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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

QUEERING THE CLASSROOM:
A STUDY OF PERFORMATIVITY AND MUSICAL ENGAGEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

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Our similarities provide us with a common ground, but our differences allow us to be fascinated by one another, (Tom Robbins, 1990, p. 145)

DEDICATION

To my mother, who radiates warmth and compassion for others, and has the wonderful gift of making everyone she meets feel like they are the most important person in the world. Thank you for showing all of us what human kindness and unconditional love truly means.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who helped bring this project to fruition. First and foremost, I would like to thank the three participants in this study—Evan, Emily, and Connor — who gave of their time and shared their stories. I am so grateful for their trust and honesty throughout this project. It is with deep respect and admiration that I present their powerful words of hope and courage.

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QUEERING THE CLASSROOM:

A STUDY OF PERFORMATIVITY AND MUSICAL ENGAGEMENT

IN HIGH SCHOOL

SUSAN LYNN SHANE

Boston University College of Fine Arts, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Creating inclusive environments that are safe and respectful of all students in the spectrum is paramount to students' success and well-being in music (Carter, 2011). When students feel safe and supported, they may express themselves more freely and participate in music more fully (Hill, 2019). Yet, freedom to express oneself is inhibited by heteronormative beliefs and practices that perpetuate gender stereotypes, suppress queer thinking, and form the origins of homophobia and transphobia (Butler, 2004; Sedgwick, 1990/2008; Warner, 1993). This study featured a narrative inquiry design which utilized the lens of queer theory and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of gender performativity to examine high school musical engagement through the recollections and perceptions of three trans young adults. The purpose of this study was to explore ways that gender and music intersect in high school, as well as illuminate behaviors that constrained or enabled the participants' abilities to participate fully in school music. Data was gathered through interviews with the participants during which they recounted past musical experiences in school, family, and community contexts. Findings from a comparative analysis revealed eight areas that were crucial to the participants' affirmation of identity and musical

engagement: supportive people, singing alone and with others, negotiating traditions, meaningful performing experiences, safe spaces and safe people, role of media, personal agency, and role of the music teacher. This study contributes to a growing body of music education research rooted in queer theory that dismantles the binary gender categories of "male" and "female" and, instead, considers the entire spectrum of gender. Results of this study may help educators remove barriers between gender identity and musical engagement by informing practice that opens channels for learning and builds stronger connections to music.

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CHAPTER ONE: Overview of the Study

We must look beyond the simplistic political syllogism that gay is to sexual orientation as trans is to gender and start understanding gender stereotypes as an issue for everyone, whether they identify as gay, straight, transgendered, minority, youth, or feminist. Because gender is one of those rare issues that brings us together, that we can work on as equals on common ground.

(Wilchins, 2004, p. 267)

Introduction

High school music can lead to some of the most rewarding experiences of a student's career. For many students, high school music environments provide a safe space where they can grow musically and openly identify themselves (Palkki & Caldwell, 2018). When students feel safe, they may involve themselves with music more deeply and form stronger connections with others (Carter, 2011). Participants in Palkki's (2016) study indicated that they felt more "comfortable" and "confident" expressing themselves in their music departments, for example, when teachers established a supportive and inclusive environment (p. 165). While creating music environments that welcome and include all gendered individuals may be a goal for most educators, doing so requires thoughtful consideration of the binary systems in place which constrain peoples' experiences and stifle diversity in the classroom. Thinking critically about these systems and changing the behaviors and practices which uphold them helps students and educators create more inclusive classrooms which may, in turn, lead to more vibrant and engaging music experiences.

Scholarship in the field of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning+ (LGBTQ+) studies and music education has illuminated various ways in

which students and educators negotiate gender identity in the classroom as well as through music (Carter, 2013; Green, 1997; Nichols, 2013).[1] Studies indicate that music aids in the formation of identity by affirming students' sense of themselves as well as providing them with a means to self-express (Abramo, 2011a; Ashley, 2009; Kruse, 2016; Wadley, 2014). In Kruse's (2016) study, participants were simultaneously stimulated and affirmed by their engagement with hip-hop music because hip-hop validated their queer, black identity and also provided a music genre they could easily "blend into" (p. 109). Similarly, Abramo (2011a) found that students' performances of popular music played a role in energizing and reinforcing their masculine identities (p. 475). More recent scholarship has explored relationships between gender and music through narrative research that highlights the personal stories of trans individuals through their own unique voices (Bartolome, 2016; Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2016; Silveira, 2019).[2] Examination of music education through the experiences of trans individuals illuminates ways that schools and educators perpetuate oppressive, gendered traditions, as well as practices that create safer and more inclusive environments.

This study adds to the growing body of music education research that posits

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[1] LGBTQ+ is an umbrella term referring to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (Human Rights Campaign, 2019). The "+" represents those who are part of the gender and sexually diverse community, "but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity" (Parents and Friends for Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG], 2019). Although the LGBTQ+ acronym can be viewed as problematic because it erases individual identities, and because it ties the constructs of gender and sexuality together, the participants in this study, as well as scholars in the field, recognize LGBTQ+ as representing a broader community of people who join together to acknowledge the wider spectrum of identity and resist heterosexual, cisgender hegemony (de Quadros, 2019). It is with this definition in mind that I continue with the acronym.

[2] The word "trans" was originally used as shorthand for "transgender" or "transsexual." Today, it is often used as an umbrella term that includes a wide variety of gender identities beyond transgender and cisgender (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD], 2019). It is with this latter umbrella definition that I use the term "trans" throughout this document. The participants in this study also used the word "trans" to identify themselves as part of the transgender community.

gender as a spectrum and that honors the lives of all gendered individuals in the classroom. It features the powerful stories of three trans musicians as they recollect their high school music experiences.[3] My intention with this study was to explore ways that music educators can better support all gendered students, as well as create an even larger space for this important scholarship to grow.

Who am I?

Embarking upon research with historically marginalized populations requires great care and sensitivity. It demands that researchers remain attentive and conscious of the many cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological perspectives that shape conversations and influence people's being, including their own (Patton, 2002). Throughout this study, I engaged in reflexive practice to increase my own self-understanding and self-awareness which I share briefly here. A more detailed discussion of my researcher positionality is addressed in Chapter Three.

I am a choral music educator, a singer, a parent, a child, a sibling, a student, and a friend. I am also an "outsider."[4] My identity can best be summarized as a white, heterosexual, cisgender female ally who grew up in a two-parent, college educated household, in a suburb of the Northeast. My only knowledge of queer before college was glam rock stars and sad portrayals of gender diverse people in the movies. Aware of my

---

[3] The language used to describe gender and sexually diverse communities is continually changing and varies according to the person and context. Throughout this document, I use the terms "LGBTQ+" and "trans" as umbrella terms for all individuals who celebrate identities beyond heterosexual and cisgender, unless otherwise stated by the participants or in the literature. A supplementary list of terms and definitions relevant to this report can be found in Appendix E.

[4] Insider/outsider status are terms used to describe how researchers and participants are positioned to one another with regard to structural relations such as sexuality, gender, class, and race. (Skeggs, 2002).

privileged position, I realized that it was crucial for me to constantly examine my perspective and my biases, as well as question my motives, throughout the research process.

“So, why are you undertaking this research if you are not part of the community?” a colleague asked early on in my studies. What gives me the right to do this research, in other words? Good question. Throughout this study I grappled with the guilt of my position, ashamed of my hetero-cis privilege and worried about intruding where I was not wanted. As the number of heartfelt and inspirational writings by respected scholars in the field who identify as LGBTQ+ increased weekly, I began to feel that, quite possibly, I could be the last hetero-cis researcher of the century writing about queer. “Because I teach gender diverse children and young adults and I wish to be more supportive,” I answered.

My career as a choral music educator has granted me the privilege of working with diverse groups of students at all age levels, from preschool through college. In particular, I have witnessed the pressures that younger trans students endure as they work to construct themselves within the confines of their regulated lives. These students are asked to come out, be themselves, and queer space inside a heteronormative cage that is held by their parents, compulsory schooling, and community laws. I am reminded of the shy student who bravely came out to her seventh-grade homeroom by announcing “I used to be [name withheld] but now I’m [name withheld]. I hope you’ll all respect that.” Seventh grade! What bravery! Or the nervous parent that shared how thrilled they were when they received several emails of support from the community after their child came

out. Or the eighth grader who was beaming with joy after they played the male lead in the school musical, even though they had not transitioned because their parents would not allow it. It is in these moments that I remember the delicacy of this underage group as the students work to balance all the realities forced upon them and assert themselves within the boundaries set forth by society. I am proud to bear witness to these students' courage as they teach me about honoring yourself, advocating for yourself, and finding joy in being yourself. While I realize that being an educator does not grant me permission to conduct sensitive research, I remain committed to the students I teach as well as to the young adults who contributed to this current study by thoughtfully sharing their messages of hope, diversity, and change.

I continue Chapter One with a discussion of gender and queering the classroom. This is followed by an overview of the study, including the current school climate, the problem statement, an explanation of key concepts and theoretical lenses, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. A discussion of the study's significance completes the chapter.

Queering the Music Classroom

In this study, I posit gender and sexuality as separate constructs that are both internally felt and socially reinforced through power-laden relationships with the outside world. As Butler (2004) clarified, "sexuality does not follow from gender in the sense that what gender you 'are' determines what kind of sexuality you 'have'" (p. 16). Additionally, this study rests upon the belief that gender and sexuality exist as a spectrum of possibilities rather than innate, binary categories. Educators wishing to "queer their

classrooms,” then, work to support and honor all human beings in the spectrum by creating environments that eliminate biases and welcome diversity. A brief introduction of key concepts associated with gender helps situate this study.

Gender is a complicated term that is often fraught with misconceptions. Once unquestionably tied to sexuality, the term “gender” has evolved from a description of sexual differences, to a description of “male’ and “female” socially constructed roles in society, to the current widely held belief that gender embodies many diverse forms that are both innately felt and socially constructed (Connell, 1987). Ehrensaft (2012) described gender as comprised of an individual’s authentic (true) gender identity, their gender expression, and their physical and biological traits. Gender identity refers to an individual’s internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not correspond to their gender assigned at birth (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD], 2019), whereas gender expression describes how individuals communicate their identity with others (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2019a). People’s gender assignment at birth largely determines their initial course towards gender identity and “once established . . . evokes and prescribes boundless sociocultural constructs” (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011, p. 17). Individuals whose gender identity does not align with their gender assigned at birth learn to reconstruct and re-signify their true gender identity in ways that are unique to each person.

Gender is constructed through social behaviors that are informed and reinforced by an individual’s beliefs and situation as well as by their internal sense of self (Butler, 2004; Fausto-Sterling, 2012). West and Zimmerman (1987) called this process “doing

gender," (p. 125). When people "do gender," they construct and sustain gender through interactions with the world around them. According to Butler (1990/1999), people "do gender" through the reciprocal act of performativity.[5] Performativity consists of bodily and speech acts that are enacted, repeated, reinforced, and then internalized through engagement with others (Butler, 1990/1999). All people, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators, experience continual rejection or validation of the self through performativity.

Examination of performativity, and the heteronormative forces which oppress it, falls within the tenets of queer theory.[6] Once considered a derogatory term, the word "queer" is now often used as an empowering word used to describe identities and events that are non-conforming, varied, and flexible (Dilly, 1999; Hawkins, 2009; Stryker, 2008). As Gould (2016) explained, "queer happens/actualizes/becomes. Like music, it is just beyond our grasp, arriving just before and just after we realize it— not when we become aware, which is always already too late, but when it takes sonic flight, already gone" (p. 128). Although the inclusion of queer in the classroom is critical to creating safe spaces, Gould cautioned against normalizing queer, which runs against its fluid nature and risks diluting individuality. Instead, Gould urged music educators to welcome queer by making room for movement, change, and unexpected happenings.

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[5] Throughout this document, I use the term "performativity" as a reference to Butler's (1990/1999) theory of gender construction, which should not be confused with other uses of the term such as "business" or "artistic" performativity.

[6] The term "queer" was first used as a derogatory label for individuals who identified as anything other than a heterosexual, or *cisgender* male or female (Stryker, 2008). Later, the word came to be used as an umbrella term of empowerment and pride within the LGBTQ+ community (Stryker, 2008). It is with this later definition in mind that I explore ways that students and educators "queer" the classroom and live beyond the binary categories of male/female and homosexual/heterosexual.

Throughout this study, I use the term "queer" as an emancipatory expression which celebrates and upholds all forms of being within the spectrum of gender and sexuality. Likewise, this study of trans students' experiences in music education explores ways that teachers and students can queer their classrooms by creating spaces that are flexible and responsive to the needs of *all* students. As Beemyn and Rankin (2011) summarized:

> We live in a world where gender is more complex and more fluid. It is not enough to dispense with the notion of a gender binary; we must embrace and celebrate the idea that gender is bound only by the limits of people's spirits. (p. 166)

"Queering the classroom" therefore, refers not necessarily to specific identities, but invites *all* people to participate in queering space by creating classrooms that are flexible, open to change, and supportive of all the many ways of being human.

Current School Climate

According to researchers, gender diversity is less accepted than sexual diversity in society and trans youth suffer higher rates of victimization than any other LGBTQ+ group (Kosciw et al., 2017). Results of the 2015 Transgender Survey (Herman et al., 2015) revealed that 48% of all gender-diverse individuals suffered verbal, sexual, or physical abuse during the previous year and nearly 50% had considered suicide. Over the last decade, however, heightened visibility of trans individuals in the media and elsewhere has prompted more social, political, and scholarly interest in this area (Steinmetz, 2014). Celebrities such as Chaz Bono, Laverne Cox, Jazz, Caitlyn Jennings, and Janet Mock, who openly identify as transgender, have publicly advocated for

themselves and others like them, gaining an empathetic audience and encouraging discussions about the broad spectrum of gender. Their courage and transparency have helped to raise public support and protective policies for trans individuals. The result has been an increase in social actions by various leaders and policy makers to provide more services for trans individuals (Cayari, 2019; World Professional Association for Transgender Health [WPATH], 2011), to educate the public and halt the victimization of gender-diverse individuals (National Center for Transgender Equality [NCTE], 2019c), and attempts to put permanent policies in place that protect people at the local, state, and national levels (Lhamon & Gupta, 2016). Schools and educators have responded to these changes by introducing policies that protect all gendered students equally and inclusive practices that consider the wide array of gender possibilities in the classroom (Baum et al., 2015; Chappell, Ketchum, & Richardson, 2018; Johnson, Singh, and Gonzalez, 2014; Kaiser, Seitz, and Walters, 2014).

Despite these encouraging actions, however, the overall climate remains unstable for diverse populations in the United States and hostility towards trans individuals continues (Vogue, Mallonee, & Grinberg, 2017). Bathrooms and locker rooms continue to be the subject of heated political debates attached to their use, and Title IX protection remains a contentious issue in the courts (Vogue et al., 2017). Additionally, progress towards a more gender-inclusive environment has been curtailed by the arrival of the current Trump administration which has restricted, and in some cases, *reversed* gender-inclusive policies that affect various constituents, such as transgender military members, transgender federal workers, transgender prison inmates, transgender people seeking

medical treatment, and transgender youth, among other groups (NCTE, 2019a). These actions, along with federal discrimination towards other underrepresented populations, have created a divisive and emotionally charged national climate. As a result, schools have reported a rise in hate speech and hostility towards LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as an overall increase in student anxiety (Costello, Cohen, & Valk, 2016; Kosciw et al., 2017). As stated by researchers from the Southern Poverty Law Center, “the dynamics and incidents these educators reported are nothing short of a crisis and should be treated as such” (Costello et al., 2017, p. 5). It is imperative, therefore, that schools and music departments, that have an obligation to protect all students, continue to work towards dispelling hostility in schools by creating safe spaces that foster understanding, awareness, and respect for all individuals.

Problem Statement

Creating inclusive environments that are safe and respectful of all students in the spectrum is paramount to students’ success and well-being in music (Carter, 2011). When students feel safe and supported, they may express themselves more freely and participate in music more fully (Hill, 2019). Yet, freedom to express oneself is inhibited by heteronormative beliefs and practices that perpetuate gender stereotypes, suppress queer thinking, and form the origins of homophobia and transphobia (Butler, 2004; Sedgwick, 1990/2008; Warner, 1993). Trans students, who are sometimes challenged to match their bodily expression with their gender, feel particularly constrained by heteronormative beliefs and practices that are reinforced in music environments (Nichols, 2013). For trans students, traditional music practices such as dividing voices by gender, assigning gender

specific uniforms, singing texts that perpetuate gender stereotypes, and rooming assignments on trips can be particularly stressful and alienating (Bartolome, 2016; Palkki, 2017). Additional intersections with race, religion, sexuality, ability, and socio-economic status (SES) compound students' experiences by requiring them to negotiate multiple power structures within their lives and music making (Carter, 2014). Though a few studies have identified ways that schools and music educators can better support gender-diverse students (Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2016; Silveira, 2019), the research is scant and more is needed. In particular, research that explores the multifaceted lives of gendered individuals within traditional music settings is needed to help raise awareness, dismantle oppressive behaviors, and encourage a queer perspective in the music classroom.

Key Concepts and Theoretical Lenses

In this study, I utilized the lenses of queer theory and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to examine the high school music experiences of three trans young adults. Constraints felt from heteronormativity figured prominently throughout their experiences, as well as places of intersectionality. An overview of these key concepts follows below.

Queer Theory

Queer theory stems from post-structural ideals that emphasize the deconstruction of heteronormative forces leading to oppressive behaviors, phobia, and violence (Butler, 2004; Sedgwick, 1990/2008). Warner (1993) noted that queer theory is less about the labeling of sexual and gendered identities than about the examining of heteronormative social structures that uphold or oppress these identities. He stated, "heteronormativity can

be overcome only by actively imagining a necessarily and desirable queer world" (p. xvi). Rooted in critical theory and feminist theory, queer theory developed from the feminist and gay political movements of the late 20th century (Stryker, 2008; Sullivan, 2003). It grew out of discourse surrounding the binary nature of gender and sexuality that categorizes people into male/female and heterosexual/homosexual, as well as arguments regarding the social construction of sexuality versus biological determinism (Pickett, 2018). Whereas feminist-based theory grounds itself in the socially constructed attributes and behaviors of male/female, queer theorists believe in the deconstruction of these binary categories (Sedgwick, 1990/2008). They argue that individuals are neither male/female nor heterosexual/homosexual, but instead lie somewhere on a continuum that also considers race, ethnicity, religion, and other contextual factors. Furthermore, queer theorists emphasize that gender and sexuality are separate constructs— each with its own spectrum of possibilities— allowing for an infinite number of ways in which gender and sexuality may be expressed (Butler, 2004; Sullivan, 2003).

Queer theory does not work to define gender and sexuality in as much as it works to analyze the power and knowledge structures that regulate and shape these constructs (Dilley, 1999). "It is about questioning the presumptions, values, and viewpoints from those [privileged] positions," Dilley (1999) stated, "especially those that normally go unquestioned" (p. 462). In schools, for example, institutionalized norms of expected male/female behaviors become ingrained within teacher practices and classroom routines, and inhibit some students' self-expression and learning while reinforcing others (Mayo, 2014; Wilchins, 2019). By applying a queer theory lens to their teaching, educators take

steps towards dismantling institutional norms and developing more inclusive practices. As Dilley (1999) concluded:

> The study of identities is but one of the areas where queer theory, applied to education, can provide major contributions. The tenets of queer theory could be used, or adapted, in many varied areas of educational research, as the underlying questions of not only our human lives, but our teaching, our learning, and our questioning. (p. 470)

More recently, scholars have begun utilizing queer theory to challenge conventional norms that exist outside of identity, such as spaces, beliefs, and ideas (Barz 2019; de Quadros, 2018; Halbertstam, 2012). They argue that queer may be utilized to deconstruct any situation by exploring "its boundedness, its limitations, and its biases" (Barz 2019, p. 15). As de Quadros (2018) summarized from his work with prison inmates, "Queer theory helps to contest and trouble the binary of good and evil, the perpetrators and the victims, and innocent and guilty" (p. 191).

Performativity

Central to this discussion of queer theory and gender construction is Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity, in which socially constructed behaviors are enacted through bodily acts and speech acts that are reinforced through engagement with others. As the process of enactment and reinforcement is repeated, behaviors and expectations become internalized. Butler explained this reciprocal and performative nature of gender construction by clarifying that not only do all people "do" gender, but society also reflects this action. Butler (2004) stated, "one is always 'doing' with or for

another even if the other is only imaginary" (p. 1). Performativity is fluid and changes according to context.

Critics of Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity question the idea that gender is extrinsically contrived (i.e., "performed") rather than internally felt (Digeser, 1994). They argue that performativity reduces individuals' embodiment and deeply held sense of gender to that of a theatrical performance (Lloyd, 1999). However, Stryker (2008) noted that this was not Butler's (1990/1999) point at all. "Rather than being an objective quality of the body (defined by sex)," Stryker explained, "gender is constituted by all the innumerable acts of performing it. . . . Gender is like a language we use to communicate ourselves to others and to understand ourselves" (p. 131). Gender, therefore, is not an autonomous self-concept hidden within; people and forces that interact with the self through performativity reinforce and shape gender's operation. As Butler (1990/1999) later clarified in a 2014 interview with the TransAdvocate:

> *Gender Trouble* was written about 24 years ago, and at that time I did not think well enough about trans issues. Some trans people thought that in claiming that gender is performative that I was saying that it is all a fiction, and that a person's felt sense of gender was therefore "unreal." That was never my intention. I sought to expand our sense of what gender realities could be. But I think I needed to pay more attention to what people feel, how the primary experience of the body is registered, and the quite urgent and legitimate demand to have those aspects of sex recognized and supported. I did not mean to argue that gender is fluid and changeable (mine certainly is not). I only meant to say that we should all have

> greater freedoms to define and pursue our lives without pathologization, de-realization, harassment, threats of violence, violence, and criminalization. I join in the struggle to realize such a world. (Williams, 2014, para. 28)

Applying Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to the lives trans youth helps teachers and scholars uncover tensions that exist when students do not see themselves reflected and validated in everyday interactions, thus forcing them to adjust and re-signify their identities. Conversely, examination of everyday interactions through the lens of performativity may reveal positive ways that gender diversity is affirmed and expressed in the school community, and point to ways that students, educators, parents, and others can better support all students' freedom of being.

Heteronormativity

In direct opposition to fluidity and queering the classroom is heteronormativity. Heteronormativity stems from essentialist beliefs that all people are either "male" or "female" and that these categories contain certain genetic traits (Connell, 1987; Geddes & Thomson, 1890; Mikkola, 2012). Sometimes referred to as "heterosexual hegemony," heteronormativity is sustained by gendered acts that align with binary expectations for "masculine" and "feminine" behavior, and those who fail to meet those expectations are often criticized (Butler, 1990/1999; Connell, 1987; Sedgwick, 1990/2008).

Despite 20th and 21st century shifts in attitudes and beliefs about gender, heteronormativity remains deeply ingrained in the socio-political fabric of the Western world, and "a binary model of women and men . . . remains intact," according to Beemyn and Rankin (2011, p. 19). Institutions, such as workplaces, government agencies, schools,

families, and the media perpetuate masculine and feminine behaviors through discourse, visual representations, and praxis, which then leads to their normalization, also known as "gender norms" (Chappell et al. 2018, Mayo, 2014; Wilchins, 2019). Wilchins (2019) stated, "norms of masculinity and femininity, while they may be embodied or enacted by a single individual, are the result of shared, communal interaction. And they are invisible, composed of shared beliefs, practices, and attitudes rather than characteristics" (p. 11). It is considered "normal" for females to wear dresses, for example, but it is not yet considered "normal" for males to wear dresses. Gender norms are debilitating for all people because they limit opportunity to learn and connect with others. In schools, norms are perpetuated through materials and practices, as well as through social behaviors. Singing songs and reading stories that contain stereotypes of aggressive males and demure females, for example, further normalizes these behaviors in the eyes of students and limits their exposure to other expressions of gender. Similarly, separating activities and voices by gender, narrows students' abilities to explore their bodies and make informed learning choices. As Wilchins explained:

> Norms are more like invisible 'guard rails' that shape and narrow people's thinking, behaviors, and opportunities. Norms often show up as a kind of negative power, as absence rather than presence; doors that just didn't open, choices that couldn't be made, opportunities that just seemed out of reach. (p. 11)

For those who subscribe to the beliefs of heteronormativity, behaviors that fall outside of gender norms are considered "wrong" or "deviant." This attitude makes individuals who do not conform to rigid views of "masculine" and "feminine" more susceptible to

harassment and victimization (Hawkins, 2009; Spidel, 2014).

Heteronormativity is widely criticized for the binary nature of its construction as well as its hegemonic stance which renders some people “normal” and others “abnormal” (Butler, 2004; Sedgwick, 1990/2008; Wilchins, 2019). These opposing dichotomies of normal/abnormal, male/female, and heterosexual/homosexual create a hierarchy of power and privilege that bears down on society. As Beemyn and Rankin (2011) explained, “our language’s emphasis on polarity (good-bad, wrong- right, male-female) also makes it difficult to think of sex, gender, gender identity, and gender expression as existing within a more dynamic framework that is inclusive of transgender people” (p. 17). Sedgwick (1990/2008) noted that the hierarchical relationship of heterosexuality and homosexuality compares with several other negating binaries such as majority/minority, natural/artificial, wholeness/decadence, and so on.

The result of these normalized dichotomies is that some individuals benefit from positions of privilege while others are oppressed. Taylor (2010) explained that “privilege is the ‘cultural currency’ afforded to a person or group of persons who are recognized as possessing a desired social or political characteristic,” and that “privilege is the stability society affords us when we don’t rock the boat” (p. 268). For those who follow and express dominant cultural norms, in other words, society grants access to political and social security without argument. People who enjoy privilege are able to freely change their names on birth certificates and other documents, for example, whereas, many transgender people must prove that they have had surgery in order to change their name on official documents, or are not allowed to change their names at all (NCTE, 2019b).

Browne and Nash (2016) noted that positions of privilege and oppression also exist within the LGBTQ+ community, itself, with regards to people who acquire social and economic privileges that were previously unavailable to them— such as marriage, adopting children, and receiving work benefits (also known as "homonormativity"). Critics of homonormativity argue that acquiring these privileges simply perpetuates heteronormative ideals of kinship and lifestyle but does little to support other forms of queer living (Warner, 1993). Supporters of marriage and adoption, however, defend their right to equal access and choice, and contend that homonormativity helps build social acceptance for LGBTQ+ people (Bernstein & Taylor, 2013).

Homonormativity can further alienate trans and queer individuals who do not identify with either dominant group (Mathers, Samerau, & Cragun, 2018). Trans individuals are particularly vulnerable to the oppressive forces of privilege, homonormativity, and heteronormativity because "failing to 'do' gender 'right'" as a trans individual can result in harassment or discrimination, and in some cases, violence or death (Gould, 2016, p. 126). For this reason, some trans youth work to visibly "pass" as cisgender in order to survive (Spidel, 2014). The term "passing" is a controversial concept that has been met with much resistance in recent years, and some sources advocate for the removal of the term altogether (GLAAD, 2019). While some people embrace "passing" as way of being, others consider it an outdated term that indicates falseness and not being "real" (Mock, 2014). As Mock argued, "if a trans woman who knows herself and operates in the world as a woman is seen, perceived, treated, and viewed as a woman, isn't she just being herself? She isn't *passing*; she is merely *being*,"

(p. 155). Similar to the arguments against homonormativity, many trans advocates believe that the concept of “passing” further entrenches heteronormativity by placing more value on trans people who present as cisgender than trans people who do not (Mock, 2014). For this reason, Mock and other activists advocate for a more expansive view of transgender, one that honors all identities and normalizes multiple ways of being. In a keynote address given at the 23rd Annual Transgender Unity Banquet, Bornstein exclaimed, ““There’s no right way to be transgender, you are trans enough,” (TFA Houston, 2015). Participants in this current study maintained a delicate balance between presenting openly as trans and moving safely through heteronormative contexts. While they were careful with whom and how they presented themselves, they did not wish to hide their trans identities as they openly advocated for themselves and others.

Heteronormativity in schools. Students remain especially susceptible to the policing of “masculine” and “feminine” gender norms because of institutionalized heteronormativity in schools. As a result, students who fall outside gender norms manage additional stress. As Miller (2016a) explained:

> When school climates support and privilege the normalization of heterosexist, cisgender, Eurocentric, unidimensional (i.e., non-intersectional), or gender-normative beliefs—even unconsciously— it forces students who fall outside of those dominant identifiers to focus on simple survival rather than on success and fulfillment in school. (p. 3)

Schools perpetuate heteronormativity by enacting policies and practices that reinforce existing norms such as dividing students by gender (lining up, sports, choir), using

gendered language ("ladies and gentlemen"), and rewarding gender stereotypes (strong boys, compliant girls). Heteronormative assumptions also exist in curriculum (such as books and choral octavos), facilities (such as bathrooms and locker rooms), documents and forms, teacher discourse, and peer interactions. As Wilchins (2019) stated, "schools, like many religious institutions, both act as guardians and regulators of very traditional and rigid binary gender ideals, of what is appropriate or allowable for boys and girls" (p. 86). Hendricks (2018) also noted similarities between school and religion, stating:

> Music education and religion share the common potential for providing sanctuaries, safe spaces, and, and containers for the divine, sacred, and ineffable— in other words, the spiritual. They also share the potential to be vehicles for harsh judgments, marginalization, and oppression. (p. 246)

As a result, students who stray from accepted gender norms are often punished institutionally as well as socially (Wilchins, 2019). For this reason, many schools are taking steps to lessen the force of heteronormativity by installing gender-inclusive policies, creating safe spaces, and adopting a proactive stance towards establishing a more welcoming environment (GLSEN 2019a; Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001).

Despite strides to create a more inclusive environment in schools, music departments remain highly ensconced in heteronormative traditions and practices that exclude gender and sexually diverse students and limit all students' perspective. These traditions and practices are then upheld by larger music systems, such as music competitions and festivals, which legitimize and reward their existence. As Talbot (2018) explained, "social actors, policies, institutions, and various accrediting and credentialing

bodies contribute to maintaining and operating within a system that limits who can be defined as 'musician' and who can become a 'music teacher.'" (p. 5). The institutionalization of gendered music traditions and practices at state and national levels, therefore, can pose challenges for music educators who wish to make changes locally.

Intersectionality

Individuals experience themselves through various intersections with race, gender, sexuality, SES, ability, nationality, and culture among other aspects. For individuals who are members of underrepresented populations, such as trans individuals, intersections with other underrepresented cultural identifiers can compound their struggle and create additional stress. Intersectionality provides a means to understand individuals' unique and multifaceted experiences and to analyze the various power structures associated with each construct (Collins & Bilge, 2016). "Intersectionality is an analytic tool that gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves," according to Collins and Bilge (2016, p. 2). Researchers utilizing intersectionality in qualitative research enliven their narrative by providing a more nuanced analysis with which to address longstanding social problems (Carter, 2014). While intersectionality was not one of the primary lenses utilized in this dissertation, intersections between gender, sexual orientation, SES, and ability helped inform the study and enrich the participant narratives.

Although the concept of using an intersectional lens to investigate social situations is not new, Crenshaw (1991) is credited with coining the term when she examined the lives of women of color. Crenshaw found that these women experienced

greater amounts of violence and oppression than any other group because of negative beliefs associated with their multiple identities as women *and* women of color. Their situations were further exasperated by various other identifying factors such as poverty, immigration, and language barriers. Crenshaw noted that identity politics was not enough to explain the women's individual, unique challenges, and that ignoring their differences in an attempt to unify their plight "created tension" rather than understanding (p. 1242). She stated, "identity politics is problematic, fundamentally, because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class" (p. 1242).

In a comparable manner, the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth are shaped by their own unique circumstances and intersecting identities (Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001). Trans youth of color often face vastly different challenges than white trans youth, for example, and transgender youth of color are often disciplined more harshly than their white and cisgender peers (Kosciw et al. 2017; Wilchins, 2019). Mock (2014) noted that many stories about trans youth focus on privileged white transgender youth, and the writers rarely consider intersectionality with race and class. She explained:

> Race and class are not usually discussed in these positive media portraits, which go as far as erasing the presence of trans youth from low-income communities and/or communities of color. Not all trans people come of age in supportive middle and upper-middle class homes, where parents have resources and access to knowledgeable and affordable health care that can cover expensive hormone-blocking medications and necessary surgeries. (p. 119)

Deconstructing these intersections of gender, class, race, and sexuality through a queer theory lens provides insight into the various underlying biases that uphold and perpetuate inequalities.

Intersectionality works in tandem with queer theory to help establish a framework for examining the lives of trans youth by simultaneously identifying different aspects of peoples' lives and deconstructing the forces that oppress them. As Massaquoi (2015) summarized, "intersectionality accounts for the multiple levels across which oppression operates, and queer theory pushes us to deconstruct categorical identities and question normativity" (p. 766). Through intersectionality and queer theory, researchers look beyond norms that govern bodies and thinking to consider new ways of being. As Wilchins (2019) explained:

> Many of us build our homes and make our lives, at the intersections— not the straightaways–-of identity. That is where different kinds of oppressions meet and interact. . . . Intersectionality pushes us to widen our frames to see more people, and to also look for more complex identities that fall outside our frame of reference for an issue. (p. 34)

When researchers use queer theory and intersectionality to examine the lives of trans youth, they become more alert to individuals' challenges as well as their strengths. Kruse (2016) examined the life of a young hip-hop artist using an intersectional lens and found that they were simultaneously oppressed by their black, trans identity and strengthened by their identity as a "queer rapper of color." As Kruse stated, "hip-hop can be a site for empowerment and representation, perhaps most powerfully for marginalized

students" (p. 116). Additionally, Kruse found that different facets of peoples' identities hold varying degrees of importance; identifying as black was stronger than other identity categories, for example.

Examining student musicians through an intersectional lens may reveal deeper ways that music and identity are intertwined, and highlight important connections between music making, race, gender, sexuality, SES, ability, nationality, and culture. Carter (2014) explained the importance of considering intersectionality in qualitative music education research. He stated:

> There is also a need for music education research to look beyond one-dimensional description of an underserved population. Life is too messy and complicated to simply state that being a member of one group denotes a single type of representation. (p. 550)

Participants in this present study faced various challenges in their journeys as trans musicians. Intersections with, gender, religion, SES, and ability figured prominently in their discussions and were a source of both hardship and empowerment as they came to know themselves.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore ways that music and gender intersected in high school through the recollections and perceptions of three trans young adults. I utilized the lenses of queer theory and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to examine high school musical engagement and illuminate behaviors that constrained or enabled the participants' abilities to participate fully in school music. In particular, I

searched for ways that queer ideals of fluidity, variance, and flexibility were present and reinforced in the participants' musical lives. Information was gathered from the three principal areas of gender construction as described by Connell (1987), namely, the participants' school, family, and community. Data collection included interviews, artifacts, related websites, and field notes. A narrative inquiry design, featuring portraits of the participant's high school music experiences followed by a comparative analysis, helped me explore the participants' complex and unique lives. Examining the lives and experiences of gender-diverse music students helps educators understand imbalances that exist in the classroom as a result of heteronormativity, which may, in turn, inform best practices for creating more inclusive and expressive music spaces (Bartolome, 2016).

Research Questions

Central to this inquiry was the following overarching question: How do gender performativity and music making intersect in high school music environments? The secondary questions were:

1. What beliefs, behaviors, and practices constrained or enabled the participants' gender performativity and ability to engage with music in high school?
2. How did the participants in this study feel supported or unsupported by their high school music teachers?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to a growing body of music education research rooted in queer theory that dismantles the binary gender categories of "male" and "female", and instead considers the entire spectrum of gender. By examining music practices through a

queer theory lens and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity, I uncovered heteronormative behaviors that suppressed queerness and fluidity in the classroom and limited peoples' thinking. The investigation also revealed several enabling factors that affirmed the participants' queer identities and bolstered their music experiences. At the core of this inquiry was the belief that *all* students benefit from a deeper understanding of queer and not just trans students, and that the inclusion of queer thinking in everyday discourse is desirable, rather than identifying queer as "other" (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009; Seelman, 2013).

The results of this study benefit the field of music education in various ways. First, information gleaned from this study expands existing research that explores how music students express their identities in the classroom and reveals previously uncovered additional subtleties. Second, by working to eliminate barriers between gender identity and musical engagement, results of this study may help inform practice that opens channels for learning and builds stronger connections to music. Third, results of this study go beyond efforts to merely protect and "include" trans students in music environments to illuminating behaviors that invite and shape queer understanding in the classroom. Finally, this study moves our understanding of queer past discussions of identity to something we can all participate in as we work to remove boundaries and create change.

Summary

In this study, I explored beliefs, behaviors, and practices that affected students' abilities to express themselves both personally and musically in high school. I utilized

queer theory and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to deconstruct the participants' circumstances and search for ways that their identities were shaped through musical as well as personal interactions. Intersections with religion, SES, and ability provided additional insight and contributed to the rich participant narratives.

I continue this report with a review of literature (Chapter Two) and methodology (Chapter Three). This is followed by a narrative portrait of each participant's story utilizing numerous quotes that highlighted their unique voices (Chapter Four). The portraits capture three areas crucial to the participants' gender identity and musical being as described by Connell (1987), namely, the school, family, and community. In Chapter Five, I present a comparative analysis of emergent themes. A discussion of these themes as related to performativity as well as recommendations for educators concludes the report in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

In Chapter Two, I review the literature that informed this study which falls broadly under the category of music and gender and, more specifically, points to ways that students and educators honor and embrace queer identities in high school music settings. The review of literature is divided into seven major categories: queer theory, gender development research, feminist research and essentialist viewpoints, education and gender, music education and gender, queering the classroom, and trans lives. I begin with a survey of scholarship in queer theory which formed the theoretical underpinnings for this study.

Queer Theory

Queer theory helps researchers and educators examine socio-political contexts and think critically about ways that heteronormativity creates barriers to being, growing, and learning. Understanding how heteronormativity shapes individuals' lives provides an important perspective on ways that society ignores some identities while privileging others. Developed from ideas set forth by French philosophers and theorists Michel Foucault (1978), Jacques Derrida (1967/2017), and Jacques Lacan (1966/2007), queer theory involves the deconstruction of identity and relationships through critique of the heteronormative power systems that oppress them (Kollias, 2018). Foucault (1978) helped lay foundations for queer theory by claiming that that all sexual beings are constructed through discourse that determines and sustains sexual norms based on historical power systems of repression. Foucault then called upon readers to question

these power systems:

> What is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another, as in the evolutionism of the first sociologists, but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective. (p. 152)

Applying Foucault's ideas to gender, Butler (1990/1999) stated, "the body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations," (p. 125). Citing Foucault, Butler referred to the embodiment of gender as a "cultural inscription," in which various meanings and values are sustained through signifying practices (pp. 176-177). Even the seemingly simple act of labeling women as a gender category is an act of power which not only perpetuates patriarchal hierarchy, but also implies that all women are the same, (Butler, 1990/1999). Ideas about gender signification and cultural power lay the groundwork for Butler's concept of performativity.

Queer theorists work to both deconstruct heteronormative constraints and to avoid identifying categories (Butler, 2004; Dilley, 1999). They argue that labeling oneself as anything (e.g., gay, straight, queer) is an act of power that supports binary, heteronormative systems (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009; Dilley, 1999; Sedgwick, 1990/2008). Butler (1990/1999) referred to the various combinations of gender and sexual categories that people fall into as the "heterosexual matrix" (p. 208). Atkinson and DePalma (2009) argued, however, that by identifying and believing the heterosexual matrix, individuals sustain it and perpetuate separate categories. They suggested that

society needs to “un-believe” the matrix to destroy binary categories (p. 18). In their study, Atkinson and DePalma uncovered embedded heterosexual hegemonic beliefs in elementary school children and noted how the teachers circumvented the discourse by presenting alternatives. One teacher, for example, described a book reading session in which the students complained that the wedding did not end with “I now pronounce you man and wife” (p. 24). Atkinson and DePalma concluded that bringing new relationships and new ways of thinking into the contexts in which children learn and play is the most effective means of creating change.

Similarly, Warner (1993) argued that all people are shaped by a “heteronormative understanding of society” that alters their expectations (p. xi). In other words, all individuals, including those that identify as queer, succumb to binary, heteronormative constraints that dictate who and what is valued, and who and what is not. In Warner’s view, attempts to categorize or define “queer” as a separate concept merely perpetuates heteronormative beliefs. True queer theory, as Warner explained, places all gendered and sexual behaviors in the same field, rather than in parallel concepts. Therefore, by emphasizing queer as separate category, people inadvertently reinforce heteronormativity. According to Warner, even “inclusion” often perpetuates heteronormative understandings by “reducing power to a form of membership” (p. xix).

Fluidity and Gender

The dismantling of the binary categories of “male” and “female,” and “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” makes queer theory unique from earlier approaches to gender and sexuality (Dilley, 1999). Pioneering trans activist and writer,

Virginia Prince (1985), emphasized the importance of separating gender from sexuality, and clarified the differences between one's gender role, gender identity, sexual role, and sexual identity. Prince described gender as "a cultural phenomenon" and explained that the behaviors and tools associated with "male" and "female" genders developed over time as a result of the division of labor required to hunt for food while caring for young (p. 94). As Wilchins (2019) later stated, "there is no biological basis for most of the things we commonly associate and often rigorously enforce about being male or female" (p. 21).

Criticizing essentialist beliefs about gender and sexuality formed the basis of Sedgwick's (1990/2008) work. Although Sedgwick (1990/2008) did not include a discussion of transgender or queer specifically, her concepts of varied gender and sexuality combined with a rejection of binary norms lay additional groundwork for queer theory. Sedgwick stated, "ultimately, I do feel a great deal depends on the fostering of our ability to arrive at understandings of sexuality that will respect a certain irreducibility in it to the terms and relations of gender" (p. 16). Sedgwick discussed the binary power structures behind homophobia as well as the ways in which gender and sexuality are affected by race and class, ultimately concluding that gender is a much broader and complex social construction than just male or female. Binary, separatist attitudes about gender, sexuality, and power are a problem for *all* people, in other words, not just homosexuals.

Butler (2004) labeled the dismantling of binary, heteronormative beliefs "undoing gender" and emphasized that gender and sexuality should be fluid and undefined

concepts that are separate from one another. She stated:

> This form of reducing gender to sexuality has thus given way to two separate but overlapping concerns within contemporary queer theory. The first move is to separate sexuality from gender, so that to have a gender does not presuppose that one engages sexual practice in any particular way. . . . The second and related move within queer theory is to argue that gender is not reducible to hierarchical heterosexuality, that it takes different forms when contextualized by queer sexualities, indeed, that its binariness cannot be taken for granted outside the heterosexual frame, that gender itself is internally unstable, that transgendered lives are evidence of the breakdown of any lines of causal determinism between sexuality and gender. The dissonance between gender and sexuality is thus affirmed from two different perspectives; the one seeks to show possibilities for sexuality that are not constrained by gender in order to break the causal reductiveness of arguments that bind them; the other seeks to show possibilities for gender that are not predetermined by forms of hegemonic heterosexuality. (p. 54)

Butler (2004) and other queer theorists vie for the free and fluid expression of all gendered individuals in the spectrum. Numerous sources have used the phrase “gender spectrum” to refer to individuals who identify anywhere between heterosexual male and heterosexual female (Connell, 2012; Stryker, 2008). Connell (2012) emphasized that trans identity encompasses many forms of gender and sexual expression, including cross-dressers and drag queens, as well as people who live in challenging socioeconomic

conditions such as those who are homeless and those who work in the sex industry.

