at MVHS, the school had approximately 1,400 students and a choral program of about 60 students, of which 11 were males. The community was very supportive of the arts, and the students received instruction in singing from elementary school through high school. Mrs. Wood began her career at MVHS teaching three classes at the high school and traveling to the junior high school a couple of days a week to teach choir during an enrichment period. She immediately changed the structure of the classes at both the middle and high schools and began an innovative recruitment process to build the choral program. This process included recruiting at football practices, singing a medley of the type of music choirs would be performing at an

assembly for freshmen, and blending the traditional choral repertoire with more popular literature for student body performances.

> Groups that could succeed would do assemblies for the student body in front of their peers with music that they could relate to, and it wasn't all pop....just to get the whole cool thing going on. And then it exploded because all the junior high kids came up. So, then it was a matter of who are you going to tell that they can't be in choir? (Taped interview, October 19, 2005, Lines 124 – 127)

Although Mrs. Wood changed the structure of the program, there were some traditions that she kept intact, such as singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" at the Holiday Concert, but she also started some traditions of her own. One tradition she began was to take music trips to perform and compete each year. The trophies from these performances are predominant in the classroom. Another tradition she began was a revue type show called Broadway Night.

The Broadway Night tradition was met with some resistance at first. Other teachers in the school felt it was impossible to get parents to come to any more concerts. The first Broadway Night consisted of medleys from musical theater productions. Mrs. Wood had small and large groups singing and dancing with many solos. She also asked several faculty members to sing solos with the students. It was a huge success and provided a new opportunity for students to excel.

Now in her 17th year at MVHS, Mrs. Wood has seen the program grow from 60 students to approximately 330 students. This growth in the program was not only in physical numbers of students in the program but also in quality of performance. She has seen significant improvement in the musical abilities of the choral students throughout the years, recalling that 1994 was "the year that things started happening." The gradual increases in musical quality led to success in performance and competition.

Philosophical Approach to the Choral Classroom

Striving for excellence.

Mrs. Wood's overarching beliefs about her responsibilities and the purpose of a choral program centered on the importance of striving for excellence. This pursuit is part of her personality and is reflected in her approach to the classroom. A primary goal was the growth of her students to become competent musicians who use critical listening skills.

> I am training people to be musical. Training them to be good critics of what good music is and be consumers of music and to raise the level of awareness and speak in musical terms. That is why I am insistent of learning theory with these kids. (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 445 – 450)

This idea of being a good critic of music was a theme surrounding Mrs. Wood's philosophy of teaching. "[I believe in] a lot of evaluation and continual critiquing. I am a very critical listener (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 259 – 260). Mrs. Wood believed that listening to other choirs and getting feedback from others on performance is a huge part of the growth process for all involved.

Competition.

Festival competitions served as a source of feedback on the choirs' performance both for the students and for the teacher. Mrs. Wood wanted her students to see that the level of performance not only was indicative of the talent of the students but also the abilities of the teacher to instruct. In addition to the ability to evaluate performance, she wanted her students to feel safe when they perform. She endeavored to create an atmosphere that honors the work the students have done. This included being honest about their performance and complimenting only their best work. She respected her

students and believed that this attitude builds reverence for the choral program.

For Mrs. Wood, competitive experiences take two distinct forms, the first being a way to motivate students during rehearsal. She often created miniature competitions between sections or gender groups within the choir. The second type of competition was having the choir perform for a rating and placement among others. Each year, Mrs. Wood took a spring trip that usually included a festival performance. Her approach to competition was based on a belief that "when I prepare you for that, you are much more aware" (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 660). Her valuing of competition for the risk-taking was encouraged and she anticipated musical growth as an outcome of critical feedback.

Atmosphere that fosters life skills.

Mrs. Wood believed that creating a positive atmosphere where it is safe to take risks enabled the students to feel "cool," "positive," or "really strong" about their performances. Each performance was an opportunity to move the audience and for the choir to express that they have "something of value to say." The students should know they have done something significant and believe that they can set a goal and reach it. It was assumed that the students would also realize the benefits of patience, hard work, diligence, and how to work with others. The students at MVHS have more economic and cultural differences with each other than similarities, but the music and the respect for each other was something that they share. Mrs. Wood believed that the social interaction and character building experiences not only make the students better public speakers but also better at connecting to their emotions.

Inventiveness and creativity.

Mrs. Wood viewed teaching as a problem solving process based on the belief that inventiveness and creativity are crucial to engage students in learning. She has gradually learned "by doing" and believes her skills have significantly improved since her early years at MVHS. Her understanding of choral music has broadened and she is much more aware of stylistic nuances:

> I guess I have just grown musically because the more I listen to other people, listen to other choirs, the more I do workshops myself...I learn a lot about myself and how I can work it...the experience and always changing. (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 217 – 243)

Mrs. Wood's willingness to be open to her strengths and weaknesses has allowed her to grow. Her knowledge of content, personality, and ability to adapt in situations are strong indicators of how the choral program at MVHS became successful.

The classroom experience

My observations at MVHS took place over three consecutive days in the fall of 2005. Though the school is 75% Caucasian, the students in the choir were of many different nationalities, including Asian, African American, Hispanic, and Native American, and they appeared to be distinct individuals with an interest in choral music as their unifying characteristic. The students had been in school a little over a month when I visited. The young choirs were still in the beginning stages of the program and were anticipating the first concert. More experienced students, some of whom were in small ensembles, were already performing in the community and vocally progressing toward their goals for excellence.

Mrs. Wood used a great deal of vocal modeling. Her beautiful voice, which she admitted she uses a little too much, is an attribute to her teaching of vocal technique. She

spent significant time on warm-up exercises. The exercises, which were each directed at a specific vocal technique, included melodic and rhythmic echoing, scale patterns on "zee zah," do – sol – do patterns on "hmm mah ee," and a five note pattern repeating the fifth scale degree. Coming down they used the vowels "ee oh ah ah ah ah oo ee" while gesturing with the thumb upward from the abdomen. Comments such as, "It's got to spin" while they were pointing their fingers upward and "I don't want to hear the breath" guided the students toward the class goals (Field notes, October 19, 20, 21, 2005).

The pace of the classes was brisk and fun. The students often laughed as they remain focused on the lesson and their role in the rehearsal. A short portion of each rehearsal included at least one sight-reading example sung on solfeggio. During one class, Mrs. Wood asked the students the goals for the song they were about to rehearse. They quickly responded with a list of important factors; breath, tone, diction, intensity, energy, dynamics, pitch, line. Before beginning the piece, Mrs. Wood reminded the students, "Accurate and musical." The students responded by singing correct notes with dynamic contrast and shaping of the musical line.

In the Concert Choir, the students were about to sing "May Night" by Johannes Brahms. Mrs. Wood sang a section of the song, as the students did hand motions encouraging forward motion, good placement of the tone, and the breath connection points. The students ended their motions with an upward finger circling to spin the tone. In Mrs. Wood's view this preparation saved much time because the students exchanged the spoken word for actions that engaged them in music making. Many meaningful comments and subtle gestures limited the teacher talk and maximized the student time on task:

Who did better on the first try?
Will it happen this time or will I have to do it again?
This section was very sloppy
You just sang a really nice warm-up, now let me hear that tone
This is not called the follow the good singer choir
Syllabic stress!
Light and lifted
Open throat!
Tell me the key and starting note
Excellent placement (Field notes, October 19, 20, 21, 2005)

To end each class, Mrs. Wood reviewed the covered material to prepare students for the next day. The calendar grid on which she prepared her lessons interspersed theory, student journaling, and daily sight-reading exercises with the scheduling of repertoire rehearsal that was backward planned from the target performance date. Mrs. Wood believed the most important goals of classes are to engage the students in what they are doing, to make sure they understand the concepts, to realize what they have accomplished, and to know the goal for the future.

Discussion

During the first 5 to 6 years of Mrs. Wood's tenure at MVHS, it appeared that the focus of the choral program was on being both bigger and better. As Mrs. Wood indicated, 1994 was the year that the choral program reached a particularly high level of achievement. Five of the eight former-student participants were in the choral program during the 1993 - 1994 school year, although they were not all in Maple Valley Singers, the most advanced group. While several former-student participants experienced the early years of recruitment, all of the participants played a part in the gradual improvement of the quality of performance.

The curricular goals of the choral classes, as stated on the course syllabi, indicate the goals of the choir program for students:

1) to become acquainted with examples of major forms of choral music for the appropriate level of vocal development and is representative of composers of various cultures and all artistic periods;
2) to continue the development of their voices to reach their potential according to years of physical growth;
3) to learn the fundamentals of music through the studies of sight-singing, ear-training, musicianship drills, music theory, and the visual language of music; and, to be made aware of professions and job opportunities that require a knowledge of music. (Appendix G)

The heart of the choral music education program at MVHS was the teaching of vocal technique and music reading skills with emphasis on critical listening and evaluation. An additional important aspect of the program for Mrs. Wood was its positive influence on the social interactions and the development of life skills far beyond the teaching of music. Although Mrs. Wood does not consider herself a "warm and fuzzy" individual, she cares deeply for what she does and for her students and believes that the emotional and social aspects of the choral program are significant in the lives of her students.

The National Standards for Music (Music Educators National Conference, 1994) encourage the inclusion of specific standards in singing, playing instruments, reading music, composition, improvisation, historical and cultural connections to music, and the connection of music to other disciplines. Mrs. Wood's instruction primarily focused on the teaching of vocal technique and sight-singing skills. She currently incorporates many kinesthetic gestures with the students to connect the voice and body, but indicated that this was not the case between the years of 1988 - 1998.

Music reading through sight-singing has always been an important aspect of the MVHS choral program; however, the study of theoretical aspects of music has varied throughout her tenure. During her second year at MVHS, Mrs. Wood began using a theory text, but soon changed to a packet that she created. Initially, the theory packet was

used for days when she was absent from the class, but she realized that this was sending the students the wrong message about the importance of theory. She expanded her attention to music theory and currently, students work from the theory packet daily in Vocal Workshop.

The teaching of music history has been less of a focus for Mrs. Wood's classes. She attempts to incorporate historical information of each piece to be sung by the choir, but often does not find the time. She feels that she often has to choose whether the choir will sight-read or spend time on historical relevance of choral literature. Additionally, while she does not focus on improvisation or composing, only occasionally interspersing composition projects, she believes that the skills of critical evaluation, listening, discussing, and analyzing music are crucial in the development of a well-rounded musician.

For Mrs. Wood, the major components of the MVHS choral program are pursuing high standards and performing high-quality repertoire. Her mission is to hold the students to the same high standards that she demands of herself. Everyone in the choral program must be willing to learn more and to be constantly challenged. While Mrs. Wood focused primarily on performance to establish the choral program, it appears that her focus has somewhat shifted to a more balanced and complete music education in her current classroom.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented a detailed description of the setting of the choral program. I have provided background information about the choral director and her philosophy of teaching and basic tenets of the choral classroom experience at MVHS.

These descriptions were written in narrative form to allow the reader to construct his or her own impressions of the choral program. I followed this section with a discussion of the most relevant aspects for my study of the choral program and its director.

The next chapter will present narratives of each of the former-student participants. I have chosen to present the participants under three basic themes that represent their general perceptions of the value of the choral program in their lives: 1) taking pride in pursuing excellence, 2) chorus as social experience, and 3) finding personal growth. Each narrative will be followed by my interpretations of the commonalities and dissimilarities of the reflections of the participants.

CHAPTER 5

RESONATING VOICES: PERCEPTIONS OF MEANING AND LIFELONG INFLUENCE

In this chapter, I present the narratives of the former-student participants that I created from their respective data. I have organized the narratives around three themes that emerged: 1) taking pride in pursuing excellence, 2) chorus as social experience, and 3) finding personal growth. These themes relate directly to my research questions and interestingly are similar to the goals that Mrs. Wood, the choral director, expressed for the program. Each narrative is organized according to the following structure: introduction; recollections of the classroom and performance; family, academic, and musical connections; and lifelong influence. Following each general theme's narratives, I discuss the findings that emerge from the participants' stories in that section.

Taking pride in pursuing excellence is the first theme. This section relates the stories of Sharyn, Rachel, and Shellie. These three participants focused on achieving excellence in their choral experience as their most significant reflection regarding the choral program. The next section looks at the theme, chorus as social experience, as the most important reflection. Brian and Hannah particularly valued interactions with friends and the social behaviors they learned while they were part of the choral program. These participants viewed the social experience as a significant benefit from their choral background. The final thematic section focuses on chorus as related to personal growth. These are the stories of Rebecca, Dylan, and Andrew. These students' personal

development and understanding of themselves grew during their choral experience, making it an influential force in their lives. A chart representing the organization of the narratives around the themes is provided in Figure 6. In Figure 7, I provide a reference chart indicating the years of each former student's choir participation.

Organizing Themes based on Participants' Perceptions of High School Chorus		
Theme I	Taking pride in pursuing excellence	Sharyn, Rachel, and Shellie
Theme II	Chorus as social experience	Brian and Hannah
Theme III	Chorus as personal growth	Rebecca, Dylan, and Andrew

Figure 6. Organization of narratives around themes

Choir Participation During High School					
PARTICIPANTS	Vocal Workshop	Chanson	Concert Choir	Maple Valley Singers	Chamber Singers
Brian				1988-1992	
Shellie	1990-1991		1993-1994	1991-1994	1993-1994
Rebecca	1990-1991			1991-1994	
Hannah	1990-1991	1991-1992		1992-1994	1993-1994
Dylan	1991-1992			1992-1995	
Andrew	1991-1992, 1993-1995		1992-1993, 1994-1995	1993-1995	
Rachel	1994-1995			1995-1998	1997-1998
Sharyn	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1997-1998

Figure 7. Chart of former-student choral participation

Theme I: Taking Pride in Pursuing Excellence

The narratives in this section focus on three former-student participants: Sharyn, Rachel, and Shellie. From the data collected in the two interviews with each participant, I determined that the primary factor of meaning for these students centered on their desire to be involved in an activity that was high caliber. Furthermore, these students took great pride in the exceptional performance level of their choral program. These narratives describe their reflections and beliefs about their experiences.

Sharyn: The diligent student

> Some of it was very hard work, but nothing good comes without hard work. All the hard work was worth it. (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 132 – 133)

Introduction.

Sharyn and I met in a coffee shop on the campus of an Ivy League university in the northeastern United States, where she was working toward a Ph.D. in political science. Based on our e-mail correspondence, I sensed that Sharyn was a 'put together' person who paid attention to detail. Her physical appearance reflected these characteristics; therefore, I recognized her immediately as she walked through the university gate and toward the coffee shop. She was neatly dressed, petite, with dark curly hair and brown eyes.

We found a table in the back of the shop for our interview, and our conversation began with a brief discussion of our doctoral programs. Sharyn indicated that she will be getting married in a few months. Though extremely busy with her own research and wedding plans, she nevertheless, was willing to talk with me about her experiences in

high school chorus. The time she spent in chorus appeared to have been very valuable to her.

> It [chorus] was just one of those things that you really wanted to be a part of; well I at least I wanted to be a part of. Everyone seemed to be having such a great time. I think all of my memories of high school are kind of within the choral program.... I always wanted to be in the Chamber Choir and wear that silly purple dress! (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 3 – 10)

Sharyn graduated from Maple Valley High School (MVHS) in 1998, where she was in chorus for 4 years. She yearned to move through the choral program to participate in the prestigious Maple Valley Singers (MVS) and the after-school ensemble, Chamber Singers. As most choral students at MVHS, she began in Vocal Workshop, and then spent 2 years in Concert Choir. In her senior year, Sharyn finally reached her goal of MVS and Chamber Singers.

Sharyn's choral participation contributed to her high school identity: "It [chorus] kind of colors my whole high school experience…. It's the music and the people who were there and being able to create something that was really nice" (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Line 87). Chorus helped her feel recognized for "being a part of something excellent....The tone of the program was that we have this history of being good, and you are part of this history, and you have to continually improve" (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 136 – 137). She knew what the expectations were, and wanted to help attain a high-quality performance level, continuing the history of excellence. A sense of achievement, both personally and for the group, was her primary interest: "Just knowing that there's more that you can do than you ever thought you could do" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 454 – 455).

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Sharyn remembered that classroom rehearsals started with warm-ups, then scales and sight-singing. The remainder of the class was spent learning music for upcoming performances. New pieces were approached by taking one voice part, singing slowly one line (i.e., soprano, alto, tenor, bass) at a time with the piano on a neutral syllable, and then putting all the voice parts back together. Sharyn recalled writing evaluations of the choir's performance after each concert. One project involved the students' comparing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" and "Joyful, Joyful" from the movie "Sister Act." She also reflected that for each piece that the choir sang, there were discussions about the composer. They would talk about the "kind of feeling of it and why the piece kind of came together, why [they] were doing one song in the program in addition to another one" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 269 – 271).

Individual auditions for choir placement were a "nerve-racking" experience for Sharyn. The students would sing in four part ensembles with one person on a part and also sight-sing individually for the director. In contrast, Sharyn enjoyed performances and did not find them stressful. The performances were "what we worked for all year long." The school concerts offered an opportunity to see what other choirs were doing and to demonstrate the abilities of her own choir. She did not have stage fright, but remembered the feeling of everyone's watching and being "caught in the moment" of the experience. Though the students rehearsed far more than they performed publicly, Sharyn found it interesting that most of her memories were about performance.

MVS was a highlight for Sharyn, partially because of the selective nature of the choir and the high level of focus demonstrated by its members. The students had a good

time and often socialized, but they also valued hard work: "It's [choir] a responsibility as much as it is a pleasure" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 211 – 216). Sharyn did not consider herself to be one of the more talented students; however, she believed that she had an important role in the choir: "There were a lot of really talented people, but a couple of times I had a solo, here and there" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 163 - 164).

Sharyn took pride in being a part of the high level performances by MVS at numerous competitions:

> Competitions were interesting. I mean we did all 4 years that I was there and there were only a couple of times that we ever saw a choir who was, kind of at the same level. And I don't mean to be snide, but there were just a lot of different levels that would go to these competitions. So, you never felt like they were competitions, at least I didn't, because it seemed like most of the other choirs were in another place....(Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 184 – 189).

Sharyn liked to win; however, she did not believe Mrs. Wood focused on winning. Mrs. Wood's had high expectations of the choirs' performance and believed that if the students met those expectations, success at competitions would follow.

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Sharyn saw no divide between "school music" and her "real world" of music. Because her mom was always singing, it was natural for Sharyn to sing. Her parents did not play any instruments, but recorded music was frequently played at home. Having danced as a child, classical music was always a part of her extra-curricular activities. She remembered listening to music and thinking about it.

Sharyn's parents valued the arts and encouraged her to take less Advanced Placement courses in high school, in order to have a more well-rounded education that

included chorus. Sharyn did not feel that music necessarily helped her in other academic classes, but rather believed that chorus gave her the opportunity to utilize the "other side of her brain" and a unique mode of thinking. Sharyn observed, "Just like you learn English even though you are not going to become an English professor, but because it is something to talk about and a way of learning" (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Line 15). For Sharyn, chorus made high school more enjoyable and offered her experiences beyond those of the standard academic curriculum.

Carryover and lifelong influence.

After high school, Sharyn sang in a choir in college, but did not enjoy it as much as her high school experience. The choir was composed only of women and the quality did not meet the expectations she had learned during high school: "That [high school choir] is one of the parts of my life that I miss the most. I sang in college for a few years, but it wasn't the same. I just never found that kind of music again, and I miss it" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 303-305).

Her positive choral experiences in high school choir seem to have made her more interested in singing and being involved in organized music as an adult. Sharyn relayed to me that she was not "living up to the potential" that her high school choral program provided and wished that she had an opportunity to continue singing at such a high level: "I kind of get this little pang every time I hear great choral music or my mom singing in choir. I wish I had a forum" (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 117 – 199).

Sharyn valued the appreciation of music that she gained from her participation in high school choir and indicated that her learning was "far more than notes on a page." Sharyn was exposed to and sang many styles of music in many languages, and found that

this experience not only gave her an appreciation of diverse music, but also an honoring of different cultures: "I love African music and maybe I would have come to that naturally, but I doubt it" (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Line 153).

Sharyn reflected on singing sacred, Christian choral music in high school, and indicated that this music sometimes conflicted with her Jewish faith. This was something that she "really struggled with" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Line 30). There were songs that she could appreciate for their meaning to those of other religions or there historical value, but she still felt somewhat conflicted: "It's just music, but it's not just music at the same time" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Line 315).

Learning to take criticism and to listen critically was a large part of Sharyn's education in chorus. She valued the lessons learned regarding accepting criticism and felt that this skill was useful in her adult life:

> Learning to take criticism as a group and really learning to take responsibility for your place in the group is a skill that carries into everyday life. If you are responsible, then you take the group criticism and apply it to yourself. (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 27 -32)

Mrs. Wood's focus on group performance, rather than individual vocal achievement, suited Sharyn. Though she may not have been the "best singer," she had opportunities to achieve excellence as part of the group. "One of the things that is still a part of me is to be the best at whatever I do, but sometimes being the best is being part of a group rather than being the individual or the star" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 19 – 21). Sharyn believed that the critical analysis training made her confident in judging quality of singing and gave her an appreciation for how difficult "good" music-making can be.