Several scholars propose a definition of "queer" that reaches beyond identities in the gender spectrum (Barz 2019; Gould, 2016; Sullivan, 2003). They argue that queer is the political and social act of *doing* rather than being, therefore, queer should be thought of as a verb rather than a noun. Sullivan (2003) examined arguments set forth by various psychoanalysts and scholars, highlighting followers of queer theory, who view its ambiguous stance as inclusive and emancipatory, as well as critics who oppose the theory's lack of definition. Critics of queer theory, Sullivan explained, argue that the refusal to define queer, in effect, perpetuates the divide between heteronormativity and queer, and becomes "no less problematic than the humanist system that it claims to be attempting to work against" (p. 47). Similarly, Sullivan surveyed critics of performativity who question the demarcation between performativity and performance, and the implication that gender is a volunteer performance. Sullivan clarified Butler's (1990/1999) stance by explaining that performativity is a continual process by which the self is constituted, rather than a willful act (p. 89).

More recent scholarship in the field of queer research has expanded discourse to include examination of more controversial subjects such as victims of violence, perversion, and incarceration, as well as intersections with race, class, and culture (de Quadros 2018; Castro & Romero, 2015; Sullivan, 2003). Castro and Romero (2015) noted that discussions of identity, intersectionality, and culturally constructed power are necessary to understand the "complex manifestations and consequences of sexism" within our communities (p. 14). The essays in Castro and Romero's text reveal a variety

of ways that gendered beings must re-signify in order to exist within multiple realities of power and oppression. In Gaspar de Alba's novel, *Desert Blood*, for example, Ivon experiences multiple levels of oppression and abuse as a queer, colonized, migrant of brown color (Gillman, 2015). Gillman explored both literal and symbolic themes of queer migration as Ivon moves between her colonized life in America and her family in Mexico.

In another essay, Walter (2015) explored ideas of transition and migration utilizing Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to analyze characters in *Little Britain* and *Testo Yonqui*. Walter's analysis revealed ways that the characters constructed their identities through modes of expression that existed both outside the body (through gesture and fashion) as well as from within (through the use of hormones and other therapies). Walter labeled these performative moves as "gender migrations" (p. 166). During gender migration, individuals queer the space between desire and being, by policing themselves and remaining flexible to the varying contexts. As Walter stated, "The places from which one migrates and to which one aspires are diffuse with hazy unfixed boundaries" (p. 169).

Halberstam (2012) proposed moving to a new queer perspective by comparing modern day feminism to the performance antics of Lady Gaga. According to Halberstam, Gaga feminism is "rooted in destruction and refusal rather than creation and acquiescence" (p. xiv). At the same time, Gaga feminism challenges other more serious forms of politicized actions by embracing playfulness, innovation, the absurd and the erotic whilst delivering a meaningful critique. Rather than critiquing issues of equality

between men and women, Halberstam vies for the abolition of these categories all together. For Halberstam, “going gaga” (p. xv) means reimagining the present by rejecting traditional narratives that limit perspective and, instead, taking whatever risks are necessary to celebrate ideas of “variation, mutation, cooperation, transformation, deviance, perversion, and diversion” (p. 143). Only after “going gaga,” will people be able to transform themselves and see alternatives that will lead them forward into a new dimension.

Gender Development Research

Acceptance of queer identities and diverse perspectives in the Western world has been hindered by deeply rooted heteronormative beliefs about gender and its role in society. These beliefs have been reinforced through literature and research aimed at categorizing and defining the development of gender. An historical examination of gender development research helps situate this study by revealing early beliefs about the connections between social contexts, psychological factors, and the body.

Early theories of gender development

The concept of “gender” has evolved from a description of sexual roles, to a description of “male’ and “female” identities, to the current view of gender as a social construct that embodies many diverse forms and roles. Initial theories of gender development focused primarily on biological determinism and genetic traits that characterize “male” and “female” individuals (Geddes & Thomson, 1890). Biological theories largely emphasized the reproductive capacities of individuals and almost always linked gender to sex. Biological theories continue to fuel essentialists’ arguments that

gender is innately male or female. Geddes and Thomson outlined the biological male and female attributes of all animals as a function of “sexual selection.” They argued that neither sex was superior, but that certain environmental factors (particularly nutrition) contributed to the preservation of male/female traits through the process of evolution.

By mid-twentieth century, theories of gender development included gender identity as a part of both psychological and physical human development (Erikson, 1963; Freud, 1905/1920). Freud (1905/1920) led the psychological approach by drawing connections between sexuality and the unconscious mind, and the creation of psychoanalysis. Freud was the first to link child development with life and family relationships by claiming that children’s early identification with their parents determines their psychosexual growth (Connell, 1987). Erikson (1963) later extended Freud’s ideas to develop his cognitive theory of the eight stages of man in which development takes place throughout an individual’s whole lifespan rather than just childhood. Erikson described each stage as a time of internal conflict and resolution based on psychological milestones. Stage 5 (adolescence), for example, was marked by the need for approval from others as well as the importance of role models. Erikson believed that if any of the eight stages is not appropriately resolved, then deviations from the norm occur. Misuse of psychoanalytic and cognitive theories formed the basis of conversion therapy methods used during the mid-20th century (Robinson, 1999).

Piaget (1969/2000) expanded upon biological and psychological theories of development by exploring how organisms adapt to their environment. According to Piaget’s cognitive development theory, children develop through four stages.

Developmental variances occur as environmental factors force children to reconstruct knowledge in each stage. Following Piaget's development model, Kohlberg (1966) concluded that children are born with the knowledge that they are either male or female but are unaware that this is a fixed attribute until age 3. They learn gender by observing, organizing, and assimilating social contexts. Likewise, Fausto-Sterling (2012) explained that aspects of gender are present during infancy, reinforced through interplay with caregivers and then internalized by age 3.

Social Constructivist Theories of Gender Development

Constructivist theories of development emphasize the societal factors that influence individuals' gender and sexuality. Such factors include heteronormative beliefs that govern "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors, as well as other identity markers such as race, religion, socio-economic status (SES), and ethnicity (Connell, 1987; Massaquoi, 2015). Connell (1987) argued that the "gross exaggeration" of male/female adornment and other social practices is needed to signify gender because biological theories, alone, cannot define gender (p. 81). They stated, "our conception of what is natural and what natural differences consist of is, itself, a cultural construct, part of our specific way of thinking about gender" (p. 76). Connell listed three "gender regimes" where gender is constructed, namely, the family, the state, and the street (p. 119). Similarly, in this study, I applied Connell's model to contexts where high school students construct gender and musical identity including the participants' families, schools, and communities.

Vygotsky (1978) led the social approach to development with the belief that all children behave differently because of the unique ways in which they interact with others

in the environment. Vygotsky stated, “the path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person” (p. 30). Vygotsky’s ideas about culturally stimulated development laid the roots for later ideas of reciprocity and gender.

Bussey and Bandura (1999) described the reciprocity of gender construction as an interplay between personal conceptions of gender, gendered behaviors, and environmental factors. They stated, “there is no fixed pattern for reciprocal interaction. Rather, the relative contribution of each of the constituent influences depends on the activities, situations, and socio structural constraints and opportunities” (p. 685). In their discussion of social cognitive theory, Bussey and Bandura explained that gender is shaped through observation, modeling, and assimilating behaviors. During this process, cognitive and social factors are shaped through triangulation with the environment; it is through this triangulation process that individuals’ self-concepts of gender are modeled, re-structured, and transmitted back into society. Gender construction, therefore, relies on the reflective capabilities of individuals to observe, adjust, and adapt to the environment, which, in turn, allows for many diverse possibilities (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Similar to Connell’s (1987) “regimes,” Bussey and Bandura (1999) noted three types of environmental factors that contribute to gender construction: imposed environment, selected environment, and constructed environment. In imposed environments, such as public spaces or schools, the individual has little or no control. Selected environments consist of places or situations where the individual chooses to participate in anticipation of gaining potential rewards or punishments, such as a party or a club activity. Constructed environments are created by the individual, such as choice of

friends or pretend play.

West and Zimmerman (1987) proposed a refinement to existing social theories of gender by suggesting that gender is not a culturally constructed destination that is achieved by age 5 or 6; it is instead a lifelong interactive performance that is enacted and reenacted according to individuals' varying contexts. They labeled the interactive lifelong social construction of gender as "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, p. 126). When people "do gender," masculine and feminine traits are not preordained, but rather, they are shared socially and then affirmed by others, which leads to their "normalization." West and Zimmerman argued that the binary construction of masculine and feminine roles is so compulsory that individuals *perceive* them to be essential. They stated, "doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men. . . . Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the "essentialness" of gender" (p. 137). These "essential" qualities then become so ingrained in society that deviations from these qualities are viewed as unacceptable. As the authors explained:

> If we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex category. If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals–-not the institutional arrangements—may be called to account. (p. 146)

Blaise (2005) examined kindergarten children "doing gender" in an urban classroom and found that children reinforced their gender through clothing, hair, toys, body movements, and discourse, as well as through the rejection of toys and colors deemed too feminine or too masculine. Results of Blaise's study indicate that

heteronormative understandings of gender regulate children's behavior beginning at a young age.

"Can we avoid doing gender?", West and Zimmerman (1987) asked. Their short answer is "no" because the power structures that categorize and differentiate individuals makes doing gender unavoidable (p. 145). However, recognizing the non-essential nature of gender construction and the varied interactive social dynamics of doing gender, West and Zimmerman considered other possibilities and questioned the limitations of having only two sex categories.

Butler (1990/1999) expanded upon West and Zimmerman's (1987) ideas of social interaction and "doing" gender in her concept of performativity. Butler explained the reciprocal, interactive nature of gender construction by clarifying that not only do people "do" gender, but society also reflects this action. Gender, therefore, is both personally expressed and socially reinforced through performativity. Butler drew inspiration for the concept of performativity from Searle's (1969) speech act theory in which words carry meanings beyond their static definition that compel both speaker and listener to act in unique and context-specific ways. A key feature of speech act theory is the subject's *intention* behind the words to produce a certain effect which Austin (1962) had previously termed the "illocutionary force," (p. 99). Austin described the illocutionary force as "performative" because it *does* something rather than simply reports (p. 6).

Building upon Austin and Searle's ideas, Butler referred to the dynamic nature of performative acts as a space for "possibilities," (Butler, 1988):

> If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (p. 520).

Whereas previous theories of gender development fell short by presupposing that all individuals identify as "male" or "female," Butler (2004) later applied the concept of performativity to the entire spectrum of gendered and sexual beings. Performativity is a form of signification, as Butler explained, but the fundamental categories that shape gendered lives must be expanded, and a "resignification" is needed for society to become more responsive to, and more inclusive of, the larger spectrum of identities (p.223).

Feminist Research and Essentialist Viewpoints

Throughout this study, I utilized the lens of performativity to examine ways that heteronormativity invades music learning and identity by upholding gender norms and suppressing queer perspectives. Examination of heteronormativity and the power structures that sustain it falls under the category of feminist research. Feminist inquiry calls upon researchers to examine people's lives from the vantage point of those who have been previously ignored or purported to have no knowledge. In this section, I review the feminist literature pertaining to this study including gender norms, feminist music scholarship, and examinations of performativity and music performance.

Gender Norms

While early feminist research focused on exposing the essential qualities of

women and men as well their unequal treatment, third wave feminists of the 1990's challenged the essentialness of gender and adopted a broader, more inclusive stance towards gender and sexuality (Mikkola, M., 2019). Connell (1987) discussed gender inequities within heteronormative societies and noted conflicts with early feminists who were seeking reform, but who also believed in innate differences between men and women (such as "domestic virtues" and "nurturance," p. 26). These conflicts then became foundations for the nature versus nurture debates of second wave feminism, which inspired sex role theories, social theories of gender, and gay politics. Connell illustrated how gender is socially constructed within the constraints of heterosexual hegemony by describing several social contexts where heteronormative practices are indemnified such as patriarchal modeling, government and wages, and cultural beliefs. Connell noted that heteronormative practices not only sustain patriarchal power and uphold differences, but they also negate natural similarities in people. Connell and other proponents of modern feminist theory, like the queer theorists that followed, believed in the exposition and elimination of power structures that perpetuate binary inequalities and render some people more privileged than others.

Similarly, Wilchins (2019) outlined the effects of heteronormativity in various contexts as well as in the power structures that oppress individuals. Rather than simply denouncing gender norms, however, Wilchins cautioned readers to reflect upon and question their significance:

> The fact that gender norms are culturally constructed does not mean that they, too, are any less real, or to trivialize them in any way. On the contrary; it is precisely

> because gender norms' impacts are so significant that it is important for us to investigate them. (p. 22)

Changing norms can be difficult because heteronormativity is sustained systematically, so dismantling it requires a systematic response (Wilchins, 2019). For this reason, Wilchins recommended that students and educators engage in "gender transformative" work (p. 37). In gender transformative work, people are given the tools to think critically about gender norms as well as the knowledge needed to take action towards eliminating biases.

Feminist Music Scholarship

Research that examines gendered inequities in music as well as the power structures that sustain these inequities falls under the category of feminist music scholarship (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Feminist music scholarship includes uncovering lesser-known women and queer musicians, examining the feminine and queer traits in music of the Western classical canon, and discussing heteronormative systems that suppress female and queer perspectives (Brett, 1994; Citron, 1993; McClary, 2002; Solie, 1993). Citron (1993) surveyed music of the Western canon through a feminist lens by examining the heteronormative "gender coding" in music which labels some musical traits as "feminine" (such as legato and lyricism) and some traits as "masculine" (such as rhythmic thrusts and strong cadences). Citron criticized older feminist approaches to the examination of the Western musical canon which oppress male perspectives and favor women's perspectives, arguing that they perpetuate heteronormative hegemony. If women and men are to be treated equally, Citron suggested, then both viewpoints must be

equally honored and included. Similarly, Solie (1993) gathered a series of essays that examined the gendered qualities in musical works and paid particular attention to suppressed or silent voices within works.

Brett (1994) explored gay and lesbian expressions in Western music and noted that, although queer themes are usually repressed by heteronormativity, homosexual underpinnings are present throughout the historical canon. Music expressed ideas what could not be spoken out loud because of fear or denial, Brett explained. Music was a "safe" place to disclose and express homosexual feelings without risking disclosure or persecution. Brett emphasized that readers must look beyond the limited evidence available in biographies and other written materials to find homosexual undertones within the music.

More recent feminist music scholarship has expanded beyond the Western music canon to investigate music from a global perspective (Barz & Cheng, 2019; de Quadros, 2019). de Quadros (2019) surveyed various conductor-led choruses around the globe to investigate ways that singers, conductors, and listeners are changing the choral landscape and challenging traditional Western classical models. Tracing the formation of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA), de Quadros praised the addition of trans-friendly choruses which provide a queer space that is responsive and empathetic to the needs of trans singers, and helps them feel "comfortable and confident" (p. 163). de Quadros described a "new normal" in choral singing–-one which draws from a global perspective and focuses on nurturing cultural identity while also addressing issues of social justice through singing (p. 34). As de Quadros summarized, "When people are

making music together. . .there is a kind of human bonding like none other. In today's world of fragmentation, marginalization, and loneliness, choral singing may well be one of the strongest ways in which we may find solutions" (p. 209). Throughout the text, de Quadros advocates for choral solutions which are flexible, innovative, and culturally responsive, much like the queer theory that underlines this current study.

Barz and Cheng (2019) compiled a set of essays which explore various music experiences around the world utilizing a queer theory lens. Central to Barz' and Cheng's pursuit is the concept of queer as a verb in which participants and researchers actively participate in the construction of queer through play, performance, reflection, and risk, as well as examination. As Barz (2019) stated, "by intentionally verbing queer, we can actively pull apart a situation or a process and explore its boundedness, its limitations, and its biases" (p. 15). In this way, the various authors' ethnographic research was queered through nuanced and, often times, surprising new ways of thinking that affected their research outcomes and researcher positionality.

Researchers have also explored how music and spirituality intersect by examining various themes of transformation, identity and music making through a queer theory lens (e.g., de Quadros, 2018; Hendricks & Boyce-Tillman, 2018). de Quadros (2018) found that the communal act of music making led to what might be described as a spiritual experience for incarcerated men in prison as they "expressed their yearnings, found consolation, [and] experienced vulnerability" (p. 197). By contrast, conflicts between Western religious doctrine, music, and queer identity have also been investigated. Hendricks and Boyce-Tillman suggested that queer inquiry provides opportunity to view

spirituality and music from a new perspective by challenging the practices that oppress people, embracing difference, and making way for change. They stated, "Through queer inquiry, we have an opportunity to see spirituality and music anew: as we deconstruct dualisms and culturally-assumed labels, we come to embrace musics and pedagogical methods previously judged as nontraditional, incorrect, mysterious, or strange" (p. ix).

Performativity and Music Performance

A few music studies have explored the relationship between gender and music performance using Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity (Alaghband-Zadeh 2015; Gould, 2016; Symonds & Taylor, 2013). Alaghband-Zadeh analyzed the sonic qualities of North Indian classical vocal music through the lens of performativity and argued that musicians' gender is reflected not only in what is seen on stage, but also in what is heard in the vocal timbre, articulation, and stylistic choices of the performance. As Alaghband-Zadeh explained:

> [Performativity] highlights the power of repetition: the repeated reconfirmation, both in musical performance and discourse, of links between, on the one hand, particular musical practices and qualities and, on the other, sets of gendered and other associations. . . . This has the power to affect the ways in which performers and listeners experience gender and contributes to the discursive frameworks within which they craft their own gendered identities. (p. 363-364)

Alaghband-Zadeh found that not only was gender reinforced through performance, but musicians were also criticized for performances that did not align with their gender expression.

Gould (2016) described music as a performative act in which musicians and listeners exchange gendered meanings through sound which is felt and enacted by the body. Gould stated, “functioning performatively, sound’s touch inscribed on the body produces the gestural speech act of gender performativity with sound as an aural speech act, which is to say, with music, queer” (p. 132). Similarly, Symonds and Taylor (2013) applied the reciprocal nature of performativity to examine relationships between performers, music, identity, context, and community. They discussed the multifaceted ways that the corporeal acts of song and dance both reflect and reinforce all aspects of the performer and stated that “the term “song and dance” can embrace a broad and diverse range of artistic and cultural practices that engage with voice and/or music with physical commitment, and whose resonances move fluidly through the porous membranes of conventional systems” (p. 4). Later, they referred to the fluid and ever-changing nature of performativity and the voice, which they summarized as follows: “Always associated with a body, the voice calls for a direct oscillation between the familiar and the unfamiliar” (p. 181).

Symonds and Taylor (2013) listed several ways in which performativity was present in the performance space and defended their use of categories despite theoretical arguments against this practice. They explained, “we don’t want to pin down definitions of performativity that interrupt its dynamic activity, its intensity, or its affect, but in order to exemplify its diversity we have categorized areas of performativity” (p. 293). While Symonds and Taylor’s broad use of the concept of performativity captures a variety of ways that performers and audiences engage with music, the authors conceded that their

text is by no means comprehensive due to the complex nature of performativity. Likewise, in this study I explored a broad range of connections between high school music and identity through an expanded application of the performativity lens, although my examination is by no means exhaustive.

Education and Gender

Literature devoted to education and gender points to ways that the overall field of education has addressed issues of diversity, inclusivity, and queering spaces. In this section, I review literature related to safe schools' initiatives, youth and identity, and creating gender-inclusive schools. This is followed by a discussion of scholarship linked to music education and gender.

Safe Schools Initiatives

Creating safe schools has been a focus of educators since 1993 and the beginning of the safe schools' initiative in Massachusetts (Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001). Since that time, schools across the nation have adopted policies and protections to support LGBTQ+ students and their families, and research has helped identify key components which affect LGBTQ+ students' health and well-being in school (Kosciw et al., 2017). Perrotti and Westheimer (2001) identified four areas crucial to students' health and well-being: including the presence of protective policy, individual student support, teacher training, and family counseling.

Russell (2010) offered several suggestions to professionals based on Perrotti and Westheimer's (2001) safe school lessons. Russell noted that both formal and informal student supports are important to maintaining safe and inclusive environments, and that

clear access to these supports correlated with the strongest student outcomes. Similarly, Poirier (2014) found that schools with strong anti-bullying policies, knowledgeable teachers, and active Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) fostered positive school environments where students felt emotionally and physically safe. Results of both Poirier's (2014) and Russell's (2010) research indicate that multiple strategies may be necessary to fully support LGBTQ+ students in schools, rather than one single approach.

Youth and Identity

Scholarship that examines the lives of LGBTQ+ students provides educators with important insight on the ways in which fluid identities negotiate heteronormative settings, as well as ways heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia are systematically entrenched in schools. In their school climate study of transgender youth, McGuire et al., (2010) found that some students avoid fluidity and perpetuate binary norms as a means of survival and well-being. They described one participant who lived in fear that his identity would be discovered: "[He] lived completely as male, with very few people at school aware of his transgender status, yet lived with a constant knowledge that his status could be discovered and his safety would be jeopardized" (p. 1182). Conversely, Simon (2005) implied that, while many youths were aware of the binary norms that regulated school settings, they viewed their "queerness" as emancipation from these norms. Simon stated, "I grew to resent my gender as an obstacle and a symbol of oppression, . . . 'queer' became my mantra for breaking away" (p. 14).

Participants in Linville's (2009) study used the term "queer" as an empowering label. Results of this study indicated that queer teens engaged in both fluid and

heteronormative behaviors to negotiate school settings. For example, although the teens respected a variety of gender and sexual expressions in their peers, categorizing one's identity was viewed as important. Linville stated, "declaring oneself as belonging to a category, regardless of the fluidity of that category or of the sexual behavior in which one engages, is seen as important" (p. 169). Similarly, participants in Johnson et al.'s (2014) study categorized themselves on a continuum between male and female, which the authors summarized as follows: "Individuals exercise agency by cobbling together a gendered identity from various masculinities and femininities available. In this way, each sets about answering the question: what sort of woman or man shall I be? Or not be?" (p. 422). The youth in Johnson et al.'s study used a variety of terms to describe themselves. They did not want others to view their identities as "trends" or "fads" and they stressed that gender fluid does not mean "confused." Johnson et al.'s findings indicate that raising awareness of heteronormativity is important to transgender and genderqueer youth.

Hawkins (2009) interviewed transgender and genderqueer youth regarding factors that contributed to their gender development and found that youth identified themselves in multifaceted ways. One interviewee responded, "I say trans/genderqueer because I like the idea of being in motion somewhere. . . moving toward something or away from something. . . moving and fluidity" (p. 61). Hawkins reported that all of the interviewees indicated an internal sense of gender variance or of "feeling different." Many struggled with feelings of guilt, denial, confusion, and depression that affected how they felt about themselves and how they responded to others. As was the case with the participants in this current study, Hawkins found that sociological factors, such as clothing, names and

pronouns, role models, queer communities, and media, were most influential in shaping participants' identities and fostering a sense of safety and well-being.

Despite some encouraging stories of resilience and determination in trans youth, studies reveal that many trans students, particularly gender non-binary students, continue to struggle with victimization and alienation in schools (Kosciw et al., 2017). Lewis (2017) examined the experiences of gender non-binary youth and found that many gender non-binary students feel left out of school settings. Participants expressed feeling lonely and disconnected from their school communities. Many avoided pressures to conform to binary gender norms by hiding parts of themselves in order to fit in and make friends. According to Lewis, they described their schools as "super separated" and "unnecessarily gendered" (p. 157). Lewis summarized, "Nearly all participants felt very little sense of belonging and most felt unsafe in schools. All participants felt pressure to either conform to the gender norms in place or to hide aspects of their personalities in these settings" (p. 162). Students in Lewis's study labeled gym and choir as two of the most gendered activities. For example, "Harper" sang in school choirs for six years but described their experience as "ridiculous" because even though they had the range to sing a variety of parts, "they were only allowed to sing soprano parts" (Lewis, 2017, p. 167). Like participants in the current study, however, "Harper" remained compliant in chorus and did not challenge the class structure.

Creating Gender-Inclusive Schools

Mayo (2014) outlined problems associated with creating safe and inclusive classrooms, as well as ways that schools and teachers inadvertently perpetuate biases that

erase LGBTQ+ identities. Mayo stated:

> Schools, like the rest of the social world, are structured by heterosexism-the assumption that everyone is and should be heterosexual. . . . Curricula, texts, school policies, and illustrations . . . are most often constructed to reflect that heterosexuality is not only the norm but also the only possible option for students. (p. 51)

Mayo explained that, by focusing on the victimization of LGBTQ+ youth, schools continue to position LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ people in a dichotomous relationship that renders one side more privileged. Furthermore, the constant focus on victimization in effect *normalizes* negative behaviors toward LGBTQ+ people, which contributes to the divide. Mayo stated:

> By thinking of heterosexism and homophobia as evident only in spectacles of bias - such as homophobic injury, assault, or murder - the everyday forms of heterosexism go unremarked, as does the everyday presence of people who do not conform to gender and sexual norms. (p. 33)

To counter this binary rhetoric, Mayo urged educators to shift away from discourse centered solely on LGBTQ+ safety and victimization. They should instead engage students in a queer pedagogy that invites them to celebrate the diverse world around them and to think critically about the heteronormative standards that limit their perspective. As Mayo summarized:

> When essays, such as this one, discussing the intersecting forms of bias related to homophobia and transphobia defensively cite statistics on harassment or provide a

> panel of LGBTQ people to describe their difficulties with homophobia, they miss the opportunity to examine the positive aspects of LGBTQ communities and cultures and the abilities of sexual minority people to live lives beyond institutional constraints. (p. 42)

In a similar statement, Gould (2009) discussed the ways in which music educators normalize oppressive practices through the repetition of behaviors that sustain people's thinking arguing, instead, that educators should queer the lines of normality by welcoming change and rejoicing in the unpredictable. Gould stated, "disorientation is not about loss of the straight line, but opening spaces for different lines— lines that are not straight, but oblique, bent, twisted, and full of potential" (p. 67).

Miller (2016a) described the creation of inclusive school environments as a "pedagogy of refusal" (p. 4). By refusing to accept binary norms and the systems that uphold them, schools disrupt heteronormativity and promote a growth mindset. As Miller explained:

> Schools can be disrupter and mediator to support trans and gender creative youth in their recognition and instill a positive sense of self-worth. Such an affirmed sense of self can then spatialize throughout the school and their lives. Refusal as a pedagogical strategy can disrupt these processes whereby spatialization has potential to change mindsets and, thereby, be sustained across contexts. (p. 3)

Miller summarized the effects of heteronormative school environments that erase trans identities and emphasized that exclusionary gender norms affect all students. Miller stated:

> When schools do not include texts, films, histories, images, events or speakers, media, music, art, policy (e.g., Common Core standards, anti-bullying, codes of conduct, athletic inclusion), or openly enumerate identities in discourse, the classroom or the school writ-large, or honor body self-care with "all gender" or "gender-inclusive bathrooms", locker rooms, etc., that speak to their identities, or misrecognizes them altogether, such students experience a constructed or produced identity erasure and can struggle with a positive self-image or sense of worth. Such a recognition gap condones an anxiety that produces gender-based ignorance that can lead to gender-based violence. In fact, all students suffer in this wake because missed opportunities prevent understanding, growth, and humanization to recognize their trans and gender-creative peers. (p. 3)

By refusing to uphold norms which separate and ignore some people's identities, schools, and educators validate all students and provide opportunities for new understanding. "Change is possible," Miller advised, and "spaces and mindsets can become trans*+ed.[7] As elements shift, the trans*+ gender creative body becomes validated, legible, and recognized by the spaces they inhabit" (p. 14).

Chappell et al. (2018) recommended that teachers and schools adopt an "asset based" philosophy that embraces and values diversity and reflect this in their pedagogy and curriculum (p. 89). They stated, "when students see themselves reflected positively in all the systems of representation at school, they receive a simple and profound message:

[7] According to Miller (2016a), trans*+ can be explained as follows: "while some activists draw on the use of trans (without the asterisk and/or the plus sign), which is most often applied to trans men/women, the asterisk with the plus sign more broadly references ever-evolving non-cisgender identities, which are identified as, but certainly not limited to, (a)gender, cross-dresser, bigender, genderfluid...non-binary, third-gender, trans man, trans woman, transgender," (p. 2).

they know that they are "good" — accepted and seen, belonging within the school community" (p. 115). Instead of abolishing norms, Chappell et al. suggested "expanding" norms by teaching through intersectionality and dismantling privilege as follows:

> Expanding norms means that we examine the ways in which privilege and power have constituted an assumed normative way of being, knowing, and relating to the world and then we create spaces to engage multiple perspectives and position the margins at the center. (p. 86)

Creating spaces that are fluid and responsive to the many diverse ways of being involves all people in the school community. Chappell et al. (2018) described this as a "dialogue." They stated:

> Campus cultures, as a reflection of student identities, form through organic and dynamic processes . . . this emergent model sees school community members, students, staff, and educators alike in dialogue with one another, responsible to each other and for creating their learning community. (p. 171)

In this way, schools and families partner with each other to help students thrive and achieve their greatest potential.

Music Education and Gender

Until recently, most scholarship in the area of music education and gender has focused on the ways males and females experience music differently. The bulk of music education and gender research consists of studies about the binary gendering of instruments (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Delzell & Leppla, 1992; Harrison & Neill, 2003; Nigel & Shibazaki, 2013), the "feminine" and "masculine" qualities of music and music

practices (Abramo, 2011b; Citron, 1993; Green, 1997; McClary, 2002; Solie, 1993), girls and boys choruses (Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Zemek, 2010), and the absence of males in school choruses (Ashley, 2009; Freer, 2007, 2010; Koza, 1993; Williams, 2011). In this section, I review literature which provided a historical trajectory of music education and gender as well as current trends including: gendered instruments, "masculine" and "feminine" music beliefs, gendered choruses, and gendered materials and practices.

Gendered instruments

Several studies link children's selection of music instruments to male and female genders (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Delzell & Leppla, 1992; Nigel & Shibazaki, 2013). Abeles and Porter found that children as young as age 3 identify certain instruments with male and female genders. Thirty years later, Nigel and Shibazaki (2013) obtained similar results when they asked 105 preschool children to match sounds of instruments with pictures of boys and girls. Although most of the instruments were perceived as "feminine" with the sound alone, results were dramatically different when the sounds were paired with a picture of the instrument. Studies about the gendering of instruments confirm existing stereotypes which limit students' perceptions about instrument selection and instrumental playing.

"Masculine" and "Feminine" Music Beliefs

Koza (1993) investigated the problem of "missing males" in choruses and determined that the lack of male involvement in choruses today is due to deeply rooted beliefs that music is primarily a "feminine" activity. Evidence of these beliefs was uncovered in early 20th century copies of the *Music Supervisors' Journal*. Although

Koza found that there were many articles written to encourage male participation in music, the increased attention on male involvement seemed to have the opposite effect. As Koza explained:

> Boys' apparent dislike of music and their absence from music programs were sometimes explained by pointing to the belief that music is unmanly, that is, not an appropriate interest for males. This belief was loudly denounced by contributors, but the presence of denunciations also tacitly acknowledged the existence of the perception. (p. 219)

Koza's finding is not unlike Atkinson and Depalma's (2009) argument that by naming a problem, people, thereby, sustain it.

Green (1997) studied boys' and girls' behaviors in the music classroom to uncover their gendered musical meanings. Similar to Koza (1993), Green found that music affirms femininity in the classroom and, therefore, contributes to boys' rejection of music. Green noted several musical qualities that were aligned with feminine characteristics including conformity, cooperation, emotion, and verbal expression (singing). The performance of popular music, however, was found to be a rejection of feminine values and, therefore, an affirmation of masculinity. As Green explained:

> Girls' vocal and instrumental display in this realm, furthermore, coincides with a cooperative attitude, constructed as feminine, which involves conformity to the mores of the school and to 'what counts as music' within the school. . . . Contrastingly, popular music practices in schools problematize femininity . . . conflicts with the 'family values' and code of sexual conduct that the school is

> supposed to offer. (p. 183)

Green identified several music practices that carry delineated gendered meanings of masculinity (composing, improvisation, popular music styles) and femininity (singing, playing instruments, classical music styles). When students engage in these practices, they simultaneously either affirm or reject femininity. An exception to this process was Green's finding that musically talented students are less affected by gendered musical meanings because they involve themselves in music more deeply. As Green explained:

> Exceptionally competent pupils, who can skillfully manipulate the inherent meanings of the music they perform, are more readily able to cross the music/gender divide than are most pupils. . . .They can perform the 'music itself,' without. . . fear of challenging the symbolic construction of their gender. (p. 187)

More recent scholarship has explored problems with gendered beliefs about male and female singing voices (Bond, 2018). A participant in Bond's study experienced both opposition from teachers and homophobic comments from students when he performed in his countertenor range. Green (1997) recommended that music teachers, as "custodians of tradition" (p. 256), recognize that music practices participate in the construction of gender identity, and that gendered musical meanings affect all aspects of students' performing and listening.

Gendered Choruses

In an effort to shun the belief that singing is primarily a "feminine" activity and increase male enrollment in singing activities, several educators have recommended separate boys' choruses (Ashley, 2009; Freer, 2007, 2010; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008).

Jorgensen and Pfeiler (2008) argued that separating singers into boys' and girls' choruses increases enrollment and improves class climate because it reinforces "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors. However, Zemek (2010) examined various same-sex choruses and found that some choral directors were equally successful at increasing enrollment and improving class climate with mixed choirs. Freer (2007) discussed the problem of male enrollment in choruses and agreed that some separation of boys from girls in choral settings helps foster their engagement. Freer concluded that, although boys like to sing, school settings do not always serve their needs. Adolescent boys seek intensity, excitement, and feelings of accomplishment, Freer explained, and they look for these same qualities in their music experiences.

In later works, Freer (2010) drew upon Markus and Nurius'(1986) concept of "possible selves" to illustrate the importance of male role models for boys' development and participation in singing activities. As Freer explained, when boys are able to explore and envision who they want to be, they experience more satisfaction and less fear. Choral teachers may assist with adolescent boys' construction of possible selves by providing models and tools for successful music making. Freer stated, "young people need repertoire that matches their developmental needs as musicians, learning environments that match their developmental needs as adolescents, and role models for their possible future role as a musician within a complex web of social connections" (p. 21). Freer highlighted several ways that boys experience music contexts differently than girls, including their desire for competence, skill, and success in order to feel validated, as well as their focus on the self rather than on interpersonal relationships.

Gendered Materials and Practices

More recently, music education and gender scholarship has shifted from examining male and female behaviors to deconstructing classroom settings and illuminating practices and materials that perpetuate heteronormativity and suppress fluidity in the music classroom (Bergonzi, 2009; Hawkins, 2007; Koza, 1992). Materials, such as music textbooks and choral octavos, contain numerous examples of unequal representations of gendered identities and stereotypical portrayals of males and females. Hawkins (2007) examined choral textbooks using Bern's Sex Role Inventory and found gender stereotypes as well as traits considered "masculine" and "feminine" in nearly 50% of the selections. Additionally, Hawkins found that there were significantly more songs about men, and with masculine traits, than women. Hawkins' findings were similar to Koza's (1992) earlier study in which 68% of the illustrations were male and there were very few pictures of females playing instruments. They stated:

> While attempting to show that girls and women are free to pursue whatever career they wish, including becoming composers or conductors, the books simultaneously send the message that the musical world is predominantly a male world in which some women participate. (p. 32).

In many music environments, gendered practices embedded in language, materials, uniforms, and other behaviors fall under the label of "traditional." Teachers perpetuate heteronormativity by allowing gendered traditions to continue, which excludes identities and limits students' perspectives. Literature aimed at practitioners has helped illuminate some of these issues and provide educators with straightforward advice.

Bergonzi (2009) roused educators' awareness of oppressive behaviors in music classrooms when he outlined the privileges of heterosexuality by describing several scenarios that illustrated the imbalance between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ music students' experiences. "All the love songs you hear on the radio, sing or play in an ensemble are about the kind of love you understand" Bergonzi listed as an example, "the annual spring musical is, in almost all cases, going to involve a romantic subplot about a kind of love that resemble yours" (p. 22). In his conclusion, Bergonzi asked educators to examine their practices and improve how they include all identities in their curriculum, while asking the following question: "Isn't it time to eliminate heterosexuality's privileged place in our profession?" (p. 25). Weinberg (2009) penned a similar article examining language in the classroom that inadvertently marginalizes or excludes individuals from classroom discourse. Language plays a central role in shaping the way individuals behave and think, he explained. Weinberg made several recommendations regarding inclusive language and cautioned educators to avoid assumptions, stating "don't assume that being LGBT is a problem" and that "coming out is an act of sharing not a cry for help" (p. 51).

Palkki and Caldwell (2018) surveyed LGBTQ+ college students about their high school choral experiences and found that, while most participants reported feeling safe in their choral environments, gendered traditions as well as silence around issues of gender and sexual diversity made students feel excluded. As Palkki and Caldwell stated, "the overwhelming message from the open-ended responses was that what LGBTQ students desired is *recognition* of their identity within the choral context" (p. 42). The authors

listed several participant quotes that confirmed youths' desire for more recognition in the classroom: "I was forced to wear a dress, despite identifying as male," stated one respondent (p. 40).

Several sources highlight the importance of attire and language with regard to honoring gender and sexual diversity in the classroom (Miller, 2016; Palkki, 2017; Silveira, 2019). A participant in Silveira's (2019) study struggled with the gendered uniform requirements in his choir, commenting "You know you shouldn't have to ask to not wear something that makes you feel uncomfortable" ("Joseph" in Silveira, 2019, p. 439). By contrast, Gould (2010) reported a sense of relief and pride that the masculine high school band uniforms, which were intended to "mask individuality," actually enabled their queer identity, (p. 11). "I walked freely in school—for the first time in my life—as part of a community that engaged me based on my contributions to our common activities," Gould recalled, (p.11). Personal stories, such as the ones outlined by Silveira and Gould, highlight ways that students' identities are often affirmed or denied through single acts and that no single act is insignificant.

Queering the Music Classroom

Scholarship exploring the ways music teachers and students move beyond heteronormativity to create environments that are safe, inclusive, and flexible falls under the category of "queering the music classroom." Although research in this area is still a growing field, scholars dedicated to creating music classrooms that are flexible and responsive to the needs of all students have made important strides over the last decade. Research on queering the music classroom is rooted in four themes: music as a safe

environment, the importance of teachers, queer case studies, and supporting the trans singing voice.

Music as a Safe Environment

Safe spaces help students feel supported, less stressed, and open to creative possibilities. As Hill (2019) stated, “Creating a safe and emotionally supportive space is the first and most crucial step in encouraging personal expression and creativity” (p. 175). Several sources list music and drama departments as environments where LBGTQ students felt safer and had more peer support than other areas of school (Drake, 2011; Spidel, 2014). Transgender jazz bassist Jennifer Leitham stated that she “survived her senior year in high school by staying active in the school choir” (Drake, 2011, p.10). A student in Spidel’s (2014) study described the drama club as an LGBT Alliance before GSAs came into existence. Another student in Spidel’s study explained that the feeling of unity in the band helped her feel accepted and equal with her peers. In Nichols’(2013) study, “Rie” described music as a “safe zone” away from the bullying she received in the rest of the school. She stated, “The only thing that kept me going was knowing that I would be able to go and play [in band] and I would be able to go and sing [in choir], because that was the one thing that no one could take away from me was my music” (“Rie” in Nichols, 2013, p. 267).

The Importance of Teachers and Teacher Training

The importance of music educators as contributors to students’ sense of well-being has been documented by several writers (Carter, 2011; Garrett, 2012). Music educators often spend several years with students and, therefore, are in the unique

position to develop strong relationships and intervene if necessary (Carter, 2011). Additionally, music events outside of school hours, such as concerts and trips, increase contact and encourage strong bonds between students and teachers. “Melanie” in Bartolome’s (2016) study benefited from the support of several mentors including her music education professor and her cooperating teacher. Under their care and guidance, “Melanie” enjoyed a successful student teaching experience and secured her first teaching position. A student from Palkki and Caldwell’s (2018) study stated, “I am one of the suicidal singers you are hoping to help. My choir director saved me. I hope your research can save more” (p. 35).

Several researchers have identified the need for teacher training on gender and sexual diversity issues in order to better support their students (Garrett, 2012; Palkki & Sauerland, 2018; Silveira & Goff, 2016; Sweet & Paparo, 2010). Sweet and Paparo (2010) found that the lack of teacher training in the area of LGBTQ+ studies is largely due to a reluctance to begin conversations. Although other areas of diversity are regularly addressed in schools and universities, LGBTQ+ is rarely discussed for fear of unintentionally offending others or feeling inadequately prepared to lead discussions, according to Sweet and Paparo. They advised educators to first begin by acknowledging the differences in each other and then by being willing to learn alongside the students and by being vulnerable and questioning.

Similarly, Garrett and Spano (2017) investigated the effects of preservice training on teacher attitudes and inclusive behaviors. They found that, while most teachers felt comfortable advocating for LGBTQ+ students and admonishing verbal harassment, those

without preservice training in LGBTQ+ inclusion were reluctant to include LGBTQ+ topics in classroom discourse or activities. Additionally, Garrett and Spano noted a correlation between teacher and school demographics and comfort with inclusive behaviors. In his earlier study, Garrett (2012) offered several recommendations for educators wishing to be more supportive, including familiarizing themselves with LGBTQ+ people, examining their own biases and viewpoints on LGBTQ+, enlisting institutional support in relation to establishing policies and disseminating materials, incorporating LBGTQ+ materials and curriculum, and modeling inclusive behavior. Garrett reminded educators that support should be a school wide effort when he stated, "inclusion must begin with teachers, in the classroom, and expand through the efforts of school, staff, administrators, and students" (p. 57).

Research in the area of music teacher support for trans students specifically is a small but growing field. Scholars dedicated to creating gender-inclusive classrooms are working to identify and understand barriers that impede music teacher support. Silveira and Goff (2016) examined teacher attitudes towards transgender students in their survey of 612 music teachers across the United States. Although the results of their study were mostly positive, comparison with student experiences in the National School Climate Survey (Kosciw et al., 2017) indicated that teacher actions are not necessarily congruent with their positive attitudes. As Silveira and Goff (2016) summarized, "it is also important to consider the possibility that although many teachers believe in the importance of creating a safe environment for students regardless of gender identity and expression, they may fail to do so" (p. 152).

Palkki and Sauerland (2018) compiled a practical guide for preservice teachers and their instructors. In addition to vocabulary and conceptual information about gender, they listed several strategies that instructors may use to help preservice teachers observe, practice, and reflect on gender inclusivity in the classroom, such as watching videos of trans musicians, investigating published materials, and self-reflection.