Sharyn viewed music as more extra-curricular than curricular. It was a way to take a break from other studies yet still to be actively engaged in thinking. Chorus

allowed Sharyn the opportunity for self-expression and creativity:

> I think that there is a value inherent in joining organizations like choruses, because I think they make you more attached to your school and more attached to obviously music, but also each other. You know, flourishing of civic culture...just being a part – one of many, and your ultimate goal is to create something beautiful. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 397 - 403)

Sharyn expressed appreciation for the importance of art in society and credited her participation in choir for this perspective:

> As far as being a holistic person and recognizing the community that is out there that we can create together, and that's not something you can necessarily get through a football program. You know, once you cut the arts, you cut out different kinds of thinking skills; and music has all these connections in terms of the way we experience life. I do think that you get attachments to people and to memories that you can get maybe through other organizations, but they are different.... You get a visceral memory with choral music that I don't think you have with other things. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 436 – 445)

Rachel: Choir and other electives provided "a full spice rack"

> I remember it really being about making beautiful music and having those good times but also knowing what you're doing is the right way and that there is a wrong way. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 227 – 230)

Introduction.

I met Rachel for both interviews in her home. Each time her very excited dog greeted me at the door and demanded her attention at different intervals throughout our discussions. Rachel has curly brown hair and a happy disposition. She recently began her teaching career as a visual art instructor, and her artistic sensibilities were visible in her home. Rachel graduated from MVHS in 1998 and was involved in the choral program throughout high school. She was eager to share her fond memories of this experience.

Rachel primarily valued choir for the high quality music making, but also found that it helped socially. Going to high school from a private school meant making all new friends and participation in choir eased this transition. Beginning in Vocal Workshop her freshman year, Rachel met her best friend who later was her maid of honor.

Rachel relayed that the activities during her senior year were among her fondest memories of chorus, specifically noting a performance at St. Peter's Basilica in New York:

> All I can say is I loved it! I guess you would have considered me a chorus priss or whatever - however you categorize high school kids in choir. That was one of my most memorable things. I did a whole lot of other activities: student government, president of the performing and visual arts society, but I loved chorus from the first day I got there. (Taped interview, June23, 2005, Lines 2 – 6)

Chorus provided Rachel with a sense of success as a member of the group, but also as an individual. For example, she was one of only four freshmen to move directly to MVS from Vocal Workshop. Such individual and group successes seemed to be a factor in Rachel's love for and dedication to chorus. Although some students were unhappy with the amount of time that choir took and the constant critique, Rachel saw it as an opportunity to learn from someone who knew how to sing: "I am not the specialist in this area, I will take all the constructive criticism that I can get" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 110 – 111).

Rachel took pride in her abilities and in the excellence of the choir, which had the reputation of being among the finest in the country. Ultimately, chorus was a place where Rachel could be happy: "You know that you are going to gain friends and skills that you can take with you, and you may even gain awards or recognition within the school" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 308 – 310).

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Rachel recalled many specific details of rehearsal including Mrs. Wood's warm-up routine. Each student would turn to his or her neighbor and rub and chop their shoulders, then sing chromatic scales, then open their black folders and sing. Rachel said that the students were always "very upbeat and ready to go!" They were united in their pursuit of quality, and Rachel viewed choir much like a family. Of course, there were some people whom she did not like, but standing and singing next to them was not a "big deal."

Rachel benefited from the vocal technique that Mrs. Wood emphasized in chorus: "I knew how to sing, but she really brought it out: breathing, time keeping, and everything to that effect" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 16 – 17). She perceived Mrs. Wood as being "tough," but stated that otherwise choir would have been "fun-based and not learning-based" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 128 – 129).

Auditioning caused Rachel to feel nervous because she had to sing in front of her peers, but she felt the process was fair and that the environment was supportive. Choir placement began with everyone receiving a new song and then forming small groups in order to practice. When called upon, each group would sing and Mrs. Wood placed individuals accordingly.

Regarding written work, Rachel remembered having a test about twice each semester, but aural skills were always the priority. It was important that the students could "hear the right things and sing them" and possess an accurate sense of intonation. Rachel did not recall other areas of instruction, such as improvisation, creation, or music history.

The repertoire represented a variety of styles, which included gospel and spiritual songs. Rachel also remembered performing an original composition of a former student and a requiem mass. Rachel noted a lack of repertoire related to her Jewish faith and would have offered some Hebrew literature suggestions but did not feel it was appropriate or within her realm of expertise. In addition, she was unaware of Hebrew music representative of technical level of the choir. The singing of Christian, sacred text concerned her at times:

> I don't believe what it is saying; it's just that I would have liked to have seen a little more diversity, which I think she has brought into the program since then.... But, you know what? The music was beautiful. Would I have liked to have seen other stuff? Yes, but I don't think I was ever really offended. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 340 – 353)

A significant aspect of the choral program for Rachel was the festival competitions and trips, which offered the opportunity to develop a critical ear while listening to other choirs:

> Once we found a choir that we thought was good, we wanted to make friends with them. The others ones...we were like...they were horrible. Going back to that choir priss, I must say, at least while I was there...we were like..."they stink, we don't know what they are doing here." (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 171 – 176)

Rachel's critical analysis of other choirs stemmed from the high expectations that Mrs. Wood held for the MVHS students:

> I don't think we did it in a bad way, per se, but we were very critical of ourselves as well. We would comment, you're a little flat there, a little sharp there; you have to get off on that note, you must be precise, and what not. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 180 – 184)

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Rachel's family supported her decision to be in choir and everyone in her family, including her grandparents, came to her chorus concerts. Her mother was a singer and an

actress, and several family members played piano. Gathering around the piano to sing while visiting her grandparents was a common occurrence.

Rachel cited chorus as being beneficial to her other academic classes and that she would use music as a learning tool. For example, she would set words to music in order to memorize facts. Although Rachel considered herself a good student, her interests moved beyond the typical core studies:

> I was in the top ten percent of my class. Academics were a big thing to me, but I knew I was never going to be an engineer or a mathematician or an English major, so it was very important for me to take those electives [visual art and chorus]. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 287 – 289)

Often times, Rachel would use her lunch period as an opportunity to take more elective courses:

> Students need this rounded education. You can't just gear it to the math and sciences and English. You don't get a full spice rack. Even if you take one marking period of it, you are getting a taste of things that you could not have otherwise gotten, and it is something out of your ordinary, something that you probably wouldn't have gotten otherwise. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 329 – 333)

Rachel was able to make connections between her school music experiences and the music of her "real world." She found herself judging the singers on the radio and hypothesizing as to who may have been in choir or taken singing lessons. Although technological advances are apparent in "real world" music, Rachel particularly appreciated the simplicity of the piano and the human interactions that were a large part of her choir experience:

> I loved the fact that it was the piano in the middle of the room and the risers going around it. You have all that other stuff [popular music] when you got out of school. This was your time to learn different music that you probably wouldn't have listened to otherwise. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 315 – 320)

Carryover and lifelong influence.

Rachel noted three aspects of her adult life that she believed were enhanced, if not completely influenced, by her involvement in her high school choral program. First, she learned how to function in a group:

> Really coming together...you come to class, and you are each a separate student coming from English and math and science or art or gym; and you come into this classroom, get up to the risers, get out your music, and become a chorus that is working together and making this music. (Taped interview, October 19, 2005, Lines 123 – 129)

This notion of teamwork and the importance of individual contribution have helped Rachel in her career, because a teacher must be part of a staff but also have an individual identity and take on leadership roles. It was also possible that Rachel's interest in group work and committee service stemmed from her years in chorus. She volunteered for committees in college and continued to see this as an important part of her identity.

Secondly, Rachel believed that her valuing of diversity in people, culture, and sound were outcomes of her education in choir: "People come from all different backgrounds, and they have all different sounds, you get them together in the chorus and blend, and it really sounds great" (Taped interview, October 19, 2005, Lines 118 – 121).

Finally, in addition to teamwork skills and the valuing of diversity, Rachel believed that chorus contributed to her sense of discipline. The discipline required to breathe properly and learn new music is helpful in other areas of life, such as completing endeavors and accomplishing goals.

Rachel never viewed chorus and music as her professional career path, but she enjoyed being recognized as musically trained. Early in her high school years, Rachel realized that she was most gifted at visual art and sang primarily for enjoyment.

In college, Rachel elected not to audition for choir because she was consumed by her visual art commitments and felt that her music reading skills were inadequate. Rachel no longer knows note names, but can tell if a note is higher or lower than another and can quickly sing a melody back if it is modeled for her. Rachel has not given up hope of actually reading music. She recently inherited a piano and plans to take lessons.

Rachel related that she enjoys singing in the congregation at her synagogue and noticed that people turn around to see who can sing the harmonies. Rachel wished that she had more of an outlet to sing and hoped to find a choir.

Recently, Rachel had the opportunity to sing on a recording with another woman, but was frustrated by the other singer's vocal imprecision. Rachel believed that her choral experience in high school caused her ears to be extremely sensitive to errors as she listens to music: "They perk up at anything that doesn't quite sound right" (Taped interview, October 19, 2005, Line 57).

Due to the formal structure of a choral music class and the close attention to proper singing techniques, Rachel did not believe that the choral program influenced her imaginative abilities, nor did it help her discover anything personally. Primarily, the choral experience was an excellent outlet for the expression of her feelings and thoughts.

Although she is still quite frightened to sing alone in front of a group, she believed that, to a degree, chorus positively affected her ability to take risks in her learning: "I always knew that I loved to sing, and I also knew that getting up in front of a lot of people made me nervous. I didn't really overcome that. I still realize it" (Taped interview, October 19, 2005, Lines 15 – 17).

Shellie: An opportunity to be special and important

> Initially, it [chorus] was a social thing; that's why I joined. Only after a few years it was obvious that she was doing great things with the program. How much fun all of us were having in it! (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 5 - 8)

Introduction.

For our first meeting, Shellie invited me to her home, which was a small bungalow with much character. Shellie had a dark complexion, dark eyes and hair, a slight frame, and a bubbly and cheerful personality. As we sat on the patio to talk, Shellie's cats joined us and one sat in my lap. Shellie had been a nurse and was in the process of becoming an interior designer. Her husband was a professional trombonist. Shellie graduated from MVHS in 1994 and participated in choir all 4 years. She was relaxed and eager to tell me about her memories of chorus.

Shellie's primary motivation for participating in chorus was musical excellence, but by admission, she initially joined chorus for the social opportunities: "It was a lot of fun and a lot of good friends. I made most of my friends because I was in choir" (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 2 – 3). Shellie was in the beginning choir, Vocal Workshop, her freshman year, but very quickly moved to Maple Valley Singers (MVS), bypassing the other levels. Although she felt lucky and proud of her accomplishment, this separated her from her friends who did not move to the top-level choir. Shellie felt young and out of place, but gradually became part of the group.

During her senior year, she had an extra class period and chose to also sing in the Concert Choir in addition to MVS. This experience was gratifying for Shellie because she was able to mentor younger singers:

> Yeah, people who sat around me were like, "Shellie, what's my note?"

> Also, the other thing that was nice was that Mrs. Wood made me a soprano two in that choir because she wanted to stretch my range a little bit. Mrs. Wood would say, "You have it; you can sing higher; you just don't like to." (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 70 – 73)

Shellie described herself as shy and believed that choir made a difference in her social life. Choir increased the quality of her friendships and helped to create new friendships, especially with people she would have never met otherwise. Vocal Workshop was a tight-knit group that was extremely supportive of each other, but MVS was different and somewhat "cliquey."

> When I got to sophomore year, MVS, it was a little funny because I was so young, and it was uncommon for sophomores to be in MVS. I didn't go into it having friends, and so I had to make friends with the juniors and seniors around me. It was hard.... (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 240 – 246)

The choir students at Maple Valley were considered "cool" and not "typical choir geeks." The combination of having close friends involved in choir and believing choir was a socially accepted activity, eventually freed Shellie up to see the experience and music in broader terms:

> Just being around it so much, I started to listen to it differently, and it just became part of my life. I think my attitude about it changed. I realized this is what choral music is, and this is how it is supposed to sound. I don't know if that's making sense, but at some point I realized this is good stuff, and you should appreciate it for what it is. (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 399 – 403)

The experience of being part of something outstanding became increasingly valuable to Shellie:

> I knew I was part of something special. I look back on that [experience] and I think, 'Other people don't have choirs that sound like this.' I haven't sung in a choir that sounded this good since then. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 102 – 105)

Because the choir had a history of excellence, won competitions, and was selected to

perform at many events, Shellie thought that her choir was far better than most. This made her very proud of their accomplishments.

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Shellie remembered specific patterns in daily rehearsals and the importance of those patterns. Each day, she would enter the choir room and all the students would chat until Mrs. Wood got angry and the students fell silent. The section leaders took attendance and Mrs. Wood began warm-ups: "Warming up was a big deal" (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Line 131). After warm-ups, the class would begin working on a song. The students would work steadfastly until the end of class.

Choir selection and section leaders were determined by end-of-the-year vocal tests. Shellie described this process as "nerve-racking" because she was required to sing in front of her peers but also felt somewhat confident because she had strong musical skills. Shellie had played the piano for most of her life which enabled her to read music and understand sight-singing better than most students.

The test consisted of performing a sight-singing example, and singing a portion of a song with one student on each voice part. Because Mrs. Wood knew everyone's ability level, she would select an exercise from the section of the sight-reading book that was appropriate for each student. Each student would sing the exercise in front of the class and then the next name would be called. This process reinforced the notion that reading music and learning to sight-sing were of great importance to Mrs. Wood; but this was only a portion of the students' musical work and education:

> Because it is one thing to just sing all the notes, it's another to add all the dynamics to get loud and soft and to sing softly and support it and make it sound good. You don't want to sound all airy and breathy. That doesn't sound good, but you don't want to be loud and overbearing and sound that

you're shouting either. (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 300 – 302)

Shellie remembered much of the choir's repertoire as being far beyond the ability of most high school choirs, and was amazed when her college choir sang many of the pieces she had performed in high school. She remembered singing the Brahms "Liebeslieder Waltzes," many songs in other languages, and some larger choral works:

> We did John Rutter's "Gloria," which I understand is a fairly large work. We did a piece called the "Chichester Psalms" with a local Symphony.... It was very challenging, but very cool. Like such a bizarre thing, but it was fun. (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 154 – 158)

Performances were enjoyable to Shellie because the choir could sing through an entire piece and not be stopped by Mrs. Wood to fix mistakes. She was so proud of the way the choir sounded: "We were good! I was so proud to be a part of what [Mrs. Wood] created at MVHS because we were so good" (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Lines 175 – 177). Shellie remembered that the choral program did not have the reputation of being outstanding yet, but had the sense that Mrs. Wood was building something, that each year the choir was moving to a higher level and increasing the public opinion of the choral program.

The success that the choir found at competitions was another indicator to Shellie that her choir was a high achieving organization. She specifically remembered the profundity of performing at the Kennedy Center. The choir was one of only eight high school choirs invited to sing at that competition, and she felt "elite just being there."

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Shellie's father often played music around the house when she was young. "My father gave me my love of music" (Taped interview, July 14, 2005, Line 331). Each Saturday and Sunday morning, he would blast music all through the house to wake the

children. She remembered that he loved 1940s Big Band music, and that he played a lot of Gershwin and Porter. One year, Broadway Night focused on the 1940s era, and she knew every song and loved it because it was her dad's music.

Shellie's mom was less interested in music but was the parent who faithfully attended every performance in which Shellie was involved. It was important to Shellie that her parents witnessed her doing something besides studying mathematics and science. Shellie's father wanted her to major in medicine, not in music or visual art. It was difficult for her to accept that a career in the arts was not an option, but she deeply appreciated the sacrifices of her immigrant parents and knew that they only wanted her to be successful.

Shellie saw a divide between the music that she listened to regularly and the music of choir. During her first experiences with choir, she felt the music was boring, old, and not very interesting. In contrast, when the choir sang popular music, she felt that all the students were much more interested. As she continued in the program, she gained a respect for great music of all time periods and came to believe that choir music can hold a very important place in the lives of students.

Shellie did not believe that being in choir affected her academic success: "I was good at academics in general, so for me music was another thing to be good at" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 42 – 45). For Shellie, participation in choir benefited her in two ways. First, there were social and personal benefits:

> What was nice for me was that I was always really shy in high school, and I think music gave me an opportunity to not be so shy somehow. Being on stage you had to learn to let go of that and perform. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 50 – 52)

Secondly, Mrs. Wood exposed Shellie to a world of music she never would have known

and taught her to appreciate varied forms of artistic expression:

> To realize that other people have things to teach you as long as you are open enough to accept that there is more than just what is on the radio and that you can appreciate classical music or jazz. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 71 – 74)

Carryover and lifelong influence.

Shellie related that she continues to be comfortable with her musical abilities and that while both choir and piano contributed to this comfort level, Mrs. Wood taught her most of what she knows about music. Shellie learned how to sing, how to "hold a note," and how to breathe. Chorus helped her understand how theory and solfeggio relate and how to determine a key signature. She was currently using these skills as she was singing with and directing a small a cappella choir.

Shellie missed having music as predominant in her life as it was during high school and credited Mrs. Wood with deepening her understanding of and feeling for music.

> I will always remember, and I don't know why, this one song in this one part, she said while we were learning it, "You guys like this part of the song don't you?" and we said, "Yeah." and she said, "I can tell." And every time I hear that song and when we get to that part I think of her saying that she could tell that we all liked it because of the way we sounded and I thought that was so fascinating. I think I listen to it with different ears because of that. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 189 – 194)

While there were many positive outcomes from choir that carried over to Shellie's adult life, having a trained ear has also led to frustration at times. While rehearsing with her a cappella choir, Shellie often felt frustrated by the large amount of time it took to learn a song and develop a high level of quality. The critique and evaluation skills that she learned in high school have become a constant part of her musical life and, at times,

have contributed to her dissatisfaction with music making as an adult.

Shellie believed that understanding the importance of teamwork was a life lesson learned in high school choir. She learned the importance of being a strong individual and working together:

> When you are part of an ensemble, sure you have to sound good, but you always have to be listening to everyone else at the same time. And that is a hard concept to actually apply; to blend with other people and volume wise to pay attention to other people. I think, in general, that is something really important for me about music. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 198 – 202)

Shellie believed that the lessons she learned in chorus (working together, discipline, and thinking deeply) can help students to be well-rounded individuals. She also expressed her belief that non-arts courses are meant to prepare students for the world of work, and can not offer students the important lessons that are learned in choir.

Discussion.

Sharyn, Shellie and Rachel, have evoked various themes in their reflections. Chief among these themes is pride in achieving musical excellence. Sharyn and Rachel graduated from Maple Valley in 1998 with Shellie graduating in 1994. While Shellie experienced the choral program's development, Sharyn and Rachel enjoyed the benefits of a reputable, highly-regarded choral program that already had a history of excellence.

All three participants were good students with good grades and had very supportive families that valued music to some degree. Although Sharyn's and Shellie's parents lacked musical training, all families often had music in their homes. All three participants found chorus to be a way to meet new and different kinds of people. They believed that chorus was an opportunity to be a part of a group that performed at a high level. These participants believed that their choir was better than those in other schools

in the country and that their experience was “special” and impacted each of them personally. They took great pride in their outstanding performances and accomplishments.

Sharyn, Rachel, and Shellie also focused much attention on the evaluative nature of their choral experience. They commented on taking criticism and learning to critique singing. The concept of “perfecting” their performance indicates the high level that they felt was accomplished. The skills and knowledge that they developed around vocal technique and their belief that Mrs. Wood’s approach to vocal music was superior have made them confident in their judgment of vocal quality. These skills in assessing quality have followed them into adult life, often causing frustration at the inabilities of other choirs and individuals to perform at a high level.

Exposure to many types of music and the development of a deep appreciation of music were also common threads for each of these women. The performing of challenging repertoire and many musical styles added to their feelings of pride and accomplishment. They viewed the exposure to different cultures through music as an educative experience that further supported the importance of the arts in the development of a well-rounded life.

While the social aspect of their choral experience was evident and important, the pride that these participants felt in achieving with a choir that focused on excellence in technique and the creation of beautiful, feeling music was the primary theme of their stories. The secondary themes that weave through the three participants’ stories are the learned abilities to critique and evaluate vocal performance, the exposure to varied styles of music, and the appreciation gained from that exposure.

Theme II: Social experience

The narratives of Brian and Hannah focused on the social benefits of the choral program at MVHS. This theme was evident throughout all eight participants' stories but was most prevalent in Brian and Hannah's recollections.

Brian: "That's where the babes are"

> I think it was stage in my life. I had a really good time doing it, and if I went back I would do it again. Do I dwell on it everyday? No. (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 81 – 82)

Introduction.

When I met Brian, his friendly and gregarious nature was immediately apparent. Brian did not have a lot to say about choir at the onset of our interview and seemed to be more comfortable having social conversation with me. This made our interviews very challenging.

Brian was the oldest participant in the study, having graduated from Maple Valley High in 1992. He was in chorus and band all 4 years of high school and frequently worked backstage in the school's theater productions. Since high school, Brian has been employed as a firefighter and is a single father of a young son.

Brian joined chorus during seventh grade but did not sing during his eighth grade year. He came back to choir during his first year of high school (ninth grade). A senior girl, whom he was dating, asked him to join chorus, and he did. Brian found chorus to be a fun social function and stayed with it. As he noted, "It's where the babes are" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 369). Although Brian apparently joined chorus because of a female relationship, he stayed because he was having a good time and eventually expanded his arts involvement into other areas.

The good time that Brian was having in choir provided him with an escape from his ordinary, everyday world. He liked choir so much that he enrolled in two choir classes and spent his lunch hour in choir. He had always loved to sing so this experience was perfect – he was singing and meeting girls at the same time! While Brian believed that most people joined chorus for the social aspects, he believed that as the program developed, a reputation of excellence became the reason for joining chorus:

> I think it was the success and people seeing the accomplishments. I would think that that had definitely something to do with it.... [The success of the program was based on] Mrs. Woods' ability to teach. (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 7 – 10)

I asked Brian how the rest of the student body responded to the choir students and their performances: "Well, you got laughed at; you got ridiculed" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 154). Brian was somewhat used to ridicule. His involvement in ROTC, which required him to attend school in a uniform, attracted much more negative attention than his participation in choir.

Brian had trouble making friends when he was young and attributed his lack of social confidence to the trauma associated with his parents' divorce. He was afraid of getting close to people who might end up hurting him. High school offered new and positive opportunities. He participated in many activities (band, chorus, and theater) and soon found many friends. Since high school, he has not had problems meeting people and has learned to "deal with people and open up" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 163).

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Brian's first experience with chorus immediately made him feel good about himself. While most students began in Vocal Workshop, Brian auditioned and was

accepted into Maple Valley Singers: "I actually went in for [Vocal Workshop], and she transferred me right out" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 37). Auditioning was never a "big deal" for Brian, but he did not remember having to sing in front of a large group of peers. When he auditioned to join choir, there were, at most, only one or two other males in the room. Brian auditioned for solo parts from time-to-time. He performed a solo once, but ultimately did not enjoy the experience and elected not to sing a solo again. Brian spoke highly of the auditioned popular boys' ensemble, "Noteworthy," but noted that he did not audition for that group and focused his extra-curricular time on marching band and theater.

Brian's description of a typical rehearsal indicated that the high expectations and the challenging environment were part of what he enjoyed. Everyday began by Brian walking in the door and giving winks and hugs to everyone. Rehearsal would begin with scales and warm-ups and then they would begin learning their music:

> She [Mrs. Wood] cracked a whip! If you did something wrong....She was tough. She definitely put all of her energy into it, made people realize, hey, if you're here, you're gonna work! It wasn't a free ride or a free class. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 89 – 93)

Although Brian learned to read music, often class songs were taught by rote methods:

> She would just start playing, but even though you could read, you didn't really know the notes until you heard the music. You had to try to work it out, and the first run through was terrible...She made it easier because she would play a tape so we would know what note we were looking for. We would listen to it first and then get it down. It made things easy. It worked out nice. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 100 – 109)

Brian typically did not take his folder home to study his music because he could easily memorize the texts of the songs after reading them once or twice. Learning and memorizing pitches was the more challenging aspect of choir for Brian.

Brian viewed the class as a very supportive environment: "Warm...it was a family" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 231). He did not recall the presence of cliques, and noted that if there was a social problem, other people in the class would help out: "If you were in, you were in. Pretty much everyone hung out" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 235).

Brian's remembrances of the choir's repertoire included an array of different genres:

> Classic, religious, Bach, Brahms, "Hallelujah" when we did the winter thing...plus a lot of show tunes! I've always loved "West Side Story," and "A Chorus Line," and I got into a lot of other musicals. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 123 – 125)

He also had a clear recollection of a song that he detested:

> The one I hated was "Black is the Color of my True Love's Hair." I hated it! I hated it! She was so "blahck, blahck, blahck" and we were "blaaaaack, blaaaaack." "NO, BLAAHHHCK." (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 206 – 208)

Brian remembered specific details of many rehearsals, including being told to keep his chest out and stand tall, how to make a tone, and how use his diaphragm, but he does not think this information has influenced how he sings now. Brian also pointed out that he did not have vibrato in his voice, which pleased Mrs. Wood. He distinctly remembered her telling students who had a wobble in their voices to "knock it off." Brian was unsure of why Mrs. Wood had such an aversion to vibrato.

Brian also recalled other aspects of Mrs. Wood's teaching style:

> It was eyes on me, watch my hands. You didn't dare look away! If you looked away and she knew you weren't watching her, you were done! (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 63 – 64)

Brian indicated that all of the students in the class knew what was expected of them and

wanted to be there. He remembered that on occasion he was extremely tired, and she let him "chill out and snooze" but, of course, he could not make a habit of that. Brian thought of Mrs. Wood as "cool" and said that if they knew their music and did what she asked, she did not "break your chops."

Brian found performance to be a positive experience, but was much more enthralled by competitions. He remembered the details of a competition in Virginia where Maple Valley won over 20 first place trophies. After the awards ceremony, Brian remembered running through the amusement park where the event was held carrying huge trophies and shouting with joy. "I am a competitive person, so I enjoyed [it]" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 186).

I asked Brian about his perceptions of Mrs. Wood's view of competitions. He indicated that she was overjoyed that in only her second or third year at the school, they were able to achieve a high level of success. "She loved it and it made her look great to be able to produce like that" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 73 – 75).

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Brian grew up as an only child of divorced parents and did not remember any music being played in his home. Though his parents were not musically inclined, Brian believed that they valued his involvement in the high school arts programs: "My parents are dorks, and they loved every minute of it. They loved seeing me on stage. They loved seeing me do the drums" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 300 – 301). Brian believed that his dad found it "cool" to watch his performances, but felt his mom valued these activities because they kept him away from trouble. Although his parents enjoyed watching him perform, their personal discontent with each other meant that they could

not attend his concerts on the same night. Brian always hoped for two performance nights so that his parents could come separately.

Brian did not note many connections between academic courses and his involvement in chorus. He considered himself an average student, and his involvement in the arts was just part of his identity at the time. Brian was much more interested in subjects that allowed him to "do" rather than just receiving information. Chorus afforded him the opportunity to actively be involved in his learning and be physically engaged in activities. He believed that enjoying chorus, band, and theater so much may have made him even less interested in other subjects:

> [In chorus and band] you were actually using your mind and your hands whereas it is boring when you are sitting at a desk and just learning with your hand on your head listening to someone lecture. I am a doer. (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 12 – 17)

Brian was accepted into pharmacy school but dropped out when he decided to pursue firefighting. The pharmaceutical profession was limiting for him and did not involve enough physical activity. He realized that he needed frequent changes in scenery and that he did not want to look at the "same four walls everyday."

Brian saw a definite, but positive, separation between his music outside of school and school music. If school music was not "different," he would have never known about it. Brian viewed school music as classical music and Broadway musicals. He did not think he would ever like classical music, and he never listened to it outside of class. Even now, Brian does not listen to classical music but does enjoy smooth jazz and musicals.

Brian felt that technology, so prevalent in the music world today, would not be important in a choir class:

> No, I don't think [technology] has anything to do with the education. If you are taking a music theory course or something like that, then maybe you put it in; but as far as a basic chorus, you don't need that. That's not what it's about. It is about learning the music and singing it with your own voice.... Rather than playing a piano [the instructors] are going to hit a play and stop button. Play the piano! (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 396 – 401)

Carryover and lifelong influence.

When we discussed the aspects of the choral programs that had carryover into Brian's adult life, he immediately pointed to beneficial social aspects: "[I learned] how to talk to women, how to socialize. Not to be intimidated. It was cool because you could walk down the hall and the girls would say hello to you" (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 137 – 139). Brian felt that choir offered him opportunities for building relationships, but he also believed that chorus had given him a sense of how people can work together. Brian related that his job as a fireman requires an understanding of teamwork, and he believed that choir helped develop an understanding of this concept.

Brian's musical engagement as an adult did not include a choral experience, but definitely indicated an enjoyment of music. His experiences in choir ignited a passion for music and offered him the confidence to sing in front of others. Brian recalled recently singing to the radio in the car with several other people and feeling good about his performance. Brian has sung in Karaoke bars, and has bought a guitar and is learning to play. He was uncertain if he still could read music, but thought that the skill would probably return with a little practice. When we spoke, Brian's primary musical involvement was playing the drums in a "society" [organization] that marches with bagpipes and drums. Brian's interest in being involved with music was connected to his positive feelings associated with performing:

> I know when I do Karaoke, I get cheers and whoops and hollers.... Usually I can get people in the audience or the bar to chime in and do certain parts. I think I am good at it. If I can motivate the audience, I'm doing something right. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 279 – 281)

I asked Brian if he would be interested in singing regularly again. He felt he would enjoy singing in a choir again, but that it would have to be the "right thing." He did not want to sing in synagogue or join a men's choir but maybe a community choir. Recently, Brian went to a holiday concert at MVHS, and Mrs. Wood invited former students to sing the final song. Brian did not participate because he did not have the correct clothing on (others did not as well) and no one else from his class was there. Even though Brian did not sing at that concert, he often thought about singing in the future. When he would hear a particular song on the radio or pass Mrs. Wood's home, he would fondly recall his experiences.

While Brian considered himself a lifelong learner (he was going to night classes and hoped for another career after fire fighting), he did not believe that chorus had very much to do with his desire to learn. The desire to learn was merely an aspect of his personality. Brian also did not feel his creativity or imagination was significantly influenced by participation in choir: "Everything was written out for you, and you knew exactly what you had to sing. You weren't making up your own things" (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Lines 58 – 59).

Brian believed that choir helped him cope with stressful situations and deadlines. He remembered many times when the choir was not adequately learning a piece, and Mrs. Wood would change the song. Even though the song might have been easier, the choir had to re-learn everything in a short period of time. Brian also believed that singing a solo gave him the confidence to attempt new challenges and survive failure: "If you

fail, you get up and try again. Just deal with it. I think it made me a better person and who I am today" (Taped interview, October 2, 2005, Lines 44 – 45).

Brian indicated that being involved in chorus allowed him to see another side of himself that gave him permission to be more sensitive: "I learned that I had a soft side and that I didn't have to be the big shot" (Taped interview, October 20, 2005, Line 23). He credited this realization for his subsequent success in making new friends.

As our conversation progressed, Brian expressed feelings that I suspect he may never have shared with anyone. Some of his deepest thoughts about his personal development and the way chorus helped him socially seemed to make him uncomfortable. He laughed and indicated that he felt like he was talking to a "shrink." Brian said that he was not an open person and prior to high school could not communicate. He was not sure if this problem was a "guy thing" or a "personality thing," but he knew that his involvement in chorus helped.

Hannah: A place for friends and family

> There are so many [fond memories]; just being on stage with people around you. It was always the performance or getting there. The whole thing was my favorite part. It certainly wasn't doing solfege and testing! (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 157 – 159)

Introduction.

Hannah and I met in the home that she shares with her husband. Her huge, old dog sat with us as we talked. Hannah had beautiful red hair and a warm personality that instantly relaxed the atmosphere. As our interview progressed, I realized that she was considering her responses very carefully. She seemed hesitant to give any information that might be viewed as negative. Her responses were often very succinct, and I had to probe for her to reveal deeper information.

Hannah immediately characterized chorus as a social experience: "[I remember most] the friends I made and the trips we took, and the talent" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Line 2). She met many of her friends in choir and spent much of her free time with those friends. They lived close to each other at the time, and were constantly at each other's houses. They would sing together and occasionally parody the songs that they were learning in choir.

Hannah graduated from MVHS in 1994. She enjoyed her high school experience, which involved being a part of dramatic performances and choir. She liked that the choir could feel like a family but also consistently referenced cliques of friends. Mrs. Wood attempted to discourage cliques by frequently changing student seating assignments, but Hannah reported the existence of many cliques despite these efforts.

Hannah remembered that during her years at MVHS the choral program gradually grew in numbers, and she attributed this growth to the fact that choir was perceived as being fun for the students. Hannah also felt that students were attracted to the travel and performance opportunities that choir afforded, and the prospect of becoming better singers.

Hannah viewed choir as a safe place where she could be herself. She began in Vocal Workshop then moved to Chanson her sophomore year and was accepted to Maple Valley Singers (MVS) her junior and senior years. When she walked into chorus, she felt relief. She was able to see her friends, participate in activities that she loved, and then be praised or critiqued on how to improve.

In MVS, Hannah remembered that she and her classmates became a little unruly and difficult to manage. She believed that the group began to feel "cocky" in their

singing abilities and started to cause problems in rehearsal: “She [Mrs. Wood] just lost it one day and dropped the music and almost cried, and I was like ‘oh, my god’ (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 126 – 127). Hannah regretted that the students were disrespectful to Mrs. Wood and always had great respect for Mrs. Wood and her abilities to director the choirs. While Hannah’s statements may indicate that the choir members were somewhat egotistical, she consistently associated their achievements with the knowledge and abilities of Mrs. Wood.

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Hannah was not in chorus during junior high school, but she remembered planning to take chorus in high school and looking forward to the experience. Hannah began chorus in Vocal Workshop which, in her view, was the place to decide if one liked chorus. She continued by moving into an all girl choir, Chansons. This choir was for those girls who were not yet ready for MVS. Hannah’s junior and senior years were spent in MVS, and in her senior year she also was accepted to the after-school Chamber Singers ensemble.

Hannah noted her aversion to the sight-singing process. She hated solfeggio and theory work. A new solfeggio exercise was on the board daily and Hannah often felt like they should just sing. I asked her if she remembered any of the warm-up exercises that were sung at the beginning of class and she indicated that she remembered all of them. Hannah then demonstrated several of the warm-up exercises for me: “We did the vocal roller coaster, the vocal yell where you go up and all the way down and....We did like stretches and mouth exercises and stuff like that” (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 58 – 64).

Despite Hannah's experiences with sight-singing and notation, she was never entirely proficient with music reading. She did, however, learn to assess if someone was flat or sharp when they were singing. Hannah remembered applying this skill when completing self-critiques after each concert. The students would watch a video of their performance and then provide a written response to a question that Mrs. Wood posed or provide a general critique of the concert.

Hannah remembered the environment of the choral classes as varying with each choir and group of people. In Vocal Workshop, she found the environment to be very positive and friendly – everyone wanted to learn and excel at singing. When she entered Chansons, the environment was quite different. She did not have as much fun and did not like the music that they were singing. She thought that part of the problem was that the choir consisted only of girls, which limited the number of musical opportunities and made the experience "boring." This atmosphere, along with Hannah's perception that the choir was of a lower quality, contributed to her lack of enthusiasm for Chansons.

When we discussed the auditioning process, Hannah remembered being very nervous. She recalled not making the after-school ensemble, Chamber Singers, the first time she auditioned and being disappointed. She indicated that she missed being accepted by two points, but did not have a problem with Mrs. Wood's decision: "If she didn't think I belonged there, then I didn't" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 550 – 551). Hannah particularly enjoyed the performing opportunities in choir and remembered much about the literature that was sung. Specifically, she remembered singing "Chichester Psalms," "Hallelujah," "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," many other classical and Broadway pieces, and songs in other languages. She also remembered

singing gospel music and feeling awkward as most of the choir was Caucasian. Hannah later remembered as one of her very favorite selections, "The Last Words of David" by Randall Thompson. She could visualize rehearsing this piece, the boy she sat next to, and how much she enjoyed learning the music.

Performing popular music (i.e. Broadway Night) was not an important part of the choir experience for Hannah. She remembered that there may have been "a couple of oldies" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Line 467), but popular music was generally below the level of the choir and was merely for the audience's enjoyment.

The idea of "just singing" did not hold great value for Hannah. She believed that experiencing high-quality music in choir, and performing at a high level changed the way she listened to music: "I think I opened a big door for me because I have such an open mind for music even as a listener (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 131 – 133).

While performing was a significant part of the experience for Hannah, the social gatherings after concerts were perhaps the most memorable. Many of the families would go to a local ice cream parlor after each concert to socialize and eat ice cream. The competition trips were also social events during Hannah's choral experience. She remembered trips to many locations including Toronto, Washington D.C., New York, Florida, and Maryland. Hannah enjoyed the trips, but noted that when they arrived at the performance venue, it was all business: "We had fun, but we were there to win" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 529 – 530). Mrs. Wood told the students exactly what the judges expected to hear so they would rehearse and rehearse until it was perfected. Hannah was proud of the choir and appreciated the great deal of attention that they received.

Hannah felt that Mrs. Wood was approachable and real, and that this was the primary reason for her success. The choir liked Mrs. Wood and wanted to please her. This was evident when Hannah shared a memory which involved the choir singing at a festival competition and Mrs. Wood not giving them a "thumbs up" at the end of their performance. Hannah remembered that Mrs. Wood just turned and took her bow. The choir was disappointed in themselves, and for Hannah it was difficult to see Mrs. Wood's dissatisfaction.

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Hannah's mother and father were not particularly musical during her childhood. She indicated that her father had been forced to play piano as a child and hated it. Hannah remembered that her older sisters often played music in their home and it seemed her sisters may have been a stronger musical influence than her parents. Both of her sisters sang, but Hannah was the one who took "it the furthest." Hannah felt that she had experienced more music making than her sisters because of her participation in choir.

Singing in chorus during high school was Hannah's idea:

> I think they [her parents] may have thrown out the suggestion a few times. But, it was always me. And then once I was in it, they were very supportive. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 342 – 343)

Her parents found the social involvement with the other chorus parents very positive. It created a very supportive group for having "good, clean, fun."

Hannah's involvement in chorus and theater were expressions of her interests and allowed her to examine possibilities for her life. Even though Hannah valued chorus for the creative and social outlet it provided, Hannah did not believe chorus helped her in her academic studies. Academics were never her priority, and she did not consider herself a

particularly good student. Hannah enjoyed English and visual art, which was her minor in college, but she found many other subjects, and their teachers boring. Music class offered Hannah something much "bigger and more real." Choir was more connected to her life and something she could learn by doing.

When we discussed school music and the music in her life, Hannah realized that she does think about the two as separate: "I don't think I was disappointed that I wasn't singing those songs, but did I want to sing them outside of school, sure!" (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 469 – 470). She indicated that she probably still would not listen to classical music nor choral music unless it was a piece that she had sung.

Carryover and lifelong influence.

Hannah believed that some skills and knowledge had carryover from her high school experience, but she communicated a lack of confidence around reading music:

> If somebody started me on a key and I needed to follow the music, at that time, I think I could have. But as far as saying, that is a B and that's an E, I couldn't do that. But, I think that if, I know it's like every good boy does fine and all cars eat gas! Something like that, but I don't know where they go on the lines. I don't, but I am still a confident singer. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 225 – 233)

One outcome of her choir experience that has followed Hannah into adulthood is the ability to identify proper vocal technique, intonation, and use of the physical apparatus:

> When I see stupid things on TV like American Idol, which I despise, and I can't believe I admit to watching sometimes, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, she's doing it all wrong!" and "Your posture counts and please raise that pitch!" So other things [such as] standing straight and opening your throat and keeping your nose open and if your nostrils are flaring, it's a good thing, and um, what else? Don't be afraid to open your mouth. A lot of people sing with a little baby closed mouth. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 260 – 267)

When Hannah went to college, she found she no longer had the time in her schedule for singing. Regarding singing as an adult, Hannah indicated that she would like to sing again:

> I would love to, but I haven't done it for so long. It's like where do I go, what do I do? I don't want to sing at my church. It would have to be the right experience.... I have a friend in a group, and he said I should have auditioned for that group. But I don't know if I am good enough. (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 81 – 86)

As we discussed the skills that may have transferred from her high school experience, Hannah expressed that theater and chorus experiences blurred together for her, so she was unsure which may have had the most specific influence. Even so, chorus has influenced her adult life. The arts are good for building confidence and that all students should have that experience. Hannah also found it interesting that people who were so different could be drawn together for a common purpose:

> It is kind of eye opening because like my friend that couldn't sing, she came to learn, and I just came to sing and branch out. Everyone came for different reasons. So, that was a cool thing. Getting to know people I never would have before, not because I was a snob, but because I didn't know them. Socially, I always come back to that, but I think that it was very social. (Taped interview, October 21, 2005, Lines 137 – 143)

Hannah found the social experience to be one of the most significant aspects of being involved in choir. She felt that she met new and different people. Her choral experience allowed her to develop and understand friendships and relationships, including her relationship with adults such as Mrs. Wood. The socialization processes also influenced Hannah's understanding of the best way to learn. Being among friends and working together for a common goal created a good learning atmosphere for Hannah. In addition, through her involvement in choir, Hannah believed that she was more able to accept criticism in her life. Ultimately, Hannah had positive reflections on her time in

choir and valued the music education that she received:

> I think there are so many doors that it [music] can lead you to, and so many more interesting things can come of a musical student than a person who has not been exposed to that. They don't even know it's there. I think there's just a lot of value in it. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 441 – 447)

Discussion.

Brian and Hannah primarily reflected on social aspects of their high school choral experience. Obviously, they had many other feelings and memories from this time in their lives, but both seemed to return to friendships and social dimensions as the most meaningful facets of their experience. While Brian used chorus as a place to meet girls and learn how to interact with them, Hannah seemed to have large groups of friends who would often "hang out" together.

Each student indicated that he or she experienced a challenging choral program with high standards of excellence and appreciated these high standards. Being competitive by nature, both students enjoyed winning competitions and feeling proud of their choir's accomplishments. Brian and Hannah also credited Mrs. Wood with being the primary reason they found such success.