Queer Studies in Music Education

Case studies of fluidity and queerness in the field of music education comprise a small but growing body of research. Abramo (2011a) studied high school students' discourse during informal music making using a queer theory framework. The students related to popular music in a variety of ways that contributed to both forming and maintaining their identities. Abramo's findings revealed that informal music practices contain many heteronormative behaviors that suppress queerness and fluidity. For example, the female students associated with "emo" (emotional) music, while the males rejected "emo" music and falsetto singing because of its association with femininity. Similarly, in Kruse's (2016) study of a queer rapper of color, "JJ" maintained their identity through informal music making in the hip-hop genre. Unlike Abramo's (2011a) study, however, "JJ" found validation of their queerness and fluidity in professional female hip-hop artist role models. Kruse (2016) urged educators to consider both the socio-cultural and the musical benefits of hip-hop music. Kruse stated, "the idea that participation in hip-hop can be a site for strength as well as struggle speaks to the powerful potential of this music" (p. 116).

Drake (2011) examined the complexity of transgender identity and jazz artist

identity through the life of bassist Jennifer Leitham. Leitham's life presented an interesting case study of intersecting oppressive forces as a female jazz artist as well as a transgender artist because heterosexual males and heteronormative beliefs traditionally dominate the jazz field (Drake, 2011). Following her transition to female mid-career, Leitham experienced discrimination and loss of work, despite having a successful career as a jazz player prior to her transition. It was not until Leitham formed her own group and broke traditional binary perceptions within the field that her career was reborn.

Nichols's (2013) narrative account of a gender variant music student named "Rie" prompted interest as one of the first studies devoted to teenage transgender students in music education. Rie's school years were fraught with bullying and discrimination from which she found solace and peer support in the music department. Nichols commented that music ensembles tend to neutralize individual differences by focusing on common goals. Furthermore, music ensemble environments foster a sense of self-worth and accomplishment in students (where other areas of the school may not). Although Rie was welcomed into her local school band and choir, her experience contained inconsistencies with regard to support from school officials and music teachers. She encountered resistance from her music teacher when she wished to sing alto instead of tenor, for example. Rie's frustration over not being able to fully express her identity in the classroom is highlighted throughout Nichols's report. As Rie stated, "[but] music isn't the only way people release things from themselves, that sometimes people need more. They need more room to express themselves" ("Rie" in Nichols, 2013, p. 272).

More recently, studies involving trans music students (Palkki, 2016; Silveira,

2019), as well as one narrative case study of a transgender music teacher (Bartolome, 2016), have surfaced and contain powerful stories of acceptance, inclusion, and change. Palkki (2016) explored the lives of three high school trans singers as they negotiated their identities in high school chorus and found that supportive teachers, parents and other adult mentors were essential to the participants' feelings of comfort and success in school music. Palkki's work illuminated several ways that educators can better support the needs of trans youth singers and lay the groundwork for best practices in choral education. Bartolome (2016) expanded existing research on trans youth musicians to the undergraduate music student realm. Bartolome's narrative case study followed the journey of a preservice music education student, "Melanie," as she developed and transitioned both personally and professionally, culminating in a teaching position shortly out of college. Similarly, Silveira (2019) investigated the experiences of a transgender undergraduate music student. His findings confirmed ideas expressed in past literature with regard to language and attire, and illuminated additional areas of concern, such as difficulties in sight-singing and methods classes.

Supporting the Trans Singing Voice

Supporting developing voices is a crucial part of every vocal teacher's role in the classroom and was a common theme throughout this current study. Providing effective and knowledgeable support through pedagogy, practice, and encouragement helps singers feel comfortable and confident as their voices grow and change. Although singing is an enjoyable emotional outlet for many students, bodily constraints on the voice can make it difficult for trans singers to express themselves in the way they desire. Scholarship that

explores the expressive capacities of the trans singing voice highlights the challenges many people face, as well as ways that voice teachers and choral directors can better support their students (Hearns & Kremer, 2018; Kozan & Hammond, 2019; Palkki, 2016). In their guide for voice teachers and speech and language pathologists (SLP) working with trans singers, Kozan and Hammond (2019) stated, “care of the voice is both an art and a science” (p. 295). They emphasized that all professionals working with trans singers should have knowledge of both music and the voice, and recommend that voice teachers and SLP professionals work in teams to best support trans singers. In addition to providing exercises and strategies for private voice instruction, Kozan and Hammond offered several suggestions for chorus directors, including allowing singers to move freely between sections, using “high, medium, and low” for voice parts instead of “soprano, alto, tenor, and bass,” and incorporating mindfulness and listening warm-ups. They also recommended creating non-performance singing opportunities for people who enjoy singing but do not wish to perform.

Vocal pedagogy. Studies chronicling private voice teachers’ work with trans singers provide pedagogical insight for educators to use in both choral and private music settings (Hearns & Kremer, 2018; Manternach, 2017; Sims, 2017a). Hearns and Kremer (2018) emphasized flexibility when working with trans voices. They maintained that “regardless of genre or singing style, the goal of a singer is to achieve a vocal quality and artistry that is both natural and authentic,” and that “for the trans singer, however, the meaning of those two terms may be in flux or may require reevaluation” (p. 104). Because trans singers present needs that require, as well as inspire, teachers to think

beyond binary vocal traditions, Hearns and Kremer stressed the importance of listening and communication, stating that “singers should have opportunities to make unique and personal choices about the ways in which they use their voices” (p. 106). Maintaining open and compassionate lines of communication helps all students thrive, but is especially important for trans singers who may be undergoing therapies and treatments that interfere with the voice (Hearns & Kremer, 2018).

Manternach (2017) explored both the pedagogical and emotional aspects of the vocal experiences of three transgender singers. Manternach found that, although the technical aspects of singing were unique to each participant, they shared similar feelings about the activity in general. One singer shared the following: “My singing voice is, and always has been, important to me as a way to express myself as human, not as transgender, and I do not think that has changed” (“E.F.” in Manternach, 2017, p. 212). As another anonymous participant explained:

> My singing voice is very important to me as a way to express my character. While I am singing, I am not thinking about the fact that I am trans; I’m thinking about the song and what I want to convey in a way that is most genuine to me. (“anonymous transman” in Manternach, 2017, p. 213)

Differences between singing voice and speaking voice were noted in several studies (Constansis, 2008; Hershberger, 2005) Participants in Manternach’s (2017) study experienced more stress when speaking than when singing. As one participant stated: “My speaking voice actually caused me more distress than my singing voice, as my speaking voice was an immediate giveaway that I was not “male”, even if I had been

perceived to be so before I spoke" ("E.F. "in Manternach, 2017, p. 212). Another participant commented, "I was very self-conscious of my [speaking] voice. My voice was a big tell" ("anonymous transman" in Manternach, 2017, p. 213). Perceived difference between the voice as an identifier and the voice as a musical instrument is a common thread throughout this current study. Like the participants in Manternach's research, some of the participants in this current study viewed music and singing as emancipatory from the daily stresses of speaking.

Vocal repertoire and casting. In a related article, Manternach, Chipman, Rainero, and Stave (2017) discussed trans singers' challenges with performing traditional Western classical vocal repertoire and opera in particular. Because opera and musical theater are so often heteronormatively constructed, trans singers sometimes have difficulty aligning their voices and bodies to match the expectations of a particular role. One trans-female in Manternach et al.'s study who continued to sing in her bass range eventually came to terms with the constraints of opera and her new identity:

> After coming out, she had a bit of an existential crisis with the idea of having to sing male roles in operas because of her vocal range, timbre, and Fach . . . we talked at length about this, and after discussing the fact that opera is and has always been replete with gender-bending roles (pants roles for women, castrati, etc.). T. G. seemed content to settle into her new identity as a woman with an extremely low voice who may occasionally have to dress in 'drag' to play male roles. ("Chipman" in Manternach et al., 2017, p. 84)

Another transman in the study found trouser roles gratifying to sing until he engaged in gender affirming hormone therapy:

> His range is still too truncated for all standard opera and oratorio repertory, only time will tell whether E. F. will eventually gain the minor third below and above his current range that he needs in order to re-enter the professional singing world. (“Rainero” in Manternach et al., 2017, p. 86)

Manternach et al. (2017) noted that participants felt more comfortable singing art songs and oratorio where they had more flexible options.

Similarly, Hearns and Kremer (2018) discussed the problems with gendered vocal literature in both opera and musical theater. They noted that, although musical theater is “mired in gender stereotypes and expectations,” new works are being produced that feature greater diversity and more options for singers (p. 47). Hearns and Kremer urged teachers to look outside of tradition in relation to repertoire and to become instigators of change. They stated, “it is important when selecting repertoire that we challenge ourselves, breaking away from some of the limitations of tradition to help move the field forward” (p. 49).

Although the limitations of traditional opera and musical theater repertoire make having a career in theater singing difficult, professional trans singers, such as Lucia Lucas (Lucas, 2019) are working to change the vocal landscape by challenging traditions and modeling new ways of thinking. Lucas explained that many of the singer limitations in the opera world have to do with the producers, directors, and patrons who demand traditional interpretations that perpetuate heteronormative stereotypes. As Lucas stated,

"the mainstream opera world is not waiting with open arms for trans/nonbinary singers. They are scared their donors won't approve. We must challenge them and hope for steady progress" ("Lucas" in Hearns & Kremer, 2018, p. 46)

Effects of gender affirming hormone therapy (HT). Although not all singers undergo gender affirming HT several researchers have investigated the effects of HT on the female-to-male (FTM) singing voice in tandem with other pedagogical aspects (Constansis, 2008; Riverdale, 2009). Constansis (2008) is credited with being one of the first singers to document the FTM vocal transition while undergoing gender affirming HT. Constansis' detailed, autobiographical account provided valuable information for the vocal community and lay the groundwork for future study in this area. A professional singer, Constansis documented both the therapy protocol as well as the vocal effects that ensued for one year and found that a gradual increase in hormone levels, combined with gentle vocal exercises, helped keep the voice "manageable and musically useable to some extent" throughout transition (para. 18). Constansis recalled feelings of stress combined with excitement while awaiting the results:

> I used to pretend that I did not care about the loss of my voice. In any case, I knew that the next few months would be the moment of truth. I had taken a risk, and nobody could guarantee that what I had thought to be correct in the beginning about the FTM voice in transition would eventually be proven accurate; I only hoped that it would be so. (para. 18)

Repeating their study with a small mixed age group of FTM singers, Constansis found that singers over age 40 were more likely to experience "entrapped" voice as a result of

HT, than younger singers.[8]

Research in the area of singing and HT has expanded in the most recent years, as voice teachers and other vocal professionals have begun documenting the vocal effects of HT in their studios (Sims, 2017a). Sims documented a student's vocal journey while undergoing HT and found that vowel modification, air speed, and attention to resonance were key determinants in developing a satisfactory range. As Sims' student became accustomed to his new tenor voice, Sims had to remind him not to raise the larynx as he ascended in his range, noting that "in this way, it was similar to training all young tenors" (p. 370). Similarly, voice teachers in Manternach et al.'s (2017) study helped their FTM students adjust their vowels and air speed, as they policed the larynx. One teacher remarked, "training a transgender male voice with the same techniques one might use to guide a cismale voice through the first few years after puberty was successful" ("Stave" in Manternach et al., p. 86). In all the aforementioned studies, participants experienced periods of hoarseness, fatigue, and loss of range that improved over time. For these reasons, Constansis (2008) and other voice teachers recommend moving slowly and exercising patience when training singers who are undergoing HT.

While the focus of this report is on music, sources outside of the realm of music have provided valuable information regarding vocal treatments and HT for trans individuals. Several researchers in the medical field have documented therapies and treatments for transgender individuals who wish to align their speaking voices with their

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[8] Constansis describes "entrapped" voice as a condition that happens when vocal folds increase in size but the larynx cartilage remains small in size. This results in a vocal sound characterized by hoarseness, lack of control, and with limited power.

affirmed gender (Andrews & Schmidt, 1997; Carew & Dacakis, 2007; Constansis, 2008; Damrose, 2009; Drake, 2011; Hancock & Helenius, 2012; Hershberger, 2005; McNeill et al., 2008; Van Borsel et al., 2000). The bulk of research includes studies on vocal speech changes that occur while undergoing HT (Damrose, 2009; Van Borsel et al., 2000), as well as the benefits of vocal therapy (Andrews & Schmidt, 1997; Carew & Dacakis, 2007; Hancock & Helenius, 2012; Hershberger, 2005; McNeill et al., 2008). More recent scholarship has examined newer treatments which allow transgender youth to suppress their prepubescent hormones through adolescence at which time they may elect to take hormones that align with their affirmed gender (de Vries & Cohen-Kettenis 2012; Edwards-Leeper & Spack, 2012). When administered properly, hormone suppressant therapy makes it possible for transgender youth to progress through the puberty of their affirmed gender.

In addition to studies by educators and other voice professionals, professional trans singer websites provide valuable information on HT as well as encouragement for young trans musicians (Conley, 2013; Lucas, 2019; Riverdale, 2009). Riverdale's (2009) website features sections devoted to products, films, references, conferences, and health, in addition to music. Included in Riverdale's discussion of singing and HT are several video clips and quotes from trans masculine singers, as well as practical information about the voice and the effects of HT. Riverdale warned that vocal changes with HT are unpredictable and can include a loss of voice, but also offered words of encouragement:

> If testosterone is in your cards, remember that the "no guarantees" clause applies both ways: it's not inevitable that you will lose your singing voice! Gradual

> administration of T, speech-language therapy, vocal exercises, maintaining good vocal health, and regular practice will all help ease the transition. (para. 19)

Conley (2013) was equally optimistic. Conley stated, “above all, don't stop singing! When you start taking testosterone, keep vocalizing, doing vocal exercises and singing songs through the process—*gently*” (para. 7). Conley also urged singers to be patient and flexible by stating “find a way to make your favorite music shift with you. . . . Keep experimenting, getting to know where the notes are in your new voice and you’ll get through it” (para. 8). Like Constansis (2008), Conley recommended that singers introduce hormones slowly and gradually to achieve the greatest vocal benefits.

Trans Lives

Examination of trans individuals’ lives and well-being outside of the music classroom completes this review. The experiences of trans individuals remind educators of the clearly drawn lines between those with privilege and those without. As Mayo (2014) stated:

> Students who are transgender show schools how much seemingly mundane issues are framed by gender normativity; using restrooms, changing for gym, being called by a gender-related first name they choose, choosing which table to sit at in the lunchroom, which subjects to excel at, or which games to play at recess (p. 73).

Butler (2004) placed particular focus on the socially constructed ironies and constraints thrust upon queer individuals. For example, Butler noted that it is acceptable for cisgender men and women to have cosmetic surgery, but transgender individuals must be

labeled as “mentally disordered” in order to receive reconstructive surgery.[9] Similarly, Stryker (2008) listed how heteronormative privileges associated with institutionalized existence, such as birth certificates, school and medical records, passports, and driver’s licenses, are not always available to transgender individuals. Literature dedicated to trans lives is divided into the following areas: trans studies, trans stories and first-person accounts, harassment and discrimination studies, and family support.

Trans studies

Stryker (2008) examined the parallel histories of transgender politics and feminist theory beginning with the first use of the term “homosexual” in 1869. When discussing institutionalized heteronormative oppression, Stryker stated:

> The state’s actions often regulate bodies, in ways both great and small, by enmeshing them within norms and expectations that determine what kinds of lives are deemed livable or useful and by shutting down the spaces of possibility and imaginative transformation where people’s lives begin to exceed and escape the state’s uses for them. (p. 51)

Stryker profiled several early advocates for transgender rights including Christine Jorgenson who made national headlines by being the first American to undergo gender confirmation surgery. Stryker noted that, although early transgender activists aligned with homosexuals in their fight for equal rights, second wave feminist politics created a divide

[9] Since Butler’s writing, there have been several changes with regard to policy and health care for transgender individuals. In 2012, the American Psychiatric Association replaced the phrase “gender identity disorder” with “gender dysphoria” (GLAAD, 2019) and in 2018, the World Health Organization replaced “gender identity disorder” with “gender incongruence,” (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). While these changes reflect tremendous strides forward for the trans community, the laws regarding gender confirmation surgeries and other supportive measures vary by state and may not always reflect an open and affirming stance.

between the two when homosexuals shunned transgender individuals based on essentialist arguments about what makes a "real" woman or a "real" man. This divide led to some homosexuals perpetuating the very hegemonic binary viewpoints that they were also fighting against.

Beemyn and Rankin (2011) compiled one of the first authoritative sources in the field based on a study of over 3,000 transgender participants. They found that, although the increased visibility of transgender individuals in the media has made life easier for some, identifying as transgender is still challenging. Beemyn and Rankin stated:

> The Internet and increased attention to transgender people in the news media and popular culture have made it possible for young people who think that they might be transgender to learn about the topic readily and to meet transgender people virtually if not in person, but embracing a transgender identity can still be difficult. (p. 44)

Results of Beemyn and Rankin's study indicated that most transgender individuals face harassment and discrimination on a daily basis and that younger people and people of color endure more harassment than their older white peers. Furthermore, participants who identified as gender non-binary or gender-neutral experienced harassment and discrimination from *both* the cisgender and transgender communities because they belonged to neither group. Their findings are consistent with Palkki and Caldwell's (2018) survey of LBTQ youth in choral classrooms, indicating that gender non-confirming and questioning youth (non-binary) felt less safe in the classroom than their LGB peers.

A portion of Beemyn and Rankin's (2011) work is devoted to transgender youth and institutions of higher learning. Consistent with results of the current study, Beemyn and Rankin found that today's colleges and universities are not fully prepared to embrace gender diversity on campus. They stated:

> Transgender people are still completely ignored and invisible in most institutional structures, college curricula and cocurricular activities rarely encompass experiences beyond male and female; and most faculty, staff and student leaders lack training on gender diversity (p. 159). . . . Furthermore, even those colleges and universities that have implemented transgender-supportive policies and practices still remain firmly entrenched in a binary gender system and largely privilege gender-conforming students. (p. 163)

Results of Beemyn and Rankin's work indicate that, while colleges and universities may view themselves as forerunners of change, they may fail to demonstrate inclusive beliefs beyond the superficial due to lack of training and allegiance to tradition.

Trans stories and first-person accounts

Stories by trans writers provide first person accounts which illuminate the varied and multifaceted ways that people experience gender, as well as ways that heteronormativity oppresses people's experiences. Wilchins (1997) sought to counter previous writings which objectified and homogenized the trans community by sharing insight about the complex and politicized realities they encountered. Wilchins emphasized that poverty, disenfranchisement, loneliness, and violence are not an inevitable part of trans lives, but effects of a transphobic, discriminatory system that leads

to these circumstances. Similarly, trans identifiers reflect a political need to categorize rather than an actuality. As Wilchins stated, "trans-identity is not a natural fact. Rather, it is the political category we are forced to occupy when we do certain things with our bodies" (p. 27). Wilchins described the conflict between what some people feel about their bodies and others' cultural expectations:

> Perhaps the single most profound and private thing we can create on our journey through this life is our sense of who and what we are. This is not a problem for most of us. We inherit meanings for ourselves that are more or less acceptable. . . . For others, the self that resonates within us is entirely at odds with what culture works to inscribe on our flesh. And this inaugurates a lifelong battle. (p. 129)

To end this "battle," Wilchins suggested that culture abandon the norms which dictate gendered ways of being and determine who takes part:

> What I am interested in is access to distinctly different ways of organizing myself that do not first require that I have such and such a kind of body or sexuality in order to be heard, that do not require of me that I have any specific identity at all in order to participate. (p. 130)

Trans activist and role model, Janet Mock (2014) voiced similar frustrations with trying to meet others' expectations. Mock stated:

> I am aware that identifying with what people see versus what's authentic, meaning who I actually am, involves erasure of parts of myself, my history, my people, my experiences. Living by other people's definitions and perceptions shrinks us to shells of ourselves, rather than complex people embodying multiple

> identities. (p. 249)

Mock's journey was fraught with several obstacles stemming from intersections with race, gender, and low socioeconomic status. Mock described living a double life as an honors student and athlete while, at the same time, working in the sex industry to raise money for gender confirmation surgery:

> If you're a low-income trans woman of color, you don't have access to health care. . . . Sex work becomes a tried-and-true solution that you've seen older girls survive on for years. . . . No one person forced me or my friend into the sex trade; we were groomed by an entire system that failed us and a society that refused to see us. (p. 213)

In school, Mock experienced discrimination from administrators and students, but found relief in a monthly transgender youth support group. Mock offered several suggestions for teachers and administrators, including helping students with gendered activities and facilities, providing clear communication and follow-through with students and staff regarding appropriate language and anti-harassment policies, and creating an environment that fosters empathy and understanding.

Harassment and discrimination

A large amount of scholarship on trans lives focuses on the victimization of youth and adults (Darwich, Hymel, & Waterhouse 2012; Kosciw et al., 2017; McGuire et al., 2010; Sears, 2005). Studies show that trans students endure more stigma, harassment, discrimination, and victimization than their LGB peers in school (Kosciw et al., 2017) and that the victimization of trans students can lead to lower grades, feelings of isolation,

substance abuse, school avoidance, depression, and suicide (Darwich et al., 2012; Herman et al., 2015).

Spidel (2014) found that students use the disapproval of trans identities to reinforce heteronormativity. For this reason, many students choose to hide their gender identity in school or delay their transition (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). The decision to come out or remain private is highly individual and transgender students who do choose to come out often experience tremendous pressure to conform to the social expectations of masculine or feminine behavior (Herman et al., 2015; Mock, 2014; Spidel, 2014). Presenting visibly as a heterosexual male or a heterosexual female, in other words, becomes a means of social survival, for some trans individuals (Spidel, 2014). Arguments exist within both the trans community and academic communities concerning the binary nature of transgender individuals who work to present visibly as heterosexual males and females (Mock, 2014; GLAAD, 2016). Some people feel that this behavior further entrenches heteronormativity, while others feel that transmen and transwomen who do not wish to present as visibly trans are simply part of a larger gender spectrum (Butler, 2004). In Spidel's (2014) study, for example, "Fred" explained that he struggles with not outing himself as a transman because he feels that he is not helping society recognize and accept trans people.

Family support

Parents and guardians play a pivotal role in children's development and sense of self (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). For this reason, examination of students' family relationships beyond school is crucial to understanding their journey. Halpern and

Jenkins (2016) found that parents' ideologies about gender and gender roles impact how their children think about gender beginning at a very young age. The parents' gendered *behavior*, however, makes an even greater impact. These findings are similar to Bussey and Bandura's (1999) report that merely advocating for a certain ideology does not ensure its implementation. They stated, "if parents preach gender egalitarianism but model traditional roles, the precepts soon lose their force" (p. 691). Modeling gender equality and acceptance in the family, therefore, is imperative to helping children develop open and accepting attitudes, and may help gender variant children feel more supported.

Research concerning gender variant children and their families has gained momentum in recent years. Studies show that LGBTQ+ children who receive support from home develop higher levels of self-esteem and enjoy more life satisfaction than their unsupported peers (Ryan at al, 2010; Simons et al., 2013; Watson, Grossman, & Russell, 2019). Additionally, Watson et al. (2016) found that parental support was more influential to a child's well-being than friends or teachers. Despite these encouraging statistics, however, many parents feel alone and ill equipped to meet the needs of their transgender child. Stories and personal narratives of empowerment provide models for families to learn and feel encouraged.

Concurrent with the first public appearances of transgender child star Jazz Jennings in 2007 (Jennings, 2017), as well as the arrival of new medical options for transgender youth in the United States (de Vries & Cohen-Kettenis, 2012), Brill and Pepper (2008) composed one of the first modern guides for families and professionals about supporting transgender children. They emphasized the importance of psychological

as well as physical support for families, beginning with a thorough knowledge of gender. Brill and Pepper explained:

> True acceptance is marked by an understanding of the complexity of gender. This understanding blends your own family experience with the greater system of compulsory gender in our society. . . . With this enriched understanding of gender comes a transformation in how one sees the world. (p. 59)

They listed several ways that parents can take an active role in supporting their child including speaking positively about their child to others, taking an active stand against LGBTQ+ discrimination, working with schools and other institutions to make them safer, finding an LGBTQ+ community, expressing admiration for their child, and believing their child can have a happy future (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Throughout their text, Brill and Pepper acknowledge the need for parental self-care by providing resources and offering encouragement with the following advice:

> First, take a deep breath. Take your time. Listen to your child. Find support for yourself and your family. . . . Kids who are gender-variant and transgender need a lot of support. So do their parents, their siblings, and their extended family. (p. 38)

Listening and keeping communications open are most important, as Brill and Pepper (2008) urged: “Staying connected to your child and always interested in their experience will help you grow and evolve together. It will help you understand how your child frames their experience, and it will help you provide guidance and support” (p. 105).

In a later work, Pepper (2012) paid tribute to caretakers who advocate and support their trans children in a collection of stories written by mothers of trans children across the United States and the United Kingdom. The essays highlight everyday fears and challenges that families work to overcome. One mother discussed fears about her child flying without documentation that matched her gender identity. She stated:

> I didn't sleep every time I knew she was flying from one city to another. . . . The great disappointment was (and continues to be) that we couldn't get a corrected New York City birth certificate. The City had been on the verge of changing its guidelines for transgender people, then backed off at the very last moment. ("Judy" in Pepper, 2012, p. 54)

Fear concerning disclosure was a recurring theme among the writers. "I could not understand how I was going to tell my family," shared one mother ("Ingrid" in Pepper, 2012, p. 72). Other common themes among the mothers included confusion over the change of names and pronouns, as well as concerns for health and safety. Conversely, the writers indicated several issues that were particular to certain regions or circumstances. One mother shared the following:

> The state in which I live provides no laws of protection for my child to be who he is. Even scarier is the fact that in this state, simply allowing children to be who they are can be considered a criminal action ("Kate" in Pepper, 2012, p. 82).

Another mother wrote that acceptance of her transgender child was hardest within her own African American community. Examining students' family relationships helps educators understand external forces that may interfere with students' experiences at

school. Pepper's compilation illustrates family tensions that may exist with trans students, even those that come from supportive households.

Summary of Literature

The research outlined in this chapter provided important foundations for an examination of performativity in high school music environments. I began with a discussion of research in the areas of queer theory and gender fluidity led by scholars Judith Butler (1990/1999) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990/2008), and activist/writer, Riki Wilchins (2019). Their work in queer theory and performativity, and in abolishing gender norms formed the crux of this study. I then reviewed scholarship in the area of gender development as I traced the history of gender theories from biological/essentialist views (Geddes & Thomson, 1890) to cognitive development theories (Erikson, 1963; Piaget, 1969/2000), to social constructivist approaches (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; West & Zimmerman, 1987). A discussion of feminist research and feminist music scholarship that informed this study completed the section (Brett, 1994; de Quadros, 2019; and Hendricks and Boyce-Tillman, 2018).

Next, I reviewed literature pertaining to education and gender which surveyed ways that students and educators experience gender in the classroom (Hawkins, 2009; Lewis, 2017), as well as ways that schools and educators work to be more inclusive (Chappell et al., 2018; Mayo 2014). Studies in the area of music education and gender pointed to a growing shift away from gendered, binary approaches to music education (Green, 1997; Koza, 1993) to practices that promote diversity and embrace a queer pedagogy (Gould, 2016; Hearns & Kremer, 2018; Miller, 2016b). Narrative research

featuring the stories of trans student musicians and educators provided first-person accounts of ways that music and gender intersect (Bartolome, 2016; Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2016; Silveira, 2019). Palkki's (2016) research on gender inclusivity in high school choral programs became an important work from which to draw inspiration and build upon for this study.

I concluded the review of literature with research that examined trans lives and ways in which schools, communities, and families shape people's identities and well-being. Stories by trans writers provided important foundations for this section (Mock, 2014; Wilchins, 1997), as well as targeted research which surveyed the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2017). Although literature featuring the voices and experiences of student musicians is scant, it is my hope that this study will add to the growing body of gender and music education research that features students and educators as leaders of change. A discussion of the methodology used for this study follows in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

In this chapter, I address the method implemented for this study which utilized a narrative inquiry research design with methods borrowed from case study to explore gender and high school music through the lives of three trans individuals. The lenses of queer theory and performativity provided the theoretical underpinnings for this inquiry and guided the methodology. The goal of this research design was to examine beliefs, behaviors, and discourse connected to high school music settings with the intent of identifying ways that students' gender and music making are performatively shaped and reinforced. The research questions guiding the methodology include the overarching question: How do gender performativity and music making intersect in high school music environments? The secondary research questions were:

1. What beliefs, behaviors, and practices constrained or enabled the participants' gender performativity and ability to engage with music in high school?
2. How did the participants in this study feel supported or unsupported by their high school music teachers?

Discussion of the methodology used for this study is divided into five sections as follows: research design, participants, trustworthiness, ethics and protocol, and researcher positionality.

Research Design

The research design for this study featured a combination of narrative inquiry and case study methods to explore the recollected experiences of three trans young adults. Design methods which seek a greater understanding of the human experience through

personal interpretation and examination of multiple realities falls under the category of qualitative research (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research is appropriate for educational and sociological contexts because it helps uncover details needed to fully comprehend complex human situations (Carter, 2014; Merriam, 1998). As Carter (2014) explained:

> For music education researchers, utilizing qualitative methodologies to examine musical experiences of underrepresented populations can inform curricula, public issues, and the educational institution in evocative and nuanced ways. In this way, researchers can invite contestation, contradiction, and philosophical tension into the music education discourse, not to haphazardly invite discord, but instead to promote a critical dialogue for growth and development for *all* members of the educative community. (p. 539)

Throughout this narrative inquiry, I worked to thoroughly understand the experiences of the participants, by collecting their stories from a variety of data sources and creating detailed narrative portraits (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I then examined the participants' stories via a comparative narrative analysis similar to cross-case analysis to highlight common themes and search for new meanings. The narrative approach provided a means with which to highlight the participants' unique voices, as well as to examine their complex and unique circumstances. Although the findings from narrative inquiry are not generalizable due to their disparate design, it is my hope that the results of this study may have practical implications for students and teachers as to ways they can effectively queer their classrooms.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach in which story is used as a way of understanding people and the world around them (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012). Through narrative inquiry, researchers investigate the human experience as it exists within a specific time and cultural context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Bruner (1991) explained that successful narratives show periods of transformation that are often accompanied by "turning points" which lead to new understanding (p. 73). These critical moments then become central to peoples' understanding of the world and their relationship to others as they construct themselves.

A narrative approach was chosen for this study so that I might explore the participants' individual experiences in greater depth (McAdams, 2012). The design featured separate interviews with each of the participants as well as an examination of artifacts, websites, and related media materials. Detailed stories, as told by the participants, supplied the primary data for investigation. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us, however, stories are temporal and grounded in specific time periods and cultural contexts; therefore, the meanings attached to stories change and shift as the stories are reimagined and retold. "Life . . . is filled with narrative fragments," they explained, "enacted in storied moments of time and space" (p. 17). Barrett and Stauffer (2012) described the transient nature of narrative inquiry as a recursive storytelling process that is subject to changes in perspective. They stated, "As our lives unfold, our narratives shift (even transform) in a recursive process of revisiting and retelling stories from different experiential viewpoints and time perspectives, and for different audiences.

Stories are always provisional or today's story" (p. 5). Additionally, stories that are retold by others (such as researcher-narrators) are subject to biases and shifts in perspective that alter the story's meanings and reconstruct knowledge (p. 7). Narratives, such as the ones presented in this research, therefore, represent only one shared moment in the lived experiences of both the participant-narrator and the researcher-narrator.

In my role as researcher-narrator of this report, I placed myself in the position of reimagining and retelling the participants' stories, as well as interpreting and drawing meaning from their experiences. This position required thoughtful consideration of the various viewpoints presented in the research and maintaining an ethical stance with regards to researcher positionality and the participants' voices. As Shuman (2012) explained, "Anytime someone tells someone else's story, the proprietorship, the authority, shifts. This is why. . . narrative is so delicate, so dependent on the relationship between the teller and the listener" (p. 131). Aware of my responsibility as a researcher-narrator, I worked to construct narrative portraits that were as authentic as possible by including many of the participants' words verbatim, by remaining open and attuned to the various meanings inherent in our conversations, and by working to eliminate my own biases through reflexive practices. A deeper discussion of these protocols can be found at the end of this chapter.

Participants

Participants in this study included three young adults from the northeastern area of the United States who identified as white trans students in high school and who participated in music activities throughout high school. Trans students offer unique

perspectives on the ways in which gender and music converge in the classroom as well as ways that heteronormativity interrupts learning. The participants in this study offered thoughtful insight on the complex relationship between music making and gender identity. Their openness and willingness to share themselves helped me build detailed narrative portraits from which educators can learn and be inspired.

The participants ranged in age from 18 to 24. This age group was targeted because they were young enough to still recall their high school music experiences vividly, but they were also removed from the context and mature enough to provide additional, thoughtful reflections about their past experiences (Hawkins, 2009). The Northeast was chosen for convenience because I wished to conduct the interviews in person. I also took into consideration that focusing on one particular geographical region might provide valuable insight as to the gender-inclusive trends within that particular region. Palkki (2016) found that where students live impacts their school experiences and noted that the northeastern region of the United States appeared to be more progressive and accepting of trans students than other areas. Similarly, Silveira and Goff (2016) explored teachers' attitudes towards transgender students across the country and, while they did not investigate regional differences, they found slight correlations between teachers' attitudes and their political persuasion. They suggested that a more representative national sample in future studies might uncover regional variation. In future research, results of this study may be compared with trans students' experiences in other areas of the country to determine if there are any noticeable trends.

Snowball Sampling

The participant sample for this study was gathered via a snowballing technique as described by Glesne (2011). Participants were invited via a short online survey (Appendix A) which was distributed to various music colleagues and LGBTQ+ organization leaders in the Northeast. While many of these contacts were known to me, some were not. I contacted my colleagues and the leaders via email and was encouraged by the enthusiastic responses I received. As an ally who does not identify with the LGBTQ+ community, gaining leaders' trust and cooperation was important for this project. Leaders of support groups for underrepresented communities often act as "gatekeepers" for the organization (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 156). Thus, I was sensitive to the fact that many LGBTQ+ individuals are reluctant to engage in research with people who do not identify within the community.

In response to my emailed request, nine group leaders indicated that they would forward the survey to their members, one group leader responded that he did not feel that this project matched their constituency, and 22 organizations gave no response. Additionally, three colleagues who identify closely with the trans community in the Northeast offered to share the link with others. The exact numbers of individuals receiving the survey link is unknown. This was because each of the contacts' methods of dissemination was different and some indicated that they did not distribute the link to their entire group but to specific individuals who seemed to meet the criteria. It is also possible that organizations that did not respond directly to my email forwarded the link to others without my knowledge.

Following the initial two-month survey period, a total of four individuals completed the survey from which it was determined that three people met the criteria for the study. This low response was not surprising given my third-party access to the participants as well as the narrow criteria. Criteria for participation in the study were as follows:

- *Young adults between ages 18-24.* This age group was selected because they are young enough to have vivid memories of their high school music years (Hawkins, 2009).
- *Live within the northeastern region of the United States*. The geographical convenience made it easier for me to conduct live interviews.
- *Identified as trans in high school.* This group was selected because they offer a unique perspective on ways that gender is recognized in schools. Although queer theory avoids the use of categories and labels to identify oneself (Butler, 2004), researchers have found that belonging to a category and self-identifying is important to youth (Hawkins, 2009; Johnson et al., 2014; Linville, 2009). Therefore, the categorization of identity in this study was both necessary and appropriate.
- *Enrolled in music classes in high school for at least two years*. Music students who feel safe and comfortable in their music department often return for several years, forming strong bonds with teachers and peers, and developing advanced music skills (Carter, 2011). Restricting participation to students who felt comfortable in their music department allowed me to examine ways in which the

participants felt safe and honored in music, as well as ways in which they felt constrained.

The Three Participants

Evan (age 18, they/them/theirs) recently graduated from a small, private high school in a rural area on the East Coast where they took part in music, art, and theater classes as well as co-led the school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). At the time of our interviews, Evan identified as bisexual and non-binary, but was also exploring their masculinity: "I'm non-binary and I wish . . . ," they started but then corrected themselves, "I *lean* towards trans-masculine" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). A passionate visual artist as well as musician, Evan looked forward to studying film and animation in college.

Emily (age 24, she/her/hers) was an experienced musician who sings tenor, plays guitar, and conducts choirs. She grew up in a musical household where she took lessons on a variety of instruments and sang alongside her parents. Emily recently graduated from college where she studied both math and music. In high school, Emily sang in select ensembles and took part in district and all-state festivals. Emily was assigned male at birth and identified as non-binary during high school before transitioning to female in college. She also has recently begun exploring her Jewish heritage. Her personal journey of identity combined with a wealth of formal and informal music experiences resulted in a complex narrative.

Connor (age 18, he/him/his) was a singer and actor who had just graduated from an urban public high school. Prior to high school, he was homeschooled with his sisters where he developed a passion for music and literature. Connor presented a highly

complicated mix of marginalized identities combined with notable personal strengths. He identified as autistic as well as trans and spoke openly about his challenges with both. Additionally, Connor struggled with a low socio-economic status (SES) which limited his ability to participate in activities he desired, such as music lessons. He was highly articulate and enjoyed discussing Shakespeare, music, and the classic arts. Despite Connor's many personal challenges, his story is one of strength and resilience.

Data Collection

Research involving the lives of trans individuals is extremely complex due to the vulnerability of the participants as well as the variety of contexts (Jones, 2016; Miller, 2013). Data collection with trans students, therefore, requires great care and sensitivity on the part of the researcher. For this reason, the data in this study was limited to data supplied only by the participants, the researcher, and public records. Additionally, limiting participant input to the students themselves allowed them to speak honestly and openly about their experiences without worrying about their parents', teachers' or peers' responses. Data for this study included the online survey, participant interviews, participant autobiographies, participant artifacts, school and town websites, field notes, and various other related media. Two colleagues known to me, who identify as transgender, reviewed the survey and interview materials prior to the start of the study and offered suggestions.

Interviews

Interviews with the participants took place over a three-month period in mutually agreed upon places that were safe and convenient for both of us. Although the spaces

were public, they offered private areas where the participants could speak freely, but feel safe in a publicly protected area. Each participant was interviewed three times for approximately 90 minutes each. All the interviews were conducted in person, with the exception of two interviews with Evan and Emily that were conducted over Skype due to changes in their schedule which precluded them from traveling. The interviews were recorded on two devices and then immediately transcribed and catalogued within two days. Each interview was divided into several separate recordings which both facilitated ease of cataloguing and provided a safety measure in case either of the devices failed.

Establishing a respectful rapport with participants, by disclosing the purpose of the study and addressing safety concerns, is an important part of the interview process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The first meeting with the participants began by reviewing the study and signing consent forms. I asked the participants what name they wanted me to use for the interviews and all the participants chose to use their actual name. However, a pseudonym chosen later by each participant was used in the final report. I also reminded the participants that researchers involved with this study would not be contacting their former high school or any other people connected with their story.

The initial semi-structured interview (Appendix B) featured 19 non-identifying questions about the participants' school, personal, and musical backgrounds which I adapted from similar demographic surveys of LGBTQ+ youth by Hawkins (2009). The purpose of this initial interview was to gather basic information about each participant and to establish a comfortable rapport. At the conclusion of the first interview, participants were asked to complete an autobiographical questionnaire before our next

interview featuring four open response prompts (Appendix C) and to gather personal artifacts to bring.

The second and third semi-structured interviews included some predetermined open-ended questions (Appendix D) as well as questions tailored to each individual based on their previous interviews and the autobiographical questionnaire. I included questions pertaining to the participants' musical lives both in and outside high school, as well as their family history, because I was interested in gaining a wide perspective of all the forces that shaped their lives during high school. As Seidman (2013) stated, "being interested in others is the key [to interviewing]" (p. 9). The questions were asked in no particular order in each interview but, rather, followed the natural flow of communication and ideas. Like the theory that underlines this study, conversations with the participants were fluid and flexible to allow for changes and shifts in perspectives that might enhance the narratives. Stake (1995) noted that qualitative work "seldom proceeds as a survey with the same questions asked of each respondent; rather, each interview is expected to have had unique experiences, special stories to tell" (p. 65). Along with the interviews, I also handwrote field notes, both during and following our conversations, which helped enhance the narrative portraits.

Following each interview, I transcribed and catalogued each conversation within two days and the transcripts were then shared with each participant for review— a process also known as a member check (Stake, 1995). The participants were invited to reflect and respond to the conversation as well as make any corrections. I also found it helpful to email a few follow-up questions in between interviews to clarify details from

the transcripts. The emails were then catalogued and added to the database.

At the conclusion of the interview process, participants were offered a small remuneration for their time in the form of a gift card paid for at the researchers' expense. Hawkins (2009) defended the importance of compensating people for their time in research with trans youth. They stated, "while compensation is not a standard practice within this level of research . . . compensation offered to the participants further emphasized the value of the information shared" (p. 51).

Participant Autobiographical Questionnaire

In addition to our interviews, participants were asked to complete, independently, an autobiographical questionnaire online featuring four open-response prompts (Appendix C). They could write as much or as little as they wished. My intention was to provide a space where the participants could reflect on their experiences independently as well as provide another source of data. Additionally, I had hoped that the questions might help participants recall their experiences more vividly and serve as a spark for subsequent interview conversations. Carter (2013) similarly used written autobiographies to supplement his study of band musicians. He found that the autobiographies gave participants the opportunity to express themselves in a way that promoted "meaningful self-reflection" (Carter, 2013, p.31). Although the autobiographies in this study were useful for triangulating data, I found them to be only minimally helpful in allowing participants to reflect more deeply on their experiences. Participants seemed to view the autobiographies more as a chore rather than an opportunity; therefore, the written responses were somewhat formal and lacking in luster compared to their interviews.

Artifacts, Documents, and Online Sources

Whenever possible, additional data were gathered in the form of participant documents, artifacts, public records, and other online sources. Documents and artifacts provide an "objective source of data", according to Merriam (1998), who also noted that "one of the greatest advantages in using documentary material is its stability. Unlike interviewing and observation, the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied" (p. 126). Documents and artifacts collected from the participants in this study included chorus and theater programs, artwork, performance recordings, photographs, and award certificates. The recordings and artwork, in particular, provided me with a rich supply of evidence with which to triangulate data as well as to witness the participants' personal artistry. As Stake (1995) explained, "often, documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly" (p. 68). Participants emailed me links to their recordings and I took pictures of their artifacts which I then added to the study's data archives.