Brian and Hannah are unable to read music as adults, and both expressed that this was an area that was challenging for them during high school. Currently, Brian is more involved in music than Hannah and appears to be less intimidated by singing. While both students indicated that chorus was a "confidence builder," Hannah's confidence around singing remains in question. She appears to know that she has some ability, but is hesitant to utilize those skills. Both former students indicated that if they were to sing in a choir again, it would have to be the "right" kind of choir.

Neither Brian, nor Hannah felt chorus influenced their desire for learning as adults. They both valued their choral experience for the active learning that it encouraged, but also recalled little from their choral experiences that enhanced their imagination or creativity. They viewed the experience as scripted and dictated by rules. The teaching approach that they experienced did not allow for a creative or imaginative musical education. Both primarily viewed the choral program as an outlet for self-expression and discovery and a place to meet friends and build relationships.

While Hannah remembered much of the vocal technique training, Brian remembered little. Neither participant remembered the types of skills that would allow them to be entirely independent in their music making. Brian and Hannah thoroughly enjoyed their time in high school choir but view it as something that solely resides in their pasts and has little influence on their present or future.

Theme III: Personal growth

The narratives in this section center on the final three former-student participants: Rebecca, Dylan, and Andrew. The primary value of the choral experience for these participants was the personal growth and development that occurred through the choral program. Each participant discovered personality characteristics and life lessons that influenced their adult lives.

Rebecca: Lessons learned

I learned that disappointment is a normal part of life, and it won't kill you! (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Line 43)

Introduction.

Rebecca was in chorus throughout high school and graduated from Maple Valley in 1994. I met her near her home, which was far away from Maple Valley, at a local restaurant on a busy street. Rebecca was relatively small in stature with medium length, brown hair. Her attire was casual, and her wide, happy smile made our meeting more comfortable. As we began to discuss my driving in from the airport and her morning, she told me a little about her budding career as a television writer.

Because Rebecca attended a private Jewish school prior to attending Maple Valley, she had many adjustments to make and people to meet. Her private school did not have a choir; but Rebecca had taken private voice lessons, and she planned to be in choir at MVHS. The involvement in choir proved to be a good choice for Rebecca as she enjoyed singing everyday. Because the school was big, new, and different, Rebecca viewed choir as a safe place for her to "make some noise" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Line 327). Rebecca's first high school friendships were students in Vocal

Workshop. Friendships developed easier in choir because it was a more casual atmosphere than standard curriculum classes.

Performing music was an important aspect of Rebecca's choral experience. Singing the major concerts, such as the one at the Kennedy Center her senior year, was very memorable: "I think it was the singing. A lot of kids wanted to sing. [Mrs. Wood] may have been the draw for some people, but I think mainly it was that you get to sing" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 29 – 30). Although Rebecca had many fond memories of chorus, I soon found that she harbored some feelings that she needed to release:

> My first year, I didn't try out for the All-South State choir because I had other priorities, and I think [Mrs. Wood] sort of held it against me that I didn't go along. Maybe that's just my perception of it, but I definitely felt that throughout the rest of my choir career that there were other people that did what she wanted and they got parts in the musical and got solos for concerts and were in Chamber Singers and people who had these other opportunities. And I know that I wasn't the only one. I had my little crew, and we all felt that because we weren't raising our hands all the time and volunteering to be part of the music boosters, that doesn't mean that we don't care passionately about it. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 155 – 166)

The extent of these feelings became more evident throughout our conversation:

> As a teenager you are definitely at the height of your persecution complex. My brother and sister went through the choir too, and in our family there was a sense, at least my family accused me for years, that I ruined it for my siblings! (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 249 – 262)

While Rebecca laughed about her feelings, it seemed that talking about these issues was somewhat painful: "Oh, yeah, I would moan and complain! 'It's not fair, I'm better than this person!' And my father would say, 'Suck it up!' God bless him" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 284 – 285). Quitting chorus was never considered because Rebecca loved to sing. She envisioned her role as that of a soldier rather than a general, which

meant that she would continue to do her best for Mrs. Wood and the program. These experiences did cause Rebecca to stop auditioning for solos or special events because she felt she would "just get beaten down once more" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Line 216). Rebecca felt that these feelings toward chorus were an opportunity for her to learn how to overcome disappointment and become resilient.

Regardless of her negative feelings, the positive aspects of the program, especially the music making through singing, kept Rebecca involved. Specific songs and performances such as "Chichester Psalms" with full orchestra were some of the experiences that made it worthwhile to stay in the choral program. She enjoyed being a part of such a good ensemble and was proud of their accomplishments.

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Rebecca was in Vocal Workshop her freshman year, and from sophomore to senior years she was in the MVS. One of three girls to quickly move from Vocal Workshop to MVS, Rebecca was thrilled, but she was not sure if she deserved it: "I kind of snuck my way into MVS my sophomore year and stayed there" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 17 – 18).

On most days in choir, the class would sight-sing. Rebecca did not feel confident in her music reading abilities and was unsure if others in the class felt the same way. Her ability to learn notes by ear and memorize quickly helped her pretend to understand sight-reading. She felt that about half of the class had limited skills in sight-reading, and the other half played instruments and therefore could sight-read the music. Sometimes, students in the class were required to sight-sing alone. Rebecca remembered this process as terrifying. As she generally sang by ear, she did not feel confident during these tests.

Making MVS her freshman year was very positive for her self-esteem, but that feeling of pride soon turned into an inner struggle to prove her worth. After she was chosen for the choir, she felt that she was never selected for any other special opportunities again. Rebecca balanced this disappointment by being busy with clubs, literary magazine, yearbook, her youth group, writing her own poetry, and getting ready for college. Looking back, Rebecca had mixed emotions about her role and the role that Mrs. Wood played in her self-perception. Rebecca thought that she probably developed a bad attitude. Her lack of selection for solos and after school groups influenced her decision not to audition for All-State Chorus near the end of her freshman year. Mrs. Wood decided that she did not want it badly enough:

> There was a little bit of bitterness there to be completely honest. When you are that age, you want something so bad. (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 44 – 45)

Mrs. Wood was sending her the message, "You didn't do this for me, so maybe I am not going out of my way for you...So, the auditioning definitely got to be...yuck" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 51 – 52).

When it came to performing, Rebecca had very fond memories. The anticipation of the performance and the process of moving from the choir room to the stage and getting on the risers was a thrill:

> I just liked the rituals of it, and then the show was over and you got to go out with the family and eat ice-cream. But, that was one of my favorite things. It's one thing working and learning all this stuff, and it was another being able to get up there and sing it for people. (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 127 – 134)

Rebecca did not attend many of the choir competition trips due to her responsibilities with other activities. The few times she did participate, she viewed these experiences as

much more than competitions; they were opportunities to see what students in the rest of the country were doing. Her school choir was in "this little bubble. When you see choirs from all over the country and realize there are people doing similar things, it changes the way you see your world" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Line 158).

The choirs at MVHS sang many different styles of music. Singing in other languages such as Latin, Hebrew, and German was a new and exciting experience for Rebecca. She recalled singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" each year and "being able to bellow as loud as she could!" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 190). The holiday music selections, though, seemed to have caused Rebecca some concern. She noted that each year the choir would sing one Hebrew piece at the holiday concert. For Rebecca, it felt like the choir would sing a lot of "Jesus music and then sing Shalom" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Line 101). She was somewhat uncomfortable singing so many Christian religious pieces, but indicated that the context was not religious, and the music was beautiful nonetheless. She never made Mrs. Wood aware of her feelings:

> Because you are a kid and you feel like (she's) an adult and has thought this through and the school is letting you do it. I already felt like I was in the doghouse! (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 107 – 109)

Rebecca fondly remembered performing the African American spiritual "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" arranged by William Dawson. "I really liked that. Stuff like that I remember" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Line 195). Spirituals were some of her favorites but she indicated feeling a little disingenuous:

> It was a weird feeling doing them because it was in dialect. It was my liberal guilt. It feels a little like, now we are going to talk like field hands. Maybe it was because we were kind of an all white choir. (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 197 – 201)

This feeling stemmed from learning the music and pronunciation very technically without

reference to why they were singing in such a different style:

> It was just sort of, "It's not THE, it's DE wheel. That's how it is written, and that's how you sing it." Methodically correct but never with the background story.... It was just this is going to sound this way. With all the stuff we sang, it was always technically the way we are going to do it and it is going to sound great but we didn't get a lot of the context of it. But, maybe at that time we would have been like, I don't care." (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 203 – 214) It was like, do a swell here because that's what you do, not because this is where the emotion is welling up. I think in high school it was more about technical proficiency and excellence even, but not connecting with the material. (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 216 – 222)

While Rebecca had some reservations about some aspects of her choral experience, she would not trade the feeling of performing great music with an excellent ensemble. Her favorite remembrance was performing "Ezekiel Saw de Wheel" at the Kennedy Center:

> There is that moment near the end [of the song] where you are singing and you stop and then come back in and there is that resounding silence in that moment and everyone is in the audience and we were so loud and everything was clanging and then you stop and there is that moment where everything shakes and then you come back in. I think that moment was just awesome. The Kennedy Center performance was kind of the button for my whole choir career and school, and in a way when that was over, that was it and we were done because it was right before graduation. It felt like a cap to everything. I'm an adult now! I'm at the Kennedy Center! (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 224 – 243)

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Rebecca's family often listened to show tunes and went to New York to see Broadway shows. Rebecca remembered music as a very important part of their household. Her mother frequently played the guitar, and they sang songs by Peter, Paul, and Mary. Rebecca's mother had a great voice, and they would also sing in harmony to the radio together. Rebecca's dad also loved to sing, but Rebecca did not think he had a great voice. Additionally, her grandmother sang on the radio in the 1930s. Rebecca's

valuing of music began with her parents, but she established her own sense of why she valued choral music. She found it important because high school choir took an activity that she enjoyed [singing] and added structure and discipline. It provided a learning experience that expanded her horizons and helped her be a stronger individual.

Contrary to the negative feelings Rebecca related about her high school choral experience, she made it clear that chorus also made her feel happy and self-assured: "I think it made me more confident. And I think that helped kind of in all areas of school. It made the day good" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 32 – 41). Rebecca found it uplifting that the general atmosphere of chorus was so different from other classes. One would go from being in a class where everyone was sitting at a desk with books and notebooks to being in the choir room where there were many more people talking and being social. The choral room had that "traditional classroom environment plus an extra social-political thing going on" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 80 – 81).

Although Rebecca did not believe chorus tremendously influenced her learning in other academic courses, she did believe that it played an important role in her development. In most classes students "learn a certain way," primarily with lectures, but chorus was different and "required more application." Chorus class relieved stress and made her more attentive and sharp for everything else she was doing.

The value of music was not only found in her school music experience but also in the popular music she enjoyed. Rebecca believed that a strong divide exists between school music and the music of her "real world."

> The stuff that I would listen to my freshman and sophomore year in high school was when Nirvana's first album came out and Pearl Jam and stuff

> like that. Before that I had been into Madonna and Debbie Gibson and teeny bopper stuff, and all of a sudden here was this music about pain and being alienated from the world. Very emotional and here I was fourteen or fifteen, and I got connected on another level of just being very visceral musically. I loved that! And then you go into choir and you are singing in German and that's not about your life. So, I'm not going to go home and put on the "Chichester Psalms," I'm going to go home and listen to all this other stuff. So, there definitely was separation between the two. I didn't like the choir music but it was the academic side and then this was my life. (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 367 – 377)

Even though Rebecca would not go home and listen to "school music," she did feel a connection to it. Certain choral songs became very personal to Rebecca. She likened it to being assigned books to read that you would not necessarily read on you own, but ultimately became very fond of them. She believed that such experiences made her a more well-rounded individual. Rebecca could get "her music" on her own.

Rebecca expressed that children are often told early in life (often in school) that they can not sing or something is said to discourage their involvement in music programs. Children are often quickly put into categories by their abilities without giving them time to develop their interests. Although music teachers certainly do not intend to discourage music making, these words and actions often cause people to stop singing for the rest of their lives. Rebecca believed that people being told not to sing is a "thread that runs through" the lives of those who do not sing as adults (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Line 20).

Carryover and lifelong influence.

One of the most significant skills that Rebecca believed carried over from her high school experiences was the ability to harmonize. Because she sang the alto part, she had many opportunities to experience the resonance and dissonance of chords: "It opened up a whole new world and now that is my favorite thing to do. On the radio I

always pick out the harmony line and sing it" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 176 – 177).

When I asked Rebecca if she could read music now, she indicated,

> Nope. Not anymore! I kind of had a sense of it. It was more like I coasted by. If I heard the starting note, I would look at it and could follow it from there...I never played piano. I really learned by ear. (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 79 – 85)

Although Rebecca could not read music, she felt confident in her musical abilities as a singer. She wished that she could play the piano and believed that this would give here more opportunities to sing.

College choir was one of the reasons that Rebecca felt more confident in her abilities to make music. Because of her feelings of insufficiency in high school choir, Rebecca's attitude in college was, "I am going to prove that I am good enough" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Line 42). Even though she was an English and anthropology major, she auditioned for an a cappella group and was selected the spring of her freshman year of college. Rebecca was thrilled to tell me about her college choir performing at Maple Valley: "That was great! I'm back. Look at me, I've triumphed!" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 56 – 59). She credited high school choir with the skills and confidence that it took to audition for and be in a college ensemble, but Rebecca also felt a need to prove herself to Mrs. Wood.

The first time that she auditioned in college, she did not get into the choir. Initially, this added to her "Mrs. Wood complex" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Line 244), but then she auditioned again five months later and was accepted. She felt that the rejection in high school prepared her for rejection in college and taught her persistence: "I wasn't taking no for an answer, and I was going to do what I had to do to get in. [High

school choir] definitely prepared me for that" (Taped interview, July 15, 2005, Lines 246 – 247).

Rebecca developed personally through the challenges in high school choir. Accepting that she could not have everything she wanted in school was a new concept for Rebecca and these experiences taught her much about real life. She learned that others often do not sympathize and that one must "suck it up and move on" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Line 54). She attributed her confidence as an adult to her high school experience: "I think it made me stronger in that I learned how to handle those kinds of things that maybe I otherwise wouldn't have learned until later in life" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 50 – 58). Rebecca knew that not receiving a solo did not mean that she was not talented. She realized that she still had a pretty voice and that she could still sing.

These and other life lessons have proved extremely valuable for Rebecca and have contributed to a fulfilling adult life: "I think the person I am now, the seeds were there, and I just needed to sort of grow up a little.... I haven't changed drastically; I've just become who I was meant to be" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 219 – 222).

Rebecca believed that her choir experience also taught her teamwork. Learning to work as a team was beneficial from a social perspective as well as a musical one. Rebecca saw blending and thinking less as a soloist as very valuable lessons for life. Not only did the group have to work together to produce an outcome, the quality of that outcome improved as their abilities to listen to each other increased and the focus on their personal interests lessened. A life lesson for Rebecca was learning "how to be part of

group and not have to always be the star" (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Line 75). This personal growth also allowed Rebecca to reflect on our conversations:

> In speaking with you about this last time and now, it has made me realize that I carried a lot of negativity towards her [Mrs. Wood]; but, the whole experience in general was very good for me. I loved being in the choir and I loved singing and so there was a lot of great stuff. It made me feel accomplished, and it made me feel like I could point to something and say I was a part of this, and it was great. (Taped interview, September 30, 2005, Lines 142 – 149)

Rebecca did not believe that Mrs. Wood realized how alienated some kids felt. Rebecca sensed that Mrs. Wood would have been nicer to her if she had only been on her "good list."

Dylan: The rhythm of life

> When you are singing, the emotion feeds your soul. It fed my soul at a time when I needed it, and it helped me grow. (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 173 – 174)

Introduction.

Dylan worked as an assistant to the director of an art museum in a large city. He had a small frame and short, curly, light brown hair. When we met at the museum, the halls were buzzing with energy. Dylan found a quiet room where we could talk and immediately began to tell me about his occupations since college. Dylan went from acting and working for a playwright, to working in a gallery, to his current position at the museum. He seemed excited to share his experiences from high school chorus.

Dylan chose to be in eighth grade chorus in lieu of attending physical education class. He admitted that he did not know "what he was getting into" by joining choir, but he found that he loved performing and that "Mrs. Wood was an amazing teacher" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 14 - 16). When Dylan was in ninth grade, he sang in

Vocal Workshop. His "sweet career" in chorus continued by being selected to MVS the remaining 3 years of high school (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Line 28). Dylan described the experience by focusing on Mrs. Wood's influence on the program: "She made it fun. It wasn't painful to go. We had a great time, and she was our leader" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 20 – 21).

While Dylan had many fond memories of his high school choral experience, he noted an experience that has colored his memories. While on a choir competition trip his junior year, he drank alcohol from the mini-bar in the hotel room and was caught. Mrs. Wood needed all of the boys involved to sing in the competition, so they were not sent home but stayed and sang. When he returned home, there were consequences which included a 2 week suspension. This experience was traumatic for Dylan, but he chose to stay in choir and "stick to it no matter what" (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Line 183). After the drinking incident, his reputation had changed. People invited him to parties and he was known as a "drinker."

When I asked him about the climate of his chorus class, Dylan described many cliques of friends and related that rumors were constantly circulating. Although this behavior disappointed him, when the choir began singing together, they put their differences aside.

Dylan expressed that being a male in high school chorus initially caused him some embarrassment, but when he realized that he wanted to be a part of the choir, he no longer cared what anyone else thought about his involvement. It took courage to enroll in choir, but he benefited in that the choral program allowed him to see other opportunities for his life and built up his self-esteem: "Some people don't believe enough in

themselves, or they haven't had positive feedback or any motivation. So, people just choose not to [be in choir] (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Lines 252 – 256).

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

With energy and enthusiasm Dylan described a typical class rehearsal as chaos! Everyone was running around and Mrs. Wood would tell them to quiet down. Because everyone respected her, things would calm down pretty quickly. Mrs. Wood would discuss upcoming activities and then would begin vocal warm-ups. There were about 15 to 20 minutes of warm-ups that addressed different singing techniques. The warm-ups were important to the rehearsal but the repertoire was what inspired Dylan to continue with choir.

While not all of the students agreed with her choices, Mrs. Wood knew how to select quality music that was appropriate for the ability of each choir. The music was so memorable that Dylan often sings these songs in the shower. One of his favorite selections was "Ezekiel saw de Wheel." He remembered that at the end of the song "the piano would vibrate and extra sound would come out of the piano that she hadn't even touched and we would be like wow!" (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Lines 160 – 161).

Dylan mentioned that he believed Mrs. Wood had favorite students, and favoritism became evident during solo auditions. Even though Dylan felt that her favoritism was based primarily on their abilities to sing, this practice was taxing for him: "You always knew who was going to get the solos. But, she listened to every person in the room and gave them a chance" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 143 – 144). Dylan did not consider himself to be one of Mrs. Wood's favorites, but he enjoyed the experience, especially performance, nonetheless:

> It was always fun. You were always with your friends and singing a great song and, hopefully, you sounded great! [There is] something about being on stage and in front of a whole bunch of people and you can barely see them because the lights are so bright. (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Lines 110 – 113)

Beyond the performances, Dylan remembered studying music theory in choir: "Yeah, I barely did it so I barely remember, but it would give me a headache just to do. I was like, this is awful. This is the worst part about music, right here. It was a challenge for me" (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Lines 204 – 206). Dylan could still read music but rarely had the opportunity to apply those skills. One of his favorite memories from chorus class involved a project where groups of students created new words to "Joyful, Joyful." His group wrote an "awesome song," and he was able to bond with people that he normally would never have an opportunity to talk to. Dylan remembered all of the words and sang them for me.

Family, academic, and musical connections.

Dylan had friends in and out of chorus; some he had met in middle school and others in high school. His best friend, Sarah, was not in the choral program: "She knew I was in chorus and didn't care" (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Line 244). Dylan's involvement in theater and photography classes allowed him many artistic outlets and opportunities to find relationships.

A primary connection to chorus for Dylan was his family's appreciation of music:

> My mom plays the piano, she sings occasionally. My grandmother is a singer. She is actually an ex-beauty queen. She is rather old now and had a stroke and wishes she were young. She always sings, Hey good-looking what ya got cookin'. I remember her singing that all the time. (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Lines 263 – 267)

While the females of Dylan's family seemed very involved in music, Dylan's perception

of his father was different. He felt that his father probably wished that Dylan had been more involved in sports. Dylan played soccer during his freshman year, but he did not enjoy it. It was also difficult to pursue theater while on an athletic team, so he chose the arts.

To Dylan, academic classes were easy and he believed that his music learning aided his performance in other subjects. Music's primary benefits to other subjects were related to the cultural connections that he saw between music and literature, and the ways that the discipline and structure of music assisted his conceptual understandings of mathematics. He believed that all of his experiences in high school chorus have had a significant influence on the person that he has become.

Carryover and lifelong influence.

While Dylan did not select music as a career, he did choose a career in the arts and believed that studying the arts in high school helped him develop personally and emotionally: "It took me awhile to come out of my shell. I grew up in a large family, and I had a twin sister that was my voice" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 70 – 71). Chorus was a place where Dylan's voice could be heard. He felt that Mrs. Wood encouraged him even though he was not one of the very best singers. She focused on the needs of the students and gave them all confidence in their abilities.

The music that was sung in choir was very meaningful to Dylan. He believed that the exposure to different types of music was essential to his personal development. He viewed singing different types of music as a way to consider his likes and dislikes: "It sort of helps you think about yourself and who you are going to be. If you aren't exposed to it, how do you know who you are or what you like?" (Taped interview, October 22,

2005, Lines 75 – 81).

Though Dylan believed that musical study enabled him to better understand himself, he did not realize this while in high school: "I didn't know what music could do for me. When I was in it, I didn't think about what could happen once I graduated or if music would come back in my life" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 38 – 39). For a few years near the end of high school, Dylan sang in a church choir: "If I hadn't been in choir I don't think I would have joined" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 158 – 159). During college, Dylan had opportunities to sing. After a theater performance where he played a role that required singing, he was thrilled that people praised his beautiful voice. He told them, "You should thank my choir teacher" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Line 49). These performance experiences left Dylan with the belief that he could impact an audience and create a lasting memory for them.

Developing self-confidence was a significant part of Dylan's choral experience. He remembered a specific instance when he had been selected for a solo and how frightened he was to sing in front of so many people. Knowing that he didn't want to let anyone down, he persevered through his solo and "got through it." This experience taught Dylan how to keep stressful situations in perspective and move forward to face what lies ahead: "You have to put yourself out there and great things may happen, but you have to take that risk. It is called risk for a reason" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 97 – 100).

When I asked Dylan about his ability to make music on his own and feel musically independent, he believed he had gained musical independence: "If I really put my mind to it and was motivated to do it and was inspired, I could probably do it. I think

I could. I would need a little guidance, but I could probably initiate a musical project" (Taped interview, June 24, 2005, Lines 225 – 227).

Dylan seemed to be a person who was constantly thinking in a creative fashion. He told me that when he walks down the street or through the subway with his headphones on, he pictures himself in a music video and creates scenarios for different camera angles. Dylan remembered having creative imaginings when singing in choir and related that he conceptualizes music in a visual way.

Dylan's participation in musical endeavors as an adult was minimal: "I would like to be in a choir...I think I would enjoy it; something to be part of, like a choir as a pastime. I just don't have the time to do it" (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 134 – 164). While he no longer sang in a choir, he believed that he continued to use some of the skills that he developed in high school choir:

> I realized that what I do in life right now is plan Eric's [the director of the museum and his boss], calendar of his daily schedule. I provide the rhythm to his day. I still use what I learned back in high school, to a certain degree, planning meetings and making sure it is the right pace. (Taped interview, October 22, 2005, Lines 3 – 6)

Dylan is not involved in music making as an adult, but his valuing of the arts and the remembrances of his high school experience have remained lasting influences in his life.

Andrew: "The long-haired heavy metal guy"

> It [chorus] was very important in that it kept me coming to school a lot of times. It gave me some other kind of creative outlet than doing math problems. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 494 – 495)

Introduction.

I met Andrew at a local shopping mall in Maple Valley for our first interview. He was a little late and rushed in to meet me. He was average build with dark hair and a friendly smile. Andrew worked for a local business, owned by his father, where he was a network administrator. He also owned a seasonal retail store and was going to school at night at a technical college. He was friendly and open to discussing his remembrances. Andrew joined high school chorus in order to meet girls and find a place where he would feel comfortable:

> It wasn't the right reason, but the real reason was that a pretty girl said, "I'm going to be in chorus, and if you take chorus we can spend time together." So, freshman year, I said, "Ok, I'm joining chorus." And then nothing ever happen but I was there and liked it, so I just kept going with it. So, I was there all four years. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 2 – 6)

Andrew, a self-professed rocker, fondly remembered singing as a young boy. He would walk home from grade school and sing to himself. When he joined high school choir, he was praised for his natural ability to sing. Andrew did not particularly like the music that was being sung in choir, but he liked the interaction with other students and learning more about reading music. Reading music benefited Andrew's interest in guitar outside of school: "All of a sudden I felt it was a skill I could use. I knew it wasn't anything I could use for a job, but it was for my own personal satisfaction" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 8 – 19).

Andrew remembered the choral program as being very organized and providing many opportunities for him. Never having been involved in a choir, Andrew quickly learned about the different levels of choir and that the "talented kids" were in MVS. Andrew had no idea the "depth of the program" until that time (Taped interview,

December 19, 2005, Line 187). He began in Vocal Workshop and progressed through the program believing that his talent was the main reason for his advancement. As a sophomore, he moved into Concert Choir, and during his junior and senior years he was sang with MVS. The choral experience taught him how to be skilled with singing, to read music, to sing scales, and how to "count rhythms." Andrew found that he sounded better when he sang along with the radio and thus singing became more fun for him.

Andrew did not have a particular group of friends in chorus, but believed that he was able to move between groups. He liked the people in choir but was not close with them. Andrew's friends, outside of chorus, were primarily "the rockers." The choir worked together well when their focus was on the teacher and not on each other. When the choir was not making music, the climate changed: "There were cliques and social barriers over at Maple Valley, but they diluted when you got in a creative environment" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 468 – 469). Most of the cliques formed according to musical ability. Students who were talented and could have private lessons were always selected for solos and practiced together: "That clique went off in their own group, and they would be nice to you but you weren't allowed to actually be part of what they were doing" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 275 – 283).

Andrew had been shy most of his life. He generally played alone as a child, and chorus offered him an opportunity to have a larger social circle and to demonstrate his abilities. As he became more comfortable in the choir, he thought less about being "cool" and more about being "skilled and talented." Mrs. Wood was a major factor in his development and enjoyment of the program. Andrew believed that she cared greatly about him because she would talk to him about his problems at home and showed real

interest in helping him. Andrew also felt that she cared about everyone in choir: "She gives you the sense that you're not just another number to fill the space to keep the program open. You're there because she wants you there. She wants you to be better; she wants to make sure you're ok (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 522 – 528).

Recollections of the classroom and performance.

Andrew admired Mrs. Wood for many reasons, but the reasons that were predominant related to the environment that she created in the classroom and her musical abilities. He remembered instances when Mrs. Wood would hear one person in a choir of 60 that was singing an incorrect part. This impressed Andrew, but more impressive was how Mrs. Wood would not single people out in class but work with them after class to fix the problem: "I actually always admired the way she taught, how the littlest things seemed to smooth out all the rough edges on things" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 537).

The choral class was an open and creative environment where students cared about and supported each other:

> Everyone saw all your mistakes and you were doing it by yourself the whole way. But at the same time, everybody was like, "hey it's ok." It wasn't a cut-throat kind of environment. Everybody was pretty much family oriented. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 111 – 114)

The rehearsal routine was easy for Andrew to describe. Everyone would come in very loudly and Mrs. Wood would "bang on the keyboard" to alert everyone that it was time to start. She would take out her pointer and they would sing up scales and down and then start singing arpeggios. These exercises were initially a disaster in Vocal Workshop, but soon the students were having success and taking pride in their work.

Andrew also remembered studying music theory in choir. The students in Vocal

Workshop had a theory workbook and learned the note names, music symbols, note values, and time signatures. Once they reached the end of the book, the songs they were singing became more difficult, and they used the music theory skills to learn the music. Andrew could naturally read the music and no longer had to think about the theoretical aspects: "[It] became a part of who I was" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 348).

Andrew described rehearsals as consisting of very specific technical work. Once the notes were learned, Mrs. Wood would herself with issues of vibrato and dynamics: "Make sure you rise up at this moment, and make sure this is loud but that soft and quiet. She was always working on the ice cream because we always got the meat and potatoes down" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 175 - 178). He was able to sense that the choir was moving to a higher level of ability.

Andrew enjoyed the atmosphere of his Vocal Workshop class. The class worked together and started winning competitions right away. Even though they were the entry-level group, they felt pride in their performances: "We kind of had a high on ourselves, feeling that we were always aspiring to be the best because we already started out that way" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 139 – 143). While Andrew enjoyed performance, he indicated that did not find the competitions as satisfying:

> [In] the competitions I felt like I had to be stiff and rigid and there to perform for somebody who was evaluating me to a "T." Where the concerts were more performing for friends and family and if I didn't do something exactly right, they weren't going to care. (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 206 – 209)

Family, academic, and musical connections.

In Andrew's view, there was no connection between his choral experience and his family. Andrew's parents were not particularly interested in music or the arts. They saw

his involvement as keeping him busy and out of trouble. Andrew noted that as a child, he found out about music from older friends. He developed his interest in music on his own by collecting CDs and playing the guitar.

Andrew did not particularly enjoy his other classes in high school. Chorus class kept him "mentally invigorated" so that he could finish the rest of high school: "Choir gave me something that interested me, so I got good grades in choir" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Line 456). Understanding how to read music helped him view concepts more abstractly. He compared music notation with symbols in mathematics. "It broadens your mind beyond just thinking this is all this is, this is what I do" (Taped interview, December 19, 2005, Lines 16 – 19).

More importantly, Andrew valued the personal change that he believed stemmed from his choral experience. He felt that creative studies gave him a new perspective on life. He saw his other classes as always having a right or wrong answer, but music was different. In choir, the students could decide what the appropriate way was to sing something at a given time, with Mrs. Wood's guidance. There were some right or wrong answers, but they did not get lost in the rules.

Although Andrew loved chorus, the music that Andrew chose to sing at home was not the music of chorus class. He saw a definite separation between school music and the music of his world. He often thought about how he could bring the two worlds together, but could never "figure out how."

Carryover and lifelong influence.

Andrew retained much of the knowledge that he acquired in his choral class. As an adult, he used these skills to further his hobby of recording and mixing music: "Now I

have the foundational knowledge to attempt things on my own" (Taped interview, December 19, 2005, Lines 88 – 89). He had a high-tech computer with the capability to produce CDs, but Andrew did not seem satisfied with his ability level: "That's all it is, learning from what other people have done. So, that's the end of what I do with music now (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 555 – 556).

Andrew did not retain the level of singing ability that he had in high school. He missed practicing and often wished he could return to Maple Valley and sing with the choir. His ability to read music was also diminishing: "I can read music, but I am so accustomed to guitar tab that I am sure I couldn't read like then" (Taped interview, June 23, 2005, Lines 334 – 335). Andrew also recognized that he has much more to learn about music: "It is vast and I am far from mastering it! It has given me much respect for a lot of different people in this world. It is like learning a foreign language and I basically know how to say hi and bye in it!" (Taped interview, December 19, 2005, Lines 132 – 134).

Andrew experienced personal growth and change due to his experiences in choir. He developed a more social persona while involved in choir and the more "mundane things in life are less scary" after experiencing performance. He built up a "fear buffer" and now he is not afraid to try things in front of people. He had the confidence to sing and be himself in public.

Andrew valued his choral experience for the opportunities that it offered, but he also perceived problems with the way that schools teach students. He remembered that the last musical involvement he had wherein everyone participated was in fourth grade. He felt that children should have more exposure to the arts:

> At least then they would have the basis of a choice, but most of the time they aren't exposed at all. They think that knowing the capital of Colorado is more important. Teaching the ability to learn is important. (Taped interview, December 19, 2005, Lines 72 – 79)

Discussion.

These three former students attended MVHS at basically the same time with two participants graduating in 1994 and one in 1995. They were all proud of the accomplishments of their choir and referred to the choral program as a place of safety where one could voice thoughts. Each noted how the choir was a class that sharpened their minds and was mentally invigorating. Rebecca, Dylan, and Andrew credited their choral experience with instilling a sense of value for music in their adult lives.

Rebecca, Dylan, and Andrew all loved to sing and perform. Throughout their trials and tribulations in choir, each indicated that they chose to stay in chorus because they loved to sing. These three former students were very different people, yet all three had similarities in the value they found in their choral experiences. Personal growth was a common thread throughout their stories. While Rebecca learned to face disappointment and rejection, Dylan became self-aware through exposure to the arts, and Andrew gained a new perspective on life. Each felt their choral experience had contributed to their confidence and self-esteem.

While Rebecca never learned to read music, Dylan and Andrew felt they retained music reading skills. Additionally, each former student recalled personal feelings toward their teacher, Mrs. Wood. Where Rebecca had negative remembrances about Mrs. Wood, Andrew and Dylan admired her and gave her most of the credit for the positive aspects of choir and for the skills that they learned.

Rebecca, Dylan, and Andrew saw chorus as an opportunity for teamwork and interaction with others. For Rebecca, chorus offered a place for her to think about others rather than focusing on herself. For Dylan and Andrew, they were able to talk to new people and this allowed them to find out more about themselves. These individuals have reflected on their experiences more deeply than most of the other participants. Perhaps this was due to having more significant issues to overcome in their lives or just being more thoughtful at a young age. The benefits of their choral experience outweighed any negative due the perspective they were able to gain from the experiences.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented eight narratives based on two interviews with each of the former-student participants. These narratives were constructed to present the participants as individuals in the MVHS choral program who shared some commonalities. The narratives were grouped according to three guiding themes: 1) taking pride in pursuing excellence, 2) chorus as social experience, and 3) finding personal growth. Following each narrative, I briefly discussed the general themes that reflected each participant's individual story. In the next chapter, I will synthesize the data focusing on the research questions. The topics, which I will relate to the research questions in Chapter 6, will include: 1) influential teacher dimensions; 2) relevance and value of a high school choral program; 3) extra-musical carryover; 4) musical carryover; 5) aspects of a choral experience that have transferred to lifelong learning; and 6) overall lifelong influence of a high school choral experience.

CHAPTER 6

RESOUNDING VOICES: SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The stories of eight former students of Maple Valley High School (MVHS) offer adults' reflections on their high school choral experience. The method of asking many interview questions in order to reveal thoughtful answers to a few research questions created an immense amount of data; however, the method allowed participants to think specifically about their experience, associate memories, and become more comfortable in the interview process. While many topics arose that are beyond the scope of this study, the information proved valuable in creating a more complete context for each participant's story.

In this chapter, I have organized the thematic data described in the participant narratives around the research questions of this study. The topics from the research questions are (Figure 8):

1) influential teacher dimensions,
2) relevance and value of a high school choral program,
3) extra-musical carryover,
4) musical carryover,
5) aspects of a choral experience that have transferred to lifelong learning, and
6) overall lifelong influence of a high school choral experience.

To inform my understanding of the primary research question, I looked to the interpretation of findings for the subsidiary research questions, each providing insight

into specific aspects of carryover and lifelong influence. Additionally, I revisited my philosophical framework for the study and relevant literature to inform my interpretations. I organized this chapter around these topics rather than the order of the research questions to assist the reader in developing an understanding of how the subsidiary questions build to the over-arching primary research question of lifelong influence. Further clarification of the findings organized around these topics is provided in Figures 9 - 13.

Topics of Analysis	Research Questions	Examples of Interview Questions
Influential teacher dimensions	What are the dimensions of a teacher or a program that may be influential through adulthood?	Was Mrs. Wood the draw to the program or the musical experience or perhaps something else? If you were writing a letter to your high school choral director, what would you want to say? About the music, about the teaching, about the social experience?
Relevance and value of a high school choral program	In what ways may a choral music education program influence an adult's perceived meaning of the relevance and value of participating in school music?	Would you advise today's teenagers to be in chorus? Why or why not? Relative to other subjects, how important would you say chorus was? Why should or shouldn't schools continue to have choral music education programs? How did your experience in chorus acknowledge other types of music outside of school?
Extra-musical carryover	In what ways do adults view their high school choral music experiences as having carryover into adult life? Is this carryover considered to be positive, negative, or neutral?	Did being in chorus influence your creativity? If you were to think about ways your experiences in high school chorus influenced who you are today, what would they be? Did being in chorus influence your imagination? Did being in chorus influence your ability to express your thoughts? Did you learn anything about yourself by being in chorus? Did chorus or music study help you in other academic areas? Did being in chorus influence your ability to take risks in learning? If you were to think about ways your experiences in high school chorus influenced who you are today, what would they be?
Musical carryover	In what ways do adults view their high school choral music experiences as having carryover into adult life? Is carryover considered to be positive, negative, or neutral?	How would it be valuable for you to be involved with music now? Have you sung in any choirs since high school? Did the skills and knowledge learned in chorus transfer or carryover to your adult life? Would you join a chorus if you had time? If you were to think about ways your experiences in high school chorus influenced who you are today, what would they be? What experiences in chorus dealt with reading music, composing, or improvising? Have these skills allowed you to achieve musical independence?
Transfer to Lifelong Learning	What aspects or qualities of high school choral experiences transfer to lifelong learning?	Has it impacted your desire for lifelong learning?
Overall lifelong influence of a high school choral experience	What is the perceived lifelong influence of high school choral music education among adults who participated in an exemplary choral program, and who did not pursue a music degree or career?	In what ways do you believe your participation in this experience may have influenced your adult life? If any, what aspect of being involved in choir seems most meaningful or valuable to you now? What were the most significant things you learned about music, beyond music? About life?

Figure 8. Reference chart of research questions and analysis topics

Influential Teacher Dimensions

What are the dimensions of a teacher or a program that may be influential in adult life?

The value of investigating the quality of teachers and their teaching strategies has been documented in the Public Agenda (1997), stating that the teacher is a significant factor in the quality of a student's education, and that teachers who care about students and engage them in instruction can get them to do their best. The teacher's role and influence was established by crystallizing the following data sources: a) student and teacher perceptions as indicated on the teaching effectiveness survey (Appendix F); b) observations of Mrs. Wood; c) interviews with Mrs. Wood; and d) participant interviews. These data revealed key aspects of Mrs. Wood's teaching relative to meaning and lifelong influence: a) high expectations for excellence in performance with emphasis on critique; b) a safe atmosphere; c) exposure to high quality literature. For this study, I purposefully selected a program in which the choral director remained constant throughout the high school experiences of the participants. I did this primarily to have consistent responses that could then be traced back to dimensions of the teacher and her work that may have influenced the participants' adult lives.

Each participant completed the perceptions of teaching effectiveness survey at the beginning of the second interview. Mrs. Wood and all former-student participants, except Andrew, completed the survey. Andrew did not complete the survey due to some scheduling difficulties. While the survey indicates research-based effective teacher strategies and dimensions (Baker, 1981; Borst, 2002; Brand, 1984; Grant & Drafall, 1991; & Porter & Brophy, 1988), the data pointed to additional features of the teacher that influenced instruction and, ultimately, may have influenced participants' adult lives.

Former students rated Mrs. Wood highly on numerous aspects of teaching effectively: setting clear goals, knowledge of the material, enthusiasm, giving feedback and correction, maintaining strong discipline to communicate expectations, loving music, being thoughtful and reflective, and communicating expectations. These scores corroborate the student interview data. Students consistently stated that they knew "what to expect in choir," that Mrs. Wood "knew what she was doing," and that they, as a group, received critique and evaluation consistently. Her strong discipline and love of music were also evident among the former students.

Lower ratings were found in a few areas of effective teaching strategies/dimensions. The lower survey ratings were in agreement with the student interview data. These areas included: lack of integration with other subjects, few questions asked during class, few redundant instructions and explanations, lack of variety of instructional activities within a class period, and lack of teaching for metacognition. Mrs. Wood indicted that she would like to better integrate other subjects into her curriculum but rarely finds the time. She also noted that she asks more questions now than she did when the participants were in school. Regarding the redundancy of instructions and explanations, the students indicated that Mrs. Wood's expectations were such that they were expected to pay attention and "get it" the first time. With regard to the lack of a variety of instructional activities, the consistency of the traditional structure and routine of choral rehearsals often does not offer a variety of activities.

The creation of a safe environment was mentioned by Mrs. Wood and several former-student participants. A safe environment where the students could perform without ridicule created an atmosphere that enhanced Mrs. Wood's effective teaching

strategies. Her instruction focused on technical aspects of learning music to create a high quality experience that included feedback, reflection, and critique during class time. All of the former-student participants indicated that a pursuit of excellence, high expectations, and challenging repertoire were important aspects of the program that influenced their adult lives.

Most of the students believed that Mrs. Wood cared about them, but they did not find her to be particularly warm. Mrs. Wood also did not believe that she exhibited a "warm and fuzzy" personality. Holmquist (1995) documented the same finding in her study of adult community choir participants. These adults indicated that a learned commitment to music performance motivated them to sing rather than the personality of a teacher. This personality characteristic does not seem to have negatively influenced other aspects of the program or Mrs. Wood's effective instructional strategies.

Mrs. Wood's philosophy of teaching encouraged excellence and an emphasis on critique with life lessons in perseverance, hard work, and character building. These characteristics of the program were evident in the interview data indicating increased self-esteem and confidence, self-discipline, the ability to deal with disappointment, appreciation of challenging and difficult work, and the ability to work as a team member rather than focusing primarily on individual desires. These characteristics of the program and Mrs. Wood's instruction have considerably influenced the participants' adult lives and possibly the quality of other carryover skills and knowledge due to the way in which they acquired the information.

Influential teacher dimensions:	
Effective Strategies/Dimensions Survey Chart:	Setting clear goals Knowledge of material Enthusiasm Giving feedback and correction Maintaining strong discipline Communicates expectations Loving music
Key aspects of the teacher/program:	High expectations for excellence in performance with emphasis on critique A safe atmosphere to learn life lessons Exposure to high quality literature

Figure 9. Chart of influential teacher dimensions

Relevance and Value of a High School Choral Program

In what ways may a choral music education program influence an adult's perceived meaning of the relevance and value of participating in school music?

This question was designed to identify the perceived value and relevance of the choral program at MVHS among participants and their current views regarding the relevance of participating in school music in general. The ways in which the participants valued their experience were grouped into categories that included: support of academics, social interaction and personal growth, family beliefs and support, and musical value. A discussion of the participants' views about the relevance of school music to their "real world" of music, as well as the value of choral music in today's schools, concludes this section.