Community websites as well as YouTube recordings of the participants' role models were other sources of data that I found helpful. YouTube recordings of the participants' role models allowed me to vicariously experience the dynamic influence that these celebrities had on their young fans, as well as to better understand how the participants' identities were shaped by these models. School and town websites provided me with demographics as well as an online view of each locale. The school and town websites presented an interesting aspect in this study with which to triangulate data and draw comparisons. I noted several inconsistencies between the public image presented on

the websites and the participants' lived experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves uncovering meanings through a detailed inspection and thoughtful interpretation of data (Stake, 1995). In this study, I employed a two-pronged approach to data analysis. First, I analyzed the data to expose the participants' individual stories, highlight critical turning points, and create thick, rich narrative portraits (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was followed by a comparative narrative analysis using methods borrowed from cross-case analysis. The data was triangulated from several sources which helped increase validity and added to a broader narrative. The process of analysis included sorting and coding the data to organize the stories and uncover themes. I used codes which aligned with the research questions, in particular, those which illuminated behaviors that constrained or enabled the participants' gender identity. I coded in three cycles using notecards as well as the highlight and underlining features found in Microsoft word to color-code the data.

In the first cycle of coding, I began by re-reading and underlining pertinent data from the transcripts as suggested by Stake (2006), looking for connections to the research questions as well as information about each participant's unique context and perspective. I then color coded and sorted the data holistically into categories according to Connell's (1987) three gender regimes of family, school, and community, which I used to organize the narrative portraits. I used descriptive coding as suggested by Saldaña (2013) for this process (p. 87). The purpose of descriptive coding is to capture what was seen and heard in general and is appropriate for first cycle coding of qualitative works (Saldaña, 2013).

The categories that emerged from this first cycle included: “high school music,” “coming out and identity,” “school climate, “family,” “peers,” “role models,” and “voice and hormone therapy (HT).” Additional categories were added that were specific to each portrait including: “theater,” “religion,” and “special needs.”

Next, I read and re-read the data as I searched for themes and trends within each participant’s narrative. I performed a second round of coding using a mixture of descriptive codes and in vivo codes from which several themes emerged. In vivo codes are particularly important for studies that wish to honor participants’ voices (Saldaña, 2013). The in vivo coding process helped me understand each participant’s unique circumstances by capturing areas of conflict as well as areas of affirmation in their own words. I used the themes from the second round of coding to complete the narrative portraits.

I employed a final round of coding to facilitate a comparative narrative analysis which I borrowed from cross-case method. In cross-case method, the purpose of analysis is to understand the overall concept of study by confirming and reinforcing the most important findings of each case and forming new meanings (Stake, 2006). In this study, the overall concept was “queering the classroom.” The comparative narrative analysis helped reinforce ways that the participants felt enabled by their music experiences as well as illuminate areas of concern.

For the final round of coding, I applied an eclectic mix of emotion, value, attitude, and beliefs coding (Saldaña, 2013) to highlight the most important findings, from which several common themes and sub-themes emerged. I then arranged the themes into

categories for the final report. The categories included “supportive people”, “singing alone and with others”, “negotiating traditions”, “meaningful performance experiences”, “safe spaces, safe people”, “role of media”, “personal agency”, and “role of music teacher.” Table 3.1 illustrates an example of the coding process.

Table 3.1. Example of Coding Methodology

Data	**First and Second Coding**	**Third Coding**
Verbatim	Holistic, descriptive, in vivo	Emotion, values, attitudes, beliefs
In high school, drama club. I also did Shakespeare club. [1]I was never a very popular but I was there and I um...so, I did the musical.	Peers – “never popular”	[1]E. Feeling unpopular
[2]The kids in drama club are all very much their own clique and	Peers – “clique”	[2]E. Feeling excluded
[3]they didn’t like me very much so	Peers – “didn’t like me very much”	[3]E. Feeling un-liked
[4]I feel like most of my more positive theater experiences especially with Shakespeare came from	Theater – Shakespeare	[4]V. Shakespeare is positive
[5]outside of high school. I think for musical theater I was, I think just	Theater –community theater	[5]V. Community theater is positive
[6]in regards to gender, there were more and less positive experiences with that.	Theater – masculine roles	[6]E. Validation of masculinity
[7]Like, I remember basically being kind of tempted to just drop musical theater all together and just focus solely on Shakespeare just because I was frustrated with my skills as a vocalist.	Voice and HT – “I was frustrated with my skills as a vocalist”	[7]E. Feeling vocally frustrated
[8]I think it was something that I wanted to focus more on when I could do something to physically to lower the pitch of my voice	Voice and HT –singing in lower range	[8]E. Wishing to lower pitch range

and kind of sing the parts that I wanted to because [9]being in musical theater you're very limited by like the physical, like, the sound quality of your voice and	Theater – casting constraints	[9]B. Musical theater is vocally limiting
[10]I think there's more you can do to correct that speaking, then singing with pitch.	Voice and HT – physical limitations	[10]B. Singing is more limiting than speaking
[11]So, I actually kind of like aggressively force myself to learn how to belt	Voice and HT – teaching self	[11]A. Independence
[12]so I could take some of the more masculine parts	Voice and HT – singing in lower range	[12]B. Belting helps masculine presentation
[13]and it did work to give myself that credit.	Voice and HT – affirming self	[13]A. Self-determination [14]E. Feeling proud

Data Analysis Summary

The analysis of Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's high school music lives through the lens of performativity required a thoughtful interpretation of the many nuances exchanged through words and actions. Since people experience performativity on a continual basis, it would be nearly impossible to capture every act in its entirety. My intention with the analysis in this study, therefore, was not to be comprehensive, but to highlight areas that were most important to Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's gender identity and music making from which educators can make meaning. Ultimately, as Stake (1995) noted, "the quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or the reader, are valued" (p. 135). The portraits of Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's individual experiences included many quotes which honored their unique voices and enlivened their individual narratives,

which can be found in Chapter Four. A comparative narrative analysis of the prominent themes follows in Chapter Five.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness is an important part of all research. Characterizing a report as "trustworthy" means that every effort has been made to conduct research in a reliable and ethical manner and that all results are valid (Merriam, 1998). Trustworthiness can be difficult to fully establish in qualitative studies, however, because the dynamic nature of sociological inquiry makes validity and reliability an imprecise matter (Glesne, 2011). Trustworthiness, therefore, is less of an achievement and more of an objective in qualitative work. For this reason, Barrett & Stauffer (2012) recommend "responsible" work to achieve trustworthiness, (p. 9). They stated:

> In qualitative research and particularly in narrative, trustworthiness is not a framework for "truth tests"; rather, trustworthiness emphasizes the need for "responsibility" (both *to* and *for*) in our conduct and our relationships with others in every phase of the research process, from planning, through implementation, to publication, and beyond. (p. 10).

In this study, I worked to maintain responsibility and achieve trustworthiness through the careful documentation of methods and procedures as well as through a thorough explanation of the theoretical framework and the findings. I also worked to maintain my responsibility to the participants and their stories by creating narrative portraits that were as authentic as possible and sharing their words verbatim as well as through triangulation of data and member checks.

Member checks

Member checks helped the participants verify my observations and interpretations and give feedback. Following each interview, the participants were sent a copy of the transcripts via email for review and invited to respond with any corrections or comments. Additionally, I emailed follow-up questions regarding any statements that needed clarification. Corrections were then made in the transcripts as well as listed in a separate document. Drafts of the narrative portraits were also sent to each participant with an invitation to edit, although none of the participants responded with any edits.

Triangulation of data

Triangulation helps corroborate what was said by the participants by verifying the information with other sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to the interview transcripts, I gathered data from the autobiographical questionnaires, participant artifacts, researcher field notes, community websites, and YouTube recordings to facilitate triangulation. Examining multiple sources allowed me to view the participants' experiences from multiple perspectives as well as uncover new information. In addition to the procedures outlined above, I worked to maintain an open and trusting relationship with all the participants. By developing a strong relationship and good rapport with the participants, the conversations flowed easily and their thoughts were honest and uninhibited, which helped me grasp the full essence of their meaning.

Researcher diary

A final source of data was my researcher diary. Throughout the study, I regularly engaged in written self-reflection in the form of a researcher diary which allowed me to

reflect deeply on the people, processes, and meanings inferred throughout the study. Poirier (2014) used a similar reflexive strategy to balance personal feelings with data analysis in his study of GSAs. He stated:

> This passion may have also inclined me to interpret data in a particular way based on my predispositions. To help address this, I wrote short narratives during data collection and analyses to reflect on my observations, interpretations, and general thinking. (p. 80)

The researcher diary helped me keep track of my thought processes related to this project as well as identify internal feelings of conflict or concern.

Generalizability

While the findings from narrative inquiry are usually not considered generalizable to a larger population due to their small sample size, studies can be enhanced by narratives which feature detailed descriptions from which readers can make "natural generalizations" and draw meaning (Stake, 1995). This study featured detailed descriptions of music students' lives in high school as told through the stories and perceptions of trans young adults. The natural generalizations drawn from this study may help enlighten educators and lead to more supportive music practices.

Ethics and Protocol

Although good ethics and protocol are an essential part of all research, they are especially important when working with underrepresented populations. Trans youth comprise one of our most vulnerable student populations (Jones, 2016; Miller, 2013). The amount of violence and harassment towards trans youth compared to other students is

well documented (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Darwich et al., 2012; Herman et al., 2015; Kosciw et al., 2017; Mayo 2014; McGuire et al., 2010). Aware of these sobering statistics, I made every effort to protect and preserve the anonymity of the participants throughout this study and beyond. The procedures described in the following paragraphs were followed in order to ensure the safety and privacy of all participants.

Prior to the commencement of the study, the procedures, ethics, and protocol were reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of Boston University. All participants were given a copy of the IRB approval as well as a description of the study before they were asked to sign a consent form. The consent form also included permission to record the interviews and an option to leave the study at any time.

Interview places were not revealed in the study. At the end of the interview process, all participant identifiers were removed from the final report and replaced with non-identifying codes and pseudonyms. The participants chose their own pseudonyms. Pseudonyms and codes for other people and places connected with this study were chosen by me. A code key containing participant identifiers was kept in a separate location and double locked. The consent forms and all study data were kept confidential and double locked for the duration of the study. All data and codes will be kept double locked for a period of seven years, as per institutional requirements, after which time they will be destroyed.

As an added precaution, I enlisted the help of two trans colleagues to review survey materials as well as the language used throughout the report. Their guidance was particularly helpful in navigating the many terms and acronyms in use with regard to

gender and gender identity. They also shared valuable personal insights about their own experiences which helped expand my thinking.

In addition to the protocols outlined above, an unexpected privacy issue presented itself regarding websites and YouTube recordings. While I would have liked to include actual quotes from the participants' school websites regarding policies and beliefs, I felt that this might jeopardize participant safety and anonymity because all of the statements are public and easily accessible through an Internet search. Similarly, I did not include titles of musical works that the participants so vividly described because program listings and recordings of these performances were also available on the Internet. As a result, I reported on the participants' school policies and music performances in a general manner, without revealing any titles or quotes that might jeopardize their privacy.

Researcher Positionality

Examination of researcher positionality is an integral part of ethical qualitative research (Arzubiaga et al., 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Patton, 2002). As Hesse-Biber (2014) stated, "like the researched or participant, the researcher is a product of his or her society's social structures and institutions. Our beliefs, backgrounds, and feelings are part of the process of knowledge construction" (p. 200). Understanding our beliefs and feelings, then, helps uncover biases which shape the research process.

In my capacity as a music educator and private voice instructor, I have had the opportunity to work with several trans youth musicians. Their experiences of struggle, joy, and resilience have both fueled my interest in creating more gender-inclusive spaces and provided the inspiration for this study. I recognize that inspiration does not replace

understanding, however, and that my position as an outsider is laden with biases which I address below.

As an outsider to the LGBTQ+ community, conducting research that was ethical and sensitive to the dynamics of my relationship with the participants was of great concern to me. While I consider myself a strong ally of the LGBTQ+ community, I understand that being an ally is no substitute for peoples' lived experiences. Additionally, I am well aware of the negative feelings associated with research conducted by people outside of the LGBTQ+ community and mindful of my primary responsibility to "do no harm." Because of these concerns, I constantly grappled with my positionality as a white, heterosexual, cisgender researcher and my desire to avoid any misunderstandings or misinterpretations (Arzubiaga et al., 2008). Like other cis-researchers working with trans individuals, I worried about "what I was doing and how I did it" (Nichols, 2016). Above all else, I wished to honor Emily, Connor, and Evan, both in person as well as on paper, by listening openly and highlighting their truths as accurately as possible. For this reason, I used many direct quotes and engaged in frequent member checks. Allowing participant voices to take priority is a vital component of ethical research (Kruse, 2016; Palkki, 2016). By emphasizing Connor's, Emily's, and Evan's individual voices in this study, I aimed to honor and value their perspectives as well as increase reader understanding.

I also consciously sought ways to become more aware of my own personal biases and privileged beliefs, as well as those present in my surroundings, through observation and reflexive writing. Reflexivity is a technique that researchers use "to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's

own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (Patton, 2002, p. 65). Throughout the research process, I maintained a researcher diary which I used to reflect on my relationships with the people, theories, methods, and ideas connected to this study. I assessed my own experiences as a teacher, a researcher, and a gendered being, and reflected on ways that privilege afforded me freedoms that were unavailable to Emily, Connor, and Evan. This process deepened my understanding as well as heightened my appreciation for inclusive spaces where Evan, Connor, and Emily could relax and be themselves. Excerpts from the researcher diary provide examples of this process:

> The constant coming out, the constant self-advocacy Evan, Connor, and Emily go through on a daily basis is exhausting. Always vigilant. Always aware. They choose places and people carefully and purposefully. They correct pronouns. They reintroduce. They repeat. . . . I am conscious of being able to retreat back to a place of privilege after our meetings. I am hyper-aware of this juxtaposition as I window shop down a sunny, unfamiliar street. Relaxed. Unguarded. Not really thinking about myself at all. (Researcher diary, July 18, 2018)

I also informally observed my own teaching and assessed my own efforts to queer the classroom:

> A student comes into the classroom looking radiantly happy. I greet her with a cheery hello at the door and tell her how pretty she looks as she walks in. Darn it! Must stop telling students they look "pretty"! Heteronormativity-1 Queering the classroom-0. (Researcher diary, May 20, 2018)

The researcher diary helped me identify biases and gaps in my knowledge as well as deconstruct sources of inner conflict associated with my researcher fears and insecurities:

> Thank goodness for my trans friends that see the world as a spectrum all the time when I forget. They are the eyes and ears for things we are missing and the spaces and the opportunities that we are not seeing. And they can hold the mirror up to our ugly, ignorant insides as well as to our goodness. Lucky to have their patient friendship. (Researcher diary, October 9, 2018)

While reflexive writing provided the opportunity for me to express my thoughts, I understood this to be a tool and not a replacement for good, ethical research. Skeggs (2002) cautioned against relying too heavily on confessions of positionality to give research credibility, because reflexivity alone does not give researchers authorization to tell other peoples' stories. As Skeggs stated, "it is the tendency to think that the problems of power, privilege and perspective can be dissolved by inserting one's self into the account and proclaiming that reflexivity has occurred in practice" (p. 312). Instead, according to Skeggs, researchers must continually pay attention to "practice, power, and process" throughout the course of study (p. 320), because telling other peoples' stories is a form of power and privilege that requires great sensitivity and care (p. 310). Throughout this research, I worked to maintain a humble position by being mindful of my outsider researcher biases, by being sensitive to the participants' stories and honoring their voices, and by remaining open to new ideas and new ways of understanding.

Embarking on this research journey has been a slow and intimidating process. Were it not for these three inspirational participants who wished to be heard, I may have

given up long ago, deeming myself unworthy of the task. Encouraged by Connor's, Evan's, and Emily's stories of personal empowerment and resilience, however, I committed to sharing their messages as we looked for clues about gender inclusivity together. I enjoyed talking with Emily, Evan, and Connor. We related easily to each other in our discussions of music and singing, and the conversations flowed freely. Most importantly, I was interested in *them* and what they had to say. As Patton (2002) instructed:

> You must yourself believe that the thoughts and experiences of the people being interviewed are worth knowing. In short, you must have the utmost respect for these persons who are willing to share with you some of their time to help you understand their world. (p. 417)

My respect for Connor, Emily, and Evan guided my sense of responsibility as I constructed the final report. Though I felt the weight of my outsider status and the pressures of being a new researcher, I understood the importance of sharing positive stories about trans individuals' lives. As Mock (2014) stated, "we need stories of hope and possibility, stories that reflect the reality of our lived experiences" (p. xvii). It is my hope that the information gleaned from Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's experiences will help educators understand the value of queering the classroom, as well as provide insight on ways they can create more positive and inclusive spaces for all gendered students.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology applied in this study to address the research questions. Specifically, I utilized a narrative inquiry design to

capture the experiences and perspectives of three trans young adults as we explored ways that gender and music intersected during their high school years. I then examined their experiences through the lens of queer theory and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to understand the beliefs and behaviors that shaped the participants' well-being and music making in high school. The overview of methodology featured a discussion of the research design, the participants, the data collection and analysis procedures, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and researcher positionality. A narrative portrait of the three individual participants follows in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: Stories of Life, Music, and Coming Out

In this study, I examined the experiences of three high school graduates through the lenses of queer theory and performativity with the intention of uncovering ways that gender identity was enacted and reinforced through people, practice, policies, and music. My examination reached beyond performativity in the music classroom to additional contexts where gender and power are constructed, namely, the family, school, and community. In this way, I worked to capture a more comprehensive view of the participants' lives, as well as a clearer understanding of the many performative forces that shape students' music making and listening. When I shared the title for this project with each of the participants in this study, they beamed and nodded in approval. "I like it," Evan stated (Evan field notes, June 26, 2018). "Nice," Emily responded (Emily field notes, July 18, 2018). For the participants in this study, queering their high school classrooms was life affirming and a necessary part of creating a safe and respectful space where they could grow and fully participate in music.

The following chapter presents a narrative portrait of each of the three participants: Evan, Emily, and Connor. As stated earlier, all names, places, and titles have been replaced with pseudonyms. I begin each portrait with a brief introduction based on my initial encounter with each participant.

Evan, age 18 (they/them/theirs)

"Look confident until I am confident"

Evan, Age 18 (Pronouns: them/them/theirs)

Hometown: Smalltown (rural)

Family: Mother, father, younger brother Thomas

High school: Wilkshire Smith School (private)

High school music experiences: Chorus three years, drama/musical four years, musicianship one semester, Out and About community youth theater two years

High school music/drama teacher: Miss Taylor

Instruments/voice: soprano/alto/tenor voice, piano

Other interests: Visual art, theater

I met Evan one week after they graduated from high school. We met at a busy public library (Evan's request) and found a quiet corner in the geography section to talk. They greeted me with a humble smile as we shook hands upon arrival, and then moved smoothly to their seat. As we sat down to talk, Evan immediately stuck me as mature, well mannered, and honest. Their posture remained tall and open throughout our conversation and they responded to questions thoughtfully and calmly, though somewhat dutifully, at first. They were dressed neutrally in jeans and a T-shirt and their face was open and welcoming beneath a short haircut. There was an intensity in their eyes, however, which showed seriousness and let me know that this was more than just an opportunity for them to tell their story; they had a message they wanted to share (Evan field notes, June 7, 2018).

We began our meeting by reviewing the study and signing consent forms after which Evan thanked me for being so thorough and clear. Transparency and honesty were important to Evan and would come up often in our conversations. When people are honest and forthright, Evan indicated that it made them feel safe (Evan interview, June

26, 2018). They spoke softly and directly as we went over some basic demographic information from the initial participant survey. I noted to myself that Evan's voice was high pitched and somewhat demure, at times. This was a source of great angst for Evan, as we later discussed. At other times, however, such as when they were talking about their artistic experiences, Evan's voice was lower, clearer, and more confident (Evan field notes, June 26, 2018).

Evan smiled easily and focused intently on our conversations. As we got comfortable with one another, Evan spoke more freely and their penchant for fun and silliness shone through. "For one of our GSA meetings…we had an LGBT sandwich making party because we think we're hilarious," Evan shared (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). They often quoted people in their stories to make a point, which was entertaining for both of us and gave me a glimpse of their love for theater. It was obvious that Evan was excited to be done with high school from the way that they beamed and sighed when they said the word "graduated" (Evan field notes, June 7, 2018). Later, I would come to understand that this reaction was just as much an expression of relief as it was excitement. It was relief not only from the rigors of schoolwork, but also from the constant negotiation of queer identity in their small community.

Family

Evan was born in an urban area near New York City where they lived with their mother, father, and younger brother until they were five years old. Evan's father works as a writer, actor, and director. "He does mostly "straight theater'…and was a little bit snobby about it," Evan explained, "He, only recently, began not hating musicals, 'they're

cheesy, they're not fun, and they're not real theater,' he says" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Evan's father exuded the confidence that Evan worked to create for themselves onstage and off. "He's so clearly a theater guy just in the way that he moves through life," Evan described, "He's, like, incredibly confident and he has a very strong presence" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Although Evan's father sang in a few musicals, he does not consider himself a musician and does not read music.

In addition to acting, Evan's father is a writer and social activist. He has written and directed short films for the occupy movement among other causes and, most recently, has begun learning about trans rights and LGBTQ+ advocacy. His efforts backfired, however, when he inadvertently outed Evan online without permission, causing Evan to retort "Don't use me! You can't do that!" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). However, Evan appreciated their father's thoughtful and introspective side, and felt comfortable talking with their dad about deep, personal issues. As Evan explained, "He's a good listener and he knows when he has nothing to add. Like, sometimes he'll say things, but he's good at acknowledging that he has nothing, like, he has no room to speak about those things" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

Evan's mother is a visual artist and an art teacher with a practical, "handy" side. "She goes out and builds a deck 'cause she's very handy," Evan proudly described, "Sometimes, I'll walk into the house and I'll be, like, 'where did that piece of furniture come from?' And she'll say 'I just built it!' Yeah, that's cool," (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Although Evan felt comfortable talking with their mother about issues, the conversations were more factual. "She is very in touch with her emotions," Evan stated,

“[but]she is not as great with her words like, say, my dad is. She’s not, like, ‘warm and fuzzy’” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

Music and art were always an important part of Evan’s family life, even if Evan’s parents were not so much music makers as they were music appreciators. There was a lot of listening to music and talking about music, Evan recalled. Evan’s father took the musical lead. “He liked a lot of weird stuff that he really cared about,” Evan remembered, “my mom picked some songs…but my dad definitely had a lot more opinions” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

Evan took piano and guitar lessons for a few years in grade school before settling on voice as their main instrument. Evan’s parents supported Evan’s musical endeavors by attending performances and letting Evan explore and try new instruments without putting pressure on them:

> Whenever I would be interested in an instrument or learning guitar or piano or something, they’d be, like, ‘oh let's see what we can do to get you lessons…or rent you an oboe…’ but there was no pressure if I found that I wanted to do something else…They were, like, ‘just explore and do what you want to do’ which was nice, and how I landed in chorus. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

The family owned an upright piano and both Evan and their younger brother, Thomas, took piano lessons for a brief period of time. Evan described having a good relationship with Thomas, and was proud of his music skills. Evan boasted:

> He is much better than I… just the way he plays piano is amazing. He started two years ago and [now] he’s playing these complex classical pieces that he’s just

> sitting down and reading and teaching himself. Everything he performs is memorized. He doesn't use sheet music and it's just, like, this eight-page concert piece that he's just learned. And I'm, like, 'you just learned that last week!' (Evan interview, June 7, 2018)

Evan explained how the two worked together on an original piano score for Evan's senior project:

> I don't know if he ever actually wrote anything down because he is mostly self-taught. He just sat at the piano and I was, like, 'something like this?' And he was, like, 'this?' And I was, like, 'more like this.' And we just worked on it like that. (Evan interview, June 7, 2018)

Evan noted that their relationship with Thomas had improved a lot over that past two years which seemed to correlate with their shared interested in music.

Evan's family influence was evident not only in their shared interest of theater, music, and visual art, but also in the way Evan's parents displayed atypical gender roles. Evan admired their parents' contrasting strengths which challenged traditional stereotypes and provided Evan with a model of diverse options for the future. Additionally, Evan witnessed their father's participation in social activist work— laying foundations for their own activist work to come.

Identity and coming out to family. Evan began expressing their gender at a very young age. "If I had the language, I probably would have understood when I was, like, 6," Evan recalled. They described feeling angry when people referred to them as a girl:

> E. I had really short hair as I kid and I would get really mad if someone were to ask me if I was a boy or girl. And I didn't have like an answer and I would usually fall back onto 'well I'm a girl 'cause that's what my mom said,' but I was always mad about it.
>
> L: You were mad that somebody asked?
>
> E: Yeah. Like, when I was younger…my friend's mom's would say, like, 'Ladies, come over here,' and I would get so mad. I'd be, like, 'I'm not a lady!' (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan came out as bi when they were 13 and as non-binary when they were 15. Like many people, Evan began learning about themselves, initially, through the Internet. "I probably started really thinking about it and understanding it as being 'non-binary' when I was 14 or 15," Evan recalled, "I came across this article about this genderfluid person and I was, like, 'this is so cool'" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan described their family as supportive of their bisexual non-binary identity, but admitted that "they've struggled a bit" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018).

When Evan came out as bi, their parents were surprised. "Which I was surprised at because I didn't think I was subtle", Evan stated. They described the conversation with a self-deprecating laugh:

> I was, like, 'Look at me!' because I wore, like, the same tie-dye sweater and my hair was terrible. I look at myself and I think 'that's the gayest kid I've ever seen,' How could you not know?' I looked like *that*. I was like *that* [laughs]. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Admittedly, Evan said they would have been equally surprised if their parents said they knew all along, but it was just “weird” that they didn’t seem to have a clue (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Later, when Evan came out as non-binary, they felt ignored by their parents:

> It was like nothing happened and nothing changed. My pronouns were not respected and I was still called a girl all the time. And then I hit a point where I was mad. And they were, like, ‘Oh, right.’ And then we had another conversation and it started to get better. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Although Evan’s parents struggle with the concept of non-binary and Evan’s mom still mis-genders them a lot, Evan empathizes with their parents: “It’s clear that she’s trying…There’s care and there’s want to do better. It’s just a matter of getting there” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

More recently, Evan has taken steps to publicly change their name by enrolling in college with their new name and investigating the required legal documentation and procedures. Adopting a new name can be a life-affirming as well as challenging experience (Hawkins, 2009). Evan described feeling conflicted and worried about their new name:

> I have a complicated relationship with my name— wanting to change it and then not changing it, and then wanting to change it and then not changing it. ‘Cause I was always like, people are going to say, ‘Oh, why are you changing your name at all? Your birth name is gender neutral, it’s a fine name. You don’t even look like’…and, I like it as a name, I just don’t like it as *my* name…There are only a

> couple of people who I actually talk to about it. I talked to my college about it. Cause I'm, like, 'Listen, if I'm gonna start over, I'm gonna start over'… But then I also just get caught up in worrying about 'What if I'm wrong about it?' or, 'What if I didn't choose right?' Even though I've been holding on to [Evan] for years, and have been using it in other social circles and used it outside of school, and used it outside of my town and used it at college. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Although Evan is 18 and is legally allowed to change their own name, they wished to do so with their family's approval. Evan had been using their chosen name privately for almost two years. However, at the time of this writing, only Evan's close friends and I were made aware of it. They had not told their parents yet because they were worried about hurting them:

> My birth name and my middle name are family names. Like, I'm named after relatives and people in the family and I'm not choosing another family name to replace it. And, I don't know, I don't want people to feel like I'm taking something away from them or that I don't care about people. It's just that, I don't like the names that people have. I don't want them. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan said that they tried to "test the waters" with their parents by bringing up a desire to change their middle name. The conversation "didn't go well," explained Evan with slight annoyance; however, they seemed to empathize with their parents:

> Talking about not liking my name has not gone great. And I think that's probably because framing it as not liking my name feels like an attack in some ways. Like, 'Oh, we chose this name, and now you don't like it.' (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan felt pressure to fully disclose their new name to others because they would be leaving for college and starting gender affirming hormone therapy (HT) soon. They stated:

> And now, I've got a little bit of a count-down calendar…because I have an appointment to see what starting 'T' [testosterone] is going to be like for me and, if it can be [started] in a couple of weeks. So, if I do that, I *have* to tell people, I feel like. Like, I *have* to. Because things will change. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

For Evan, changing their name was critical step towards claiming their non-binary, trans masculine identity. Worries about their parents' reaction, however, prevented Evan from making official changes and sharing their name publicly until after high school. They also empathized with their parents' attachment to their birth name, which added feelings of guilt to the stressful situation.

Evan also worried about coming out to their extended family. Most of Evan's extended family lives in New York City where Evan's love for music and musical theater was nurtured by their maternal grandmother. She encouraged Evan's artistic interests by taking the family to museums and performances when they visited, as well as by mailing soundtracks and programs:

> She is just interesting. She really, really loves musicals, like a lot. She collects playbills from everything she's ever seen. She has a box of them and, every once in a while, she's like 'I found this soundtrack do you want it?' And, then, she mails me these CDs. It's very cute. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan's maternal grandmother recently confronted Evan about their identity. Her forthright questions shocked Evan at the time, but seemed to ease Evan's coming out by encouraging open communication:

> My grandmother basically backed me into a corner and straight up asked me if I was gay. I was like 'oh, there's so many conversations to be had around all this, um…' We were in a restaurant. We were in public, and there was, like, nowhere to go! [Evan laughed] I was, like, 'does this need to happen right *now*? does this need to happen *ever*?' (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

The conversation became awkward, however, when Evan used the word "queer" to describe their identity:

> I came out to her as queer 'cause that's the word I use most now. But, because of the history of the word she, like, visibly, physically reacted and flinched and was, like, 'why would you call yourself that?!' So, I tried to explain… She's better about it now than I thought she would be. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan's grandmother continues to be supportive by asking questions and sharing positive anecdotes, which Evan appreciates:

> My grandmother is very sweet…one day, like a month later, she just blurts out, 'You know, papa used to work for the human rights campaign.' And then, like,

> dropped it [Evan laughs]. She's trying very hard [to connect] and it's adorable. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

By contrast, Evan described their relationship with their paternal grandparents, who also live in New York City, as somewhat guarded and uncommunicative. This caused Evan to worry about possible "hidden beliefs" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan's worries were somewhat confirmed because after Evan came out to their paternal grandmother, she said nothing, leaving Evan to wonder how their grandmother really feels:

> She could tell I was upset and I'm, like, 'this is the context of why I'm upset.' And she has not mentioned it once since. Not because she has a problem with it—although maybe [she does] because she is incredibly catholic—but more just because she has this thing that she is just incredibly respectful of people's boundaries and what's hers to share and what's not hers to share. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan chose not to come out to their paternal grandfather, an equally quiet and traditional man, based on the people he associates with and their behavior:

> I haven't heard him talk about a lot of things. He makes me nervous 'cause he's a union guy, and I know I shouldn't make assumptions about people based on that, but, like, the way the people he works with behave are very similar to him and I worry that that reflects on him. And I don't know that it doesn't. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Silence can be as powerful as words (Sedgwick (1990/2008). In Evan's case, silence from extended family members brought on stress which affected how they came out to people and, in their paternal grandfather's case, prevented them from coming out at all. Additionally, Evan's assumptions about their grandfather's beliefs, based on his union association, presented an interesting irony considering their own heightened awareness of bias. Evan's comments are a reminder that openly modeling inclusive behavior is equally as important as ideology when it comes to creating safe and affirming spaces.

Childhood Experiences

Evan's parents moved out of the city and settled in the rural area of Smalltown when Evan was 5. Evan's mother took a job as an art teacher in the Wilkshire Smith High School while Evan and their brother attended public elementary school. The population of Smalltown is approximately 11,000 residents with the majority identifying as white, English speaking, and middle class; among the population, 64% reports having earned a Bachelor's degree or higher and only 4% reports living in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2018). The Smalltown public school system is part of a larger, regional district that consists of three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school (Wilkshire Smith website). There are three private high schools in the area including the Wilkshire Smith School which serves both boarding and day students (Smalltown website).

Evan described the stress of fitting into their new town as a child and viewed this move as a catalyst for later anxiety issues surrounding their voice and singing. "My complicated relationship with my voice started when I was really young," they stated

(Evan autobiography). Although school was easy for Evan, their initial lack of literacy made them self-conscious for the first time. “I was the only kid in my class who couldn’t already read,” they added [Evan autobiography]. They developed anxiety and became self-critical of their voice: “I really didn’t like how my voice sounded… I had just enough awareness to hear myself and be, like, ‘I don’t like how that sounds’” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). As a result, Evan admitted to “drawing into themselves” and not singing at all. “I got really quiet,” Evan explained, “And because I was quiet, I liked everything else to be quiet” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan also attributed the anxiety they felt as a child to their internal struggles with feeling “different” (Evan autobiography). Feeling different is a common theme in the literature (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Hawkins, 2009), and many gender-variant children report experiencing anxiety and depression as a result of feeling “uncomfortable in their body” (Edwards-Leeper and Spack, 2012, p. 327). Evan described the local art gallery as a place where they could open up and be themselves, while trying to understand what made them feel different from others:

> One of the most important parts of my childhood was the art classes I started taking in third grade in the art gallery across the street. It was the only place I felt comfortable being loud for years, which got harder when I started trying to place a finger on what made me different… From the time I was 8 until I was 13 it was the center of my life and the only thing I really counted on and looked forward to. I don’t take a class there anymore, but the gallery is still an incredibly important space for me and I’m there nearly weekly. [Evan autobiography]

Evan credited elementary school friends for their eventual return to music after a quiet childhood. In fourth grade, when recorders were introduced in music class, Evan made fun of the recorders at first, but then was inspired by friends who played the instruments well and enjoyed the challenge. The next year, they followed their friends and joined the school chorus.

Middle school. Evan described their public middle school experience as a mixture of stress and newfound allegiance to music. “Public school was super unhealthy for me,” Evan explained, “The school was big and noisy. I have issues with processing sound, and it would just shut me down. I wouldn’t have anything left in me to just function” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). The school also had high academic expectations:

> There was a lot of pressure to do really well on tests, and I’m a good test taker, but it just got to be so toxic there for me to be there. I would come home and just stay in my room and just lay down with the lights off because I needed to decompress. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Despite the noise and academic stress of middle school, however, Evan’s relationship with their teachers was positive and contributed to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth. “I was a bit of a teacher’s pet,” they admitted, “so, when everyone was being rude or goofing off, I just said ‘no, no’” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

Evan’s middle school had one volunteer chorus for each grade from sixth to eighth. Evan liked singing in middle school chorus and enjoyed the mix of pop songs and show tunes. Seventh grade chorus was Evan’s first exposure to musical theater and led to

what Evan described as their “hard core *Les Mis* phase” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). “‘Eponine’ was probably the last woman I desperately wanted to play on stage,” Evan stated [Evan autobiography].

Evan liked their middle school chorus teacher, Mr. Murphy, even though they felt that the chorus quality was mediocre and that the other students did not appreciate Mr. Murphy. Evan explained that Mr. Murphy made them feel safe by addressing difficult situations with honesty and directness. They recounted:

> He put up with so much and I really appreciated that he went beyond teaching to be really honest and frank with us. Like, with active shooter drills or anything else that we wanted to talk about. [After Sandy Hook], he was like the one teacher that said ‘Listen, if anything should ever happen, god forbid, you’re going to have to do whatever you have to do to just get away. So, like don’t wait for me to say something, just go.’ Which is scary to hear, but also probably what we needed to hear. And that was comforting at the time…because everyone else was floating around the subject and were not talking about it. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Although Mr. Murphy tried very hard to improve the level of the chorus, it seemed clear to Evan that the school did not have very high expectations of the chorus students. “The school made it clear that even if you failed the class, nothing was going to happen to you” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). This was made evident by the chorus class placement in the school schedule: during “enrichment time” rather than as a graded class. Lack of school support was also reflected in the way the administration often took chorus rehearsal time for other school needs such as standardized state testing or

assemblies. The school's apathetic attitude towards chorus eventually led to the students themselves to not really care about chorus either, according to Evan. Some students did homework for other classes during chorus class and even Evan admitted to finishing a Spanish project in chorus class one time. Mr. Murphy was not happy about this behavior, but he let it go. It seemed that Mr. Murphy had "given up just a little bit," Evan mused (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

When students showed an interest in chorus, however, Mr. Murphy "tried very hard," (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). He often let students meet in the chorus room and practice on their own for music solos and regional auditions, occasionally stopping in to help. "Once we showed we cared, he was more than willing to help," Evan explained (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Mr. Murphy's faith in the students' ability to conduct rehearsals by themselves in the chorus room, combined with a willingness to help, instilled a sense of trust and affection with Evan.

Mr. Murphy was the first person to suggest that Evan should be singing soprano, but he did not push it. "He knew I could [hit the notes]," Evan recalled, "but I was also not totally comfortable with [singing soprano] for reasons I didn't understand at the time, so he didn't push it, but he started putting the thought in my head" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). In seventh grade, Evan auditioned for a state regional junior chorus and was accepted as an alto. Evan described the experience as a turning point for themselves as a committed music student. It was the first time they got to sing with a group of people who really wanted to be there, and at a musical level that they had not experienced before. Evan said they found it very exciting to be so musically challenged. During the

rehearsals, Evan remembered thinking, “I really, really love doing this” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Evan’s experiences with Mr. Murphy and middle school chorus helped lay the foundations for their future interest in chorus and trust in their music teacher.

Wilkshire Smith High School

The Wilkshire Smith School is an older, established, co-educational, boarding school for Grades 9–12, with a long history of private education and legacy involvement (Wilkshire Smith website) Approximately half of the student population are boarders. The school website indicates a small diverse enrollment of under 500 students that herald from over 30 countries. Pictures on the website, however, reveal only a handful of people of color, and Evan commented that the number of “out” LGBTQ+ students was relatively small (Wilkshire Smith website). Statements about “trust,” “respect,” and “integrity” appear on multiple pages of the school website and a section devoted to “diversity,” “equity,” and “inclusion” encourages readers to celebrate the uniqueness of each individual student (Wilkshire Smith website). The online student handbook, though difficult to locate, includes anti-bullying, anti-harassment, and anti-bigotry policies that contain language explicitly protecting individuals based on gender, gender identity, and gender expression (Wilkshire Smith website).

Evan described most of their teachers at Wilkshire Smith as well-meaning but ill informed. While no one was blatantly homophobic or transphobic, the teachers would often ignore or forget Evan’s pronouns and gender. They did not take Evan’s identity seriously and, instead, treated it as a passing phase: “They didn’t think it was that important, I think,” Evan surmised, “Because they didn’t realize how important it was to

me. That it wasn't just some *thing* I was doing. That it wasn't just, like, something they could ignore (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

Some of Evan's teachers blatantly refused to acknowledge they/them pronouns even though Evan stated that they had had several conversations with them in the past:

> [My English teacher] just had all these posters up about grammar rules. And just moved right past it. On paper, in comments, she would use 'they/them' for me, but never out loud, never in front of people. And I wasn't closeted by this point, it was my senior year. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Although research indicates that many people express disapproval of non-binary identities by refusing to use correct pronouns (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011), it is unclear whether Evan's English teacher's refusal to use they/them pronouns was based on rigid ideas about English, or gender, or both. Either way, a change was needed in order for Evan to feel respected and included in the classroom.

Some teachers with good intentions would ask Evan "bizarre and rude" questions: "I had one teacher ask me why I didn't refer to myself as "we" instead of "I." I explained that the use of 'they/them' was singular. And that's not totally invasive, it's just a weird question" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Another well-meaning English teacher gave a class writing assignment right after Caitlyn Jenner came out, about whether or not the students thought Caitlyn Jenner was a "real" woman. "Which was horrifying," Evan explained, "it came from a 'I just want to talk about it' place and a 'I don't know what question to ask' place, but bad question. Not a question" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Other teachers missed basic etiquette rules by "outing" Evan to other teachers and

students without permission: "Some teachers outed me to other students early, before I was out to everybody" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

There were two gay non-music teachers in the school and one intern that Evan believed was trans-masculine. Evan wished they had been able to connect with the intern. "I really wish I had had more chances to interact with him because he seemed really cool," Evan stated, "But, because of the way my classes were scheduled...I just never saw him that much" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Evan's experiences with their teachers confirms the need for more teacher training, as supported in the literature (Palkki & Sauerland, 2018; Silveira & Goff, 2016). For, even though many of Evan's teachers were well-meaning, mistakes and misinformation led to Evan feeling of angry and hurt sometimes.

School climate. "I'm pretty removed from the school as a whole," Evan wrote in their initial autobiography [Evan autobiography]. After meeting Evan in person, however, and hearing about their theater experiences and friend group, they did not sound isolated at all, so I was anxious to understand what Evan meant. Evan described an aggressive athletic environment in school where it was not unusual to hear homophobic and transphobic comments in unsupervised spaces like hallways and lunch and locker rooms. "It wasn't uncommon, especially during my first two years, to hear the f-word or other homophobic comments in the hall or at lunch," Evan stated (Evan email, November 27, 2018). The hostile environment made them feel unsafe:

> I ate lunch in the basement and hung out with a small group of theater kids and didn't venture out of that too far because my school is very big on sports. Like,

> we're state champions in football and hockey and, like, all these other sports. The hockey team, especially, has a reputation for being pretty homophobic. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

For this reason, Evan sought spaces away from the general school population, like the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) and the music department, where they could feel safe and supported among like-minded peers.

GSA. Evan co-led the GSA at Wilkshire Smith for two years. Membership included both gay and straight cisgender students; Evan was the only trans student. Under Evan's leadership, the GSA met regularly to discuss a topic or to plan an event such as participation in the Day of Silence, a dinner dance, or a movie night.[10] Evan took their position as co-leader of the GSA seriously and patiently tried to educate people in the school about trans individuals and trans etiquette. "[People's questions] came from a place of wanting to learn and wanting to know more and, because I was the leader of the GSA, I was, like, 'well this is kind of my job to teach you this,'" Evan sighed (Evan interview, June 26, 2018).

Support for the school's GSA varied. While Evan felt that the faculty were supportive of the group, they did not feel that the students respected the GSA:

> We got support from the faculty but less from the student body. Not that it was a 'written negative' but we were either ignored or people were slightly rude to us. Not, like, 'oh we hate you because you are GSA,' but more like 'why are you doing that?' (Evan interview, June 7, 2018).

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[10] Day of Silence is a student-led national event held in April each year where individuals take a vow of silence to highlight the silencing and erasure of LGBTQ+ people (GLSEN, 2019b).

Evan also voiced a lack of support from the school's administration, which often scheduled all-school events during club meeting times. "I'd call it directly hostile to any student led activities," Evan stated, "there's no respect of that time as something that's for students" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). During Evan's sophomore year, Evan complained to the administration about the need for gender-neutral bathrooms and requested that they build one. Reaction from the school was minimal and Evan felt disrespected by their tacky solution:

> I was, like, 'Hey, there are kids here who need it.' And, then, this administrator I was speaking to—who, if she didn't know [me] at the time, she does now [laughs]— they were, like, 'Yeah, sure,' and then they put a paper sign over the faculty restroom and that was the gender-neutral bathroom. And I was, like, 'missed the point!' (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

To Evan's dismay, the GSA did not even support their request for a new gender-neutral bathroom:

> But, not even the rest of the GSA was on my side. They were, like, 'It's too much money to ask them to do some construction to make one of the bathrooms a whole single bathroom and put a sign on it.' And I was, like, 'It doesn't need to happen tomorrow, but it would be better to save for that, and this school can afford it. So, why not ask it of them?' (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan's experiences are a reminder that students need practical as well as philosophical support when building LGBTQ+ affirming spaces, and that there is a need for more trans education both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community.