Support of Academics

One of the extrinsic benefits of school music participation is the frequently touted improvement of academic skills. Winner and Cooper (2000) have suggested that

cognitive skill development and greater engagement in school may heighten with studying the arts. Participants in this study did not see a direct connection between choir and academic studies; however, the idea that choir was intellectually invigorating, offered a mental change of pace, and engaged ”another side of the brain” was clearly evident (Andrew, Rebecca, and Sharyn). Brian felt that active involvement in chorus class made his other classes even less interesting, while Dylan felt that his choral experience made him more culturally aware of connections in English literature. Andrew recalled that he was able to write his emotions more freely in English class due to his expressions of emotion in choir. Additionally, Andrew and Rebecca suggested that the “lack of right or wrong answers” in music made them “think more and differently” and this was beneficial in many ways, including other academic subjects. This idea corroborates Eisner’s (1992) belief that the fine arts are multifaceted and have subtle and ambiguous problems with seldom a single correct solution.

Social Interaction and Personal Growth

The social benefit of schooling and musical organizations is widely documented (Chorus America, 2003; Dewey, 1916/1944; Johnson, 1992; McCarthy, 2002). Participants in my study found the social aspect of choral experience to be important. Brian and Hannah expressed having a close “circle of friends” and being “exposed to many different kinds of people.” Brian, having previously had difficulty making friends, found himself surrounded by friends. Rachel also was very social in choir and remembered that her maid of honor had become her best friend through choir.

Others had many friends beyond the choral program and moved in and out of the choral “cliques.” Shellie, Sharyn, Rebecca, and Dylan had friends in various groups

throughout the school but also remembered positive social experiences in choir. Andrew enjoyed social acceptance based on his contribution to the choir, though his friendships outside of choir were with "rockers," and remained distinct from his social experiences in choir.

Consistent with the findings of Turton and Durrant (2002) that confidence and personal growth are important student outcomes of a choral program, several of this study's former-student participants indicated that they valued their choral experience for personal growth. Hannah learned social skills that benefited her personal growth and came to understand "how I learn best." Both Shellie and Brian were able to overcome shyness due to their experiences in choir. The participants who found the most noteworthy personal growth experience were Andrew, Rebecca, and Dylan. Andrew developed a "new perspective" on himself and life in general. He learned not to fear new things and developed social skills that allowed him to interact better with others. Rebecca learned much about herself and how to "deal with disappointment." Rebecca values her choral experience for making her less self-conscious and self-absorbed and for helping her face life's challenges. Dylan also valued his choral experience for personal reasons. He was able to discover more about himself and what he wanted his life to be about through his "involvement in the arts."

Family Beliefs and Support

The value of the choral experience for many of the participants was highly connected with their families' valuing of music. Family influence has been documented (Bowles, 1988; Chorus America, 2003; Vincent, 1997) as a factor in childhood musical involvement. While family involvement is not a research question, it does have bearing

on lifelong valuing of music. Understanding the childhood musical experiences of the participants gives context to the issue of lifelong value of their choral experience. With the exception of Andrew, Brian, and Hannah, the other participants indicated that music was very important during their childhoods. Five out of eight participants saw their family's musical involvement as a meaningful aspect of their interest in being in choir, though most indicated that they had decided on their own to be in choir. The participants believed that their parents were supportive of their involvement in choir and that this made their participation more accepted and valuable to their parents. Former students also indicated that either they or their parents wished for them to have a well-rounded education. Being involved in chorus was valuable for the balance it offered to a busy academic high school day.

Musical Value

Continuing the examination of the research question pertaining to the value of school music, the former-student participants indicated that musical dimensions were valuable aspects of participation in the choral program. The high-quality performances and high expectations of the program made choir challenging and valuable. Andrew was able to learn to read music and to apply those skills to his hobbies. Hannah enjoyed being challenged and learning vocal technique as opposed to "just singing some songs." Interestingly, Turton and Durrant (2002) also cited "sing-a-longs" as having a negative connotation for former choral students as they expressed a desire for the teaching of vocal technique in choral music classes.

All former-student participants indicated that "being a part of something great" or "having great success" were reasons to be proud of their involvement. The sense of

accomplishment provided meaning and value. Along with this sense of accomplishment and pride in their abilities, the participants suggested that the quality of the repertoire and the idea that they were singing "adult music" was very motivating and rewarding.

Relevance of School Music

A disconnect between institutional music and the music of everyday life has been documented by Peters (2005). Britton (1961) also suggested that throughout the history of American music education there has been a certain distance between the music of schools and the music of American life. Few of the former-student participants viewed their choral experience as having any connection to their "real world" of music while they were in high school. Several indicated that now they can see some link, whether it is in vocal techniques that also apply to popular music or in music reading skills that make popular music-making easier.

Most participants realized a definite separation between "school music" and "real-world" music. Several former students indicated that they could get "their" music at home and did not need to have it at school (Sharyn, Brian, and Rebecca). School music provided them the exposure to music they would never have known about otherwise. Hannah did not mind that it was separate, and Dylan never thought about it until I asked him about it. Shellie and Rachel definitely thought school music and "their" music were separate, but their attitudes changed as each became more interested in the repertoire. Andrew realized the separation and wanted to find some way to bring the two worlds together, but could not figure a way. Finally, Sharyn never thought about her music and school music being different, as she grew up with all different types of music and thought of all of it as her music. These responses indicate a vast range of thought among choral

participants about this topic.

During several of the interviews, former-student participants addressed issues of technology in music, such as the use of an ipod, garage band software, or electronic keyboards with midi technology. When I questioned whether these advances in music technology were relevant to the choral classroom, each of the participants indicated that technology was not needed to have the meaningful experience that they had. Hannah's response compared choral music and technology with the use of digital technology in photography:

> Something is missing; it's a grain, it's a character, it's a detail, it's something. And it's hard to put your finger on, because it's close, but it's the same thing. There is something natural with music and if you digitize everything, you take away the nature. (Taped interview, June 22, 2005, Lines 455 – 458)

In both the issue of relevance of school music and the ways in which choral music might be taught, the former-student participants saw their experience as "the way it should be." This type of expectation is also documented, as typically parents believe school should be the way they remember it (Public Agenda, 1997). From the perspective of the former-student participants, choral music is still a valid and valuable subject in schools. While most of the participants believe that some popular music may have influenced their initial interest in the program, they benefited greatly from the performance of "adult music" and works by great composers. While there is little evidence of musical independence or continued music making, the participants perceive that choral music is relevant in schools.

Relevance and value of a high school choral program:	
Support of Academics:	Participants did not see a direct connection between choir and academic studies intellectually invigorating a mental "change of pace" engaging the "other side of the brain" "Circle of Friends" "Exposed to many different kinds of people"
Social Interaction:	Social acceptance "How I learn best" Overcome shyness
Personal Growth:	"New perspective" "Deal with disappointments" Open to career in the arts High quality performances Singing "adult" repertoire
Musical Value:	High expectations Sense of accomplishments - "being part of something great" Pride in their learned abilities Vocal technique applies to popular music Music reading skills make popular music making easier
Relevance of School Music:	High school choral music - "the way it should be" Some continued involvement in music activities Critical listening and active thinking

Figure 10. Chart of themes found regarding relevance and value

Musical and Extra-Musical Carryover

In what ways do adults view their high school choral music experiences as having carryover into adult life? Is carryover considered to be positive, negative, or neutral?

For purposes of this study, carryover has been defined as the retention and use of specific skills, knowledge, and feelings or attitudes that have been learned earlier in life. Musical carryover could be apparent in ways such as singing in a community or church

choir, or being an avid consumer of music and attending concerts and purchasing recordings. Extra-musical types of carryover could reflect how choral experiences have influenced the way individuals think about music and arts or involve an understanding of social and emotional issues learned through choir experiences that have led to behavior changes and development. In addition, I was interested in knowing if these carryover experiences were positive, negative, or neutral and if these retained skills, knowledge, and feelings were beneficial to their adult lives

Musical Carryover

To address the issue of musical carryover, it seems that the first question must inquire whether skills, knowledge, and feelings or attitudes have carried over from the former-student participants' high school choral experience and in what ways? Most of the former-student participants believed that they had taken much with them from their choral experience. It would be natural to expect that music reading and being able to function independently in music would be measurable indicators of retention. Continued musical activity has often been documented as evidence of learning from a prior music experience (Dykema, 1934; Holmquist, 1995; Ordway, 1964; Peterman, 1954; Stein, 1948; Tipps, 1992; Vincent, 1997). Four of the eight former students indicated that they could still read music, while two former students indicated that they "really never learned" and managed to basically "fake" their way through high school choir. This issue has been documented by Demorest (2001) as a common occurrence in group sight-singing. While in a group, students may be able to quickly imitate or actually read the music, but alone they are incapable of reading the music and singing without assistance.

While most of the former-student participants believed that they had the knowledge and ability to be independent musicians, most believed that the knowledge of how to correctly sing allowed them the ability to sing alone. These singing technique skills were documented by several participants as beneficial to them in their current level of ability in singing. However, they indicated that they would need some guidance to "get started" with singing with the written music. With advances in technology today, it is likely if the participants wished to create music and perform, it would be feasible to accomplish this without the ability to read music. Regarding knowledge in music theory, history, composition, and improvisation, the former-student participants indicated a general lack of knowledge that may have contributed to their inability to continue independently with musical activities.

When I asked if being in a choir, which would be an indicator of the transfer of skills and knowledge, would be of interest now, most indicated that they would like to participate, but the quality and composition of the choir would be crucial to their interest. Others indicated that they would not know where to go to be involved in a choir other than a religious organization. Additionally, two participants, Brian and Rebecca, thought they would prefer singing in a band because it would be more satisfying at this point of their lives.

Regarding singing since their high school experience three of the participants (Rebecca, Sharyn, and Shellie) sang in a college choir. Shellie is the only participant currently involved in a choir experience. During college, Dylan and Hannah used their singing skills in theater experiences, but do not continue to sing. Brian and Andrew have participated in Karaoke singing activities. Rachel has not sung since high school.

Beyond singing experiences, several of the participants are actively engaged in some type of musical experience. Brian performs in a society with bagpipes and drums and is learning the guitar. Andrew uses technology to mix music and plays guitar. All other former-student participants indicated that music is important in their lives and that they listen to music frequently and with a critical ear.

An appreciation of various genres of music and the cultures represented in the music that the former-student participants sang while in high school was also a frequent topic pointing to the value of their choral music education. The former-student participants often referenced singing in many languages such as Latin, German, and Hebrew and dialects, such as those used in spirituals. Most of the participants referred to African-American spirituals as their "favorite" pieces to sing and noted that they doubted they would have known this music, much less loved this music, without having been involved in the choral program. Rachel even referenced how the African music has allowed her to have a better understanding of African visual art. The appreciation of music of other cultures was an aspect of the choral program that had specific carryover into the adult lives of the participants.

A frequent topic among the former-student participants was the importance of critique and evaluation in their choral experience. Many of the former-student participants pointed to learning critical listening and evaluative skills through classroom evaluations and competitions. Six of the eight participants cited how critical analysis of their own performance and of other choral performances has enabled them to evaluate musical performances. They indicated this skill also has benefited them in accepting criticism in other areas of their lives. The skills of critique and evaluation are perhaps

some of the strongest consistently shared carryover from the Maple Valley choral program.

While continued musical involvement and active thinking about music are strong indicators of carryover learning from a previous musical experience, they are not the only evidence of continued use or benefit from skills, knowledge, feelings or attitudes developed during schooling. The next section will consider the extrinsic aspects of the former-student participants' choral experience for meaningful carryover.

Extra-Musical Carryover

Dewey (1916/1944) referred to democracy as the opportunity to experience "conjoint communicated experience" (p.87). The extra-musical benefits of music study directly enhance the ability of an individual to experience an understanding of the world and relationships. Dewey also suggested that an education that promotes "personal interest in social relationships, control, and habits of mind" benefits the entire society (p.99). The former-student participants of this study all pointed to life lessons learned through choir and the "well-rounded" education choir provided. The significance of these experiences appears to have had a lasting effect on their lives to a greater extent than the musical experiences.

The types of skills that the participants indicated beyond musical skills included teamwork and socialization. Teamwork was expressed as being valuable for teaching how to count on others and to be an individual without always having to be the star. The socialization aspect was evident for all participants. While Brian and Hannah found this aspect to be a major component of the experience, others found it to be an important facet of the program. Some participants noted that working with people from various

backgrounds where everyone is different was particularly helpful in their adult lives. It seems that while the ethnicity of the choir was primarily Caucasian, the participants perceived significant differences among the choral students. The acknowledgement of the value of learning music of many cultures was also a factor in their development of an appreciation and understanding of the differences in people. Many of these same outcomes were documented in the Chorus America (2003) study. They noted teamwork, creativity, social interaction, and discipline as benefits of choral music education.

In the area of personal growth, several of the participants indicated that choir experiences afforded opportunities to build their self-confidence (Hannah, Dylan, Rebecca, Brian, Andrew, and Rachel). Shellie, although she did not use the term confidence, felt that the choral program increased her self-esteem. Andrew, Rebecca, and Dylan experienced the most personal growth through their choral experiences (see page 164).

Two interview questions focused on possible extra-musical outcomes of music programs. These questions were formed in response to the Abeles, Hafeli, Horowitz, and Burton (2002) study that focused on "habits of mind" as outcomes from rich arts-learning programs. The ability to express thoughts and to take risks in learning were two outcomes found in the Abeles, et al. (2002) study. The former-student participants of this study generally did not find that their choral experience had influenced their ability to express their thoughts. While the program may have encouraged self-confidence in the students, only Andrew felt that his choral experience had assisted him in expressing his feelings and thoughts. The other participants were perplexed by this question and typically answered with responses such as: "maybe," "perhaps," and "I do not know."

The verbiage of this question may have caused the participants to be uncertain or perhaps they had not thought about their choral experience in this way.

The question regarding whether choral music participation had enhanced their risk-taking again puzzled participants. While Rachel felt definitively that her ability to take risks had increased due to her choral music experience, most responded, "maybe." Other statements made during the interviews, however, led me to believe that in fact the participants did develop some minimal skills in risk taking. Many spoke about the auditioning process as daunting and how they "got through it," as well as singing in front of others and taking a risk of singing the wrong note.

These examples may depict ways in which the participants learned to take risks; however, the participants seemed unaware of an additional type of risk taking involved in music making. An additional risk in music may be the qualitative musical decisions that are required to stretch a performer or to make a performance of music exemplary. Ultimately, the risk taking in choral music at MVHS is not the type of risk taking that Abeles, Hafeli, Horowitz, and Burton (2002) suggest. The risk taking experience for their study was suggested to offer multiple solutions in order to provide an environment in which one learns to take risks. Often musicians need to try new approaches or push musical boundaries in search of excellence and this, for example, may involve risking a mistake, or poor tone production, etc. MVHS choral musicians were not entirely independent in their music making decisions and did not have ownership over decisions. Therefore, they can not fully appreciate musical risk taking because they have never experienced it. Though these benefits may have occurred without the participants'

conscious awareness, if participants do not associate these behaviors with their experience, then it is not their reality and can not be named as a carryover experience.

The multiple extra-musical benefits perceived by the former-student participants included 1) teamwork, 2) socialization, 3) confidence building, and 4) personal growth. The interviews suggest that personal growth included individuals' finding a direction in life, discovering new possibilities, and building resilience in personal character. These benefits were considerable factors in the lifelong carryover of the choral program.

Positive, Negative, or Neutral?

The musical and extra-musical skills, knowledge, feelings, and attitudes that carried over from the high school choral experience at MVHS generally seem to be positive based on the interview data. The extra-musical aspects appear to be the most positive. Some specific instances were negative, such as Rebecca's feelings of inadequacy, Dylan's drinking incident that changed his identity among students, and Rachel's memories of having to try on uniforms in front of other girls. These images and specific stories have remained with them in their memories. Interviews seem to have given these students the opportunity to voice their negative memories and, in the case of Rebecca, release some of the negative energy that she harbored.

As many of the participants can not read music, and do not participate in any formal musical activity, musical carryover, as defined by continued involvement, is limited. Though these former students have fond memories of their experiences in choir and report the carryover as positive, they have little continued use of learning in the form of performance, or in applying their musical skills and knowledge. The primary musical

carryover from this study is the appreciation of many genres and cultures of music and critical listening skills to evaluate musical performance.

Musical carryover
Critique and evaluation Appreciation of various genres of music Teamwork
Extra-musical carryover
Socialization Confidence Personal growth

Figure 11. Chart of carryover findings

Transfer to Lifelong Learning

What aspects or qualities of high school choral experiences transfer to lifelong learning?

For the purposes of my study, lifelong learning has been defined as continued interest and investigation in learning and personal growth in adulthood. Field and Leicester (2000) point out that education that enhances lifelong learning encourages citizenship, and social, vocational, and personal development. In this section, I will present the aspects of the former-student participants' stories that may transfer to lifelong learning.

All of the participants consider themselves to be lifelong learners. Each expressed a desire to continue learning and growing as an individual. When I spoke with them about whether the choral program had enhanced their desire for lifelong learning, most indicated that they felt they would have been lifelong learners regardless of their

choral experience. Rachel indicated that a desire for lifelong learning is "something within you." Dylan and Sharyn both indicated that being "well-rounded individuals" naturally leads toward lifelong learning. Shellie believed that her choral experience "set the standard for everything in life" and Andrew believes his choral experience allowed him to "think more creatively" and influenced his desire for lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning research suggests that learner attributes such as critical thinking, imagination and creativity, and self-confidence, as well as educational influences such as valuing students as learners and expressing a love of learning, are crucial factors in the development of lifelong learners (Barrow & Keeney, 2000; Aspin, 2000; Bryce, 2004; Longworth, 2003). The participants in my study indicated that their choral experience did not significantly influence their imaginative abilities. Brian and Rachel referred to the choral experience as "scripted" and "imitative" and not something that required imagination. Andrew found that his choral experience laid the foundation for him to be imaginative on his own. Dylan, by contrast, thought that the choral program had expanded his thoughts about music, thus making him more imaginative. Regarding creativity, several participants found their choral experiences to have been beneficial. They directly related their exposure to new things as a "springboard" for learning. They believe their choral education allowed them the opportunity to integrate music into creative projects in their adult lives. Their appreciation of various types of music and high quality musical performances has allowed them to generate more creative thought. As creativity is considered to encourage lifelong learning, these participants engage in lifelong learning as they utilize the creative process drawn from their exposure to choral music.

Along with creativity, other areas of transfer from the choral experience for lifelong learning appear to be self-confidence and critical analysis. As indicated in the previous section on extra-musical carryover, self-confidence was an outcome of the choral program. Participants cited having confidence to audition for college choir, confidence in their singing abilities, and overall confidence in public forums. As suggested in the literature, self-confidence is a factor in the development of lifelong learning.

The former-student participants learned to critique and evaluate musical performance, a process that utilizes critical thinking skills that may promote lifelong learning (Barrow& Keeney, 2000). The participants valued the critical listening skills that they developed in choir and several (Hannah, Sharyn, Rachel, and Shellie) viewed these skills as fundamental to their attitudes that they would be involved only with high quality music experiences. These experiences can be in multiple genres of music but the unifying factor is that they must be of high quality.

The teaching style of the choral director appears to have promoted some aspects of lifelong learning. The former-student participants believed that Mrs. Wood valued them for their contributions to the group goals and as important members of the team. According to Bryce (2004) and Longworth (2003), students must be valued as learners in order to promote lifelong learning in schooling. Further, Longworth (2003) cited that the teacher must express a love of learning during instruction. Former-student participants frequently cited Mrs. Wood's love of music and music learning. Although these former students did not directly link lifelong learning to their choral experience, they have indicated aspects of the program that contribute to lifelong learning. By instilling self-

confidence, critical/analytical skills, and encouraging creativity, Mrs. Wood's teaching style may have contributed to the support of lifelong learning.

Potential aspects of a choral experience that have transferred to lifelong learning
"Springboard for learning" Appreciation of genres of music generating more creative thought Self-confidence Critical thinking Aspects of teaching style: love of learning, valuing student contributions to group goals, valued as learners

Figure 12. Chart of potential aspects transferring to lifelong learning

Overall Lifelong Influence of a High School Choral Experience

What is the perceived lifelong influence of high school choral music education among adults who participated in an exemplary choral program, and who did not pursue a music degree or career?

If, as Dewey (1916/1944) has suggested, the object and reward of learning is a continued capacity for growth, then the evidence of lifelong influence of a choral music experience is an indicator of possible continued growth and development, both in and beyond music. The primary research question for my study focused on the former-student participants' perceived lifelong influence of their choral music experience. The former-student participants in my study demonstrated a thoughtfulness in their reflections that was far beyond my expectations. Beane and Apple (1995) suggest as a goal of education that students will no longer be "passive consumers of knowledge," but will be "active meaning makers" (p.16). Each participant, including the choral director, Mrs. Wood, seems to this researcher to have embraced the role of active meaning making. Each provided extensive detail in profound memories and stories that enabled me to gain

insight into their past experiences and perceptions of lifelong influence. The data have been presented in narrative form to encourage the reader to form his or her own interpretations. This account is one person's encounter with a complex case (Stake, 1995).

Peterman (1954) purported that for music to be considered more than an activity, "educators must reconsider the whole music curriculum for the whole student for a whole lifetime" (p. 129). Understanding the lifelong influences of education informs the value of the education being provided. In essence, this study offers a program evaluation from the "inside out." For most former-student participants, the value of the choral program lay in enabling them to have a well-rounded education. As Sharyn pointed out, the MVHS choral program developed opportunities for a student to become a "holistic person" who recognizes the "community that is out there that we can create together." Such democratic ideals are espoused by much of the philosophical thought that frames this study. It appears that the MVHS choral program provided opportunities for students to feel a "part of a whole" and to develop a sense of society and community.

The overall lifelong influences of a high school choral music experience for the former-student participants can be categorized under three issues: 1) teacher qualities; 2) musical outcomes; and 3) extra-musical outcomes. Many of these influences have also appeared in the previous sections that addressed the subsidiary research questions, due to the nature of the research. While many other findings were evident, these areas were most frequently cited and tended to be most valuable to the participants.

Teacher Qualities

As documented by Bryce (2004), Holmquist (1995), Public Agenda (1997), and Turton & Durrant (2002), teacher quality has a considerable influence on the enjoyment and effectiveness of learning. The teacher characteristics that appear to be of importance to the former-student participants in my study include: 1) high expectations, 2) valuing students as learners, and 3) exhibiting a love of music and learning.

The idea of being trusted as a student naturally leads to being valued as a learner. These students knew they had an important role to play in the group. They believed that Mrs. Wood needed each of their voices to reach a shared goal of excellence. The safe environment in the classroom promoted the atmosphere of acceptance and high expectations without intimidation. Rebecca's negative experience in not being selected for solos and ensembles indicates the tension that arises from competition and the process of leveling choirs by ability. While Rebecca may have felt some animosity from Mrs. Wood, she never indicated that Mrs. Wood harassed or intimidated her.

The former-student participants consistently cited Mrs. Wood as "knowing what she was doing" and having extensive knowledge of vocal technique. It was evident to them that she loved all kinds of music and wanted to share this knowledge with them. Her open and tireless sharing of knowledge demonstrated to them her love of learning and teaching. Mrs. Wood's high expectations, her valuing of students, and her love of music and learning are qualities that these adults view as influential on their adult lives.

Musical Outcomes

The lifelong musical outcomes focused largely on learned critical analysis and evaluation of performance, the predisposition toward musical excellence, and the learned

appreciation of differing genres of music and cultures. While the former-student participants typically did not retain strong music reading skills or knowledge of history or theory, they did hold on to a considerable appreciation of music and at some level an understanding of music and its expressive qualities. They valued the singing of repertoire that challenged them technically and was completely unknown to them. The deliberate exposure to multiple styles and genres of music was appreciated by most former-student participants, who cited "feeling like adults" and "being proud" of their abilities. This varied repertoire also provided an understanding and appreciation of different cultures by exposing them to the music of many countries and traditions.

The extensive training the students received in vocal techniques and pedagogy was crucial to the development of their ability to perform well and critically analyze vocal performance. The former-student participants referred to consistent criticism of their performances, as well as completing self-critiques of performances. They also noted that the competitions they attended were opportunities to use those skills to evaluate other ensembles. The valuing of high quality performance and the critical analysis skills to acknowledge excellence are lifelong influences on the lives of these former students. While this aspect of the program has carryover for their critical thinking skills, it appears to have had negative carryover regarding their highly critical nature and judgmental approach to the abilities of others. These critical thinking skills can also be considered an extra-musical influence, as they appear to have carryover to other aspects of their adult lives beyond critique of music, as in the case of Dylan's critical thinking for planning as he works at the art museum.

Extra-Musical Outcomes

Extra-musical dimensions of the choral music program that had lifelong influence included: 1) personal growth and confidence, 2) creativity, 3) socialization, and 4) teamwork. These extra-musical outcomes had the most significant lifelong implications for the majority of participants.

Personal growth and confidence.

Personal growth, and specifically, self-confidence, realized through participation in the choral program at MVHS were consistently noted by the participants as meaningful aspects of their choral experience. Personal benefits realized included overcoming shyness and learning social skills. Andrew found "a new perspective" in his life and about life in general, and he was no longer afraid to try new things. This growth enhanced his interacting with others. For Rebecca, although she harbored negative feelings about some of her choral experiences, she was able to use those experiences to face her disappointment and develop a less driven approach to her life. Dylan also experienced personal development through his acknowledgement of who he was and how the arts would be a large part of his adult life.

The strongest shared aspect of personal growth was the development of self-confidence. The former-student participants built their confidence during their choral experiences from auditioning, valuing the difficulty of their music, knowing the teacher's high expectations and meeting those expectations, and feeling pride in their performance. Personal growth and confidence were significant aspects of the choral program for the participants and are factors that have encouraged lifelong learning and continuing influence in adult life. For instance, Brian and Andrew both indicated that they are less

shy and more capable of leadership skills due to the self-confidence gained from their choral experience.

Creativity.

While most of the former-student participants did not believe their choral experiences enhanced their imaginations, a few believed that some experiences were beneficial to their creative abilities. They described their exposure to new things as a "springboard" for learning and thinking differently about issues. Their contact with many different types of music and cultures allowed them as adults to listen to and to seek out music beyond the mainstream. These creative possibilities were evident in Dylan's envisioning a music video as he walked along the street listening to music and Rachel's view of African visual art becoming enhanced by her understanding of African-American spirituals. Though some participants were able to use their choral experiences to enhance creativity, most viewed their choral experience as "scripted," with few opportunities for creation, imagination, or experimentation with musical forms and elements.

Socialization.

Most former-student participants indicated that many of their friends were involved in the choral program. Social experiences created a sense of family for the participants, whether it was the group of students as family or the combination of parents and students that were a choral community. The various backgrounds and ethnicities of the students also provided an opportunity for the participants to develop understandings about differences in people and the valuing of these differences.

Even though music programs may have the reputation for being an "un-cool" activity, these graduates of MVHS found choir to be the "cool" thing to do. The choral

"clique" was an accepted group of students in the school, and this led to greater pride and enthusiasm for the program. Andrew was able to realize that he could move between groups of people ("rockers" and choir kids) and find acceptance in choir based on his contributions to the group. Contributing to the goal of excellence was primary to the choral program and each participant built his or her social skills for life by being a valued member of the group. Socialization aspects of the program were evident in the adult lives of the participants in ways in which they are able to make friends, join organizations, and function social settings.

Teamwork.

Many of the former-student participants cited teamwork and learning to work together as a meaningful aspect of learning. Learning to listen to each other and blend, as well as each person's learning his or her part, were elements of teamwork that the participants valued. They found teamwork helped them learn to count on others and think about the progress of the group over their individual needs and desires. Several of the participants indicated that these experiences "transcended" significantly into their adult lives and influenced the ways they approach group activities and the idea of "being one of many."

Overall lifelong influence of a high school choral experience	
Teacher Qualities:	High expectations Valuing students as learners Exhibiting a love of music and learning
Musical Outcomes:	Learned critical analysis Predisposition toward musical excellence Learned appreciation of differing genres of music and cultures
Extra-Musical Outcomes:	Personal growth and confidence Creativity Socialization Teamwork

Figure 13. Chart of themes regarding overall lifelong influence

Summary

In this chapter, I have analyzed the findings from the data and synthesized the information into manageable pieces. I have organized the information around the research questions, culminating with the primary research question. The primary research question serves as an over-arching question that encapsulates the lifelong influences of this case, the Maple Valley choral music education program.

The topics from the research questions provided the organizational structure of this chapter. The thematic data that emerged from coding procedures informed the topics. The topics from the research questions were:

1) influential teacher dimensions,
2) relevance and value of a high school choral program,
3) extra-musical carryover,
4) musical carryover,

5) aspects of a choral experience that have transferred to lifelong learning, and

6) overall lifelong influence of a high school choral experience.

In the final chapter, I present my conclusions, provide implications for practice, and recommend further related research.

CHAPTER 7

REVERBERATING VOICES: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the process of analyzing the interview and observation data, I found myself alternating between confident understanding of participants' experiences and frequent self-doubt regarding what I believed to be their experience. My assumptions about the case have changed conceptually throughout the study and afforded the kind of development for my conclusions that only time and purposeful thought can provide. It is important to note that, in qualitative research the reporting of findings represents one person's encounter with a complex case (Stake, 1995) and should be valued as such. Through the process of crystallization, I have viewed the data from many angles and verified the accuracy of participants' statements. The narratives presented for each participant were intended to give the reader a fuller picture of the participant and his or her perspective on a personal high school choral experience. It is hoped that the narratives provided an authentic reflection of the nature of the choral program and conveyed the realities of the participants. This chapter provides my interpretation of the findings, implications of the research, and topics for further research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The participants in this study provided strong, specific memories of their high school choral experiences. These experiences allowed me to gain insight into their beliefs about the relevance of a choral program and its lifelong influence. I will discuss three general themes of the findings and present my interpretations. These themes are: 1)

teacher personality and approach may influence perceptions of lifelong meaning and value, 2) adults may recall aspects of a choral program that they perceive as enhancing lifelong learning, and 3) adults may cite both intrinsic and extrinsic evidence of ways in which their high school choral program had lifelong influence.

Theme 1: Teacher personality and approach may influence perceptions of lifelong meaning and value

Creemers (1994) pointed out that "In daily life, people often remember their teachers as persons; they remember their morale, their humor, and teaching style more than instructional qualities" (p. 76). It appears that this is true for the participants in this study. They recall Mrs. Wood as a person who had high expectations and who made the students believe in themselves and their abilities. They remember the energy and enthusiasm of their performances, the structure of rehearsals, and specific stories involving Mrs. Wood's personal response to situations or issues, such as Hannah's remembrance of Mrs. Wood's compassion, and Andrew's recalling that she took a personal interest in him and his family problems.

Neither the participants, nor Mrs. Wood herself, considered her a "warm and fuzzy" individual. Her strong personality was demanding and yet compassionate. Although Mrs. Wood had such strong personal characteristics, several of the participants remembered her as accessible and concerned about their well-being. These aspects of her personality were recalled by the participants as considerable influences on their valuing of the program.

Mrs. Wood may not have taught all aspects of music in a way that has led these former students to continue to sing in choirs; however, the influence that she had was

considerable. The participants viewed Mrs. Wood as a significant part of the success of the program. A personal dedication to excellence and high principles encouraged respect for her and the choral program. The participants may not have always agreed with Mrs. Wood's decisions during school, but as adults they remain respectful of her musical abilities and her ability to train choirs. The lifelong influence of Mrs. Wood for these participants hinges on her expectations and the creation of an atmosphere that encouraged character building. Expectations and an atmosphere for personal development coupled with Mrs. Wood's love of music and energy for teaching encouraged a lifelong interest and appreciation of music.

Mrs. Wood's attention to high quality performance and critique was perceived by the participants to have built their character and self-confidence. The participants viewed their music as "adult" and were proud of their abilities, especially as compared to other choirs. Their ability to critique and evaluate choral performances continues to enhance their adult lives. The participants perceived that involvement in the choral program under the guiding hand of Mrs. Wood benefited their adult level of confidence and strengthened their character in adulthood. The primary perceived teacher influences appear to have focused on the more extrinsic life lessons instilled by Mrs. Wood.

Theme 2: Adults may recall aspects of a choral program that they perceive as enhancing lifelong learning

My analysis suggests that the participants in this study, through their choral experience, may have developed skills and attitudes that promote lifelong learning. While several participants (Sharyn, Brian, Rachel) indicated that they believed they would have been lifelong learners regardless of being in choir, others found possible

connections from their choral education to their desire for lifelong learning. Several participants indicated that their self-confidence was increased through involvement in chorus and that their abilities to think critically about music and performance. Several participants also believed that being involved in the arts encouraged their creative thinking while acknowledging that the choral program did not provide a particularly imagination venue for arts exploration.

Research indicates crucial factors in the development of lifelong learning to be critical thinking, self-confidence, creativity, a sense of valuing of students and a love of learning. Mrs. Wood was believed by the participants to have valued her students and to have loved music and learning. While it was perceived that Mrs. Wood encouraged these characteristics in others, there is little evidence of planned curricular goals that directly support teaching for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning was a potential byproduct of the choral education received at Maple Valley High School (MVHS) but was not recognized by the participants as an obvious outcome of their experience.

Additionally, the participants perceived that the choral program offered them a "well-rounded" education that potentially may have led to a greater acceptance and understanding of the global issues of the world and encouraged individuals to think more deeply and widely about democratic ideals. Several of the participants indicated that they believe a balanced education where students are encouraged to think is important. They also believed that their choral music education offered them opportunities to think function in this way. These participants however, did not view these factors as directly connected to lifelong learning and continued growth as an individual. Although

primarily incidental, a balanced education and character building skills were the perceived benefits of the choral program that enhance lifelong learning.

Theme 3: Adults may cite both intrinsic and extrinsic evidence of ways in which their high school choral program had lifelong influence

Participants in this study were chosen because they were not music majors or professional musicians. It might be expected that the lifelong influences among these participants would be different from those who have chosen to continue with occupations in the field of music. I was particularly interested in how students who did not continue professionally with music viewed their experience. These individuals comprise the majority of school music classes, and their perspectives are not only valuable to inform the classroom situation but also as they relate to influence through adulthood. These individuals become the audiences for music and the constituents who determine the ways in which a community delivers and values education. These individuals may set the tone for the valuing or de-valuing of a choral music program.

The participants in my study were extremely proud of the MVHS choral program. They enjoyed having been a part of "something great." This experience should not be minimized. Though they may never feel that they can recapture those same feelings, they have experienced them once and have those memories. The lifelong influences of this choral program are: 1) the desire to achieve excellence; 2) the ability to analyze critically and evaluate vocal music; 3) the ability to appreciate diverse cultures and music genres; and, 4) enriched of socialization and personal growth. While the ability to analyze critically and evaluate vocal music, as well as the ability to appreciate diverse cultures

and music genres are intrinsic to music; the desire to achieve excellence and experiencing an enriching social and personal growth are extrinsic influences of musical studies.

Reimer (2004), in a reflective article about his own theories, has pointed to the benefits of active and passive roles in musicianship. He states, "What demarcates the level of passivity or activity is not the overt physicality of the engagement but the quality and fullness of a person's investment of energies in it" (p. 95). While the majority of participants in my study do not actively sing in a choir or ensemble as adults, the findings indicate that some are, to varying degrees engaged in thoughtful, active, musicianship. Ultimately, the majority of participants' musicianship and investment of energies were not perceived to be highly connected with their choral music program

The participants perceived that they benefited from a highly selective choral program. Their valuing of high-quality performance and over-all excellence has encouraged a more selective nature in adult life. Several participants (Hannah, Sharyn, Rachel, and Shellie) indicated that future musical involvement would need to be of high-quality.

The perceived ability to critically analyze vocal skills and performance was a finding of this study that influences adult life. All participants indicated critical analysis and evaluation as a large part of their experience. The participants indicated the lifelong influence of this skill to be positive and negative. While beneficial to their ability to acknowledge high-quality singing, some participants are often frustrated with the singing abilities of others.

The participants in this study felt that they have acquired musical knowledge and have benefited from their musical education. They believed that the exposure to music

that they would never have experienced otherwise was important. They also believed that the type of choral experience they had is valuable for students today. The participants perceived that the choral program provided them with new and expansive possibilities to develop their taste in music and to further understand "their music."

The participants' knowledge of genres of music and cultural connections is a facet of their education that appears to have transcended their high school experiences. These former students' performance of repertoire that they deemed to be "adult music" prepared them to appreciate music more and to feel advanced beyond the normal populations. My analysis indicates that these participants are likely to listen to and engage with unknown types of music as adults and to use their knowledge of the music of various cultures to provide links in their lives to new people, activities, and experiences. While these benefits are musical in nature, they may have meaning for other areas of adult life. An understanding of musical cultures and styles may provide an avenue for acceptance and appreciation of people and different cultures they are exposed to in their lives.

The extrinsic benefits of choral music participation for the participants focused primarily on social interactions, teamwork, and personal growth, particularly in self-confidence. In addition, the participants indicated that involvement in choir provided the opportunity to "think more and differently," using their brains in ways that benefited other pursuits. While the participants did not see a direct connection between choir and other academic subjects, they did believe that music offered them a time to expand the ways in which they think and provided a break from purely academic thought.

The social interactions that choir provided were considerable. My analysis indicated that the participants expected to find friends and opportunities for social

engagement in ensemble music classes; however, I do not believe that most participants expected to develop personally through their experiences. These participants perceived that the development of teamwork and self-confidence constituted lifelong influences of the program.

I believe that the intrinsic and extrinsic lifelong influences of this choral program were of equal value to these students. I have attempted to understand the genuineness of the relationship between music and more comprehensive influences. Participants in this study did not view intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of music as contradictory, but rather complimentary. Perhaps we in professional music education positions would be wise to do the same.

Implications

Some implications for music teacher preparation, secondary school music education, teacher professional development, and the research process were revealed to me as I analyzed the data. Research has shown that the teacher is the key to successful classrooms and student achievement (Public Agenda, 1997; Fiore & Whitaker, 2005). In my study, the teacher also was a considerable factor in the lifelong influence of the choral music program. The teacher is often the difference between a successful learning experience and a lack of academic engagement; therefore, preparation and continued growth and development of teachers is critical for the success of a music program.

Music Teacher Preparation

The participant's perceptions of the choral program in my study focused more on excellence in performance and less on quality of instruction for overall musicianship. The participants perceived their choral music education as something that happened and

was primarily over. Additionally, these participants had difficulty expressing any lifelong influence and appeared to have never thought about their choral music education in this manner with few participants continuing to be actively involved in music making. These findings suggest that choral music teacher education should be broadened to encourage more training to enhance musical independence and lifelong involvement in music.

The training of music teachers primarily occurs in three sub-disciplines: 1) vocal/choral, 2) instrumental, and 3) general music. My study implies that while these areas are valid, music teacher education must balance the ensemble learning experiences with understanding of a broad repertoire of music and the ways in which classical music studies connect with other genres in students' lives. My study indicated that the students highly benefited from the variety of repertoire to which they were exposed. They commented on how the musical selections opened their minds to new possibilities in music. The music selections for the Broadway Night performance were opportunities for the students to connect "school music" with "their music." Making connections with and for students continues to be a challenge worth undertaking in education. Making music accessible to students and valuable in their lives encourages lifelong involvement and interest. With a balance between a performance education (solo and ensemble) and the learning of skills for compositional and improvisational techniques in ensemble classes, music teacher education could possibly develop music educators who are more prepared both to meet the needs and interests of students in schools and to encourage musical independence.

Critical thinking and analysis were important aspects of the choral program for several participants. Although many aspects of the choral program were dictated by the director, the participants perceived that their critical analysis skills gave them opportunities to think on their own. The ability to analyze and come to conclusions is a valuable tool for lifelong learning. Shelly recalled a moment when Mrs. Wood told the class that she could tell they enjoyed a song. Shelly wondered how Mrs. Wood knew this by the way they sounded. She also wondered what this meant about music and its power over the emotions. Additionally, my analysis of the findings of this study revealed that the participants valued working as a team and creating music through joint endeavors. Dylan indicated that the group composition project from his freshman year in chorus was among his favorite memories. The communication, thoughtfulness, and analysis that are generated by students who are empowered to learn for themselves suggest that teacher education is needed to encourage teachers to act as facilitators rather than the givers of information (Bryce, 2004).

In high school choir classrooms, the choral director typically determines the majority of the performance aspects with students preparing the music as instructed. Perhaps with a more open and developmental approach to choral music during portions of the instruction, students could be encouraged to become more musically independent and self-sufficient. Students need to be given the opportunity to understand why information is important and how to apply that information. The teacher as a facilitator would allow students opportunities for metacognition and a deeper understanding of their education. As Andrew expressed, it is important to give students the ability to learn for

themselves. This empowerment is crucial for engagement in learning and the desire to learn for a lifetime.

A final implication for music teacher preparation stems from my findings around the teacher as a lifelong learner. Mrs. Wood had been teaching only a few years when the early participants were in her program and now she is in her 18th year. In our interviews she clearly expressed her personal growth and development as the most important aspect of teaching. She became aware of the level of student learning and students' lack of understanding during her tenure. Mrs. Wood continually attended conferences and workshops to improve her craft and received an advanced degree focusing on differentiated instruction in the choral music class. Her resulting effectiveness combined her strategies with her knowledge, character, and disposition. Lifelong learning is a significant aspect of Mrs. Wood's teaching style and personal approach to life. These findings imply that music teacher preparation should encourage the gradual process of learning to teach and learning from peers. Her development as a successful teacher evolved as she exposed herself to opportunities to grow and consistently reflected on her own teaching and how to improve.

Consideration of how music teachers are prepared to teach is important if we wish to have students who can function independently in music and have a lifelong interest in music making. It is my belief that music teachers should develop an understanding of why music is important in our adult lives and base their approach to instruction that fosters connections to music for a lifetime.

Music Education Programs

Analysis and review of my findings suggest there are several possible considerations needed in the area of music education in secondary education. The lack of significant continued musical involvement among participants, the prevalence of extrinsic benefits over intrinsic musical benefits of the program, and the lack of evidence of musical independence and learning for meta-cognition have led me to consider the need for restructuring school music and reconceptualizing the choral curriculum.