By Evan’s senior year, membership in the GSA had shrunk to only three or four people. There had been a lot more people in the past, Evan said. When I asked Evan if they thought having a GSA was valuable even if only a few students participated, they answered, “yeah, it’s important that, even if it’s not what the community needs, or thinks that they need, or uses at this moment, holding that space so that it exists when someone wants it, *is* important” (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). The presence of a GSA is also important for LGBTQ+ visibility, Evan stated, and “just reminding people we exist” (Evan interview, June 7, 2018).

Evan shared that participation the annual Day of Silence had also dwindled in recent years but they did not understand why. They stated, “It's very strange, it’s just happened in the last two years that it’s like become this…It’s very weird…” (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). In one of our later conversations, however, when I asked if they ever discussed the election and changes to our national administration at GSA meetings, Evan seemed to suddenly recognize the connection, “That might actually be why things have changed, now that I think of it,” Evan realized (Evan interview, June 7, 2018).

Evan’s experiences in high school add evidence to reports that hostility towards trans individuals has increased in recent years (Kosciw et al., 2017). We discussed their GSA and changes in the Wilkshire Smith school climate over the past two years as Evan considered why people, particularly students, have become more openly hostile. “It [the political change] awakened people. Because, before people were super apathetic and just didn’t care, and then they started caring about things and it wasn’t all positive,” Evan stated (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan felt that people had almost been given

encouragement to share their homophobic and transphobic views:

> My school was split about 50/50. We had a few slightly horrifying people… I mean, we knew they were there, but they had no reason to talk about it at school. Now, they were [speaking out]. And I know I'm using sort of 'judgey' terms for people's beliefs, but when you're racist and homophobic and you make people feel unsafe, then that's bad,' [Evan explained and then added sarcastically] '*Sorry*.' (Evan interview, June 7, 2018)

It was in these role-played discussions, where Evan acted the parts of speaker and listener, that Evan's emotions really showed. I noted during this last conversation that Evan had grown angry with new understanding. The conversation shuts down and Evan turns away, "Well I'm gone at least. And other people have to deal with it," they say quietly (Evan field notes, June 7, 2018).

Performing arts department. The Wilkshire Smith School arts department includes a variety of classes and activities in music, drama, dance, and the visual arts (Wilkshire Smith website). Evan participated in the drama and visual arts all four years of high school and sang in the chorus for three years. Engagement with the arts in school not only gave Evan a means to express themselves, but also provided them with a relatively safe place to be that was away from the rest of the hostile school environment. Relationships with the students and teachers in the Wilkshire Smith School arts department were crucial to Evan's feelings of well-being and success.

Music friends and social circles played an important role in Evan's school life and came up often in our conversations. Relationships with peers helped connect them to

music and to their sense of self-esteem. Evan enjoyed small groups of friends from the theater and music departments, and the GSA. “I like having small groups of friends,” Evan chimed (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Most of their friends were straight and cisgender. “There were not a lot of “out” people at my school,” Evan mused, “A couple of queer kids— maybe, like, three— and, then, the rest of them were just, like, straight or super closeted” (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

Although a few of Evan’s friends took part in both chorus and theater, most of them were separate. Evan explained that they felt more comfortable with the students in chorus:

> Chorus was a lot nicer. Some people weren’t nice but, in chorus I was liked by people. I wasn’t, like, popular or I wasn’t loved. But I was liked and I had a decent social standing. And, in theater I didn’t have that. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan described problems with some of the musical theater people disliking some of their chorus friends. This created a stressful environment during the shows:

> Unlike the fall straight shows, the musical brings a really large range of people. It brings people who do theater all the time, it brings in people who just want to sing, it brings in people who do theater and were pressured into doing a musical, but have never sung before…, and then it brings in a few people, like me, who just always do everything and we’ve always been there and we’re just like, ‘hi.’ This creates a lot of tension in the department. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

I asked Evan why they stayed involved in the theater department, despite the animosity:

> I stayed in theater and chorus because I really love performing, and I had nowhere else to go. It was the main place that I made friends and interacted with people and, even though it wasn't always great, it was the best option and, at the very least, we all loved singing or acting. (Evan email, August 28, 2018)

When Evan came out during their sophomore year, support from friends at school was vital. Evan described coming out to their friends:

> E: They were pretty spectacular. Like, I don't think I've ever really truly like thanked them for how they handled things. I was a little bit rude about how I came out to them. I posted something on line and then they saw it. I thought 'this is fine, I just won't talk about it,' because I was I was so uncomfortable with myself… It was Trans Day of visibility and I wanted to participate, so I posted something on Tumbler and, like, there's three people in real life that follow me and, like, what are the chances that they will even see it? *All* of them saw it [Evan laughed] And I'd only talked to one of them!
>
> L. Why did you say you were rude?
>
> E. Because I didn't talk to them. I just posted something and I was like 'let's let you find out from a post rather than from me.' It's not that it was totally rude, it's just that I could have been more sensitive about it and spoken to them about it. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan's school friends offered support by thoughtfully anticipating questions and correcting others when necessary. They explained:

> They were so good, they were like ‘hey, like I saw this and I just wanted to check, your pronouns are ‘they/them?’ And I’m like ‘yeah’ [Evan smiled]…There were specific questions like ‘Do you want me to correctly gender you around my family?’ ‘Your family?’ ‘How do you want me to handle that?’ ‘Are you out to your family?’ They just took it and like ran with it…and I was like “thank God, thank God I have you people!” (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Evan worried most about losing the social subtleties of peer acceptance as a result of coming out. Like participants in Lewis’(2017) study, Evan considered keeping their identity hidden rather than risk any negativity:

> I was just afraid that things would change…cause’, there are a lot of ways that people show that they are OK with you. Like, I remember especially as a freshman, a lot of people would be, like, ‘Hey, girl,’ which is ‘cheesy,’ but it was a way that people showed that they liked you. And I was really afraid that, if I came out, that showing of acceptance would go away. And then people would just be awkward and uncomfortable around me. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Their fears were realized when conversations became stymied and people acted uncomfortable. Evan described the stress:

> It was hard to get people to just roll with it. It wasn’t easy to be just, like, ‘This is a thing now let’s move on.’ It was always [beat], the conversation would *stop*, which is expected, and I can’t expect people to know things that they have no way of knowing, but it was also stressful. So, I would avoid coming out to teachers and stuff until I was, like, ‘Well, I must, now.’ (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Similar to the silence received by their paternal grandparents, silence from their peers made Evan wonder if they were harboring transphobic beliefs:

> People are generally nice to your face. Like, obviously, sometimes there's some weirdness outside of the little group I cultivated…There would always be some sort of disconnect between me and everybody else. Which wasn't explicitly negative or that they didn't like me or that they had a problem with me. There was just either confusion or they were secretly transphobic and didn't tell me. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

When I asked how people expressed this "weirdness", Evan explained "most noticeably, a lot of kids would, after I came out, just pretend that nothing had happened. Like, really, intentionally avoid conversations about it." (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

In addition to awkwardness, disrespect for Evan's pronouns was a problem and a source of frustration. "There were some who tried really hard but were just remarkably bad at it." Evan expressed, "And, I get that it's not something that people think about, which is OK, but there were some people who just never got it. Over *years*" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). One student verbally harassed Evan after they came out and seemed to intentionally disregard their pronouns:

> I had this one kid who would pretend he hadn't heard it every single time someone would correct him on my pronouns. And, he would just move on and, like, never correct himself… And then he started more intentionally referring to me as a girl in really weird ways. Like, he would aggressively refer to me as female and treat me like I was 'small' and 'little," and 'petite' and 'fragile'…And

> he wouldn't have said these things before I came out to him. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan's experiences with verbal harassment align with Beemyn and Rankin's (2011) findings that students who are "out" to most of their friends face greater risk of harassment and bullying. After Evan came out, they encountered more transphobia and harassment from teachers and peers, which resulted in feelings of frustration and alienation. At the same time, they also received validation and support from friends which helped strengthen their resolve.

Chorus. The Wilkshire Smith School music department boasts several performing ensembles, including chorus, band, jazz band, and orchestra, as well as a private lesson program, a recording studio, three levels of musicianship classes, and a visiting artist series (Wilkshire Smith website). Evan took part in the school chorus, a cappella club, and a musicianship class. Chorus was under the direction of Ms. Taylor and met four times per week for 50 minutes each time. The chorus was small (15–18 members) and open to all students without audition. According to Evan, most of the students were "good students" who did not do any other electives or activities outside chorus class and, as far as Evan knew, there were no other trans students in the chorus.

The chorus was set up in traditional SATB format, with all females assigned at birth singing soprano or alto and all males assigned at birth singing tenor or bass. However, labeling voice parts as masculine or feminine can be problematic because it ties people's gender to their voice, and excludes non-binary singers, like Evan (Hearns & Kremer, 2018). Evan sang alto during their first year of chorus, but then was moved to

soprano during their sophomore and junior years. Evan preferred singing alto and enjoyed the feeling of "being in the middle." They equated singing alto with feelings of security as well as aligning with their non-binary identity. As Evan described:

> Being in the middle, and more grounded in the sound was really comforting. Singing lower notes also made me feel more comfortable with my voice, it made me feel, like, it could maybe be closer to something I would recognize. (Evan email, August 28, 2018)

By contrast, singing soprano brought feelings of dysphoria which increased Evan's anxiety:[11]

> Physically I'm comfortable in the soprano range...my voice is quite high...And there is a little part of my childhood-self that says 'Hoo-hoo, you can sing all the high notes, yeah!'…But, I've got a lot of dysphoria around my voice and what it sounds like. So, it got harder to sing soprano the longer I was in chorus. (Evan interview, June 7, 2018)

Although Evan felt physically capable of singing in their soprano range, anxiety from vocal dysphoria prevented them from doing so. Additionally, because Evan felt tremendous respect for their music teacher, singing where the teacher could bear witness to their vocal struggle was a source of embarrassment and stress. As Evan explained:

[11] Dysphoria can be described as feelings of stress or discomfort as a result of conflict between one's affirmed gender identity and the gender that they were assigned at birth (APA, 2019). As Palkki (2016) explained, "dysphoria occurs when trans people feel a disconnect between their gender identity and their body," (p. 123). Similarly, vocal dysphoria is described as an overall discomfort and detachment from the sound of one's voice, which can lead to severe anxiety with regard to speaking or singing (Hearns & Kremer, 2018). Although many would argue that the term "dysphoria" further stigmatizes and pathologizes trans identities (Daley & Mulé, 2014), all three participants in this study used the word "dysphoria" to describe their feelings of stress and anxiety. It is with this in mind that I continue with the term "dysphoria" throughout this report.

> We had assigned seats…and we were in our sections all the time...I didn't love it. Part of the reason was because I sat on the far end of the soprano section near my choral director, and it felt like she was too close and hearing too much of my voice. It made me more self-conscious. I also didn't love it because after maybe three days, I was no longer interested in being a soprano. (Evan email, August 28, 2018)

Despite struggling with their vocal part and seating, Evan enjoyed the chorus warm-ups which were a mixture of physical tasks and mental imagery. The exercises helped Evan shift focus away from their dysphoria temporarily:

> We would do a lot of 'mindfulness' stuff… I'm honestly not even totally sure what that was because my chorus teacher was the only one who seemed to take it seriously…we would sit at the beginning of class and we would focus on our breathing, and we would focus on different parts of our body, and just be still, and not think about things except, like, what we felt and how that felt… There was also a lot of things to trick us into doing things the right way. Like, images and little like tricks she would tell us [to do]. Like, where to breathe from, or, to act like we were biting an apple… Just things so that you don't have to think about what you're doing. You're thinking about what you're doing, but you're not thinking, 'Oh, I have to move this muscle.' (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Chest binding began interfering with Evan's breathing, however, which increased their stress and made it even more difficult to sing in chorus. They described their struggle:

> We did warm-ups, like, the one that you would just laugh to exercise your diaphragm. We did that a lot. And I hated it so much because it hurt… Honestly, the longer I was in chorus, by the end, it got a lot harder to do all of those warm-ups because I started binding my sophomore year and then I would just… like, I was fixated about it [binding] actually, and then I would just do it, like, 14 hours at a time, forever. So, by the end of junior year, my lung capacity was, like, 'I don't think I can take a full, deep breath anymore,' which is not good in chorus. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Eventually, Evan quit the chorus their senior year citing both scheduling and vocal dysphoria issues. When I asked Evan why they didn't request to move back to alto in chorus, Evan replied "I did talk to her about it, but she voiced us and placed us where she needed us, and ultimately I didn't want to create a problem" (Evan email, November 27, 2018). Evan felt responsible for helping the soprano section. "We had so few people that having two more altos than sopranos was a lot," Evan explained (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). They wished to please their teacher who worked hard to balance the voices. "I was, like, 'Put me wherever you want. I'll sing wherever you need me,'" Evan said enthusiastically (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Pleasing others was a common thread throughout Evan's story. However, pressure to meet the vocal needs of the chorus and their teacher without consideration for their own needs, resulted in feelings of stress and dysphoria which ultimately led to their departure.

Consistent with the literature, the chorus dress code was also a source of great discomfort for Evan and contributed to their feelings of dysphoria (Bartolome, 2016;

Palkki & Caldwell, 2018, Silveira, 2019). Even though the Wilkshire Smith High School dress code did not separate requirements by gender (the policy simply states "all clothing must be neat and in good repair"), the attire for chorus members consisted of all black with a sash for the girls and white shirt and black tie/pants for the boys. Since Evan stood with the girls in the soprano section, they felt that it was expected that they wear the female gendered attire:

> I didn't specifically have to wear a dress but it was implied that I should. And I would, and I did not enjoy it. But then, I would get these blouses that were flowy and black, and I would wear those with pants and that was better, but still not good. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

By junior year, Evan elected to wear black pants with a black polo or dress shirt for the concerts. They recalled:

> E. By the end of my sophomore year and into my junior year, my teacher was specifically, like 'Hey, you [girls] can wear anything you want so long as it's all black, any clothes are good.' So, I started wearing a button-down and pants and it was good… It was still a little strange because the soprano section and the alto section would be in all black and then the guys would have white shirts on. So, it was still a little bit, like, 'we're giving you what you want, but there's still something else here that we haven't quite gotten rid of.'
>
> L: Did you ever talk to her about that?
>
> E: I did. And we never really figured out what to do about it. She was adamant… She mostly would ask that guys wear white shirts because she knew that's what

> guys had for other school events. But I think it would've been perfectly fine for her to ask them to buy black shirts because *I* did. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Although Evan was allowed to wear pants in the soprano section, this still conflicted with their non-binary expression because the male shirts were different. When Evan advocated for a change to all black for everyone, the teacher refused citing financial hardship for the boys. While it was not within the scope of this study to fully investigate the sexist beliefs present in this latter exchange, Evan's comment highlighted the contradictory standards that are sometimes applied to males and females in the classroom. Evan's conversation also revealed a duality of oppressive circumstances as both an individual who identified as trans and an individual who stood in a female section of the chorus.

The chorus repertoire was a mix of sacred and secular pieces. The sacred repertoire typically included holiday songs as well as one large one multi-movement work performed with orchestra. Although Evan was proud of these music experiences, they struggled to connect with the sacred literature. They described an experience on tour:

> Being on stage at Carnegie was more than amazing and I'm always going to know how lucky I am and be grateful for it, but the music we were singing was kind of alienating because we sang a mass. As beautiful as Christian music can be it doesn't resonate for me. [Evan autobiography]

Evan seemed to think that singing Christian repertoire was "inescapable" in the choral context because it was included in every concert (Evan interview, August 26, 2018).

They grew frustrated, even though their teacher tried to compensate by asking the students to replace “God” with something else they believe in order to find personal meaning:

> We sang just like multiple masses in a row where I was, like, ‘these are almost the same words over and over. And they don’t mean anything to me.’ Because the assumption that you must believe in something in the place of God…I think, fundamentally misunderstands what atheism is. I don’t consider myself an atheist, because religion is complicated and I don’t totally know what works for me…but it is a little frustrating to be asked to do that with only Christian music. It’s just like… like, I just get tired. (Evan interview, August 26, 2018)

Evan preferred secular pieces that helped them learn about other people and carried strong messages of unity and peace:

> I really liked the one term we did a lot of protest songs…Like, this bigger, more meaningful stuff, that we did in preparation for Martin Luther King Day…It was just, like, ‘Ah, ha!’ It was just, really, really nice to sing. And it was really powerful to sing. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Choral repertoire was a source of both pride and frustration for Evan in high school. While they felt moved by many of the pieces and proud of their performances, connecting with the lyrics was not always possible. This created ideological conflicts which compounded the vocal stress they already felt in the classroom.

In addition to school concerts, the Wilkshire Smith chorus regularly planned overnight chorus trips to nearby cities to perform and take in local culture. Like most of

their schoolmates, Evan looked forward to these trips, even though the rooming arrangements were handled awkwardly. Evan chose to stay with female friends whom they trusted and, while this made Evan feel slightly uncomfortable, they felt it was the best decision at the time. In retrospect, however, Evan felt that trip leaders should have opened lines of communication regarding gendered rooming arrangements, which would have enabled them to feel more supported. “I got to request people to be with. But, in regards to gender and how we would split that up, we did not talk about it…I would have preferred to talk about it,” Evan stated (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). At the same time, Evan acknowledged that talking about gender and rooming assignments would have been difficult because they did not know what they wanted. “At the time, like, I would’ve been super uncomfortable and I wouldn’t have known what my answer was,” Evan explained, “So, they did the best with what they could (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

Rooming on trips is a complicated matter which must be handled sensitively by students, parents, and school personnel. Conversations around gendered rooming need to consider students in all phases of transition. In Evan’s case, although being given the choice of roommates was helpful, they still felt uncomfortable because of their non-binary, trans-masculine identity.

In sum, singing in chorus was both a constraining and enabling activity for Evan. Although they struggled with dysphoria and some repertoire, singing with friends strengthened their musical identity and gave them a sense of belonging. As Evan described, “Singing in an ensemble is, honestly, essential to functioning. It’s therapeutic. I love being part of an ensemble more than anything. There’s nothing like singing with or

acting with a group of people for months at a time" [Evan autobiography]. Despite these Evan's love for the ensemble experience however, Evan left the chorus during their senior year, including the teacher whom they adored as well as their friend group, because of their physical and mental discomfort. Evan described feeling lonely in school during their senior year. "I was, like, very alone this past year," Evan stated ruefully (Evan interview, August 26, 2018). Their experience demonstrates the extent to which oppressive choral practices and bodily constraints can outweigh positive social experiences in the classroom.

Ms. Taylor. Evan liked their chorus teacher, Ms. Taylor, who started at the school a year before Evan entered and was Evans advisor for all four years. They credited Ms. Taylor for improving their singing technique and musicianship: "She really pushed me to have a better singing technique and to actually know what I was talking about in terms of music," Evan stated (Evan interview, August 26, 2018). Ms. Taylor also openly identified as bisexual which, Evan admitted, gave them the courage to come out as non-binary in school:

> I was just going to keep it to myself and a couple of friends and then I was going to go to college and have a good time. But, because of my chorus teacher, I ended up coming out to pretty much all of my social circle and my extended social circle. Like, essentially, to the school. (Evan interview, August 26, 2018)

Evan described Ms. Taylor with enthusiasm and admiration: "Ms. Taylor is amazing. She is like a ray of sunshine," Evan shared, "She's, like, the most empathetic person and she's bi. She's married to a woman and having that in a teacher is just really cool" (Evan

interview, August 26, 2018). Evan praised Ms. Taylor's efforts to establish a safe space where students could openly share ideas and be themselves. "She very intentionally set safe spaces," Evan explained, "She creates this atmosphere where there's just… there's not shame. And she jokes about things and calls people out…which, like, is horrifying, but in the air that she set up it's OK" (Evan interview, August 26, 2018). Very recently, Ms. Taylor started introducing herself with her pronouns in class which Evan really appreciated: "I walked in one day and she had left her pronouns up on the board and I was, like, 'yes! Go, you!'" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Ms. Taylor's simple act of introducing herself with her pronouns helped Evan feel validated and respected. At the same time, her gesture made space for other students to share their pronouns and established practice towards a more gender-inclusive environment.

Evan appreciated the care Ms. Taylor took to make sharing part of the curriculum. They described a typical sharing session during chorus class:

> She would go out of her way to like, either in class or in rehearsal, to stop. Like, if something had happened, or we had a speaker, or something happened in the world that she thought was important that we talk about…or [if] there was something in the music that seems sensitive and she wanted to talk about it…She would change the tone of the space and sit on the floor. She wouldn't speak over us. Like, she would ask her question, say what we were doing, and why we were doing it, and then she would just let it be silent until someone wanted to say something. And I almost always did." (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan stated that Ms. Taylor worked hard to make sure that students were "being true to a

piece of music" by talking about it and writing about it in their journal:

> She makes us have conversations about the music we're singing and what it means and why we're singing it and why it matters…Especially if we were singing music from another culture that wasn't specifically the culture of anyone in the room... She allows us to do free writes and connect it back to ourselves, and how we fit into the music, which is cool. (Evan interview, June 26, 2018)

Ms. Taylor tried to connect students with sacred literature through journaling, but Evan was not convinced. They recounted:

> She did have us do couple free writes about what it was, specifically God could be in the religious world for us if we didn't believe in God. Which was a nice way to try to help us to connect but was, I don't think, one of her most successful lessons. But she tried. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

By giving students space to share, Ms. Taylor promoted a sense of trust in the classroom as she helped them sort through complicated feelings. The trusting atmosphere helped Evan feel comfortable coming out to the drama club during their senior year. They wrote:

> I'd never planned on really being out as trans in high school, my plan was really to go to college and only ever talk to a couple people from school again, but the space that [Ms. Taylor] and the cast opened up gave me a place to come out and for it to feel right and ok. Not everyone was great about it, but no one was bad either, and it let me enjoy the fact that it was senior year. By the end of the year, people I wasn't even really friends with were correcting people about my pronouns and that was really amazing (Evan autobiography).

Despite earnest efforts to build an open and trusting atmosphere, however, Ms. Taylor upheld several choral traditions that constrained students' identities and music making, including a perceived emphasis on sacred repertoire, gendered voicing, and gendered concert attire. She also chose all the music and placed students in vocal sections according to where she felt they would sound best, rather than soliciting the students' input. As stated earlier, even though Evan gently inquired about moving to alto, they were placed in the soprano section which made them uncomfortable and brought on dysphoria. Similarly, Ms. Taylor maintained gendered concert attire requirements which compounded Evan's vocal discomfort, but when Evan requested a change, Ms. Taylor said "no." Ms. Taylor's gendered practices seemed to contradict other more supportive vocal practices such as her "mindfulness" warm-ups in which she encouraged students to get in touch with their bodies and emotions through breathing and imagery. Based on their experience with Ms. Taylor, Evan made the following recommendation:

> Create more space...do not make assumptions, and do not put it on the students to come forward if they are uncomfortable with the way you are dividing things or the way that you're doing things. To anticipate that. Like, especially in high school. They're kids. They are afraid. Likely, of you, even if you're great. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Ms. Taylor's denial of Evan's requests for less gendered attire and a lower voice part despite identifying as bisexual demonstrates the need for more gender-inclusive education in all communities, including the LGB community.

While it is difficult to fully assess the reasons why Ms. Taylor did not take Evan's

requests seriously, what is clear is that, while Ms. Taylor did not fully address their needs, Evan felt safe and cared for by their teacher in other ways. When Evan started binding and singing became more difficult, Evan commented that they were disappointed that they could no longer “impress” their teacher (Evan email, August 28, 2018). I asked Evan if they ever talked about binding and their gender dysphoria and voice with Ms. Taylor. Evan replied “no” because they didn’t speak with anyone about their dysphoria. Evan stated:

> But I did come out and talk to her about other things. She was my advisor for three years. So, that was really nice. We talked about lots of things and she made it, like, an easy conversation to have. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

Informal conversations are an important part of student-teacher relationships and can be equally as influential as classroom discourse (Palkki, 2016). Ms. Taylor’s presence was particularly important to Evan because they had very few LGBTQ+ role models in their small school and rural community. Evan commented that Ms. Taylor’s bisexual identity was helpful to them, even if they didn’t talk about it. “Like, even if I didn’t speak to her about it, like, she was like a good presence to have,” they stated (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

In addition to being a role model and advisor, Ms. Taylor supported Evan’s identity and music making in other ways such as attending GSA meetings and working with Evan to rearrange their vocal parts in the musicals. She also volunteered to work with Evan’s student-led a cappella club when it was floundering. Despite holding on to oppressive choral traditions, Ms. Taylor’s efforts to connect with her students and create

a supportive space, helped Evan feel cared for even as their dysphoria and stress increased, and engagement with the music became limited. Evan's experience is similar to participants in Palkki's (2016) study who felt cared for even if the support was not very systematic; just the fact that Miss Taylor was reaching out made a positive impression.

Theater. In addition to chorus, Evan enjoyed their theater experiences where they could spend time with friends and explore their male personae on stage. Theater environments often provide students with a safe place to express themselves and explore their identities (Spidel, 2014). The theater program at Wilkshire Smith included one act plays, Shakespeare club, musical theater, and various acting classes (Wilkshire Smith website). Evan performed in both the plays and musicals, as well as took an advanced acting class during their junior year. They enjoyed their drama teacher, who was also a family friend, and appreciated the way he affirmed their identity without being asked:

> He's pretty great…he doesn't really like to have big, deep discussions about personal things…but, he's good at picking up on things… Like, he was a person who, even though I never talked to him about it, just picked up on [my pronouns], which I greatly appreciated. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan participated in the annual spring musical every year where they played a variety of male ensemble characters and sang a few short solos. "I don't even remember all of their names, because it was just a revolving door of characters," Evan laughed (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Although gender-neutral casting fosters a more inclusive environment that provides students with opportunities to explore gender roles

(Newman, 2018), this was not the case in Evan's theater department. The directors were relieved when Evan spoke up and requested to play male characters in shows, not because they viewed the request as an impetus for more gender fluid casting, but because they needed more people to fill traditional, binary, male-gendered roles.

The drama teacher and Ms. Taylor worked together on the musicals. Evan stated that they felt more comfortable singing the soprano parts in the musical theater ensembles because the tessitura was not as high. "I felt a lot better about my role in the chorus in the musicals because, even if I was singing soprano, it was nowhere near as high as it was in chorus," Evan explained (Evan email, November 27, 2018). Occasionally, Evan was allowed some flexibility to explore their vocal range in the musicals by switching octaves or rearranging the vocal parts, although this practice was inconsistent. "I was generally encouraged to sing up the octave," Evan recalled, "but whether or not we ended up changing the key, kept me singing it up the octave, or had me sing it as it was, it was done song by song" (Evan email, November 27, 2018).

During Evan's senior year, they were offered a secondary leading male role with a tenor solo. It was Evan's first scripted character in a musical and they were excited to share their experience. They explained the casting process:

> L: Did you ask for that or did they just put you in that role?
>
> E: They put me in that role and I had said that I would rather not play a girl in the show… Also, because we had a large number of girls to play the roles that were available in the main cast, the second I said that, they were, like 'Ah Ha! Thank you for that!'…It was nice. I liked it a lot." (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan described working on the character's tenor solo as a collaborative process. The directors did not offer to change the key of the tenor solo to accommodate Evan's voice, but asked Evan to experiment with different octaves, instead. Evan did not enjoy singing the tenor part up the octave but dutifully complied with the director's request to experiment. "In rehearsals, they had me jump around a lot and had me sing it up the octave a couple of times, which I did not appreciate. Every time we rehearsed it, it was different and I was, like, 'It's just one song!', Evan laughed (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). In the end, the directors allowed Evan to sing the solo as written in the tenor octave which made Evan very happy.

Adhering to gendered casting traditions in musical theater places undue stress on students in transition who wish to align their bodies with particular characters and vocal ranges. By working collaboratively with Evan on the senior musical and allowing them to be a part of decisions regarding casting preference and vocal range, Evan felt empowered as a singer and actor and was able to enjoy a more meaningful experience. Despite Evan's positive experience in the senior year musical, however, they felt hurt that Ms. Taylor did not give them a leading role which brought on additional feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about their voice. As Evan explained:

> I know that this decision wasn't personal, but in the musical, I was the only member of Honors Theater who wasn't a part of the main cast, and she cast one guy who just couldn't sing. He'd been in one other show and he just, objectively, could not sing at all…and we all knew it. My breathing wasn't great, but I was still pretty decent and I'm an at least 'ok' actor [Evan stated with hesitancy]? In

> the end, I was fine with my role in the show and I just wanted what was best for the show, but it hurt a bit that she cast him over me because he just couldn't perform the role and didn't seem to want to. (Evan email, August 28, 2018)

Evan reflected on their personal conflicts between wanting a leading role in the musical, the dysphoria surrounding their voice, and being a supportive theater member. Similar to reports from other trans individuals, Evan worried whether their voice would be "good enough," (GALA choruses, 2014). Their struggle was evident by how they weighed their desire for playing a leading role with the responsibility of maintaining a quality show:

> All I wanted in high school was to play the lead in a musical. When I'm performing, when I don't have to be myself, I love nothing more than being on stage… and I was never the lead in the musical. I was disappointed but, as much as I wanted to play a lead just once, I also wanted the show to be the best show it can be. I was the lead in the fall play my senior year, which was incredibly exciting. It's more disappointing to not have played a lead in a musical, because I know, vocally, I would struggle or be unable to play a lead that I'd want to be, but more than anything I just want it to be a good show. [Evan autobiography]

Out and About Theater

In addition to high school theater, Evan participated in an activist LGBTQ+ community youth theater group that met an hour away from Evan's home. The group created educational programs for the community at large and provided a social and artistic space for LGBTQ+ youth actors. For the most part, Evan kept their Out and

About theater life separate from their school life. When I asked Evan how their Out and About experience differed from high school drama, they summarized:

> Out and About was a much easier space to breathe in…not everything is about being queer obviously, but there is something to be said about how much easier it is to be with other queer kids, especially when I'm just meeting someone. (Evan email, August 28, 2018)

Connecting to other queer youth through Out and About was essential to Evan's high school experience because of the lack of LGBTQ+ representation in their rural hometown. Although Evan was not always able to participate in the group due to geographical and scheduling constraints, the Internet and social media provided a means to stay in touch and build strong relationships online.

Media and Celebrity Role Models

Social media and Internet sources played an important role in Evan's musical and personal journey. Like many people, Evan's first introduction to transgender was online. They recounted:

> I came upon this story about this genderfluid person and I was, like 'this is so cool,' and then my brain was, like 'you have to think about this for months,' and then I just couldn't let this story go. I was so interested in this…and then I started doing some more reading and I was, like, 'uh-oh.' There's a lot of great archives and…places to get information. (Evan interview, June 7, 2018)

Evan credited YouTube for providing information and access to people in the trans community. "There's this great trans community on YouTube, that is musical," Evan

explained, “if I’m at home, that’s probably what I’m doing— just consuming content made by these trans people,” (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan enjoyed videos made by trans Internet celebrities, such as Ash Hardell (Ash Hardell, 2017) and Chase Ross (uppercaseCHASE1, 2017), who deliver information and positive messages through entertainment and humor. “They’re pretty cool people,” Evan stated (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Connecting to the trans community online was essential for Evan’s well-being because they had very few trans role models in their rural community. Palkki (2016) noted that the anonymity of the Internet can make it easier for trans individuals to explore their identity and ask questions. “I don’t think I would have figured it out when I did if I didn’t have these online sources,” Evan stated (Evan interview, June 7, 2018).

In addition to trans role models online, Evan enjoyed viewing music videos made by popular recording artists. Evan admired strong vocal artists who exude confidence as well as artistic excellence. “I really admire Beyonce’s confidence,” Evan stated, “and the fact that, even though she’s made it and she’s there, she still pulls out all the stops and goes all out with everything she embraces” (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan also appreciated vocal artists who embrace LGBTQ+ social justice such as Janelle Monae, an American multimedia performance artist and queer role model, and Hayley Kiyoko, affectionately referred to by her fans as “Lesbian Jesus” (Spanos, 2018). One of Evan’s favorite groups is the Panic! At the Disco, with lead singer, Brendan Urie. Urie, who identifies as pansexual, leads Panic with a bright tenor voice and a stylish theatrical flair reminiscent of Bowie (Hudzsilullaby, 2016). His activist work includes donations to various LGBTQ+ and Human Rights campaigns as well as public service announcements

to raise awareness (Zogbi, 2018).

Senior Project

Evan spent the latter half of their senior year working independently producing and illustrating a short film for their senior project. "The film was entirely produced and animated by hand by me," Evan said proudly, "and it was exactly 2 minutes and 10 seconds," (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan's brother Thomas composed the music by improvising ideas for the film, which Evan then edited and "directed him through it" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan spoke excitedly about the film, which they had completed only a week earlier.

The story centers around two trans characters, one real person named "Peter" and one ghost named "Victoria." "Victoria follows Peter around but he can't see her… They're both trans because I fail to make content about people who aren't trans, I guess," Evan laughs (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). The ghost is really lonely and the story revolves around her trying to reach Peter. "She's failing, but not necessarily permanently," Evan explained (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan shared their film with me and I took the opportunity to write my impressions:

> The story begins by introducing the leading characters in animated contrasting colored outlines as they begin their day. Both characters remain transparent outlines throughout the short, which contributes to the overall mood of the film and feelings of vulnerability and loneliness. There is no speaking or singing throughout the story, only the piano music and a few sound effects. The music, composed and played by Evan's brother Thomas is both sweet and sad sounding.

> It expresses the honesty and transparency of the characters through simple arpeggiated I and IV chords set in E major with occasional melodic notes layered on top. As the story continues, Peter gets dressed, including putting on a chest binder, and heads out the door. The climax of the story happens just before Peter leaves the house when Victoria stands in front of him and places a hand on his shoulder. At this point, the two characters' eyes meet and the piano stops on a sustained G# before returning to the slow, arpeggiated bass line as Peter walks through Victoria and out the door. [Evan artifacts]

Although Evan did not specifically indicate that their film was autobiographical, the project featured several elements that reflected their trans experience including fluidity, vulnerability, and loneliness. Evan's fluid, non-binary identity seemed to parallel their characters' dichotomous relationship of a male person and a female ghost as a symbol of their outward reality versus their inner struggle. As Evan explained, "[The story] juxtaposes their different experiences as the ghost Victoria has several tries to get Peter's attention because no one can see her and she's really lonely living in this old house" (Evan interview, June 7, 2018).

Fluidity, transparency, and loneliness were also expressed in Thomas's piano music which featured light, arpeggiated piano chords in a major key. Evan directed their brother to keep the music "simple" and "quiet" while the characters were "exploring" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). The care with which Evan connected music and animation is evident throughout the film and helped underline "intersonic meanings" of loneliness and transparency (Green, 1997). As Evan explained, "I gave him the timing of

everything so he was able to line things up" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

I was moved by Evan's project and deeply honored that Evan chose to share it with me. In addition to the culminating film, the project also included PowerPoint slides discussing their learning process and showcasing sketches from their animation process. The slides, that included images from the film as well as other unrelated subjects, displayed both the depth and imagination of Evan's artistic talent.

Looking to the Future

Evan looked forward to attending college for multimedia visual art in an urban metropolis this fall, where they can be surrounded by cultural opportunities as well as just be themselves. Consistent with the literature, Evan described feeling safer in the city than in their small town (Erber, 2015; Mock, 2014):

> I need the city. There is such a better balance of not being "alone" and in the middle of nowhere. Like, there's something about being alone that's terrifying, right? But, the downside of being in a small town is… you're not alone, but you, also, can't *be* alone. So, there isn't any… there's no break. If you go outside, you're gonna speak to people and people are gonna speak to you. But, if you go outside in the city, everybody's minding their own business, but you're also not alone. So, if something comes up and you feel unsafe… I don't know, I've always found it easier to navigate feeling unsafe in the city than feeling uncomfortable on a dirt road in my town… I also think it's just easier to find other queer people in the city, just 'cause there's more people and there's more spaces and more things happening. Like, I would go to my [Out and About] troupe and be surrounded by

> all these great, queer and trans people and then I'd go back home and I'd have, like, *some* people…but we're never all together at school. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Evan explained how choosing their college had just as much to do with how the school responded to their identity and respected their pronouns as it did about the location and the program:

> When it came down to [it], there were three schools I was choosing between…one of them I really liked, but they would just blatantly disregard everything about gender that I told them. And I was, like, 'But, you're an arts school, shouldn't you know better?' And, on the phone, they mis-gendered me and I'd correct them and they would just ignore me. And I was, like, 'Are you just not hearing what I'm saying? Are you missing something? I don't know how you can be like this.' So, I chose my school because they had the right opportunities *and* they were also nice to me. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Although Evan's ultimate goal is to produce film, they still hope to return to singing one day. Singing plans are being postponed, however, until after they begin gender affirming HT. "I do wish my voice was able to go lower than it can [on its own], but there is only so much you can do about that without taking hormones," Evan explained (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan was excited to be starting HT in the fall, but worried about the possible negative effects on their singing voice which can include loss of range, stiffness, hoarseness, and decreased resonance (Gurss, 2018). Evan discussed the conflict:

> I've known for a long time that hormone replacement therapy was really one of the only ways I was going to really be able to see my reflection, but, until recently I'd convinced myself the change in my voice wasn't worth it…as much as my voice has always made me uncomfortable, I also didn't wanna let go of it. And I didn't want to… because I was singing all the time, it seemed not worth it. But then, I had to take a break from being in chorus, and I was, like, 'Oh, this is a really important thing to me, but if I'm not great at it, then I'm OK with that. I can still enjoy and I can still participate in it.' (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Despite Evan's fears, however, they were looking forward to the masculinizing effects of HT and prepared to adjust their singing goals if necessary.

As we met for our final interview, Evan summarized how chorus and theater affected them personally, as well as musically, in high school by helping them feel more comfortable and confident. They stated:

> I think performing, in general, has given me confidence. Not even necessarily in myself, but just in the way that I put myself into the world… Like, even if I'm not being 100% truthful, it's OK. People don't need to know that and they can't see that on my face… Performing has made me more comfortable just talking with people and engaging… it's shaped the person that I am in terms being 'OK' with being myself. I also think it gave me a better awareness of my body and my relationship to it. Like, how I move and what that says. There was a little bit of 'fake it, till I make it'—how to look confident until I *am* confident. Also, with everything I've learned about breathing in chorus… breathing is just so central to

> everything and having control over my breath helps me stay calm in situations where I previously would have panicked, or to stay calm long enough until I *can* get somewhere where I can panic. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

At the same time, early successes in chorus kept them from fully exploring their potential and being who they wanted to be later in high school. As Evan explained:

> I do think that chorus, in a lot of ways, was probably the biggest reason… because I wanted to hold on to the person I started high school as, or the person people saw me as… it was a large part of why that was hard to let go… because I really liked how that person was treated at school. (Evan interview, August 7, 2018)

Summary

Evan's experiences highlight a number of opposing forces which shaped their identity and music making. First, although family support provided crucial underpinnings for Evan's interest in music and feelings of well-being, empathy, and concern for their family's reaction with regard to their identity prevented them from fully coming out in high school. Second, although friends in the music department provided Evan with essential support and a sense of belonging, heightened hostility elsewhere in the school increased Evan's feelings of loneliness and fear as they sought spaces away from the general population. Third, while Evan's music teacher demonstrated care and concern for her students by teaching them vocal pedagogy, advising them, and giving them opportunities to share, she maintained gender divisive practices that created stress in the classroom. Additionally, when Evan spoke up against some of these practices, their requests were denied. As a result, Evan's music making and class participation was

constrained. Finally, Evan's engagement with trans content online and the Out and About LGBTQ+ youth theater provided vital support for Evan to learn and feel good about themselves, despite living in a rural community where there were few LGBTQ+ role models.

Emily, age 24 (she/her/hers)

"You can't make music fully if you're squashing part of yourself"

Emily, age 24, (Pronouns: she/her/hers)

Hometown: Kayston

Family: Mother, father, younger sister

Private K–8 grade school: Fallmount Elementary School

Private high school: Urbanton High School

High school music teacher: Mr. Kendrick

High school music activities: chorus three years, chamber singers two years, theater tech four years, all-state chorus two years

College: Traditions College

College music: chorus, chamber singers, music theory, composition, conducting

Instruments/voice: tenor voice, guitar, piano, flute, recorder

Emily and I met for our interviews at two different locations where we had reserved private conference rooms. Emily, a tall, thin young woman with shoulder length hair pulled into a pony tail, greeted me warmly, though somewhat reserved at first, as we shook hands. She was dressed simply in a pair of jeans with a long-sleeved top, flip-flops, and a single bangle bracelet.

As we moved into the conference room, Emily seemed relaxed and enthusiastic about sharing her stories. She leaned attentively into the table and rested her head on her hand as we talked. Occasionally, she took her hair out of the pony tail or put it back up. I thanked Emily, in advance, for her time and enthusiasm and she smiled. "It's fun," she quipped (Emily field notes, July 5, 2018). Throughout our conversations, Emily spoke intelligently and with confidence. There was a softness in her eyes, however, that revealed an emotional, vulnerable self which she guarded with matter-of-fact, objective discussion (Emily field notes, July 5, 2018).

Emily was my oldest interviewee who studied music in college as well as in high school. This gave me some excellent comparisons between the two experiences as well as a glimpse of the needs of music students in higher education. She spoke thoughtfully about her experiences in both high school and college, and quoted lyrics and music details with impressive accuracy. A talented singer, guitarist, and conductor, Emily's musical strengths were matched by a strong background in math and computers. She enjoyed working with numbers and calculations and, perhaps not coincidentally, she also had a strong interest in music theory, early music, and "playing with sounds and layers" on the guitar (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Emily often had a logical and detached manner of telling personal stories. This was evident in the way she occasionally left out pronouns and articles when describing people or events. I often had to look hard for signs of annoyance or discomfort in Emily's stories, because she would often mask any negativity with dismissive statements and body language indicating that "it doesn't matter now." She had tremendous empathy for

others and an impressive ability to view her stories from multiple perspectives which gave us both the chance to explore situations more deeply. Conversations with Emily flowed easily and we were both disappointed that we had to meet online rather than in person for our last interview.

Childhood and Family

Emily grew up in an urban neighborhood on the East Coast, where there was constant interaction with diverse groups of people and easy access to high quality cultural experiences (Kayston website). The town of Kayston, where Emily lived, is an affluent section of a major metropolis where Emily's mother grew up and had attended both Fallmount School and Urbanton High School, where Emily also attended. Emily's mother was a psychiatrist and her father was a mathematician. Emily also had a younger sister with special needs. Although interactions with her sister could be challenging at times, Emily spoke lovingly and with great maturity about their relationship:

> E. She's 18 and, I mean, she's got all the sort of snark and sulkiness that a teenager is supposed to have but, intellectually, it's been clear since she was one or two that… she pretty much can't read and [she] can count small numbers of objects, but can't really perform calculations on paper or in her head past adding single digit numbers… I think that runs the risk of sounding like the sort of stereotypical story of how 'it was so difficult,' and 'I didn't get any of my parent's attention,' but it wasn't like that.
>
> L. Were you ever resentful?

> E. No, I don't remember feeling that way. I mean, she's also a lot of fun, and always has been, and she's my little sister… She had a lot of trouble just pronouncing things intelligibly for a while, and there were stretches when I was the one who was most able to decipher what it was she was trying to say…[It] has sort of been complicated as she grew up because, in some ways, I knew how to interact with her better when she was a small child. You know, like, 'what are we gonna do together that's gonna be nice or fun?'…So, now she's 18 but [she] doesn't exactly have the capacity for the interest that you might expect an 18-year-old to have, but Candyland isn't that much fun [for her] anymore, either. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily's parents were both amateur folk musicians who sang and played instruments. Informal music making was an important part of Emily's family life as well as her first exposure to music. Emily stated:

> I think basically, in terms of my parents, it was mostly that [music] was present around the home in a kind of casual, fun way…just around the house, or singing along with things in the car, or harmonizing with each other. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily's parents participated in a nearby folk music festival each year that featured traditional songs, dances, and stories. The highlight of the festival was a show performed by both professional and volunteer musicians of all ages. When Emily was twelve, she joined her father in the show and spoke excitedly about the experience. "It's a really neat thing," Emily exclaimed, "he and I were both in it, together, when I was about twelve. I

was in the little kids bunch and he was in the adults bunch" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018).

Encouraged by her parents, Emily took lessons on several instruments as a child including piano, recorder, and flute. Her lessons were "solidly classical," Emily recalled, and although her parents were supportive, they did not participate in a lot of classical music making themselves (Emily interview July 18, 2018). "It's not their main thing," Emily stated, "…they are just, sort of, broadly musical people with good ears and a lot of respect for singing" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018).

In middle school, Emily began teaching herself guitar and considers that her main instrument today. "I've never, or almost never, taken guitar lessons, but started teaching myself," Emily stated, "[now] that's sort of become my main instrument" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Emily and I discussed her guitar playing and the importance of informal music making:

> E. [I play] mostly, sort of, folky, indie acoustic stuff. Some, kind of, instrumental noodling around of my own devising, but mostly playing music that I like to listen to, figuring it out on guitar by ear.
>
> L. Do you song write?
>
> E. Sort of. I've almost never written anything that was a song in a sense that there was singing involved. It's mostly instrumental stuff and it's always been a very informal kind of 'well, that's an interesting idea.' [I'll] maybe play with it, and maybe it will eventually evolve into something, but I'm never quite sure if I'm

> done messing with it, and I've hardly ever performed at all. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily's family music experiences provided her with a rich musical foundation on which to build her life-long association with music. Support in the form of music lessons and opportunities gave Emily the tools she needed to approach later music challenges with curiosity and confidence rather than fear. Additionally, Emily's parents modeled a relaxed performance environment through informal music making that encouraged independent learning, family togetherness, and joy.

Early music experiences. Emily attended private schools from elementary school through college. She described her general music classes in elementary and middle school: "Singing was big in the music classes at Fallmount. We did a lot of singing in that kind of 'not-really-for-performing' way" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Emily's music teacher at Fallmount was also her private lesson teacher for recorder and flute from first through eighth grade, after which Emily took lessons from a professional recorder player for another year. Fallmount gave Emily her first experience with singing in a chorus:

> In seventh and eighth grade, instead of having music class all together, you had an arts elective…I picked chorus, but I don't remember what it entailed. I'm not even sure it was in parts, you know. It might have been everybody sing Fleetwood Mac 'Don't stop' or something [laughs]. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily continued private instrumental lessons all through her years at Fallmount. By the time she was in seventh grade, Emily had formed her own chamber music group with friends after school. "I did some amount of chamber music on the flute," Emily

recalled, “I can’t remember whose idea it was, but it was me and two friends from my grade at Fallmount being coached by the father of one of the other guys playing” (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Consistent with the literature, creating music informally led to both musical and personal benefits for Emily (Green, 2005). Informal music making helped her develop trust in her peers as well as confidence in her music abilities. It may be due to these early music making experiences, at home and with friends, that Emily was later able to feel comfortable singing tenor in high school and college ensembles, because she trusted her peers and she understood her tenor voice to be an independent, unique part of the collaborative experience, rather than a gender marker to be achieved.

Identity and Coming Out

“I’m a woman. I’m trans, I’m a trans woman. In terms of orientation, I haven’t really felt the need to use very specific words in a long time,” Emily stated, (Emily interview, July 5, 2019). This was Emily’s description of herself at the time of our meeting. “I’ve identified as “queer” and felt no particular need to get more specific than that since HS,” she clarified (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Emily’s journey to womanhood went through several transitions beginning in grade school and continuing through college.

Identifying as male. Throughout her grade school years, Emily identified as male and didn’t question her gender. “[I] was raised male and did not question that, until the beginning of high school, at all,” Emily stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Emily described herself as a somewhat “nerdy” kid who enjoyed logic questions, building activities, dinosaurs, and an occasional baseball game:

> L. Were there ways that you expressed non-binary or feminine as a child?
>
> H. No, it didn't cross my mind until high school and, yeah, you always run into people who have stories of like 'when I was a child I always loved pink and dolls.' I really don't think there's a lot I can point to… I was a 'train tracks and little Thomas the tank engines' kid. I liked construction toys like 'k'nex' and stuff. I don't think I was a particularly gendered kid, but I certainly didn't actively transgress gender expectations in a particular way. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily had long hair as a child, a trait she shared with her dad. "There were moments of people mistaking me for a girl because of my hair," Emily remembered (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). She described being mis-gendered while playing baseball:

> I was at bat and, I think, I swung once and fouled off the pitch and the catcher said 'hey, you swing pretty good for a girl.' The umpire behind him, who was also his coach, said 'Hey, Jake, be nice.' And he said, 'I was being nice, I just said she swings pretty good for a girl.' And I said, 'I'm not a girl, I'm a boy.' But, it wasn't at all that upsetting to me. I thought I should've been really offended by that emasculation or something, and I wasn't… I sort of didn't know what to do with it, and thought it was funny, but it wasn't something bothering me, nor was it something that felt really good. There wasn't that much salient meaning to it. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Although Emily identified as male, she admitted to feeling slightly uncomfortable as a child. She stated, "There is, even before you figure out gender things, there is a childhood

discomfort in your own skin that you have no name for, but figuring out what to call it (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Her feelings of discomfort were somewhat lessened, however, by role models who expanded gender and sexuality norms.

In addition to being a musical and mathematical role model, Emily's dad was a personal role model, as well. Emily described her dad as quiet and thoughtful but viewed his quietness as a personality trait rather than reflecting a particular gender norm. Emily explained:

> My dad is, in a lot of ways, not that stereotypically masculine; at least, not in the sort of negative ways that that term might get used… the fact that he's not the one I have tended to go to about [things] is not because… he's *not* that way… he is open and thoughtful. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily's dad had long hair, which may have contributed to her own sense of comfort in breaking gendered expectations as well as helping her see possibilities:

> On a very superficial level… I mean, I've had long hair, well longer than it is now, at least four or five years longer than I've been questioning my gender at all. I mean, I was a child with long hair who thought of myself as a boy and was perceived as a boy for years, but I think, maybe, that sort of ability to feel like it wasn't an impossible transgression to do that had something to do with him. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

By contrast, Emily's mother wore her hair short. "I think [my parents had] something to do with what it felt like to start violating some sort of visible gender norms," Emily concluded (Emily interview, July 18, 2018).

Emily began exploring her identity in seventh grade when she started identifying as bisexual. She described the conflict between feeling bisexual but not seeing any real possibilities:

> I had been aware that I probably wasn't straight since sort of the end of seventh grade. I had sort of been dating, in a seventh and eighth grade kind of way, a girl. Therefore, it wasn't a particularly pressing situation. But wanted to be… I mean, it never crossed my mind in middle school, it just didn't seem like a conceivable thing. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily remembered her middle school friend group as being all male but not presenting as overtly masculine. This seemed to help ease acceptance by her peers later, when Emily began expressing her non-binary identity:

> [They were] sort of nerdy, intellectual kids and, therefore, none of them really overtly masculine, but nobody particularly ambiguous or gender non-conforming in any kind of interesting way [either]. But, [they were] also the people that, by the time I started kind of changing my appearance somewhat, were less likely to be really thrown by it or be opposed to it. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily enjoyed her eighth-grade homeroom teacher who was an openly gay man. In addition to being an LGBTQ+ role model, he created an atmosphere of support and kindness which Emily appreciated:

> My teachers at Fallmount were mostly women, but my eighth-grade teacher was a gay man, and maybe the only "out" gay teacher at Fallmount that I knew of, at least. I mean, he didn't talk about…but it was known that he had a husband…I

> don't think he ever talked about his husband, it was just a thing people knew and he knew that people knew and it was a sort of unspoken…I wasn't out to anyone at Fallmount in terms of orientation, and I wasn't out to him, but it was just good to have him as a teacher. And he was very… I mean, in ways that were broader than gender or sexuality, he just ran a very thoughtful, supportive, kind of homeroom, and, I don't know, made it clear that differences and being kind to people were to be taken seriously and that, in this room, he was not going to stand for any nonsense that was opposed to that. That was something even on a bigger level than just having an "out" teacher. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Role models play an important part in shaping adolescent's "possible selves" (Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006). Emily's early interactions and exposure to positive role models who transgressed gender and sexuality norms helped her develop a positive sense of herself as she constructed an identity that was fluid and open to possibilities.

Identifying as non-binary. Emily learned about transness and non-binary from her partner whom she met during her first year of high school. He was three years older than Emily and the two stayed romantically involved throughout high school and college:

> I started dating somebody who was my partner for several years, who is a trans man and also sort of non-binary, goes by he /him pronouns…and, I think, I sort of became aware of, of 'transness' and, certainly, 'non-binaryness' [through him], which I don't think I had ever heard of before high school, as available options. And realized that 'non-binary' was what seemed to fit [me]. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

She came out as non-binary during her sophomore year of high school. “[I] was not going by a different name or different pronouns, so it didn’t mean anything concretely to most people,” Emily explained, “My ‘outness’ was someone who presented rather androgynously, so that was my label and sense of myself for a while” (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Parental support for Emily’s transition varied. Understanding the terms “genderqueer” and “non-binary” was hard for Emily’s parents. Emily described coming out to her parents:

> I don’t think it ever meant much to them because it didn’t come with a new name or new pronouns or any medical transition. You know, I did some things to my presentation, but the word “genderqueer” the word “non-binary” didn’t mean anything. I sort of tried to explain what I meant by that and I think that it just felt very abstract… And then there was a string of many years where the only way it really came up was when my mother said something about, you know, “my son,” or something, and I said, well sometimes I would work up the *nerve* to say, ‘Well, you know, actually, when I told you that I identified as somewhere in the middle like, like that’s actually uncomfortable,’ and ‘please don’t’ and she’d try to understand that. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily felt that it was easier on her parents when she identified as non-binary because she did not change her name or pronouns, so they did not need to discuss it. When they *did* discuss it, however, Emily’s mother would often get defensive. As Emily explained:

> For years it was something that didn’t come up much. It didn’t feel very present or important to them and it only came up when I occasionally made a fuss about

> something. And, my mother has always had trouble getting used to things like language and pronouns and stuff, if she can't instinctively perceive it: 'You still feel like you always felt like to me…,' 'I'm not perceiving you as…,''It doesn't seem like you've changed radically, so it's hard for me to get used to the idea that these words don't fit anymore….' It wasn't a matter of 'I need you to convince me that this is real before I'm willing to try to change,' it was just really hard for it to feel natural to avoid those words because it didn't feel to her that I had transformed that dramatically. So, there's wasn't a lot of support or anti-support, I guess, while I was identifying as non-binary. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Although Emily's parents were supportive of her identity throughout high school and college, they often struggled to understand the changes, which created additional stress for Emily. By contrast, Emily benefited from attending a progressive high school where there were several LGBTQ+ role models and where she felt comfortable exploring her identity with others.

Urbanton High School

Urbanton is a small, coed, private high school in the center of the city where Emily lived (Urbanton website). According to the school website, Urbanton High School was founded in the mid-20th century to provide a high caliber learning situation where all students and faculty have an equal part in the decision making, and where all students, including those from underserved communities, are equally welcomed and included (Urbanton website). "Governance of the faculty and student body is by committees," Emily explained, "there are no department chairs and there is no student government"

(Emily interview, July 5, 2018). The school boasts a rigorous academic program, including several National Merit and Advanced Placement student scholars, and a high SAT score median (Urbanton website). Faculty biographies reveal an impressive number of terminal degrees from various elite colleges and universities as well as a variety of specialties and research interests (Urbanton website). "[It was] really academically intense," Emily stated, "Which is not to say that the arts are not important, but I think it's safe to say that I was pushed harder there, in terms of writing well academically, than I don't think I ever was afterwards" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Emily liked her teachers at Urbanton as well as their emphasis on critical thinking skills. "With a few exceptions, most of my teachers were really good, and really, really good with what they taught and really interested in teaching it, and having interesting conversations about it, and pushing you to think hard about it," she stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She summarized the type of student that attends Urbanton:

> Urbanton is a really strange and good place… It's an unusual kind of person that ends up there, I think. I mean it's a really small group of people. I mean, like, your grade is only a few students and you are in classes with all of them at some point… [It's a] wonderful community of smart, pretty highly-strung kids who are interested in thinking about stuff hard, and teachers who were mostly pretty interested in taking the ideas that the kids have seriously and asking them questions. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily felt supported personally as well as academically at Urbanton. According to Emily, the school population includes a large number of LGBTQ+ students and faculty. She

described a positive school climate where all people felt welcome and where tensions surrounding LGBTQ+ diversity issues were not usually felt. "It was a school where the orientation was a real non-issue," Emily explained, "I mean, I'm sure that there were ever problems, but, like, it really, really wasn't much of a thing" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). The diverse and welcoming climate at Urbanton profoundly affected Emily's high school experience and her feelings of safety and well-being. She described a powerful moment when she first became aware of her school community during her first year:

> On national coming out day— which I want to say was somewhat early in the year— what the Urbanton GSA used to do about this was say 'It's national coming out day, and if you are gay or lesbian or bi or trans or anything, we invite you to stand up.' The first year I was there, I didn't stand up, because I wasn't out yet. But, just a *huge* amount of the room stood up and it was this startling moment of 'wow, ok, that many people are out and totally comfortable standing up in an 'all school' context'…[I] had felt that I wanted to be out in high school, and was thinking about how to do it, and that was a striking moment when I thought 'well, OK, maybe I could actually do that'…I don't even know what the numbers were, but it was a lot of people…including various teachers and a bunch of students that were in chorus. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily's experience presents an unusual case compared to many other students' schools across the United States where LGBTQ+ individuals remain an underrepresented population, and where students who identify as LGBTQ+ often feel alone (LGBT demographic data interactive, 2019). For Emily, the proportionately large representation

of self-identified gender and sexually diverse people in her school provided her with many positive role models and helped her to feel safe and free to openly explore herself with others.

Despite the safe and diverse atmosphere at Urbanton, however, statements about diversity and inclusion on the school website were few, and I had to look hard to find the student handbook hidden on a parents' page (Urbanton website). Once I was able to access the anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies listed in the handbook, however, I found them to be comprehensive and thorough. Moreover, I was pleased to read language specifically addressing protection for students and faculty based on sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, and gender identity, as well as specific supports for transgender students which read:

> Particularly with respect to transgender and gender non-conforming students, the school will work closely with students and their families to honor their wishes with respect to use of school facilities, participation in athletics, accuracy of student records, use of preferred name and pronouns, and privacy. (Urbanton website)

Inclusive school policies send the message to students and their parents that they are safe and protected (Alvarez, 2017). Exposure to written policies may be particularly helpful for students, parents and teachers, who are new to school and learning about the system. Although the Urbanton school's policies clearly outlined supports for transgender students, their hidden placement on the website may have limited some people's access to the information and diminished their value.

GSA. Emily took an active role in the school's GSA in all four years of high school and became one of the co-leaders during her senior year. Membership was small despite the proportionately high LGBTQ+ identified population. As Emily explained:

> Not all of them went to GSA. This was partly because a lot of people felt like 'well, it's a true fact about me and not something I need to talk about at lunch. I'm quite happy to have it be true and not do anything about it,' but it was a good group. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

The group typically met during lunchtime to discuss issues or plan an event. Emily clarified that the GSA at Urbanton did not need to work as much to affect change because the school was already so supportive and inclusive. "I think a lot of GSAs sort of struggle with their own [school] administration, sometimes," Emily stated, "We were pretty lucky in that respect. There wasn't a lot to fight about" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Instead, Urbanton GSA meetings were primarily social gatherings where students could just be together. Emily reflected thoughtfully on the group's purpose:

> You know there is sort of this balance between 'Is it going to be a safe space to go hang out with people like you?' or 'an activist space to go get things done?' I mean, the answer is always both…we did both. But, mostly it was to be with each other and talk about some interesting article or issue. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

During Emily's tenure in high school, there was a dramatic shift in trans awareness around the country as human rights organizations and law makers began to put policies in place to protect transgender individuals in health care and in the workplace

(Garza, 2012). The resulting media attention, as well as increased involvement from celebrity spokespersons, helped raise trans visibility nationwide and gain public support. "There was starting to be more awareness and more talk about it," Emily recalled (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). During her senior year, Emily co-led the GSA with a trans friend. Together, the two worked to raise trans awareness at school which was a subject that the school had not fully addressed in the past:

> We had talked about trans things before that, but it was, more often than not, sexuality. So, we tried to bring up more current events things that had to do with that… I think the GSA, and maybe the school in general, became a little more conscious about transness and gender identity, in general, during my time there. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Despite her trans advocacy work with the GSA, however, it was unclear to Emily if all the institutional changes needed to fully accommodate transgender students had taken place in her school, because many of them did not affect her at the time:

> The trans guys that were two-three years older than me had to fight some battles with the administration about new names being accepted in official settings, like chorus rosters, and about bathrooms and about sports. I don't know if they were ever resolved, exactly, because I wasn't going by a new name, I wasn't going by new pronouns, and I wasn't trying to use a surprising bathroom, you know? For me, the things that were relevant and the things I noticed more were— How do people react if I wear earrings or nail polish? If I wear a skirt? You know, social things. Not the sort of structural. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily began to explore her trans feminine, non-binary identity by experimenting with gendered clothing and accessories:

> In high school, nail polish and dangly earrings felt like sort of the only thing I could think of to, like, stake a claim that I wasn't masculine. It actually felt like something I could do. I didn't really ever dare wear a skirt or, you know? (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Although her involvement with the GSA and her inclusive school setting helped Emily feel supported, she admitted to feeling lonely at times as the only non-binary person who was leaning toward female.

> It was, demographically at least, almost all men. In the time that I was there, counting all the grades that overlapped older or younger, I think there were four, five, or six trans men students and one trans man teacher, and two trans women students, and me. So that, sort of, felt a little lonely in that respect… not that there wasn't commonality there, but there is also a difference. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily's comments about her GSA and trans awareness in her school revealed several contrasting elements, all of which point to the need for more education and training for all students and staff, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. First, despite identifying as non-binary and leading her school's GSA, Emily admitted to being unaware of the institutional supports in place for transgender students in her school. Second, Emily's admission that she didn't "dare wear a skirt" demonstrates the extent to which heteronormative beliefs pervade social contexts, even those contexts that are

disproportionately inclusive. Finally, Emily's experience supports Lewis'(2017) findings that gender non-binary students are the most underrepresented and misunderstood group in schools. For, regardless of Emily's LGBT-friendly school climate, there seemed to be a lack of non-binary awareness which left her feeling lonely and unimportant.

In sum, although Emily struggled as the only non-binary student in her school, the overall positive school atmosphere and the GSA gave her a safe place to openly learn more about and assert herself with others. Emily's experience is consistent with Poirier's (2014) findings in which the GSA served as an important resource despite an already supportive and safe school environment. When I asked Emily if she ever attended an LGBTQ+ support group outside of school, she replied that she did not feel the need because her school was so welcoming:

> I was vaguely interested, but never did. I don't remember looking at it that much. I think the need for support groups was relatively low just because the school as a whole was such a lucky place to be in those ways…I think I would've sought something out like that if I'd felt less comfortable at school but it was such a non-issue. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Peers. Emily enjoyed a small but loyal group of friends throughout high school. "I had a very queer group in high school," Emily stated, "Not particularly by design, [because] a lot of us didn't really come out until after we had gotten to know each other" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Finding a peer group of queer, science-oriented, friends seemed to happen naturally for Emily. She described meeting her friend group:

> The Urbanton lobby was where the most, the sort of ‘nerdiest’ and ‘scienciest’ people were, and it was [also] where most of the queer and trans people were. I don’t know that I even really knew the second of those when I, sort of, unconsciously gravitated towards it, but there’s some kind of ‘magical self-selection’ that happens… I didn’t know who they were, and even before I did, [I] kind of ended up in that area. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily was fortunate to have several queer friends, including a trans best friend and partner for several years, who helped her understand herself and feel comfortable sharing herself with others.

Although most of Emily’s social time with her friends took place during school hours, occasionally she would meet friends on the weekends to make music informally:

> I had a bunch of friends that played various instruments. We never quite got as far as forming a band properly, but we’d get together and play music on the weekends. Between us, maybe we’ve got two guitars, a bass, and a drum set. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Music friends played an important role in getting Emily involved with the school chorus:

> I knew a bunch of people who were in the chorus and I don’t know that I would have been as willing to join if they weren’t…but I don’t think they played a particularly huge role once I was there. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

As Emily and her friends embraced their queer identities together within an accepting high school environment, Emily’s need for peer approval lessened which allowed her to develop her musical interests freely and independent from her friends.

Urbanton Music

According to the school website, 80% of the student body at Urbanton enrolls in arts courses voluntarily (Urbanton website). Opportunities in the arts included day courses in dance, visual arts, theater, and music, as well as a few student-led clubs in each of the disciplines. There were two music teachers, according to Emily, "one classical and then one jazz" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Mr. Kendrick worked at Urbanton full time and taught music theory as well as the choruses and the orchestra.

Mr. Kendrick. Mr. Kendrick was Emily's chorus teacher for three years of high school. She described Mr. Kendrick as a stereotypical "gruff" masculine guy whom she did not like at first (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). She recalled her initial impression:

> It was visiting day and my mother and I, independently, at different points in the day both met this guy. Both of us formed really negative impressions. I remember mine was along the lines of, like, thinking he had overly rigid ideas about 'you have to learn these classical things before you're allowed to do anything else.' I can't remember the context, but [I] just got this really sort of 'do it my way' kind of impression of him. And that was all I had to go on, so I really had no interest in putting myself into more contact with him. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

During her sophomore year of high school, however, Emily joined chorus at the urging of her English teacher and advisor, who was also an experienced choral singer and violinist:

> She said, 'You know, I think you should try this choir thing, I think you might like it.' She knew I really didn't like Mr. Kendrick, but she knew that I would, if I got to know him better and, in fact, I did. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Although Emily felt intimidated by Mr. Kendrick's brusque manner at first, she grew to appreciate his stern commitment to choral music.

> He's a serious and gruff and slightly abrasive man. But he cares a lot about doing the music well and, abrasive is a strong word, but, you know… I think [he] seemed a little harsh and intimidating at first, but I came to really like the seriousness with which we took things and took the music and took the text. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily recalled that Mr. Kendrick often discussed lyrics in rehearsals, particularly if the text was something deep or complex. However, she indicated that the lyrics of sacred masses and motets were considered standard and did not need an explanation:

> He focused on the things that had more difficult text to grapple with. Like, I remember him talking some about the poetry from [title of piece withheld] that was, sort of, wild and abstract language… So, you know, in cases like that, there's a lot more to talk about or explain there than there is with a mass or a motet. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

In addition to teaching at Urbanton, Mr. Kendrick also directed a community LGBTQ+ group which, Emily admitted, was "a nice thing to know" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Emily shared that she did not discuss her non-binary identity with Mr. Kendrick because she didn't discuss that with anybody, but, generally, she felt comfortable in chorus. She stated:

> I never talked to any of my teachers about that in HS because, again, it wasn't like I was asking to be referred to any differently with different language or anything.

> By the time I graduated I think most of, at least, my grade knew…I do think that chorus felt like a, sort of, generally welcoming space and I'm sure that was partly [Mr. Kendrick's] doing, and partly because it was a school full of mostly pretty nice people. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily's experience with Mr. Kendrick highlights the importance of first impressions and establishing an open and inclusive atmosphere from the start. Were it not for Emily's strong childhood music experiences and peer support in school, she may not have tried chorus after her negative first impression.

Chorus. There were two choruses at Urbanton, both of which met during the school day two times per week and included faculty as well as students. Emily joined the large, non-auditioned, mixed chorus of 50+ people during her sophomore year, where she sang tenor 1. She quickly gained the attention of Mr. Kendrick who assigned her solos and recommended her for select school and state ensembles the following year. Emily noted that there were a number of LGBTQ+ individuals in the mixed chorus:

> There were a bunch. I don't remember specifically who *was*, in chorus, but I'm sure there were plenty. I did not at all ever feel like I was the only one. [I] might have been the only trans person in chorus, though. There were a few other trans students [in the school], but I don't think any of them sang. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily auditioned for the smaller select chorale of 16–20 people at the end of her sophomore year at the recommendation of Mr. Kendrick who singled out several students out in class. "'Some of you should think about trying out for Chorale next year,'" Emily

recalled Mr. Kendrick saying, ‘you should, and you should, and you should [pointing to Emily]’” (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). Auditions were a casual mix of sight-reading, tonal matching, and range checking without the pressure of singing a prepared solo. Emily recalled that she felt comfortable in the auditions. “He knew us pretty well,” Emily stated, “he knew our voices” (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). Emily sang in both the mixed chorus and the select chorale for her junior and senior years.

In addition to feeling more comfortable with Mr. Kendrick, Emily also grew to love the feeling of musical “togetherness” that singing in a chorus brings. She stated:

> I also just like choral music for its complexity and communalness. I mean, even in a way that seems quite different from orchestras. There’s a real physical unity of people being the instruments and the mass of bodies being what is producing the sound together and the sort of synchronization that happens between people…There’s something real, I don’t know, animal bonding about that, in a very good way. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

She especially enjoyed her small chamber chorale work and spoke about it in a visceral, almost spiritual, manner:

> What I’m talking about is independent of size, but also somewhat limited to smaller groups…but, on a human level, not just a musical level. That sense of very intentional togetherness that arises from listening hard and breathing together…which, I think, is more available both with a smaller choir and a more serious choir… which is about as good as it gets. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily compared her small chorale experiences to the experiences she had with playing

chamber music as a child:

> I had done some chamber music on the flute, which I also took lessons on, and I had a couple of friends in middle school— one played the violin and one played the cello—So, I knew enough that I had a context for making music with people and in a 'fun size' of ensemble, to just sort of hear and react. So, choir didn't feel like that when it was a 50–60 person un-auditioned high school group, but [it] felt a little a little bit like that in a smaller auditioned group. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

One of Emily's most powerful small ensemble moments was during an all-state conference rehearsal where Emily had been accepted as a tenor. "I remember that being not personally powerful so much, but being musically powerful. It felt different and more intense than I previously realized music could" (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). She described the experience:

> One of the things we were singing was [motet name withheld]. And, at some point in one of the two big long rehearsal days the conductor said 'I want you all to hear how this sounds with four on a part, not, you know, 50 something on a part, [but] as a small ensemble. Who thinks they have it memorized?' And I put my hand up and was one of the tenors he called up front to sing the thing memorized and I hadn't done that before. That was a really, really striking moment. I mean, I had sung in a group of that size but not un-conducted and not with people who were that good. I don't remember how good they were but, you know, the people within all state choir who decided to raise their hands and so they were a good

> group of people. And, it was just a really sort of musically intimate feeling experience, this kind of real close connection of listening hard with not very many people. And I just sort of hadn't known that was a thing and it was just a really, really striking moment. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily's all-state and chamber music experiences resembled what Csikszentmihalyi (1988) described as an "optimal experience" in which individuals enter a "flow" state of being (p. 29). During flow state, individuals experience deep concentration combined with a loss of self-consciousness and anxiety as they work towards a clear goal. The result is an enjoyable and stimulating event which motivates people to seek more. For Emily, flow state occurred when she sang with a small, highly skilled chamber group that was concentrating, listening, and breathing together, thus creating an optimal experience that helped her feel secure and comfortable adding her tenor voice to the ensemble. Additionally, Emily's optimal music experiences fostered a deep connection to others through music which motivated her to continue in chorus.

Seating in the Urbanton choruses was self-selected by voice part and, roughly, in a semi-circle. Emily felt comfortable where she sat in the tenor section and regarded this casual arrangement as normal for high school:

> E. We actually sat in a big circle in one or two rows or, maybe, it was just kind of one big messy row that was deep in some sections…There certainly weren't assigned seats. We all, sort of, ended up where we ended up.
>
> L. Did you like where you sat?
>
> E. Yeah. I don't remember thinking about the physical layout, but I liked the

> people I sat near… All of the sections had teachers sitting in them. The tenor section was actually a funny, small, almost half-teachers, kind-of-a section. I remember sitting near the math teacher I had all four years who I liked a lot. He was a good singer. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Emily felt comfortable singing alongside her teachers and did not seem to think it was all that remarkable. Since she had grown up performing alongside her parents and other adults in the folk festival, intergenerational singing was familiar.

The chorus concert uniform consisted of traditional suits for the tenors and basses and dresses for the sopranos and altos. Emily felt uncomfortable wearing a tuxedo but, because this was Emily's first choral experience, it was difficult for her to assess whether this was standard practice or deserved to be challenged.

> It wasn't the situation where the choir owned lots of the same mass produced [uniforms], but I did have to wear masculine clothes for the concerts. I didn't quite know how to push back on that because, again, what I wanted at that point wasn't even like I wanted to wear a dress. It was… you know, what does 'in the middle' even look like for formal concert wear? What is 'non-binary concert attire?' You know? I didn't have an answer to that myself, so I didn't know what to ask for. It didn't even occur to me that there was something I could do besides wear a suit and feel uncomfortable about it. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Gendered dress requirements affect all students, but may be particularly constraining for non-binary students who identify as neither male nor female or both. For this reason, Emily urged educators to consider gender-neutral options such as choosing a color

scheme rather than a particular style. “We definitely had a pretty strict, sort of, jacket and tie with pants,” Emily stated, “[I] would find some alternative to that and, increasingly, [I] think the easy alternative is to just wear all black and don’t worry about the details” (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Repertoire in the choruses at Urbanton included mostly pieces from the Western classical choral canon as well as one piece with orchestra each year. Other than a few spirituals, the Urbanton choruses did not, typically, sing any popular or jazz arrangements. “We did one, sort of, regrettable choral arrangement of an old jazz tune called [jazz standard name withheld], with some ridiculous words,” Emily scoffed, “but most of it was pretty serious a cappella or piano choral rep” (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Emily accepted Mr. Kendrick’s repertoire choices without question and learned to value certain “serious” works over others, a trait she would later carry into her own conducting.

Emily connected most deeply with the early music repertoire of the select chamber chorale. She recalled the first time she heard the smaller group at school and was inspired by the sounds that would lay the foundations for her deep commitment to early music:

> I remember, my sophomore year of HS when I was in the larger group, the pieces that the smaller group was working on were so interesting and so different from other choral music that I had ever encountered… I remember I had a free period and used to go down and listen outside the door when they were rehearsing. It wasn’t a ‘me as an individual performing’ musical moment, but it was a, sort of

moment of 'I didn't realize that voices could do that' moment. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Emily and I talked about her high school chorus repertoire and some of the pieces that were particularly inspirational including a group of French motets and a Holocaust memorial piece in English. Her memory was astounding as she quoted and sang several complex musical passages to me without hesitancy. "I remember on a pretty word-for-word level what those texts of the motets meant," Emily stated, "and [Mr. Kendrick] making space in rehearsal to talk, I think, quite a bit, about the poetry [of the Holocaust piece]" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Although connecting with the text was important to Emily, Mr. Kendrick rarely discussed the lyrics of sacred works. Instead, the Latin texts of sacred masses and motets were treated as part of the standard choral canon and to be sung without question. "He didn't [discuss text] with something sort of as conventional as a mass," Emily stated, but then she reconsidered, "of course, a mass wasn't as familiar to me at that age" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Mr. Kendrick assumed that everyone in the chorus understood the sacred texts and appreciated the value of the music, Emily implied. This shaped Emily's understanding of the choral canon and contributed to the normalization of the repertoire, which Emily carried with her into college.

Theater. In addition to chorus, Emily took part in Urbanton's after school theater program all four years by helping to run the lights and sound. She found the lighting booth to be a comfortable place where she could participate in a staged production, but also be herself. Emily reflected:

> There's some sort of tenuous connection to draw between being uncomfortable in ways I didn't quite understand yet, with presentation, and liking the job where you sit in the dark and do all the interesting lights and sound stuff but no one can see you. Kind of goes hand in hand. Being involved in the performance in that kind of rush and excitement and making a creative thing, but from behind the board in the balcony where no one can see you. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Although not part of the musical experience itself, Emily's theater experience highlights ways that technical work in the theater can be equally as empowering for students. Not all students need to be on stage to feel their identities strengthened by the theater experience.

Celebrity role models. Outside the school environment, Emily recalled listening to a variety of 1980s and 90s alternative rock bands in high school. One band, in particular, provided a non-binary model from which Emily drew musical as well a personal inspiration. She described the band "Placebo":

> I don't know, you used the word "idol" which makes me think as much about the person as well as the music. And, I think… there's a band called Placebo, who the lead singer was a sort of David Bowie-ish figure…sort of a flagrantly androgynous kind of a rock musician figure. That was definitely an important person or persona to me. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Placebo's lead singer is Brian Molko, who is openly bisexual and known for his dramatic flair and androgynous style (Dedman, 2017). The band's lyrics often explore socially charged subjects such as bisexuality, drug use, and mental health. They have won numerous awards and worked closely with David Bowie until his untimely death in 2016.

Emily named both Molko and Bowie as important role models during high school.

In sum, high school music and theater provided safe and nurturing environments for Emily, where she felt artistically challenged and benefited from sitting alongside LGB role models of all ages on a regular basis. Her experiences not only shaped her identity as a singer, but also lay the foundations for her future role as a choral director. She felt validated as a musician by Mr. Kendrick, who recognized her talent and recommended her for select opportunities like the chamber chorale and the all-state festival. Exceptions to Emily's overall positive experience were Mr. Kendrick's "gruff" demeanor, which made for a somewhat formal relationship, and the practice of wearing gendered uniforms which created unnecessary tension and discomfort. An enlightening discovery was Emily's comments about her work backstage in the theater where the lighting booth provided her with both a place to participate in the fantasy on stage, as well as privacy to relax and be herself in the dark.

Traditions College

Following high school, Emily entered Traditions College with the intent to major in math, but she eventually transferred to the music department where she ended her college career as one of the assistant choral directors. Although discussion of college reaches outside the parameters of this study, Emily's experiences beyond high school provided an additional lens through which to view her musical journey and better understand her experiences. Additionally, tracing Emily's transition from non-binary to female helped me understand the different challenges Emily faced as a woman which allowed us both to view her high school experiences from a deeper perspective.

As Emily moved from a progressive high school setting to a more traditional college setting outside the city, she encountered more entrenched heteronormativity which was intensified by the comparative lack of trans knowledge on campus. This made it more challenging to openly identify as trans. At the same time, support from the music department provided the encouragement she needed to come out and be herself during her final year. A summary of Emily's college experiences highlights four main areas of consideration: campus climate, choral conducting, identifying as female, and musical transcendence. This is followed by a discussion of Emily's present musical situation.

Campus climate. Traditions is a small private liberal arts college in a rural part of the East Coast where Emily majored in math and music (Traditions website). "It was a small liberal arts school where people were very good musicians," Emily stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Although the school has made strides in terms of promoting a diverse culture, Emily felt that they still have more to accomplish because some people "still feel excluded from campus life once they get there" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She recalled her brief experience with the campus's Pride alliance during her first year in which trans individuals went unrecognized:

> [The school] wasn't a place that was very aware of transness, even within the Pride alliance. I went my freshman year, sporadically, and I just didn't go again because I just didn't feel like it was a comfortable place to be as a non-cis person (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Emily described the atmosphere in the alliance as well as her feelings of frustration:

> It was, like, this is a room for lesbians and gay people and, maybe even, bi people, but on the rare occasions that 'transness' came up in conversation, it was in this, kind of, stilted, distant language, like, 'Oh, right, and if there were people like this…' and like, 'we don't know how to talk about this,' and 'this doesn't apply to anybody in the room…' and 'we feel strange even discussing it…' So, if that's what it's like in this space, given that the gender I was wishing I could be open about was a non-binary one, if the *Pride alliance folks* don't seem to have thought about transness at all, what are the chances that the wider community has even heard about non-binariness? Am I going to be explaining all of this to every person that I want to come out to? You know? And I didn't yet have a new name and new pronouns I wanted to go by, so it, sort of, held non-concrete. And, I don't even know [how to have] that conversation. 'So here's this thing that you've never heard of. Ok, I'm *that*. It doesn't affect what you call me.' Somehow, it just felt insurmountable…And so I thought, 'maybe it's just me and no one's heard of it. Huh. I guess I'll just not talk about it.' (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

The lack of trans awareness in the school's Pride alliance gave Emily the impression that the entire campus harbored ignorance which made Emily feel unsafe to come out and prompted her to conceal her identity. When Emily began using "they/them" pronouns during her sophomore year of college, she chose to reveal her non-binary identity and pronouns to only a few friends and family rather than continually explain herself to others. Emily's experience is consistent with studies indicating that "colleges are not immune to negative societal attitudes and discriminatory practices" (Beemyn & Rankin,

2011, p. 81). When the Pride alliance showed no understanding of transgender or gender non-binary identities, Emily was left feeling unsupported and alone.

Traditions music and choral conducting. Emily eventually found solace in the music department where she was able to grow and develop trust. During her first year in the music department, she joined a student-led early music chamber group and "fell in love with that kind of music and that group of people" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She sang tenor all four years with the group and became one of the co-directors during her sophomore year. Emily described her student-led ensemble experience with passion:

> [It was] like 10 or 12 people and you… nobody's waving their hands in front, you know? You're singing with the group and sort of breathing them in and leading them that way. But [I] got a first taste of directing in the sense of picking repertoire and making musical choices about shaping it and running a rehearsal and, you know, trying to get a thing ready for performance. Sort of everything but the actual, manual technique, hand waving aspect with no real training…you learn from having watched people do it before you. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily's self-directed ensembles paralleled the informal music making practices with which she was so familiar, where musicians engage in music for the intrinsically rewarding experience, itself, rather than to meet a prescribed teacher agenda (Jenkins, 2011). Being part of a select, self-directed chamber group helped Emily feel included and valued as a musician, and co-directing the group ignited her interest in choral conducting.

Although Emily did not enter college to study music conducting, she grew to love the art and sought opportunities to learn on campus. An unexpected result of this inquiry

was Emily's discussion of her conducting lessons during her final years of college, after she had transitioned to female. Emily found traditional preservice conducting lessons to be uncomfortable because they involved using mirrors and video recordings to provide feedback, which brought on feelings of dysphoria. Alternatives to this practice were not offered, nor did Emily ask for accommodations. Her experience was further aggravated when the professor mis-gendered her. Emily recounted:

> A conducting lesson I find very vulnerable. Sort of, standing in front of a mirror and somebody observing you minutely. Having your physical actions be scrutinized. 'How exactly are you holding yourself? How are you holding your hands? How are you standing?' Ten minutes into the lesson, he slips up about pronouns and then I'm just feeling scrutinized and horrible through the rest of it, in my head, and not really in my body and not really able to focus on what I'm doing and doing it well and… you know, that was hard. That was a hard first conducting lesson and made me nervous going into lessons with him afterwards. (Emily interview, July 4, 2018)

Emily's experience confirms the need for more work in the area of conducting and gender inclusivity, as well as careful consideration of the practices used in traditional preservice methodology courses that may limit students' abilities to fully engage with their lessons.

Despite difficulties with conducting lessons, Emily felt passionate about choral music and believed that conducting was the right musical path for her. "It was exciting and felt like 'Oh, shit this is maybe, actually, what I'm actually supposed to be doing!'"

(Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She applied for and was granted a position as the assistant director of the three main choirs at the college for her final year.

Identifying as female. During her junior year of college, Emily began identifying as female. "[I] sort of had this strange realization that actually 'woman' had come to feel like a much more right answer than 'non-binary,' and a much more lasting answer, and was really what I meant," Emily explained (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She had another coming out conversation with her parents. This time, however, the conversation became much more emotional:

> I remember my mother being been pretty overwhelmed and sort of distraught and asking me questions about what this meant I would want to do physically…wanting to know 'Does this mean you're going to start hormones? Does this mean you're going to want surgery?' and me saying, 'Well, I don't think so, but I'm not gonna promise you that right now. At the moment, it's not a thing I want, but I can't promise you that that will continue to be.' (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

As Emily talked about her family and their role in shaping her identity, it was clear that Emily thought highly about her relationship with her parents and valued their support and opinions. Likewise, Emily's parents created an atmosphere conducive to honest and open communication where Emily could share her feelings (Emily field notes, July 18, 2018). Conversations with her mother were difficult, however, because Emily felt that her mother struggled more than her father with the transitions and each step was "a thing" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). "It was just something that she had a lot of anxiety

about," Emily explained, "Like, you know, 'please, please don't tell me' or 'OK I can get used to this, but no farther please' (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Understanding and accepting a child's transgender identity can be difficult for families and many parents feel a "profound sense of devastation, loss, shock, confusion, anger, fear, shame, and grief" (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 38). Emily described her mother's initial reaction to her coming out as female with a mixture of shock and hurt:

> One of the first things she said was something to the effect of…'well, you're not gonna cut anything off are you?' Which, you know, no, in fact, I wasn't planning to. And it was the, sort of, out-left-field, like, 'that's not what I'm talking about,' you know? I understand why she might've [thought that], but it was a really startlingly visceral, and, kind of, violent phrase for her to come out with as a first response. And [it was] something that festered a little bit. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Although Emily felt hurt by her mother's initial reaction, she also empathized with her mother, stating "I can sort of imagine, although [I] can't, really, not having experienced in it from that side, but, you know, the bodily integrity of your child, who you born and raised, is a pretty powerful thing for a mother" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Coming out as female was complicated by the fact the Emily's sister was going through a particularly difficult time mentally and emotionally, which added to the family's stress. While Emily was sympathetic to her parents' struggle, she grew frustrated when they asked her to keep her transition hidden at home. "It meant that being at home was pretty excruciating," Emily recounted, "I mean, having to effectively be back in the

closet when my sister was at home and awake, you know? That was hard. That was a really hard summer" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). She called her parents and gave them an ultimatum:

> I remember late one night calling and saying, basically, 'look, I can't tell you what it's going to do to her mental health, but I can tell you what it's doing to mine, right now…And I don't mean this as a threat, but I don't think I can come spend winter break at home if I'm gonna be spending three or four weeks not being me.' (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily and her parents did eventually discuss Emily's transition with her sister and, to the family's delight, Emily's sister seemed to accept the change just fine. "That was sort of a turning point for the better in terms of my relationship with my family about all this stuff," Emily stated (Emily interview, July 18, 2018).