Music education in the secondary schools has remained essentially the same during the last century. The longstanding focus in secondary school music on large ensemble performance and a product over process approach has led the profession to question the paradigm of music education (Bartel, 2004). This study has suggested that little specific musical knowledge, such as music reading, may carry over from the high school choral experience. If music educators wish their students to remain music-makers, this study implies that we must consider an alternative or additional approach to our traditional music ensemble courses. As Brian indicated, being in chorus was "something I did then," and now it is over. Lifelong involvement in music is not encouraged with the current traditional system.

The perceptions of lifelong influence found in this study appear to be inconsistent with the outcomes purported by the music education profession. The participants in this study typically viewed their experience as something that happened during a finite period. The concept of lifelong involvement and influence that I introduced was a rather new concept for many of the participants. This further implies a deficiency in education that fails to encourage lifelong personal engagement and development. Holmquist (1995)

indicated that music education purports to provide students an outlet for learning experiences after formal education and encourages prior learning for lifelong engagement. Studies have also shown that students in ensemble music classes often cease to continue to sing or play instruments (Ordway, 1964; Lawrence & Dachinger, 1967). The contradiction between practice and what is purported by the music education profession appears to be supported by my study. If the music education profession is to live up to the claims of lifelong engagement, perhaps a re-examining of the way in which we deliver music to students should be addressed.

It seems probable that the expectations for high quality performances that the participants in this study experienced were a factor in the formation and success of the ensemble. Bartel (2004) has suggested that the ensemble tradition encourages the idea that secondary school music is only for the talented. This may further indicate that there is a need for music experiences beyond the traditional performance ensembles. It appears that music teachers, in general, must also think more about the relationship of school music and the students' innate interest in music. What is intriguing about music to students and what qualities engage them in musical learning are of primary importance if music skills are to be learned for lifetime influence.

The need to connect "school music" to the lives of students and to encourage lifelong involvement may suggest a need for an extension of traditional ensemble classes to offer more varied opportunities in music. Classes such as guitar or keyboard, composition classes, music technology, or improvisational ensembles may need to be considered to meet the needs of students and to encourage lifelong interest in music making. These types of classes would also offer musical opportunities for students who

do not wish to be a part of the traditional ensemble classes, but have an interest in music. Although ensemble music classes provide musical and social opportunities, would another type of music education provide greater possibilities of continued music making? Traditional band, orchestra, and choir teachers may need to teach courses that are not focused on the techniques required of large group performing ensembles. Such instruction would require different teaching strategies and musical knowledge and could influence music teacher preparation programs.

In addition to the need to consider the restructuring of secondary music education classes, my analysis revealed that extra-musical benefits, such as teamwork and socialization were considerable influences of the choral program. The participants frequently referred to the choral program having influenced their confidence, their abilities to work with groups of people, and to socialize. While the participants highly valued these outcomes of the program, the findings raise the question of whether these skills and attitudes could not have been realized through other means. While music ensembles offer social experiences that are meaningful to students, it is my belief that these social benefits also could be gained from other types of group experiences including non-traditional ensemble music experiences.

A final consideration for secondary school music education centers on the evident lack of musical skill that has carried over to the adult lives of the participants. This lack of engagement in active music-making and music reading may suggest the need to reconsider the choral curriculum in ways that encourage lifelong musical benefits as much as extra-musical benefits. Several of the participants indicated that singing certain repertoire, connecting with that repertoire at a deep level, and appreciating high-quality

literature was influential in their lives. If this is the case, why did the extra-musical benefits supercede the musical? This may suggest that a less competitive experience that focuses on musical decision-making, reflecting on music, and a more comprehensive approach to music learning would encourage the lifelong influences that music educators desire.

Today's choral curriculum focuses heavily on vocal development and performance with instruction in sight-singing. A more comprehensive curriculum that provides opportunities for students to create and make musical choices would perhaps encourage more musical independence. In order for music reading skills to be more readily retained, the choral approach to music reading in large groups should be addressed. Students need opportunities to work and perform independently in the classroom to develop and improve music reading skills. As Demorest (2001) has indicated, often students who sight-sing only in groups do not fully grasp and retain music reading skills.

Along with music reading skills, my study has shown that the culture and historical information that a varied repertoire provides students is meaningful for continued valuing and openness to various types of music. To expand that valuing, the historical and cultural information that students receive from various repertoires may need to be expanded to exploring the purposes of a song and its role in the curriculum, along with provoking students to discuss and consider compositional techniques used to tell a story or reveal a purpose.

My study indicated that the participants viewed their retained abilities to critique as valued musical carryover. The determining of active involvement in critical analysis

of music centers on the quality of this engagement. While it is evident that these participants learned to evaluate and consider musical quality, it appears that the majority of these participants' investment in critique and evaluation of music is minimal and any connections with lifelong involvement are not intuitive or spontaneous. Examining possibilities such as these to expand and enhance a choral curriculum will provide students a more complete picture of how music fits in their world. Perhaps with a more comprehensive approach that encourages meta-cognition, students would become more aware of their learning and how to incorporate skills, knowledge, and attitudes to transfer a lifelong learning and interest.

Lifelong involvement with music could take many forms. As previously pointed out by Reimer (2004, p. 95), the "quality of the investment of energies" is more a determining factor than the physical engagement. Being able to read music is one indicator of musical independence and involvement, but the idea of lifelong influence in this study relates more with the "essence remain[ing] long after specific memory fades" (Myers, 1983, p. 47). The essence of the choral music experience for these participants held valuable and significant memories. Thinking about specific lifelong benefits and metacognition of their learning was a challenging concept for the participants. Although the essence of the program was meaningful to them as adult, something was missing from the education that allowed them to know specifically the extent of those benefits.

Professional Development

Findings from my study have suggested that teacher professional development and continued growth is important for effective teaching and maintaining a connection with the student population. Professional development opportunities for in-service

teachers should not only consider a broadened perspective in music teaching but also the importance of the quality of teaching that occurs. Turton and Durant (2002) indicated that the cultural and technical skills of choral teachers, as well as their abilities to utilize multiple genres of music, are important to the classroom:

> Singing operates within a variety of cultural contexts that perhaps need to be reflected more effectively in schools.... Music is a social process and ideally should embrace both tradition and new experiences...Singing is, after all, a communal activity. Teachers should not be defensive about seeking enlightenment with regard to professional development in their own singing and choral conducting. (p. 47)

The practice of "embracing both tradition and new experiences" is important for educators and their students. Music educators would be advised to take every opportunity to reflect and expand their knowledge of music education including, but not limited to choral music.

Research Process Implications

An unanticipated and ancillary implication of this study centers on the issue of performance-based instruction. It should be noted that although I requested recommendations of high school choral programs that had comprehensive programs of instruction, the choral experts contacted appear to have based their recommendations solely on the performance reputation of the programs rather than knowledge of classroom instruction. This has implications for what the choral profession values in education. It also suggests societal evidence of a mindset that focuses on awards and accolades. Focusing on achievement in performance may indicate a prevailing tendency toward competition and excellence at the cost of democratic ideals for education.

Additionally, in retrospect, the process that I followed for selection of the program and participants could have possibly have been improved by observing the

programs prior to selection. Although this process would not have allowed me to see the choral program as it was in 1990, it would have given me more insight to the development process of each possible choral program prior to selection. I also believe that I it would have been beneficial to interview each possible former-student participant prior to selection. This process may have allowed me to locate students with more specific reflections of the influence of their experience; however, the genuineness and in some cases, lack of awareness, of the responses of my participants tells a story in itself.

Recommendations for Further Research

During my research, several topics and issues have arisen that warrant extended research. These topics include the lack of specific music skills retained, the considerable use of competition, and the use of Christian repertoire in choral classes.

Although music reading and knowledge are not sole indicators of lifelong influence, these skills do offer an entrée into participation and ultimately musical independence. As the majority of the participants of my study did not retain music reading knowledge, this may be an indicator of an area in need of improvement. An investigation of strategies and curricular approaches that facilitate students' retention of music reading skills into adulthood could be beneficial to encourage lifelong involvement. This type of study could compare programs or aspects of differing instructional approaches to find valid ways to help students develop and retain music reading skills.

This investigation could be expanded to include the value of a more comprehensive approach to music learning in traditional performance-based courses in secondary schools. The choral program in this study was highly successful by

performance standards. Future research should compare the lifelong influence of a high quality choral program that receives many performance accolades with that of a program of moderate acclaim that focuses on a more comprehensive approach. Such research could inform the profession about the type of education that allows for the kinds of lifelong influence music educators frequently purport as a benefit of music study in schools. The comparison of adult retention of skills and knowledge among various styles of high school choral programs which approach choral music from differing perspectives may offer insight into how students best retain information for lifelong involvement and encouraging greater societal arts contributions.

The choral program in this study utilized competition as a motivator and as a means of learning to critique and evaluate. All participants commented on the competitive nature of the program and their personal abilities to critique and evaluate vocal performance. The focus on competition and critique may have had some bearing on the lifelong influence of the choral program. Many students found the competitive nature to be among the most memorable reflections of the program. This competitive nature along with pop culture's "American Idol" (Fremantel Media Productions, 2003), may encourage our society's tendency to determine whether a person "can sing" or not. Rebecca stated in her interview that people being told by music teachers not to sing is a "thread that runs through" the lives of those who do not sing as adults. Future research should investigate programs that emphasize competition, as opposed to those that do not, to determine the influences on adult behavior and attitudes. This type of research could again compare adult reflections from choral programs that focus on differing aspects – competitive or non-competitive.

The use of religious music in the choral curriculum also arose as an issue in this study. Several students of the Jewish faith noted their feelings of discomfort in singing the religious texts of Christian music. Although these students may have felt uncomfortable, they valued the quality of the music and seemed to ultimately to believe the selection of literature was based on musical criteria. Historically, much standard choral literature is of a religious nature. It is unknown how this issue was handled in class at MVHS but it appears these young students did not feel comfortable to voice their concerns or offer alternative suggestions. The idea of including music of all religious groups is also unrealistic due to the lack of teacher preparation for such material and societal concerns for non-traditional religious beliefs. Future research should investigate the ramifications of this issue in the lives of non-Christians and the implications for more inclusive repertoire that encourages musical value.

A final recommendation stems from the evidence that lifelong influence of a choral music program seems to be a foreign concepts to most participants. The idea that a high school course would provide knowledge and skills that highly influence adult behaviors was not obvious and transparent. This raises the question of how to infuse knowledge and the disposition for teaching for lifelong influence. Teacher training focuses on preparing music teachers to provide information to students and does not appear to generate the larger concept of learning for life. If the purposes of education include building a sense of responsibility for community and a continued capacity for growth, then learning that stops at the school house door is inadequate.

Future research should investigate ways in which music education, and all education, can broaden the continued influence of schooling and train teachers to value

students' understanding of their own learning. An investigation of philosophy of education among students in various music teacher preparation programs or of first year teachers could prove informative regarding practices and personal beliefs. This type of data could then be compared to the curricular approach of the teacher preparation program. This research might also include an investigation of adults and the types of education that they believe they received, thus encouraging thoughtful reflection about the influence of education through adulthood.

Summary

The results of my study on lifelong influences of a high school choral program indicate that students identify a variety of worthy outcomes that have lifelong influence; however, they do not always take with them specific skills and knowledge taught in the choral curriculum. As I reflect on my teaching career and the influence I may have had on my students, I struggle with the possibility that many of my graduates may no longer participate in active music-making. I hope that at least some of the music skills that were taught have carried over into their lives. I feel confident that many would specify social and personal growth aspects of the program as meaningful to their adult lives, as did the participants of this study.

It appears that the hidden curriculum of a choral program may have the strongest influence on students' adult lives. Perhaps the overall influence or essence of the choral experience and the different ways of thinking and doing are the most meaningful lifelong influences. It is my hope that this study will provide the impetus for music educators to come to understand that the skills and knowledge that we profess to teach are not necessarily what is learned. Music educators must be thoughtful about the types of

experiences that encourage the lifelong influence of a music education. We must keep in mind nurturing the idea of the "whole music educator" and reconsidering the "whole music curriculum for the whole student for a whole lifetime" (Peterman, 1954, p. 129). Through this approach, music education can perhaps encourage a society that values and promotes the teaching, listening, and performing of music.

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Appendix A

Dear Colleague,

Given your knowledge and expertise in choral music education, I am writing to request your assistance in identifying a high school choral program that might serve as a case study for my doctoral dissertation. I am pursuing a Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning with a concentration in Music Education at Georgia State University. My research will focus on the reflective perceptions of graduates regarding the influence of choral music education on their lives. In an effort to eliminate as much of my bias as possible, I am searching for a high school choral program outside my home state of Georgia.

The program I wish to study will meet several criteria:

- Choral teacher must have been at the same school for 15-plus years
- A choral program, with instruction focusing on vocal pedagogy and singing technique, music reading skills, relevant historical and cultural connections, musical expression, and high-quality teaching strategies
- A superior reputation, both for the director and the program, among peers and colleagues for high-quality performances
- Located in the central or eastern portions of the United States

Once a choral program is selected and the choral director agrees to be involved, I will be endeavoring to locate former students of the program to interview regarding perceived meaning, value, and lifelong learning associated with their experience. I will also observe and interview the director to document various facets of the program.

I would greatly appreciate your e-mail suggestions of two or three choral directors and their programs that would meet these criteria, as well as any contact information you may have for them. Thank you in advance for your help. If you would like a copy of the summary of my findings, please let me know in advance where to send them.

Sincerely,

Melissa Arasi

Appendix B

Hello,
My name is Melissa Arasi and I am conducting a research project about your high school choral program. I am studying the perceptions of adults of their high school choral music experience. I am looking for participants for the study. A participant's involvement will consist of two (2) in person interviews, in which I will come to the participant at a pre-arranged time and place that is most convenient to the participant.

Understanding how valuable your time is, if you are interested in participating, please respond to this e-mail. Your time commitment will be minimal if you are selected as a participant.

In order to select the participants, I need the following questions answered:

1. What year did you graduate?
2. How many years were you in chorus?
3. What is your ethnicity (optional, but helpful)?
4. What is your current occupation?

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-mail.

Sincerely,
Melissa Arasi
Doctoral Candidate
PhD in Teaching and Learning in Music Education
Georgia State University

Appendix C

Former-student Interview Questions First interview:

Grand Tour question –

- Could you tell me about your remembrances of your high school choral music experience?

Specific questions as necessary:
Contextual questions to develop an understanding of their perspective of the program.

- How many students were in your school?
- How many years did you participate?
- How many choirs were in your school?
- Describe the types of choirs and small ensembles available and the selection process.
- How did you feel about auditioning for the choir?
- Please describe a typical rehearsal as you remember it.
- What types of music did you learn? Will you describe specific pieces?
- How did you feel about performing concerts?
- Where were your performances?
- How often did your choir perform for the student body?
- What did you think about festival?
- Could you elaborate on particular songs you sang while in chorus?
- What was the general climate of the choir?
- What experiences in chorus dealt with reading music, composing, or improvising? Have these skills allowed you to achieve musical independence?

Friends and Family:

The following questions about friends and family are asked in an effort to elaborate on other influences in the informant's life and to investigate generational carryover.

- Were your friends in chorus? If not, why do you believe they were not? If yes, were they your friends before you were in chorus or after? Are you still in contact with any of them?
- How would you describe your family's involvement or valuing of music while you were growing up? Did this affect your being in chorus?
- How did your parents feel about your being in choir?
- How would it be valuable if your child were in music now?

School Music:

- Would you advise today's teenagers to be in chorus? Why or why not?
- Relative to other subjects, how important would you say chorus was?
- Why should or shouldn't schools continue to have choral music education programs?

- How did your experience in chorus acknowledge other types of music outside of school?
- Did chorus or music study help you in other academic areas?

Appendix D

Former-student Second Interview Questions:

Adult Life:

- If any, what aspect of being involved in choir seems most meaningful or valuable to you now?
- In what ways do you believe your participation in this experience may have influenced your adult life?
- How would it be valuable for you to be involved with music now?
- Have you sung in any choirs since high school?
  - In what ways did your high school choral experience affect your performance in a new choir?
- Would you join a chorus if you had time?
- If you were to think about ways your experiences in high school chorus influenced who you are today, what would they be?
- Did you learn anything about yourself by being in chorus?
- Did the skills and knowledge learned in chorus transfer or carryover to your adult life?
- Did being in chorus influence your creativity?
- Did being in chorus influence your imagination?
- Did being in chorus influence your ability to express your thoughts?
- Did being in chorus influence your ability to take risks in learning?
- Has it impacted your desire for lifelong learning?

Reflection:

- Was Mrs. Wood the draw to the program or the musical experience or perhaps something else?
- Could you describe particular stories of events that happened in your choral music experience?
- What would you say to a high school choral director who feels he/she does not make a difference in kid's lives?
- If you were writing a letter to your high school choral director, what would you want to say? About the music, about the teaching, about the social experience? Other?
- What were the most significant things you learned about music, beyond music? About life?
- What is your worst memory?
- What is your fondest memory?

Appendix E

Interview topics for Choral Director

- What was the choral program like when you began at the HS?
- How has it changed?
- How has the entire school changed?
- How has your teaching changed?
- What role did tradition play in your planning?
- What role did inventiveness play in your planning?
- How well do you address the national standards, then and now?
- Music education through chorus?
- Do you make connections to other subjects?
- Do you feel you must justify the value of chorus to your students, other faculty, or administration?
- Do you connect chorus to the "real world" of music?
- To what do attribute your success?

Appendix F

TEACHER EVALUATION

Participant_____ **Date**_____ **Time**_____

EFFECTIVE ASPECTS OF TEACHING	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Knowledgeable of content and teaching strategies	7 (1)		
Knowledgeable of students and instructional needs	5 (1)	2	
Clear about instructional goals	6	1 (1)	
Has enthusiasm for teaching	7 (1)		
Communicates expectations to students	6 (1)	1	
Teaches for metacognition	2	4 (1)	1
Addresses high and low cognitive objectives	3 (1)	4	
Cares for students	5	2 (1)	
Monitors student understanding and offers appropriate feedback	5 (1)	1	1
Makes expert use of existing instructional materials to enrich and clarify the content	4	3 (1)	
Maintains strong discipline	5 (1)	2	
Integrates instruction with other subject areas	1	3 (1)	3
Accepts responsibility for student outcomes	5 (1)	1	1
Is enthusiastic	7 (1)		
Is thoughtful and reflective about teaching	6 (1)	1	
Possesses a warm personality	2 (1)	4	1
Structures the learning	5 (1)	2	
Proceeds in small steps but at a brisk pace	5 (1)	1	1
Takes a personal interest in students	4 (1)	3	
Gives detailed and redundant instructions and explanations	2	4 (1)	1
Provides many examples	2 (1)	4	1
Presents material in a clear manner	5	2 (1)	
Asks a large number of questions and provide overt, active practice	3 (1)	2	2
Teaches at a brisk pace	5 (1)	2	
Provides feedback and corrections, particularly in the initials stages of learning new material	6 (1)	1	
Balances praise and criticism	5 (1)	2	
Plans a variety of activities within the class period	2 (1)	4	1
Includes overt, active practice, to the point of "over learning"	2	3 (1)	2
Has a desire to improve as a teacher	4 (1)	2	1
Has a student success rate of 80% or higher in initial learning	5 (1)	2	
Uses discipline techniques focused upon communication of expectations	5 (1)	1	1
Loves music	7 (1)		

Numbers indicate former student responses. Seven former students completed the survey. Number in parentheses is the teachers' self rating.

Appendix G

MAPLE VALLEY SINGERS: Grades 10, 11, 12

PREREQUISITE: Audition and one year high school choral experience or permission of department chairperson.

DESCRIPTION: Maple Valley Singers is a balanced group of men and women with the most highly developed voices who meet the musical standards for the advanced level of this performing group. A rich, inclusive variety of choral repertoire from many diverse cultures and artistic periods will be studied. Choral traditions are studied, stressing vocal, choral and sight reading techniques. Students will develop the ability to evaluate and demonstrate an appreciation for; music as an art form and music related careers. Students will develop an understanding of the potential for music in interdisciplinary relationship with all curricula. The students will receive a sectional lesson on the rotating music schedule. Maple Valley Singers will perform extensively at concerts in and outside of school.

GOALS:

Students will become acquainted with examples of major forms of choral music for the developing voice of representative composers of various cultures and all artistic periods.

Students will continue the development of their voices to reach their potential according to their years of physical growth.

Students will learn the fundamentals of music through the studies of sight singing, ear-training exercises, musicianship drills, music theory and the visual language of music.

Students will be made aware of professions and job opportunities that require knowledge of music.

REQUIREMENTS:

Students will achieve an average grade of 60 percent or higher for the course based on a variety of evaluation devices including:

Performance at all concerts and attendance at entire concert.

Memorization of all required music for concerts.

Attendance at the one mandatory after school rehearsal prior to each concert.

Quizzes and tests (written and performance).

Homework assignments.

Class participation, class and lesson attendance.

Music at all classes.

Semester exams (written and performance).

Sight reading activities.

Regular ear-training procedures.

MATERIALS:

Octavos and major works by highly representative composers of various cultures, classic and present day literature most suitable for developing voices.

Listening materials, videos, computer programs as they become available.

GRADING SYSTEM:

30% Class participation
30% Performance testing
20% Rotating lesson attendance
10% Written assignments
10% Concert and rehearsal attendance and performance

_____

Parent Signature