At the same time Emily came out to her parents, she also came out to the Traditions music department. The response was positive even though some professors struggled with her name and pronouns:

> They were all supportive. I think some of them knew how to be supportive more than others did, but nobody was - there was not any nastiness about it. And some of them were really thoughtful and good about it. And, you know, were not perfect in getting used to new pronouns or a new name, but tried. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily was surprised by some of her professors' responses. She described her experience with a mixture of pleasure and annoyance:

> My first [college choir director] was in the habit of saying “men, women” for tenors, basses, sopranos, and altos, but made me a real, and mostly successful, effort to change… and it was not a conversation that ever needed to happen [with me]. I imagine that somebody did, or that she just thought about it hard over the summer and realized that that was a thing that she should do, which is sort of not a big thing, but…she’s had a long career and a long time to make these habits and so I was pleasantly surprised to find things like that, actually…The other [choir director], who is a younger teacher and a very progressive and social justice oriented and politically “good” seeming teacher, was really not that good at pronouns in practice, which was rough. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Some professors asked how they could help, and one professor offered to tell others at a department meeting so Emily didn’t have to approach each one individually. “I said ‘yeah, that certainly sounds easier than telling everybody one by one,” Emily stated (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). A few professors worked to make their classrooms more gender inclusive by asking everyone to introduce themselves with their pronouns. Emily had mixed feelings about this practice because it forces people to either come out or hide themselves. As she explained:

> There were some professors that started making preferred pronouns part of the start of the semester. You know, go around and introduce yourself and your pronouns on the first day of class, which wasn’t entirely just because of me, but maybe that made them think about it a little harder… And I’m of two minds about whether this is the right thing to do. I have felt very strongly that it is, at some

> points… The good thing about it is that it normalizes the question that needs to be asked, but the tricky thing about it is that… If you're trans but not quite sure, you know, 'am I 'she'? am I a 'they'? what name?' or, if you're trans and, you're not ready to be out yet, if nobody asks, then maybe you can kind of get away without telling anybody, but if somebody ask you, then you either have to out yourself or mis-gender yourself, you know? So, it's great if you want to be out. It's not great if you are not ready for it. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily felt supported by her fellow students, although their need for education was apparent. "The singers were really pretty good," Emily recalled, "but I think I was many people's first real "trans acquaintance" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She described using her position as assistant director to help educate the directors and students about "transness" and her needs:

> The year that I was the assistant choir director at Traditions we had, I think, three "out" trans people that year, besides me, having maybe not one before. So, it happened to be the year that the director I was working with before had to, sort of, confront this question, and it was both nerve-racking and handy that I was her assistant that year. You know, to sort of be able to help that change along, and push her gently. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily and I discussed ways that she "gently pushed" her director and peers to create a more inclusive space:

> I don't think I did the bringing things up in the first place, but [I] was glad to be the personal assistant that she could bounce ideas off and be thinking with when

> the things came up. Like, there was this group of students who brought up the idea of “women’s chorus” and here I was, as a person that she had worked with and trusted, as a student, and, also, as a trans person, to help her think about that, which was just, sort of, a lucky accident of timing that I was there. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Binary gendered choruses have a long history in the traditional choral paradigm and, although researchers have investigated the merits of separate male and female choirs, there has been little consideration of trans voices in this model (Freer, 2007, 2010; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Zemek, 2010). This was not the case for Emily, however, whose presence may have prompted a discussion of gendered choruses at Traditions. With Emily’s help, the formerly named “women’s chorus” changed its name to a gender-neutral title and realigned their mission to be more inclusive.

Despite making strides in gender inclusiveness during Emily’s tenure, however, gendered uniforms continued to be a problem in the music department at Traditions and Emily was forced to choose between the school-owned tuxedo or dress for all the years that she sang as a chorister (she wore the tuxedo until her final semester). Moving to the front of the choir as the assistant director her final year, however, allowed Emily to assert her trans woman identity without the heteronormative pressures associated with gendered uniforms and where she could choose the direction of the music as well as her attire:

> As the assistant, I could get away with wearing a “different thing” because I was one of the conductors, you know? And I could begin to figure out what it was I wanted to have as a conducting outfit when I didn’t have to deal with this, sort of,

"one of the two" styles to choose from. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Although Emily faced challenges with her family and the music department, Emily remarked that she was able to engage in music more deeply after she came out as female. As she summarized:

> I think I spent some time feeling like being openly trans, and letting myself explore that side of things, fully, was going to be incompatible with pursuing music fully. And thought that, if I wanted to do this, [trans] had to take a backseat, to some extent. And, I think, now I would say to my younger self, 'turns out you can't make music fully if you are squashing part of yourself and you will, in fact, be able to enjoy it more and, also, make better music if you stop trying to suppress it.' (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Musical transcendence. It was clear from our conversations that Emily felt a deep, almost spiritual, connection to choral music and its ability to transcend. She described conducting a chorus rehearsal the day after the 2016 Presidential election:

> The other choir director called me that day and said we should cancel rehearsal, 'I don't know what to do.' And I thought about it and I thought, 'you know, I should help people understand, and if we're not there, then… We should have it, because, for some people, the best thing is to give them some normalcy. We should try to provide that.' And so…when we got to that piece I said 'you know, I don't want to assume I know what you all are feeling about the world right now, but I'm sure some of you, like me here, are pretty scared and unsure about what things look like now. I'm not particularly religious, but [choral title withheld]

> seems like a pretty good message right now' [Emily recites the English translation of the piece followed by a period of silence]. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Ideas of transcendence, discovery, and vulnerability were common themes in our conversations about music. For Emily's capstone project at Traditions, she composed and conducted her own piece. She chose words from a favorite novel about self-discovery and art and admitted, in hindsight, that the poem seemed to parallel some of her own personal journey:

> Texts were excerpted from one of my favorite novels which I read in high school and loved. It's a story of somebody growing up and sorting out issues of identity and issues of what it means for them to be an artist and to be making art that is somehow engaged in understanding the world and understanding their people and, you know, was a text that resonated [with me], I guess, on some level. Although I don't think I really set it because I… I'm sure I identified with it some, but I… It was also just a text I liked a lot as language. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

I had the privilege of viewing a video of Emily's capstone project and conclude this section with a description of the performance which reflected Emily's musical acumen as well as expressions of her fluid identity:

> The performance begins with the 16-voice mixed chorus entering a bare stage followed by Emily dressed in a simple slacks and dress shirt outfit with her hair pulled back. The chorus stands in a semi-circle as Emily steps to the music stand in the center. The piece begins simply with sopranos singing a slow, lilting melody. They are joined shortly after by the tenors who sing along with them in

> unison. Soon, the rest of the choir joins to complete the verse as the tenors and basses repeat a gentle ostinato pattern on the words “his song.” As the piece continues, the singers continue to express the text utilizing a variety of textures and tonalities, resting every so often on an interesting cadence as phrases are completed. The through-composed piece is 15 minutes long and I am impressed by Emily’s writing. Her score is full of rich 20th century harmonies and complex movement. She has a wide palate of sounds and the voices move frequently and fluidly between major/minor, homophonic/polyphonic, and dissonance/consonance as each lyric is expressed in detail. It is evident that Emily has taken great care to rehearse the choir’s word emphasis, chord tuning, and dynamics. They sing from memory with a relaxed and free vocal tone, and respond heartily to Emily’s conducting gestures. At the end, Emily steps to the side to acknowledge the choir before taking a humble bow herself. She clasps her hands to her chest as she smiles and bows twice. [Emily artifacts]

In sum, college was a time of tremendous personal as well as musical growth for Emily. Personally, she grew to embrace and share her female identity as she negotiated a less progressive environment than high school. Musically, she expanded her passion for choral singing to include conducting and composing. However, even though the music department at Traditions worked to be supportive, they were not fully prepared to create gender-inclusive spaces, and Emily needed to help educate others upon her arrival. Emily’s experiences highlight ways that she was both encouraged and alienated by others through LGBTQ+ representation (or lack thereof), language, teaching practices, and

music. At the same time, Emily's courage to come out in college, despite a less welcoming climate, was a testament to her inner strength and resilience.

Looking to the Future

An investigation of Emily's vocal and religious experiences following college illuminates some important considerations for educators wishing to create more inclusive spaces. Following graduation from Traditions College, Emily continued her music studies with the eventual goal of directing her own choral groups. She took conducting lessons and was employed as a tenor at a local church. Additionally, she began exploring her voice more as well as her Jewish identity.

Singing. Emily continued to feel comfortable singing tenor in chorus throughout her college years and following graduation. She viewed her vocal instrument with practicality and indicated that the language of traditional voice parts did not present a problem for her:

> Well, "soprano, alto, tenor, and bass" is not problematic at all. That's something that just *is*…I've always thought about it as just a voice part…I am a tenor. That's an accurate description of what my larynx does. That's just as true as saying I'm 6'2". (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

She appreciated opportunities to be able to explore her range and pointed to warm-ups as one place she could safely explore:

> The more free form warm-ups, if that makes sense… not just "sing this particular pattern of notes," but more of the, kind of… Like, for example, 'sing a note in this chord, now, while holding that, I'm going to pick another chord.' Sort of, where

it's a little more, like, exploring as an individual and free. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

When I first asked Emily about singing tenor in chorus, Emily clarified the physiological makeup of her voice and did not seem to express any particular yearning to sing other voice parts. "I sang some alto in college, and I still do, occasionally, as a high tenor who has a passable falsetto," Emily explained, "but I am still basically a tenor" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). In later conversations, however, Emily stated that she was thinking about working on her countertenor range but felt conflicted. She discussed her hesitancy:

E. I've thought about [trying countertenor] recently. And I did some, at least, in that early music student directed group in college…it's a goal in a not particularly concretely, urgent kind of way… And, I haven't really worked at it sort of, you know, [by] saying to people from church choir, like, 'you know, I like singing these parts and I'd be happy to sing these parts.' I've never been quite sure how much they think I'm good enough for singing that part and [would] put me on that part, but they sometimes have… It's been very much on the back burner, but it's a thought.

L. How do you feel when you're singing up in your higher range?

E. It's mostly, sort of, an affirming identity thing for me. And it matters to me more when I'm singing on my own. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Although Emily took voice lessons in college, she found them to be stressful and dysphoric:

> E. I had not taken voice lessons until college. I never really wanted to. I mean, I have had choral solos within a choral piece, but I've never taken voice lessons with a teacher and worked on art songs and stuff until my last year.
>
> L. How did it go?
>
> E. It's been useful. It hasn't been wildly useful, but it's some good technique. I think I find [solo singing] a little more dysphoric than I find choral singing, because it's much more exposed…And so, you know, art songs are interesting, but the combination of not being as interesting to me and being somewhat more provoking of dysphoria has made me not that interested. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

She wished to explore her counter tenor range in her voice lessons, but she never voiced this request to her teacher. "I kind of thought about telling the voice teacher, that I studied with in college, that I wanted to work on that instead, but then I didn't" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Additionally, Emily valued her lighter, higher range and feared that voice lessons might disrupt her ability to use it.

> I've never really known where my break into my falsetto is, and no voice teachers and no conductors I've worked with have been entirely sure either. I definitely feel like I cheat a little bit as a tenor and mix into the falsetto…and I've known people who took voice lessons and really strengthened their chest voice and then, kind of, lost the ability to do the nice floaty, blendy, alto choral thing that I really value being able to do. And it was much more important to me to be, you know, to be able to sing the sort of funny, fifth middle part in a Renaissance motet that's

> kind of between tenor and alto, with two altos, and sound nice, than it was to be a really convincing solo tenor voice. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Emily's discomfort with solo performing highlights a need for educators to reconsider the practice of mandatory private vocal lessons and solo recitals for preservice students. As Emily remarked, "I have not really ever been a solo singer so, you know, being a tenor in the end-of-the-year voice recital is sort of nerve wracking and one of the reasons why I might not take voice lessons again" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Instead, Emily preferred singing in a chorus where she could blend her voice with the group. She stated:

> I find singing a male voice part chorally much less dysphoric than I do solo because it's more like a group of people making a group sound and, you know, it's not as exposed. So, if I feel confident that my fellow singers aren't making bad gender assumptions about me because of my voice, then I'm really not bothered by singing the tenor part in a choir. (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Emily enjoyed being able to lose her individual identity within a group singing experience and felt protected by the anonymity that comes with singing in a choir. "Singing in a choir, there's sort of this massive sound produced by a massive [group of] people and this anonymity," she stated, "Somebody has to look a little carefully and notice which part you're singing (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Yet, Emily's inner struggle with her voice was evident in the way she worked to balance her role as a choral leader with a desire to explore her upper range. Although she felt secure with her tenor voice and valued her position within her church choir, she also wished to experiment with singing countertenor and wondered if it was safe to do so: Will her directors approve?

Will she be vocally successful? Hearns and Kremer (2018) recommend that teachers and directors talk with singers about their vocal desires "and create room for flexibility" (p. 46). In Emily's case, discussions with her church choir director were needed to alleviate her inner conflict and help clarify her vocal goals.

Identifying as Jewish. Although Emily's heritage included both Jewish and Christian roots, her family did not engage in the formal traditions of either religion. Most recently, however, Emily has begun exploring her Jewish faith by observing some holidays and occasionally attending services. Discussions with Emily about her religious experiences illuminated various ways that her Jewish, trans feminine, and musical identities intersected.

Emily stated that there was no real conflict between trans feminine identity and her Jewish faith during her school years. "Had I grown up with [more Jewish traditions], I think I would have had some really complicated feelings about things like bar mitzvahs," Emily reflected, "But that wasn't a thing in my family" (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). Identifying as trans feminine and Jewish has become a concern more recently as she looks for a welcoming worship community. Emily stated:

> It would be complicated to be approaching that at this point, anyway, having not grown up with it…now, it's even a little more complicated looking for a good space and a good community to think about that, with transness in the mix. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Emily explained that it was difficult to determine whether or not to try again with each new place. Does it "feel weird" because it's not the right place, or does it "feel weird

because I didn't grow up with it?" she questioned (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). Gendered traditions and beliefs within the Jewish faith can create unsafe spaces for transgender individuals (Ladin, 2012). As Emily struggled to understand her feelings about the various worship practices, her search was complicated by fears for her emotional and physical well-being as she entered each new place.

Conflicts between Emily's Jewish identity and music also posed a problem in her role as tenor section leader of a nearby church. Although Emily enjoyed performing sacred early music within a school setting, negotiating her Jewish identity within the confines of a church service was becoming problematic. She discussed the conflict:

> You know, choral music is obviously very historically tied with the church because that's where the funding came from for a lot of centuries…and so I go to church every Sunday morning, which is not something I've ever done before, because I have this job as a tenor. And, I'm also at a point my life where my Jewishness is feeling very important to me. And that sort of tension of, you know, 'OK I should mean all the things that I'm singing, but what does that mean when I'm singing in mass?' And, none of us really think about this text, I think, very directly anyway, because we're all so used to the syllables of the Credo and the Kyrie, you know? So, how do you navigate that? How do you? I don't know that's all… I'm not sure I have any articulate thing to say about that, but it's a question I struggle with a lot. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

For Emily, singing Christian music in a concert was different than singing Christian music in a church service. She explained the difference:

> We did plenty of masses and things [in high school]. I didn't feel any conflict then. But I also wasn't really thinking about my Jewishness. It was a non-issue for me until I was in college. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)…But, singing that music in concert never felt like that kind of conflict to me. And, in fact, really doesn't feel like that much a religious conflict, either. I sort of resent the fact that there's so much more good Christian choral music in the world than Jewish choral music. It's more the singing in the church service context; it feels more like a false statement of faith to sing it for a service than to sing it in a concert, you know? (Emily interview, July 18, 2018)

Although Emily struggled with the spiritual aspect of her church role, she seemed unaffected by the homophobic and exclusionary history of some Christian religions. "Somehow, that never manifested itself much in terms of 'how do I feel about singing these words' as the spiritual discomfort did," she stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Conducting. Emily looked forward to leading her own choir someday and was preparing for various projects. When I asked Emily what she would do differently with her own choruses, she replied:

> Well, some of the most obvious, and most explicitly gender-related things would be just language and dress codes. Which, I know, are, sort of obvious…And, I mean the question of sacred music with choirs that aren't church choirs is one that I have a lot of complicated thoughts about. You know, there is so much 'good' music out there that is of that kind, and, of course, you're going to program some of it. But, like, I have been the Jewish kid in the choir being tired of singing a

> Christmas concert every year. And so, in the very least, trying to get a lot of good secular stuff in and, you know, maybe also some Jewish stuff. Although there is not much of that out there. (Emily interview, September 7, 2018)

Emily and I also discussed her views on trans advocacy and trans visibility in her work:

> I do see myself trying to be various kinds of an advocate. I don't know exactly what that looks like, yet, but the part that seems clearest to me is just choices of what to program…I think, there are ways to be very stilted about it like, 'this concert must have a certain percentage of women composers, of queer composers, and composers of color,' and that's maybe not the way it feels to me to go about it. But, I know a handful of young composers who are friends of friends or something, who are queer or trans or various other demographics that are writing choral music. I don't love all of it, and if I don't love all of it, I'm not going to program it. But if I do, you know, one thing that seems worthwhile is fighting for space for those. It doesn't necessarily mean 'they better be setting texts about transness,' but it if happens to, not a bad thing. And I think, or at least I hope, there is some utility in just having trans people leading choirs…I mean, part of me definitely thinks, 'well, it would be nice if I could just direct choirs and not *trans* direct choirs.' But given that the world is as it is, it's kind of good work to do and, maybe, a kind of work we can do, partly, just by just existing. You know, there is some amount of just trying to do the thing well, and if you seem to do it well, then that's kind of a lesson in of itself, whether or not you make a big fuss about it. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

Summary

Emily's music experiences in high school were shaped by a variety of forces that contributed to her sense of musical and personal self. She benefited from a supportive family who provided her with unconditional love and exposed her to a variety of musical experiences. She also benefited from a culturally rich musical environment where she engaged in informal music making practices before and during high school, which strengthened her musical independence and creativity, as well as her artistic relationships with others. Music teachers played a crucial role by providing lessons, and by recognizing and affirming her talent. However, teacher support for Emily's trans identity was not demonstrated until college when she transitioned to female.

As a singer, Emily's relationship with her voice was a complex mixture of pride and insecurity. She understood her tenor voice as an instrument with physical limitations that was independent from gender and was proud of her skill set. At the same time, she wished to explore her falsetto range more and stated that singing countertenor was gender affirming. Similarly, while Emily felt comfortable singing tenor in a choir where her voice blended with the group, solo singing felt too exposed and brought on feelings of dysphoria. For this reason, Emily gravitated to a cappella chamber music where she could apply her advanced musicianship and desire to sing to an intense ensemble experience without the risk of vocal exposure.

Although Emily gained personal freedom and fulfillment as she came to know herself, engagement with society at large grew more complicated as she moved further away from inclusive school environments and began to embrace multiple identities.

Conducting and composing in college provided an additional avenue for Emily to assert her personal and musical independence, and immerse herself in the choral sound which she values. Additionally, conducting allowed Emily to move freely within the choral environment but without the heteronormative constraints associated with singing in a group, and where she could model inclusivity and musical excellence in a leadership role.

Connor, age 18 (he/him/his)

"People like me as a performer, I think"

Connor, Age 18, (Pronouns: he/him/his)

Hometown: urban Northeast

Family: father, mother, two sisters

Homeschool: K-8

Public high schools: Gerston High School, Special School

High school music and drama teacher: Miss Miller

High school music activities: chorus, theater

Instruments/voice: soprano/alto/tenor voice, tin whistle

Connor was a recent high school graduate who transitioned to male at the end of his sophomore year. We met on three occasions at a local LGBTQ+ support center where Connor had attended since he was 15. The center was a comfortable place and the director was warm and inviting as he led us into a private study room to talk (Connor field notes, August 2, 2018). Connor was of slender build with short hair and dressed simply in jeans and a T-shirt. At first, he appeared to be very guarded and unsure with eyes cast down as we tentatively shook hands and I was wondering if our interviews

would proceed smoothly.

As we conversed, Connor kept his satchel wrapped tightly around him and shared minimal eye contact. His defensive physical demeanor was deceiving, however, for Connor was quite articulate and eager to share his stories. This contrast was made even more apparent later when I transcribed our conversations and was struck by the strength and clarity in his voice. He spoke thoughtfully and confidently as we discussed his life and performing.

Connor's background included a unique blend of homeschool, public school, special education services, and community performing experiences. He had recently graduated from public high school where he sang in chorus for two years and participated in the theater program after school. He had a passion for language, history, and the classic arts, and spoke intelligently about a variety of artistic interests.

Connor also spoke honestly about his challenges with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and how it intersected with his music and his transgender journey. These challenges were deeply intertwined with all parts of his story, which made it difficult to categorize this aspect separately. "The more that you learn about like music and theater, like, the more you can apply it to the way that my brain works, the way that my gender works, and vice versa," Connor stated (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Connor felt that music and theater gave him tools to support both his social learning needs and his trans masculine identity by providing models and scripts that he could use to safely explore himself and his relationship with others. Connor clarified:

> Music and theater can let you basically get a chance to do exploring that's not OK in normal situations. Like, you get to try things on and really just kind of act things out in a way that feels very concrete…be experimental. Like, 'this is what it's like to be called a different name.' You get to get used to those things that are really helpful later on. So, I think all of these things are very closely interconnected. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Throughout our conversations, Connor demonstrated tremendous inner strength and a clear sense of self. Contrary to commonly held beliefs about ASD (American Psychiatric Association, [APA], 2019a), I found Connor to be extremely articulate and capable of expressing himself. He voiced concern for others in "dealing" with his trans masculine identity and his ASD, and sometimes labeled himself with self-deprecating terms such as "weird" and "annoying." At the same time, he also used these terms with a sense of pride and uniqueness:

> I'm a little weird. Like, I don't know. It like a 'social thing.' Like, sometimes people ask rhetorical questions and I think they are genuinely asking a question. And, I don't know, people were alienated by that...but I just have very niche interests that they didn't really want to talk about. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Connor's story is organized into the following areas: family, homeschooling and socioeconomic status (SES), childhood theater, identifying as trans, identifying on the autism spectrum, Gertson High School, voice and performing, and looking to the future.

Childhood and Family

Connor grew up in urban locations near a major metropolis on the East Coast. The family did not own a car so they walked or took public transportation everywhere. Connor described his family's SES as relatively low:

> I've always been kind of working class. Like, they've never struggled to feed us. There have been times that were…like, we weren't sure where we were going to be living. There have been like some serious financial struggles. I couldn't always have nice things, but I could have things. So, like, we weren't destitute, but we were pretty poor. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor's parents were both receptionists with college backgrounds. "My mom studied child psychology. My dad didn't finish college, but I think he was mainly going in on, like, a literature path," Connor explained (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). Connor also had an older sister in college and a younger sister who was still in high school. The family did not practice any religion, but Connor's mother followed some Celtic pagan traditions. "My mom is very connected to her Irish ancestry," Connor explained, "She does like the old Celtic things…Just like the mythology and stuff. She's really into that" (Connor interview, August 2, 2018).

Although Connor appreciated his mother's interest in Celtic traditions, he did not feel close to his mother. He felt that she did not like him and treated him differently than his siblings. At the same time, Connor empathized with his mother's financial struggles and attributed her hostility to dealing with this stress:

> She doesn't like me very much…She says some very explicit things that tell me that she has a personal problem with me. She's under a lot of stress, and I understand that, but I am her scapegoat, for reasons untold, and, when she gets angry, if she's not angry at me, she'll find a way to make it about me. And this, again, has nothing to do with me being trans, because this started before that. This is just a thing that's been. And, I don't know, she'll just, like, say things like, 'We have a big problem in this family and it's you.' And if I correct anyone, she'll like jump down my throat. She treats me like I'm very aggressive, but she treats *me* like that, very aggressively, which is contradictory. She's not abusive. I definitely want to say that straight out, but she does have, like, a really personal beef with me…and if she wasn't so different with my siblings, I would be more inclined to not feel that way. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

It is difficult to assess Connor's relationship with his mother without a deeper understanding of his childhood and the ways ASD may have exacerbated the situation. What was clear, however, is that Connor felt disliked and unsupported by his mother.

Connor felt the strongest connection to his dad who took charge of the family's homeschooling and fostered their love for music and reading. "He read out loud a lot," Connor explained, "I remember one time we went through all the *Lord of the Rings* books" (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). Through reading with his dad, Connor developed a deep interest in Shakespeare which provided Connor with opportunities to explore his masculinity and discover his identity:

> I read for the 'Scottish Lord,' when we were reading through it in middle school, and I was just like, that was really my moment of just, like… 'This is what I love. This what I enjoy.' And I think, from there, definitely before I came out, I just started more actively pursuing, like, I know at that point I would've identified as a girl, but I really, really wanted to play a male part. And that was weird, but people let me do it. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor valued his dad's honesty and constructive criticism which helped him feel supported. As Connor described:

> One of the things I like about [my dad] is that he gives honest feedback. You know, some parents would always be, like, 'you did so good, congratulations.' Like, of course, he did say that stuff, but he would tell me why. And he would tell me specific things that I did well. And he would, like, give me pointers. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Both of Connor's parents were amateur musicians. His mom and sister played Renaissance recorder and his dad sang and played piano. Connor credits his dad for teaching the family music. "What I learned, I learned from my dad first," Connor stated, "He tried to teach all of us how to play piano. I never picked it up because— just neurological stuff. But, I learned to sing from him. We all picked that up" (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). The family listened to a variety of music at home. "My dad, I think has the most diverse taste," Connor explained (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). He recalled singing Renaissance motets with his dad. "My dad had a really weird book of, like, English renaissance folk songs," he described, "There was one about a

woman finding the corpse of her lover and then burying him and dying on his grave, because 'Renaissance music,' [Connor smirked] (Connor interview, August 19, 2018). Connor's parents also encouraged the family's love of music by taking them to free concerts in the city. "I went to a lot of classical concerts as a kid," Connor explained, "which I enjoyed a lot…community groups will sometimes do things for free or for less than the price, so I grew up with a wide range of music" (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). The family's shared interest in music and the Renaissance was both comforting and a source of pride for Connor as he became more involved with performing.

Connor's dad homeschooled all three children from kindergarten through eighth grade. Connor enjoyed the freedom of being able to explore his own interests through homeschooling. He recalled:

> I started learning Japanese when I was like 8…my dad was, like, 'OK you can learn Japanese.' And we got a bunch of books and, like, we started watching these shows. He actually went and found, like, a bunch of songs that I could learn, and it was really fun. (Connor interview, August 19, 2018)

While homeschooling provided the opportunity for Connor to pursue his own interests, isolation from others as well as intersections with ASD made it difficult for Connor to build friendships. His mother tried to help by encouraging relationships with her friends' children. As Connor recalled:

> For me, particularly, it was always hard because my older sister and my younger sister would be part of other things and they'd make friends I was… I really, really tried to be friends with my sister's friends, and my mother always tried to

> make me friends with her friends' children, but their children didn't like me at all. And, I think, basically, as soon as we got to an age in early childhood, like 8 or 9, I just kind of noticed, I suddenly have no friends. And then, I think a couple of years later I realized, 'Oh, I suddenly have no friends because, as soon as people were making voluntary decisions about friendship, I was the first person they wanted to get rid of.' (Connor interview, August 2, 2018).

Connor felt that homeschooling was one of the main reasons he did not have any friends. "Homeschooling was definitely among the primary reasons, like, I didn't really have any friends," he stated, "Kids didn't like me and I didn't like them" (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). We discussed the advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling:

> I hated it. I mean, there were, like, good things about it. It was good to be able to spend more of your time doing and researching and studying things that you like. That's kind of how I got to the point that I'm at with theater, with Shakespeare, with music. But by the time I went into high school, I was so unprepared for the social aspect. Like, I was really feral. Which I think didn't help things either with my transition or with school. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor enjoyed studying music and theater as a child and wished he could take lessons. The family could not afford private voice lessons, however, so Connor took it upon himself to learn and teach himself:

> I did a lot of work on it at home, just kind of by myself…Just singing and stuff…I never was able to afford to take voice lessons a la like 'real' private voice lessons, but I would just find resources on the Internet, in the library…For me, it was just

> a hobby that I pursued, kind of, very much of my own volition. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

In addition to singing, Connor found success teaching himself to play the recorder and tin whistle after he stopped piano. He explained the difference:

> I learned to play Irish Tin Whistle and I dabbled in piano for a long time. I was… it's just that things that require any kind of spatial or numerical awareness, I have a very hard time picking up on, just because of how my neurological make up is. So, I really struggled with basically all instruments except for wind instruments because it's, like, it's all in a straight line. It's all right there, so that made sense to me…whereas piano is all over the place. It's just, spatially, it's a large, large thing. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor's comments regarding playing instruments illuminated interesting pedagogical insight, for many students with ASD also struggle with academic learning disabilities such as math or reading (Kroncke, Marcy, & Huckabee, 2016). Additionally, their academic skills can be unequal, revealing a deficit in one area while displaying tremendous strength in another. Although challenges with spatial awareness and symbols made playing instruments and reading music difficult for Connor, he found success with wind instruments. He also benefited from have strong English language skills, which helped him feel successful as a singer and actor.

Connor believed that his parents decided to homeschool their children for both financial and academic reasons. They felt that they could give their children better opportunities for specialized study and exploration by providing it themselves, rather than

paying school fees. Connor explained:

> I got to have more time with music than I would've been able to have at a public school because, even at my high school you can take voice lessons for, like, 20 bucks a week. And, like, even the 'free' public school isn't really as free as people think it is, because they charge fees for extra-curriculars. And like, we were not wealthy. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Financial constraints figured prominently in Connor's discussions of childhood and music. He compared his music experiences to those of his peers:

> There were some kids I knew who were financially in a better position than us. Who were able to do more things and kind of build up a stronger resume when they were way younger than I was able to because, like, a lot of these things charge tuition. A lot of training, like voice lessons, acting lessons and even just a lot of productions will just really eat money. And I wasn't able to do that, at all. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

The disparity between Connor's music experiences and those of his peers was made even more apparent when he began attending public high school at age 14 and when joint concerts with neighboring schools highlighted programmatic as well as economic differences between the towns. Connor was impressed with the other choruses' upscale performance venues and fancy uniforms. "It's a very rich school, so they had, like, fitted uniforms and stuff, and their a cappella group was better than ours, and their auditorium is awesome," Connor described (Connor interview, August 19, 2018). Although researchers have found that music students with low SES perceive themselves to be less

valuable and talented than their financially privileged peers, this was not the case with Connor, who felt confident in his musical abilities and did not equate artistic competence with economic status (Hoffman, 2012; Shaw, 2017). Connor believed that choruses in neighboring high schools had better quality music programs than his chorus, but he viewed this as a programmatic disadvantage, not a personal one. Working on music independently at home bolstered Connor's sense of autonomy, which helped him feel confident and capable as he ventured into the community to perform.

Early performing experiences. Community theater became Connor's primary connection to the performing world and remained a significant force throughout his school years. He began by seeking free performance opportunities in the community as a child. "I've been in theater as soon as my ambulatory childhood began," he remembered, "basically, as soon as I could walk and talk with relative ease, I was on stage as often as I could be" (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Connor stated that he relished performing as a child and rarely got nervous, a fact he attributed to his young age and solitary lifestyle:

> When you start getting interested in this stuff as early as I did, I basically never had a chance to develop stage fright…and I think a big part of why I didn't develop stage fright is because I basically grew up not interacting with my peers. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Through community theater, Connor was able to connect with others as well as explore various male characters on stage, including "Malvolio" in *Twelfth Night.* He stated, "I feel like most of my more positive theater experiences, especially with Shakespeare,

came from outside of high school" (Connor interview, August 2, 20180). He began noticing that he was more comfortable playing male characters on stage:

> Theater, I think, really gave me the grounds to be more experimental and to realize, like, where I was comfortable. And I think really one of the first things that I noticed…was when I realized that I really, really strongly prefer playing male characters…that I am so much more comfortable when I'm on stage and the cast is referring to me as male, and I am male, and, like, this is good. This is where I'm comfortable. And that's the point, I think, where I started questioning. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor's experiences in the theater provided essential validation that he needed in order to grow and thrive. Through performing, Connor was able to safely explore his masculinity and learn about others through scripted models. Additionally, performing in Shakespeare plays fueled Connor's interest in Renaissance history and literature and fostered his desire to be a serious classical actor.

Identifying as Trans Masculine

Connor identified as transgender at age 13 and came out to his family at age 14. Their reaction was positive with the exception of his mother:

> After I came out they were… my dad is really good with the pronouns and with the name thing. And my siblings, like all of them, basically, never slip up. My mom tries her best, like, she is trying. But she's like one of those people who, like, when you correct her, she gets angry. And she's like, 'I had you for 13 years before you pulled this on me.' And she's, like, she makes excuses and, like, she

> gets very defensive…And, like, she doesn't want me to do anything, medically, but, she's not 'unaccepting;' she doesn't try to tell me who I am. She's just a little upset, I think. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Additionally, Connor's mother seemed unaware of basic trans etiquette:

> Like, sometimes she tries to say things authoritatively to me about trans people because she has trans friends and I'm, like, 'It doesn't work that way.' Like, she'll talk about people before they came out and she'll use their old name and pronouns which is, kind of, a thing you're not supposed to do. And, like, I tell her, like, 'OK, if those people said that's OK, you can do that with them, but, like, I prefer it if you didn't talk about that way with me.' And she'd get mad about that and she'd tell me that I was wrong. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor began coming out to his teachers and peers at the end of his sophomore year in high school. He described coming out as a gradual process that is still evolving. "I mean, like there are still some people that don't know," he explained, "…some people come out and immediately tell everyone. I didn't. That wasn't how it worked for me" (Connor interview August 2, 2018). After Connor came out, reactions from people at school were mixed. As Connor described:

> Like, there's always going to be kids who are jerks. There's always going to be teachers who are kind of weird about it. Like, nothing really horrible happened. And, like there were definitely like points when I was more or less comfortable with how I was presenting, but, like, it was messy, but it turned out OK. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

With few exceptions, the teachers at school accepted Connor's transition right away, without the need for official statements or documentation:

> There was some slipping up, at first, where, like, I corrected people in my name, like maybe once or twice. I just basically told my teachers, 'Hey, I want to be called [Connor] now.' And, like, when the teacher started doing it, everyone was, like, kind of confused a little bit, and then they were, like, 'oh that's why.' And, some of them caught on and some of them didn't. I didn't pressure anyone. I did it, kind of, surreptitiously. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Although Connor wished to change his name on official school documents after he came out, this did not happen until halfway through his senior year, after deadlines for SAT exams, FAFSA forms, and other federal applications had passed. Changing names on official documents such as passports, birth certificates, driver's licenses, and other government forms can be difficult for trans individuals, and the legality of such changes varies by state (NCTE, 2019b). Connor described his frustration:

> For SATs and for certain statewide things they do have to use your legal name and they were worried that, like, having a preferred name on some documents and a legal one on other documents would cause some confusion. And it did cause confusion, but eventually they, kind of, decided that it's not worth having this be a problem anymore. It did mean that the first day of class [my junior and senior years], I always had to correct people. Because my name on the roster would always be wrong. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Regardless of legal documentation, Connor believed that it was important to change his

name and pronouns permanently from the onset of his transition rather than ease into the changes or explore the options. He felt that this would help other people view his transition more positively. As he explained:

> C. I picked Connor pretty early in my transition. I stuck with it for a while…Like, I had already been thinking about those things on my own for myself when I was just, kind of, more sure that this is what I wanted to do. Because, like, what you really don't want to do is make a lot of changes, and then end up realizing that you were not thinking things through enough…and especially with names. Like, I know some people who go through like five or six or seven names before they find the one that they really want, and I know some people who go through five or six or seven gender identities and different pronouns before they find the ones they want.
>
> L. How do you feel about that?
>
> C. I think it's good to be able to do that. I also think that, for me, it's something that I would never be comfortable expecting people to put up with. Like, I always feel like my gender identity is such an imposition on other people so I should try to make it smooth as possible. Whereas some people feel like people owe it to them to be accepting, to be respectful. And I wish I had that kind of confidence, but I don't. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Since Connor believed that his gender identity was an "imposition" on people, he often would not correct people on his name or pronouns. As Connor explained:

> C. It would be nice if I could enforce that on people, but I just can't be that obnoxious. I can't afford to be that assertive. Like, I know some people who just right away correct people on their pronouns.
>
> L. Why can't you be more assertive?
>
> C. Because I already annoy people. And, like, when you already annoy people and you're also a minority, making a point of that, makes them think minorities are annoying... Like, because I'm the only trans person a lot of people know, it's basically all on me to either have them not think I'm annoying, or not think I'm trans…Basically, just being trans, you just, kind of, automatically become the poster child for the entire trans community. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Connor's comments illustrate the oppressive reality of his multifaceted identity. As he worked to assert his trans masculine identity and overcome his challenges with ASD, Connor felt pressure to be a role model for the transgender community by suppressing aspects of himself that might be viewed as "annoying." As a result of this oppressive duality, Connor retreated and became less assertive about his needs.

Identifying on the Autism Spectrum

Connor was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) during his sophomore year of high school, at which time the school created an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address his needs. Prior to this, Connor's ASD symptoms posed challenges with relationships beginning at a young age.[12] Connor remembered struggling to learn social skills on his own as a child because he did not receive a

[12] Symptoms of ASD can include difficulty empathizing with others, intolerance for ambiguity, and difficulty articulating inner feelings, (Jacobs et al., 2014).

diagnosis and professional support until he was 15 years old:

> I was obnoxious. I was one of those kids who parents really liked, but, like, other kids really didn't like. Like, I learned how to be friendly from the theater and from television and from books, which are all very larger than life. So, I was very larger than life. And I was, like, never really sure of what other people were aware of, so I would always, like, over explain things or not explain things enough. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Consequently, Connor taught himself to be quiet.

> C. It's always just been something that *isn't* my instinct to shy away from being the center of attention, or from being the only one talking. And I, basically, had to learn through trial and error that I'm not supposed to do that.
>
> L. How did you learn not to talk so much?
>
> C. I learned when people started avoiding me. I was, like, 'why do my siblings have friends but I don't?' And I was, like, 'oh, because I yell at everyone and my siblings are, like, a normal level.' And that was a hard discovery to make.

Researchers have found correlations between gender dysphoria and ASD and noted that trans individuals with ASD may experience greater challenges in constructing their identities because ASD interrupts the social processes needed to construct gender (Jacobs et al., 2014). When Connor entered high school, he felt unprepared socially— a symptom of his ASD that was exasperated by years of homeschooling and a lack of regular peer interaction. At the same time, being in high school gave Connor the practice he needed to improve his social skills. As Connor explained:

> I think, when you're more around your peers in school and you really learn those social rules of, like, 'don't talk when my friends are talking,' or like, 'I can't be the only one who is out in front,' and, like, you've got to fit in, and not do anything embarrassing, you have to not make mistakes…And, I think, part of it is, also, just me being super Asperger's.[13] (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Throughout our conversations, Connor shared ways that his social challenges intersected with music and every day school life. Some of the ways contradicted each other. For example, Connor explained that learning to keep quiet when he was younger made it difficult to reassert himself later on. He discussed the conflict:

> I learned to be quiet and then I had to *un*learn it. I had to unlearn the fact that I basically taught myself that I'm not allowed to be assertive, that I'm not allowed to make impositions…it's something that I'm still working on. And, I think, it's kind of a weird paradox, when you're someone who is outgoing in the sense that, like, you'll talk to anyone and, like, you want to be friendly, and you want things to go well, but you also can't ask for anything, and you know deep down that you're doing this all wrong. (Connor interview, August 19, 2018)

As Connor learned to guard himself by remaining quiet, he began relying on prepared scripts for interacting with others. Scripted conversations can help people with ASD practice social skills (Barnett, 2018). Connor reflected on the art of conversation and the

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[13] According to leaders at Autism Speaks, "Asperger syndrome, or Asperger's, is a previously used diagnosis on the autism spectrum. In 2013, it became part of one umbrella diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 (DSM-5)," (Autism speaks, 2019).

habitual, scripted responses that have become socially acceptable and that many take for granted:

> I think a lot of just the small conversations that we have throughout the day are scripted. I think that's actually one of things it was hardest to get for me as a kid because, like, someone will say 'how are you?' and you will want to tell them how you are, but it's actually just a scripted conversation. They ask the question you say 'good' and then you ask it again. And you go back and forth. There's actually a very small pool of things that are appropriate to say in that context. And, if you think of it like a script, and you just know, like, you find that people are just really very predictable. And if you just say the right things in the right order, you can get them to go away so much faster and have a positive opinion of you. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

As Connor struggled to balance the social and academic challenges associated with ASD, learning various speech routines helped him cope. He found additional help in the theater where the embodiment of different characters on stage helped him explore and practice social skills in a safe environment. When examining Connor's scripted interactions through the reciprocal lens of performativity, it is difficult to identify which came first: Connor's love for performing which fulfilled a social learning need, or the social learning need which led Connor to performing.

Gerston High School

Connor stopped homeschooling at the end of eighth grade and attended Gerston High School for his first, sophomore, and senior years. Public high school was a difficult

shift for Connor. As stated earlier, his homeschooling experiences had not prepared him for the social aspects of school nor the standardized academic expectations. Throughout his four years at Gerston, Connor struggled both socially and academically and spent one traumatic year in an intensive special needs program I titled “Special School.”

Gerston High School is an urban public high school with approximately 1,000 students, situated near a metropolis on the East Coast (Gerston website). The school is part of a diverse community with a large Spanish-speaking population and a commitment to arts and culture (Gerston town website). It is clear from the website that the school works hard to partner with the community; in addition to school information, links on the home page lead users of all ages to a variety of community resources including concerts, health and wellness information, and career services (Gerston website). Some of the pages available in both Spanish and English, and there is a direct link to college application information.

Remarkably, there was no visible student handbook link on the website (Gerston website). Policies protecting students and teachers were found, instead, in the school committee section of the website and labeled simply “school policies.” The policies, which were last updated in 2015, included protections for students based on “sex and sexual orientation,” but the word “gender” was nowhere to be found. Despite the lack of a formal gender-inclusive policy, however, Connor felt that Gerston High School was generally a safe environment where conflicts were handled swiftly and fairly by administrators. He stated:

> I don't think there was a lot of peer bullying going on at Gerston High. Like, I mean, of course, it happened. You can't really avoid that. But, I think, it was handled very well where it did happen. And it never really escalated to the point where people were in danger, Usually, when like the administrator saw a situation between kids getting out of hand, they would be really good about getting that sorted out. And, I think, for the most part they were really fair about that. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Several scholars have noted the importance of teacher intervention to help students feel safe (Johnson et al., 2014; McGuire et al., 2010; Russell, 2010). Because Connor's administrators intervened when there were student issues, Connor felt safe in his urban high school. Despite these feelings of safety, however, Connor admitted to being lonely as "the only trans person" in his peer group. As a result, he sought support from his community's youth alliance.

GSA and LGBTQ+ support. Gerston High School had a GSA that Connor attended on occasion. "It wasn't very well attended," Connor stated, "It was run by one of the math teachers and I actually really liked her. She was very open and supportive person" (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Although Connor was aware of other LGBTQ+ kids in school, they remained fairly quiet and kept to themselves. As far as Connor knew, he was the only transgender person in his peer group and many students' first encounter with a transgender individual. Connor described his experience:

> Like, I knew the LGBT kids. I wasn't the only one, by any stretch of the imagination. But, like...No one was particularly outspoken and I was the only

> trans person that I knew, personally. I knew *of* other trans kids, but I was the only one in my circle of people that I interacted with. And, I think, really, I became of the person who everyone knew. Like, 'I know a trans person. [Connor] is trans.' ...Like, I was '*the* trans kid' for a lot of people... And, when I was out, I didn't really care that people were saying that, but it was, kind of, annoying that, like, I was more a topic *of* conversation, than someone people actually wanted to talk to. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Being tokenized as "the trans kid" in his peer group compounded Connor's feelings of alienation and loneliness.[14] "It was, I guess, a little awkward, and maybe, was part of the reason why I had zero friends. There were many reasons why I had zero friends, but that may have been one of them," he stated (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Since Connor felt othered by his peers at school, he was more comfortable participating in the town's local LGBTQ+ youth alliance where he attended meetings and took part in events. "I've been going to [the alliance] for a long time," Connor stated, "Actually, I think the first time I ever came to [the alliance] I was, like, 13, but I haven't been consistently going since then... But I go when I can. I like it there. It's fun" (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). The alliance provided Connor with a place to find social-emotional support as well as a place to perform in their monthly coffee house concerts.

Gerston teachers. The teachers at Gerston High School were generally supportive and positive, according to Connor. He stated:

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[14] Singling out individuals in an effort to be inclusive—also known as "tokenizing"—perpetuates feelings of isolation and minimalizes individuals' unique circumstances by positioning them as representatives of an entire group (Catalano, 2015; Erber, 2015).

> I had a lot of very positive teacher experiences at Gerston High. I think the staff is generally pretty well trained. They were helpful if you came up to them with any questions. They all know what they're doing and just, like, a lot of really nice people. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

In particular, Connor enjoyed his teachers in the English department who shared his interest in Shakespeare and provided LGBTQ+ role models:

> I really loved all of my English teachers. Some of my teachers liked me better than others but, I always liked *them*…I think the English department was a fan of me just because I was the only one who got excited about Shakespeare [smirks] …And two of my English teachers were [gay and] married to each other. That was, actually, really positive. That wasn't really something that they made a big point of— it was just if you knew, you knew. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

When Connor came out to school staff during his sophomore year, he was grateful for their quiet support, but still did not feel comfortable using any of the school's bathrooms. Connor's experience points to the importance of providing gender-inclusive options in public spaces regardless of how many people identify as trans. As he described:

> C. I appreciate that they really didn't make a big deal about it…They never, like, made it a big deal or made an ultimatum about what bathroom I could use. So, I just didn't.
>
> L. So you just wouldn't go all day?
>
> C. My bladder is *steel*… But I'm glad they didn't tell me, like, 'you have to use the women's.' I'm glad they didn't tell me any of that. They never told me who I

could tell, they let me do that my own. They never told me how I could dress. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

While some of the school staff was supportive, a few teachers did not honor Connor's name and pronouns or consistently forgot. When Connor grew tired of correcting his teachers, he would just stop trying:

> My French teacher was, like, 'I'm not gonna call you by your preferred name until I have a note saying that that's your real name.' And I didn't know what she meant by that, and it turned out it wasn't a very big problem, but it was a very weird situation. And, there were some teachers who never did it and I'm not the kind of person who is going to, like, get up in their face. Like, I'll correct them for maybe the first couple of times, and then when it becomes clear that, either they're just so used to calling me a certain way that they were just really not gonna pick it up, or that they were being obnoxious, I just let it drop. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Additionally, some school staff members worried about Connor's mental health:

> I did notice that they were a little more worried about my psychological health, after I came out…That was the point where they suggested that I take a free block to be in, like, the 'quiet room' with the kids who were, like, coming out of the hospital. Like, the kids who really, really, needed to take a break from the school day. And I was not really one those kids. They were taking like a lot of really extra precautions…I was a little annoyed. I was definitely feeling like they were associating my gender identity with my mental health which isn't fair, because

> it's not about that. But it wasn't very extreme— they never wanted to contact any of my doctors or any of that. They never did anything that was really crossing a line. They were just definitely a little more 'twitchy' around me after I came out. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Although Connor felt his school's teachers and administrators were generally supportive of his transition, concerns for his mental health were both an annoyance and an insult. As Weinberg (2009) stated, "coming out is an act of sharing, not a cry for help" (p. 50–51).

Gerston peers. Contrary to Connor's positive experiences with his teachers at Gerston High School, relationships with his peers were not as successful. "I mean, like, no one really wanted to be my friend at Gerston High" Connor recalled, "I had a few but, like… No one really wanted to talk to me for most of it (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). He felt excluded and disrespected by his peers, particularly by the drama "clique" with whom he shared a mutual passion for theater: "The drama kids, I think, as a group, liked me the least," he recalled, "They were all friends with each other. It was definitely a clique that didn't like me at all" (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). When I asked Connor how people expressed their dislike for him, he described feelings of exclusion and distance:

> They just put as much physical space, and just, like, they just really didn't want to be around me. I could just tell that they were so much more comfortable when I wasn't there. But I never did anything to them. I always tried my best to be really nice. So, I think it's just like a personal thing of, like, they were all very upper middle class and they were all very, like, socially adept. And, I think, I was kind

> of just intruding upon a space that they felt all very uniformly, like, 'This is where the people like me are,' and then I come in and I'm not like them, and they weren't very comfortable with that. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor discussed his challenges with social relationships. ASD made understanding the subtle nuances of conversation difficult; he longed for genuine feedback others:

> It wasn't like a hostile environment but… I didn't really get a lot of feedback. I think, in school, they're always very cautious with feedback, because what they don't want to do is, like, say something too harsh to someone who is not secure in their abilities yet. And, for me, that was very frustrating because they would say something very vague, like, 'oh, you did good,' and I wouldn't know what to make of that…So, I didn't really have a good grasp on what people thought of me because I had, really, no friends and the people who were nice to me, would tell me nice things, but I always thought that was just because they were nice people. And I can't really tell humoring compliments from genuine compliments, they kind of sound the same. Like, I can't tell when someone says, 'oh, that was awesome' and when they really mean it and when they're saying it because they want you to do something for them later. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Connor found it challenging to advocate for himself because once his peers found out he was on the autism spectrum, they accused him of not understanding and expected him to work to meet their social level rather than adjusting their own thinking:

> I feel like the kind of people who get cast are the same kinds of people who get annoyed with autistic people, and they are the kind of people who get annoyed

> with trans people because, like, whenever something goes against their very concrete definitions of things like 'affection' or things like 'honesty' or like 'boundaries,' they just get really, really, really, angry, which, I think, is bad social skills. But, because they're the ones who get to make the rules about social skills, you can't say that…Like, as soon as you disclose [that you are on the autism spectrum], all of the sudden you can't ever make any assertations about… you can't ever tell them they're being rude, again, because they're, like, 'I'm not being rude, you just don't understand my tone.' And I'm, like, 'what you said to me, the words that came out of your mouth, were rude. And I don't need to understand your tone to know that.' And, like, I don't know. You get caught in a situation where you can't explain why you don't understand things, without, basically dooming yourself to not ever be able to improve, or be able to… or, basically, like, you explain why something's hard and then people make it harder because of that. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Connor's comments reflect the generally held belief that the social rules constructed by dominant groups in society determine who and what is valued (Froehlich, 2007; Miller, 2011). In Connor's school, this meant that the students with more social capital determined what was normal, and what was not. As a result, once Connor outed himself as trans and autistic, his peers decided that his words were not valuable and, therefore, not to be seriously considered.

Although Connor did not feel physically endangered by his peers, the emotional toll of being continually ignored and excluded was evident in the way Connor spoke

impersonally about his peers and viewed them somewhat matter-of-factly. He described a classmate, Paul, with whom he shared similar interests, but did not consider a friend:

> L. Was Paul a friend of yours?
>
> C. No. Paul is not my friend. I would have liked to be his friend but, like, I was weird, and he was very nice but also very judgmental. And, like, once you 'weirded him out,' you could never go back…like, he's, just someone who really latched onto hating certain people and I was one of them, and it was fine.
>
> L. Why do you say it's fine?
>
> C. It was fine because it wasn't really my fault, and it also wasn't really his fault. It's just the way he is. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

I asked Connor if he ever felt bullied by his peers. He responded:

> Bullied is never a term that I felt particularly comfortable using in regards to my peers. There were times I felt excluded. There are times that I felt specific people were being rude to me. But… I never had any peers who went out of their way to make me feel afraid or uncomfortable. There were definitely people who made me feel uncomfortable either inadvertently or just, kind of, because they didn't like me and were trying their very hardest to avoid me. But the thing is, I kind of respect that. There are a lot of people who I would avoid, given my druthers. So, when people want to avoid me, I usually let them, even when it means that I have no friends. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Ostracization from peers was a hurtful critique of Connor's unique being as well as a reflection of his peers' narrow beliefs. The exclusion and negativity he experienced from

his peers in music and drama contradicts research pointing to the performing arts as a safe space, and made it imperative that Connor find support and success elsewhere in the school (Garrett & Spano, 2017; Palkki & Caldwell, 2018). Thankfully, he developed positive teacher relationships in the English and performing arts departments.

Gerston High School Performing Arts

The Performing Arts program at Gerston High School includes day classes in band, orchestra, and chorus, as well as a large competitive marching band (Gerston website). The chorus and drama departments are run by the same teacher who directs a non-auditioned chorus, an auditioned chamber choir, several acting classes, and an after-school drama club. The drama club included a subsidiary Shakespeare club of which Connor was proud to be a part.

Chorus. Connor participated in chorus for his first two years of high school where he sang soprano and alto. "I was one of the sopranos who they would shove down to alto and we didn't have enough," Connor explained (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Chorus met every other day for 90 minutes. The students sat in assigned seats in traditional SATB sections, but Miss Miller would move the students if they asked. Connor sat at the end of the sopranos and did not request to be moved.

The chorus repertoire included a variety of styles, languages, and time periods. In addition to performing their own school concerts, Miss Miller occasionally arranged for the chorus to collaborate with other school groups in the area. Connor enjoyed these joint concert experiences and proudly shared copies of the programs with me [Connor artifacts]. He found the historical aspects of the older Western classical choral pieces and

folk songs particularly interesting and summarized the meaning of several pieces for me as we perused each program.

Connor tried to improve his music reading skills by taking a music theory class in addition to chorus, but he found it too difficult. “Symbols don’t get me and numbers don’t get me,” he explained, “If there was a way you could explain sheet music to me in paragraph form, I’m sure I’d understand it” (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Despite not being able to read music, Connor felt confident about his aural skills. “I have very good ears,” he stated, “I am very quickly able to tell if something’s been moved up or down, if somethings out of key…I can correct myself very quickly and I notice other mistakes very quickly” (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Connor’s strong aural and singing skills earned him several solo spots in the chorus:

> C. I actually had a lot of solos while I was in chorus because I would audition for everything. And, like, when you put yourself out there enough, like, eventually you just start sticking.
>
> L. Bravo to you for always auditioning.
>
> C. Well, if someone gives you an opportunity, take it, even if you’re saying to yourself, you know, ‘I’m not gonna get it.’ But, at least, like, I was *there*.
>
> L. Did you have any favorite solos that you sang in chorus that you recall?
>
> C. One time I was given the riff over an Ed Sheeran song…I got to do the riff over everyone else, which was awesome because I got to basically make it up on my own. [But] I ended up doing it very similarly to the way it was on the recording (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Although Connor struggled with reading and understanding musical notation, solo opportunities in the chorus bolstered his confidence in his musical abilities and provided essential validation of himself as a worthy artist.

Connor's positive solo experiences contrasted with his ensemble experiences in the soprano section. Singing soprano brought on feelings of dysphoria because of the high tessitura and female-gendered attire. "There was just no way I was ever going to be comfortable with the music that I was working with, and the way that I was working with it," Connor recalled (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Standing close to others in the group also exasperated his symptoms of ASD which contributed to his stress. As Connor explained: "Singing in general brings on dysphoria… Especially in a group. Like, I don't know, just being in groups, in general (Connor interview, August 29, 2018).

The chorus uniform consisted of dresses for all the sopranos and altos and suits for all the tenors and basses. Connor described his discomfort:

> The female uniform was a black dress and I hated that and I wasn't… I knew that if I had asked, in retrospect, they probably would've let me wear the male uniform, but I didn't feel comfortable asking (Connor interview, August 2, 2018).

Additionally, there was a lack of male singers in the class, which intensified Connor's stress and reinforced the stereotype that chorus was a "girl thing." As Connor explained:

> Like, at one point, there were literally two guys doing chorus…And it got to the point where chorus was a 'girl thing.' And that, in and of itself, was, I guess in my own, kind of, pseudo-misogynistic way, kind-of uncomfortable. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

The presence or absence of male role models can have a significant impact on male involvement in singing activities (Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2010; Williams, 2011). Role models help students stay focused on their "possible selves" even when faced with challenges (Freer, 2010, p. 21). Without a sufficient number of male role models in class, Connor lacked a connection to his future self, which increased his feelings of isolation and dysphoria. When the dysphoria became too difficult to endure, Connor left the chorus at the end of his sophomore year:

> At that point I was… just being there was really stressing me out. And, like, I was… I just… I didn't really want to be doing any gendered activities anymore, and I didn't want to ask to correct things, and I was, like, 'I'd rather just back out,' because I knew that backing out at the point wasn't causing any problems. Chorus was really popular that year. There were, like, a lot of kids. They weren't going to miss one extra mezzo. Like, they weren't going to miss me. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Gendered practices attached to vocal parts in chorus reinforced Connor's belief that singing soprano was naturally a female activity. Additionally, a lack of peer support compounded his feelings of discomfort and alienation. As a result, Connor experienced dysphoria and had no sense of belonging in chorus. Instead, he remained in the theater where he was allowed to freely align his voice and body with male characters.

Theater. Connor participated in the high school drama club three out of his four years of high school, where he took part in Shakespeare plays as well as the school musicals. Though he preferred performing Shakespeare, Connor viewed being in the

musicals as a natural part of being in the drama club. “I did drama club… I was never very popular, but I was there and, um, so I did the musical,” Connor clarified (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Connor was cast as various male ensemble roles in the drama club. “I don't think I ever played a female part in high school,” Connor stated, “…It was something that I expressed as my preference” (Connor interview, August 17, 2018).

During his senior year of high school, Connor understudied the male lead in the school musical. It was a big part and Connor was given one evening performance. The production included volunteer singers and players from the community, which made the experience even more special. He described the experience:

> I understudied the lead and I got a performance. I was also in the ensemble where I had a small named part and I had a lot of fun. It was definitely not my largest role, it was definitely… Like, musicals, in general, are something that I don’t enjoy as much as Shakespeare, but I had fun. It was just music that I really like. I really like that show. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

In addition to being a part of the cast, Connor enjoyed the storyline of the musical, which was based on a historical novel and appealed to his literary interests. High school theater provided Connor with an arena in which to interact successfully with his peers on stage and validate his masculine identity through voice and character.

Miss Miller. Connor liked Miss Miller, the theater director and chorus teacher at his school, and he felt that she liked him in return. “She definitely liked me OK. She gave me a [senior] scholarship for theater,” Connor stated proudly (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Miss Miller was open and accepting as well as respectful of Connor’s name and

pronouns. “She was the first teacher to get my pronouns down,” Connor stated, “when I came out, she was the one who was just, like, ‘OK.’ She didn’t ask any questions, she didn’t make me, like, go email people and tell them” (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). Although Connor liked Miss Miller, he did not feel comfortable asserting himself and advocating for his vocal and concert attire needs.

> I didn’t really feel comfortable approaching her. I just basically, I did what I was asked and I knew in the back of my head that if I was uncomfortable I could’ve said something about it, but a lot of the times I didn’t just because that’s the kind of person that I am. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Even though Miss Miller was open and supportive of Connor’s name and pronoun changes, she had strong feelings about gendered voicing in chorus:

> C. Miss Miller was a little against having two x chromosome tenors for chorus.
>
> L. How did you know she was against it for chorus?
>
> C. Because some people asked and she told them no. I mean, she wasn’t, like, rude. Miss Miller was not a rude person. But, she did put her foot down on that one because there were some girls who, like, really, really wanted to do that and she told them ‘no.’ (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Miss Miller’s stance on females assigned at birth (FAAB) not singing tenor in chorus was similar to other teachers who argue the pedagogical and vocal health reasoning behind gendered voicing (Mount, 1983). By upholding rigid norms about the FAAB choral voice, however, Miss Miller created an oppressive situation whereby Connor was not allowed to align vocally or bodily with his trans masculine identity in chorus. Her stance

on gendered voicing contradicted more recent scholarship which vies for the separation of voice from gender by allowing singers to move freely throughout their range (Hearns & Kremer, 2018; Kozan & Hammond, 2019).

In contrast to her beliefs about choral voicing, Miss Miller let the students sing where they wanted for the school musicals. "There was one girl who sang tenor for the musical, and *I* got to sing tenor for the musical. I'm not a girl, but, like, yeah," Connor stated (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Although Connor usually chose to sing alto in the musical theater ensembles, during his senior year he was pleasantly surprised when Miss Miller asked him if he would rather sit in the tenor section for the spring musical. He described the interaction:

> It was basically just one of those things where, like, you set up the chairs and you sit wherever your voice range is, so I sat with the altos. And, like, eventually, Miss Miller just comes up and sits next to me for a while to, kind of, listen to me. And, then she just says, like, 'Do you want to move over a seat?' And I'm, like, 'sure.' And then I just switched the sheet music. That was the first day of rehearsals; that was just the sing through, and I was like, 'That was just so much easier than I thought it would be.' And that was just really enlightening. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

In retrospect, Connor had strong regrets about quitting chorus and wished that he had returned to chorus his senior year. Miss Miller's seemingly small gesture of asking Connor if he would rather sing tenor in the musical simultaneously reassured him that it was safe to do so and affirmed his identity. Connor reflected on their relationship:

> And, like, I just know now that, like, if I'd been, like, 'can I wear a tux, instead,' she would've been, "sure, what's your shirt size?' And, I mean, I even kind of knew that, in the end, she wasn't going to be angry at me, but I just didn't want to make things awkward. And now I know that they wouldn't have been awkward. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Connor also felt that his peers would have been more accepting, now, because Miss Miller's, approval would inspire students to do the same.

> It's just that, usually, when the teachers are cool with it, like, the kids calm down about it, too…because it does just kind of promote the sense of like 'this is OK,' and they are genuinely more OK with it. Likewise, when teachers are openly hostile, it, kind of, invites kids to join in who wouldn't have been hostile otherwise. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

At the end of Connor's senior year, Miss Miller presented Connor with a performance award and scholarship at the annual senior awards ceremony. Connor was touched by the recognition:

> I was shocked because, I mean, I came back senior year after spending a year in special ed. And I went back into drama club for the hell of it. Like, there were kids there who I definitely thought deserved it more than me, not necessarily because of the performances they put in, but just because of their dedication to the program. Like, I basically let them drop for an entire year…and, it meant a lot to me that, like, what I did before and what I was able to still do, mattered. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Miss Miller's recognition of Connor as a tenor and an outstanding actor in the drama department provided essential validation he needed as a person and an artist. However, Miss Miller's gendered practices during Connor's first two years of high school contributed to him leaving the chorus, despite enjoying the music and Miss Miller's supportive attitude. Connor's experience highlights the importance of caring for all aspects of students' identities when creating inclusive spaces.

Special School

During his junior year, with encouragement from his parents and teachers, Connor decided to enroll in a full-time special needs program housed within the school building, but separated from the rest of the study body. According to the *Program of Studies* link on the school website, Special School boasts a "personalized experience" that includes specialized services as well as "engagement with the greater school and community" (Gerston website). Courses listed for the program include English, history, math, science and vocational classes, but no performing arts. Students must be recommended for the program following evaluation by school personnel. A typical student enrolled in the program is one that has "fallen behind in the traditional high school framework" (Gerston website). At first, Connor thought Special School was a good idea:

> Sophomore year was a very tough year. People knew at that point that I have an autism spectrum disorder… I think that really also was making things like gender transition harder, was making school, in general, harder and so someone said to me 'Maybe he would do better in a smaller school environment,' and I was, like, 'Really? A smaller school environment that sounds maybe like something that

works.' So I went with it. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor's enthusiasm was quickly lost, however, as soon as he began attending the Special School. He felt constrained, academically, as well as disrespected by administrators and teachers. When he asked to leave the program and return to the regular high school, his request was denied and he felt trapped.

Connor's experience with the Special School was traumatic and he described the year with bitterness and regret:

> In special education, they will be telling you things like 'Oh don't go to college,' or, like, they didn't give me any resources to apply for the SAT. They didn't help me improve my grades and they flat out told me that I couldn't take classes at an advanced level, that I couldn't like… They just really severely limited my opportunities to grow my strengths. And, they also weren't very helpful in giving me accommodations for the places where I struggle. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

One teacher, in particular, made Connor feel physically uncomfortable but she refused to stop her behavior, even when requested by Connor.

> I mean, like, they did not respect my boundaries at all. Like, there was a teacher who found out that I don't like to be touched unexpectedly, and she basically went out of her way to do this all the time, like, it got to the point where I was telling her to 'back off' every day and she would be like 'Oh, I'm sorry you're so oversensitive.' And she would be like— she just got very mocking. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Compounding Connor's negative experience in the special needs program was the fact that there were no performing arts classes offered for him to continue his music studies:

> They didn't have any music. They didn't have any theater. They didn't have any advanced sciences…You go there to graduate and that's it. They don't help you get to college. They don't give you any resources, and it's this very sterile, very negative, environment. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Although Connor fought to transfer out of the Special School, the school rejected his plea:

> I complained to other teachers, I complained to the counselors, I complained to the principal and the vice principal, and I started calling other schools, like, 'Hey, can I transfer out?' And every step of the way up the ladder of the chain of command, it was just very, very disrespectful to me. They said, like, basically, 'You don't know what's good for you.' (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor's dad tried to advocate for Connor's return to public school:

> My dad…he was definitely, like, with me working on getting out of there… But, I mean, even with one parent and myself just being kind of active advocates of 'this isn't working, you guys aren't helping,' they still managed to really hold me to that. (Connor interview August 2, 2018)

Connor's mother seemed to deny that there was a problem. "My mother really, really just didn't want to hear any of it from me," Connor recalled, "to this day she's still like, 'Well I think I gave you a good run. I think they gave you good opportunities'" (Connor interview, August 2, 2018).

By the time the school granted Connor's request to return to regular high school, he had missed key opportunities to prepare for college. Connor felt frustrated and behind:

> They finally transferred me out the day before the next school year…and, at that point, I couldn't take AP classes, anyway, because I couldn't do the summer work, so they basically, like, as one last spit in my face, they basically said, 'well, you can't have those opportunities, anyway, because now you're a senior.' So, I mean, school was rough. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

In an effort to catch up, Connor decided to focus on his non-artistic studies during his senior year, so he did not sign up for any music courses:

> At that point it was my senior year. I really needed to just, like, get the credits I needed to graduate and try to get myself back on track. Because I wanted to go to college. I wanted to go to a real school and, like, really study things and, like, have opportunities… So, I basically said to myself, like, 'This [performing] is something that I'm gonna do in college. This is something I'm going to do on my own time. My own auditions. I will just pick it up at school.' (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor's experience with harassment and confinement in the Special School, together with his subsequent struggles to remove himself from the program, demonstrates the extent to which student voices can be ignored. It is often difficult for students, particularly LGBTQ+ students, to come forward about harassment (Carter, 2011). Many choose not to report harassment because they feel unsupported by their schools or institutions and fear retribution by their attackers (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Kosciw et

al., 2017). This was not the case for Connor, however, who continued to speak up and advocate for himself despite a lack of support from school authorities. While it is difficult to assess whether discrimination played a part in Connor's situation at Special School, what is clear is that when teachers, administrators and his mother ignored his requests for help, he felt trapped and alone. Although Connor was eventually able to remove himself from the Special School, the lack of teacher intervention when he needed it most set him back academically and contributed to feelings of emotional trauma, which affected his decision not to enroll in music during his senior year.

Celebrity Role Models

Music celebrities and professional theater productions provided Connor with role models from which to observe and emulate personal as well as artistic success. Access to music role models online became especially important during Connor's time in Special High School where there were no performing arts opportunities.

Connor's earliest memory of being drawn to a singer artist was hearing Nina Simone's voice on the radio when he was 9.

> Like, that was the first time I was, like, 'people who have vocal cords like mine, can sound like that.' And that was really what I wanted, which is weird because she is a woman, but I was, like, that was really where I was at the time. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Despite being exposed to a variety of music as a child, Connor gravitated to only a few artists as a teen. Similar to Evan and Emily, Connor named genderfluid rock star, David Bowie, as a big influence. He also appreciated the punk rock antics of Green Day:

> I listened to a lot of Bowie and Green Day. My tastes were a little old-school throughout… I think, vocally, I really tried to emulate that old-school punk rock style. That was kind of what I aspired to, musically, but also just, like, on a personal level. These are really cool people and I liked what they did outside of music. I liked just kind of… how long those careers have lasted. The impact. I liked just a really good story. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Although Connor appreciated a few rock artists, he mostly watched musicals on YouTube, which was ironic since he stated earlier that he doesn't enjoy musicals as much as Shakespeare. Connor explained:

> I actually really love musicals. I love show music, in general. Like, I watch a lot of musicals on my own time, on the Internet. But I think it's just something that didn't grab me, as much [as a performer], even though I do really like music, and I do really like theater. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

In addition to watching musicals on YouTube, Connor was able to attend three live productions. He shared the programs with me, with each one containing the ticket stub carefully placed inside. It was obvious from his demeanor that these souvenirs meant a great deal to Connor. "Careful not to lose the ticket stub," Connor warned, as he gently presented each program to me individually (Connor field notes, August 17, 2018). We discussed several of his favorite musicals as we perused the programs [Connor artifacts].

> L. Tell me about *Newsies*.
>
> C. I went by myself. That was the only time I went to see a real professional play by myself…I actually went to see it for my 16th birthday because my parents

> wanted to do something special, and it was just off Broadway at that point. I think, the first tour cast.
>
> L. Who would you see yourself as in the show?
>
> F. "Crutchy." I think, first of all, because I'm not a dancer. I'm not *not* a dancer but I'm not a dancer. And, musically, it's in my range. And, as a character, I really relate to "Crutchy" because I was always the friend who was a couple of steps behind. And, also, [he is] just one of the more morally grounded people— just kind of holding it together— and, I think, better than everyone else.
>
> L. And do the songs feel comfortable when you sing them?
>
> F. Definitely. I sing those songs all day, every day. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Music celebrities and musical theater online provided Connor with artistic models which inspired excellence and with which he could identify. Additionally, watching musical theater provided Connor with another scripted model through which he could observe interactions with others.

Singing and Acting

Performing was a deeply embedded part of Connor's identity. We discussed his voice as both an artistic and personal extension of his identity, and Connor clearly felt that strengthening his lower range was an integral part of being male and a personal marker of masculinity. Connor took responsibility for his own vocal progress by dutifully practicing warm-ups on his own to extend his range and using a piano to measure his progress.

> C. When I was a kid, I had really good range. I was trained classically, to use a lot of vibrato. I was, like, a *real* soprano and I kind of let that drop after I came out, like, trying to stretch it back down.
>
> L. How did you stretch it down?
>
> C. I do a lot of warm-ups. Just really moving out of my head voice back down into my chest voice. I think I just kind of started picking lower and lower songs for myself to learn sing. Warm-ups are my friends. They can really give yourself so much more room. Like, you can really stretch your voice down a good couple of notes in either direction just by doing that every day a couple of times a day. Like, just an hour is really all it takes to give yourself some more range, to experiment with different styles. And I like that. It's been a good connection. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

By working on his "belt" voice, Connor found that he was able to increase his lower range and extend his chest register up.

> I mean, I really just kind of found it through trial and error. Like, there's just a certain point, when you are going down the scale, where it's easier to sing it full chest voice than to try not to…then, you learn how to belt back up. And you stretch that out. And, like, volume was always something that I had on my side. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor used a variety of scales for his warm-ups and felt that using a piano was an important part of measuring his progress:

> L. What things are you are thinking about when you are warming yourself up?

C. Definitely posture. And, breath support is always something that I'm trying to work on. And [my warm-ups] are very limited to my piano skills. Like, there is only so much I can do. So, like, I can go up and down the scale and slowly but, I don't know. I just have very clumsy fingers.

L. Do you feel like warm-ups have to be done with the piano?

C. Yeah. It's important to know that you're still on the same scale you started on. And just to, like, notice where are and just kind of keep an eye on, like, where your range is and stuff like that. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

In addition to warm-ups, one of Connor's primary solo singing activities was to prepare songs for musical theater auditions. His audition repertoire included a flexible array of songs, including those traditionally performed by male characters and those traditionally performed by female characters. He spoke confidently and thoughtfully about his repertoire choices and the process of auditioning:

L. What did you sing for your senior musical auditions?

C. I sang "I dreamed a dream" from *Les Mis* because I thought it would be appropriate because it was in the same style…and just as a piece, it's the one that I sing very well. It's one that is comfortable within my range. I am a belter and I generally do well with those kinds of songs. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Musicals were a source of frustration, however, because Connor found it difficult to align his voice with the parts he wanted:

I remember basically being kind of tempted to just drop musical theater all together and just focus solely on Shakespeare, just because I was frustrated with

> my skills as a vocalist…so, I actually, kind of, like, aggressively forced myself to learn how to belt, so I could take some of the more masculine parts. And it did work, to give myself that credit. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor compared auditioning for musicals with auditioning for plays and noted the vocal restrictions inherent when working from a published score. As Connor described:

> C. There are a lot of hard limits in music. There are a lot of 'can'ts.' Like, I think a lot of people know where their musical limits are better than they know their emotional limits… I think everyone has a wider acting range than they do for a singing range. I think anyone can pull off something theatrically. There's no one who can't, like, physically portray something effectively. But there's definitely a point where you physically cannot sing something effectively without drastically changing the key.
>
> L. So gender is not an issue when you choose songs or monologues?
>
> C. Yeah, it, kind of, can't be. Like, I've started singing more men's parts now, but last year, two years ago, I really couldn't have been able to do that. I generally only choose men's monologues but a lot of the time it doesn't matter. A lot of the time, the character's gender is not brought up by themselves, so you don't necessarily have to worry about that too much. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor and I discussed other songs that he has used for auditions. I took the opportunity to listen to the songs more closely on my own and noted correlations to Connor's own experiences. As I listened, I imagined Connor singing them and pouring his emotions into

the dramatic scenes. A description of one of his song choices illustrates the connection:

> "Lifeboat" from *Heathers* is a short, ABA rock ballad written originally for a female alto voice (O'Keefe & Murphy, 2014). The A section features keyboard alone on alternating pitches of a g minor chord as the singer softly delivers the text '*Floating in the tiniest lifeboat in a big ocean with people I know. Cold clammy and crowded, the people smell desperate so someone must go*.' There is a sudden shift, as the bass, drums, and electric guitar enter with rock band force in the B section and the singer's pitch rises to belt the words '*Everyone's pushing, everyone's fighting, storms are approaching, there's nowhere to hide. If I say the wrong thing or wear the wrong outfit, they'll throw me right over the side*!' The piece ends like the beginning on the words '*people I know'* followed by a soft cymbal roll. (Connor field notes, August 18, 2018)

Gender-neutral casting. Although Connor had previously only played male characters on stage, at the time of our meeting Connor had just finished performing in a professional community production of *Hamlet* where he was cast as "Ophelia." While a discussion of *Hamlet* does not appear to be directly within the realm of high school music, Connor's experience highlights several areas important to understanding his performer identity as well as pointing to the power of gender-neutral casting.[15] *Hamlet* was Connor's first paid performing job and the production values were high. Connor was excited to talk about his experience:

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[15] Gender-neutral casting (also referred to by other terms such as gender-inclusive casting and gender-blind casting) is the practice of casting actors without regard to gender. Gender-neutral casting stems from the 1980s non-traditional casting movement in which directors were encouraged to cast people without regard to race, ethnicity, ability, or gender (Pao, 2011).

> This is my first time working with this particular troupe. They are a professional outfit and they're paying me for my gig in *Hamlet* so, I am likely going to work with them again…they were a company that I had a pretty positive experience with. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Auditions for *Hamlet* were specifically advertised as "gender-blind casting," which drew Connor's interest and helped him feel welcome:

> [Gender-blind casting] was something they made a point of with this production. They informed us like right on the notice that they would be casting gender blind…and they really did hold true to that…When I see people, like, explicitly encourage people of all gender identities, that says to me that they specifically want more trans people or more non-binary people to show up to auditions, and that me coming in there as a trans person is actually kind of a bonus. It sets me apart. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor elaborated on the significance of gender-blind casting, but cautioned against company leadership's motives hidden behind this practice:

> I think a lot of people are kind of— and, of course this is kind of a shitty thing to say— but they know that they can capitalize on it. They know they can say 'we're cool, we give jobs to trans people.' It's kind of, like, an artistic statement to have a trans person just playing a character, which, I mean, it's something that you kind of have to work with. You can't really get too hung up on it because, I mean, if people want to ask me to make a statement about *themselves*, they still cast me. I'm still getting that paycheck. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor took his performance of “Ophelia” very seriously and it was clear that he did much research to prepare for the role. He spoke authoritatively about the character of “Ophelia” and the role of women during the 16th century. He even took care to learn how to make his own crowns from real flowers for each performance. Additionally, Connor was asked to improvise songs for his role, but he found this to be difficult:

> C. I actually ended up improvising my own songs for my part as “Ophelia.” It’s really not something I’m necessarily the worst at, but it’s also just… it’s hard, it’s frustrating, and the pay-off is minimal, so I never really looked much into composition or writing in general.
>
> L. What makes it hard?
>
> C. Um, the fact that I have zero knowledge of how music is written down doesn’t help.
>
> L. So, in your opinion, does music need to be written down to be composed?
>
> C. Um, it makes everything a whole lot easier. It gives you like a way to go back to it and make revisions and not just have to rely on your ability to remember it… Because like, one of the things I was noticing doing *Hamlet* was that it would sound wildly different each time— I mean partially because I was making intentional changes as I went along— but, also, just because, like, I’m never going to remember it 100% the way that it was the first time and, like, it wasn’t very fun. And it’s not my favorite thing to do. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Although Connor embraced his fluid identity to play the part of “Ophelia,” he disliked the ambiguous and fluid nature of improvisation. Difficulty with ambiguity and change is

a common trait in individuals with ASD (Jacobs et al., 2014). Connor indicated that the experience would have been easier and more consistent if the music had been notated; however, he lacked the music literacy skills needed to compose. Connor's experience supports Green's (1997) findings that improvisational confidence and composition skills contain delineated meanings of masculinity. In effect, Connor's difficulty with improvised composition not only exasperated his autistic challenges with ambiguity, but also symbolized an aspect of failed masculinity.

Connor shared with me a newspaper article and a copy of the program. The article featured photos of the cast, as well a discussion about gender-neutral casting and the company's history of non-traditional casting [Connor artifacts]. A photo of Connor as "Ophelia" lined the side of the page. Connor's portrayal of "Ophelia" is a stunning image of 16th-century femininity and classic beauty. The make-up and costumes are so professionally done with attention to period details, that is difficult to see any trace of 21st-century Connor in the photo. "Yeah, 'Ophelia' is very visually iconic and that's about all she is," Connor shrugged, "I basically put myself together. I'm used to a fake hair. I actually picked that wig out" (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). I asked Connor if he felt uncomfortable playing a female on stage and he replied with pragmatic earnestness:

> I mean, of course, I felt dysphoric, [but] it was a part that I was offered and it was something I made my peace with when I accepted it. That I was going to be… just kind of following that imagery of 'Ophelia' of being a woman. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

At the same time, Connor thought that gender bending the role of "Ophelia" would have been an intriguing choice:

> If I had asked, I'm sure that they would've been open to the idea of completely gender bending the role which… I mean, that would have been interesting and I would've definitely been open to that, but it kind of occurred to me that I was never going to be the kind of person that would've made that ultimatum. I just never would have had the chutzpah to ask. (Connor interview, August 2, 2018)

Connor viewed himself as a flexible artist who was capable of portraying a myriad of characters. Putting a gender-blind casting policy in place helped Connor feel welcome, included, and validated, which alleviated some of the dysphoria he experienced playing the female role of "Ophelia." For Connor, feeling welcome and included in the theater was more powerful than aligning with the gender of the character. Additionally, the monetary remuneration Connor received was especially meaningful because it both fulfilled a financial need and signaled a move towards the professional status he desired.

Looking to the Future

At the time of this writing Connor was poised on the brink of transition in multiple areas of his life: He had finished high school but had not yet enrolled in college, he looked forward to living on his own but did not have a job, and he had taken a hiatus from performing while he waited to begin gender affirming HT. Connor was excited to be starting HT and believed that this would lower his vocal range significantly:

> I'm actually gonna be starting on hormone therapy probably in the next few weeks, so that's going to push me down. I'm kind of excited to see where my

> range ends up after that, because that is going to drop me at least one-two octaves. So, it's kind of weird just thinking, like, I sound nothing like I did five years ago, and I am going to sound nothing like I do right now three months from now, which is awesome. But it's also kind of scary. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Connor stated that he was refraining from singing until his voice settles into a more reliable range and timbre:

> I keep saying to myself, 'I'm going to do this when I settle down. I'm going to do this when I'm at a point vocally where I know I'm going to stay and when my voice isn't going to be dramatically changing'… You don't really want to start anything and have to stop and start again. (Connor interview, August 17, 2018)

Despite all his uncertainty, Connor spoke calmly and positively about the future. As we ended our last interview, he shared advice for other students:

> I would tell my younger self that it's OK to be more upfront with people about what you need. That you don't need to pretend like you don't want things. And, you don't need to tell yourself that you can't ask for things if you need them. And that refusing yourself the ability to ask for help is just putting more stress on other people, not less. It's just being more open and more communicative is going to help you in the long run. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018)

Summary

Connor's experiences in high school point to numerous ways his identity and music making were both affirmed and rejected by others. Unlike some adolescents,

Connor felt sure of his trans masculine performer identity throughout most of high school, but struggled to be recognized and respected by others. Although he felt validated as a soloist and theater performer, rejection from his peers as well as constraining choral practices contributed to feelings of exclusion and loneliness in the music department. His negative experiences were compounded by a strained relationship with his mother and a traumatic year in Special School where he felt harassed, unsupported, and trapped. Support and encouragement from his father as well as his English teachers and the LGBTQ+ alliance provided some positive balance to his circumstances. Additionally, Connor maintained a strong sense of self as an artist which fostered his resilience and determination. During his final year of high school, recognition from his music teacher and the community theater in the form of voicing, casting, and an award provided essential validation that Connor needed to feel cared for and increase his sense of self-worth both as a person and as an artist.

CHAPTER FIVE

High School Music Uncovered: A Comparative Analysis

In this chapter, I present a comparative analysis of Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's recollected high school music experiences. The previous chapter highlighted each participant's unique story through thick, rich narrative portraits. An abundance of direct quotes gave rise the participants' individual voices and contributed to the authenticity of each portrait. In this chapter, I analyze their stories through the lens of queer theory and Butler's (1990/1999) concept of performativity to uncover behaviors, beliefs, and practices that shaped their well-being and music making. Whenever applicable, I also included Emily's college experiences in the analysis to provide another relatable perspective on queering the music classroom, as well as to gain additional insight from Emily's experiences as a student who identified both as non-binary and female. Analysis revealed eight themes and subthemes including: supportive people, meaningful performance experiences, negotiating traditions, singing alone and with others, safe spaces/safe people, role of media, personal agency, and role of music teacher.[16] Table 5.1 outlines the comparative narrative analysis themes and sub-themes as they appear in this chapter.

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[16] In general, queer theory works to avoid categorization and, instead, describes a continuous, fluid relationship between themes and behaviors (Dilley, 1999). While I acknowledge this fluidity, some categorization was necessary in order to effectively present this analysis.

Table 5.1. Comparative Narrative Analysis Themes and Sub-Themes.

Themes	**Sub-themes**
Supportive people	Family
	Peers
	School personnel
Singing alone and with others	Singing SATB
	Sense of belonging
	Practicing solo
	Singing in the theater
	Wishing for “T”
Negotiating traditions	Language
	Choral practices
	Policies
Meaningful performance experiences	Chorus
	Playing instruments
	Composing
	Theater
Safe spaces, safe people	Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)
	LGBTQ+ teacher role models
	LGBTQ+ community spaces
Role of media	
Personal agency	Coming out and taking initiative

	Empathy and forgiveness
	Educating others and being a role model
Role of music teacher	Musical leadership and blind trust
	Recognition and support
	Openness and creating safe space

Supportive People

Family, peers, and school personnel played a pivotal role in shaping Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's musical and personal lives. Analysis of supportive people reveals various ways that Connor, Evan, and Emily were both encouraged and hurt by people closest to them. Positive interactions with others helped them feel respected as artists and confident in their music making. By contrast, experiences of harassment, exclusion, and misunderstanding created stressful circumstances from which music became a safe haven.

Emily, Evan, and Connor benefited from supportive family members at home that loved them unconditionally, provided them with musical and personal role models, and fostered an appreciation for the arts. Parental support has been found to be one of the most important factors in the lives of trans youth (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Ehrensaft, 2012; Simons et al., 2013). When students feel supported at home, they enjoy higher life satisfaction and have fewer depressive symptoms (Simons et al., 2013). Although the participants' families loved them unconditionally, they occasionally struggled with Evan's, Connor's, and Emily's transitions. Family relationships are complex, as Connell

(1987) noted: “In no other institution are relationships so extended in time, so intensive in contact, so dense in their interweaving of economics, emotion, power and resistance” (p. 121). Emily and Evan struggled to gain recognition for their non-binary identities and pronouns from their family members. Respecting names and pronouns is a pivotal step for families wishing to accept their trans child (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Coolhart et al., 2013). In Emily’s case, because she was not going by a new name or different pronouns in high school, her non-binary identity was somewhat ignored.

Most of Emily’s, Evan’s, and Connor’s parental conflicts stemmed a lack of approval from their mothers, which contradicts Beemyn and Rankin’s (2011) findings indicating that mothers tended to be more supportive than fathers. Emily’s mother struggled particularly with Emily’s transition to female in college which made coming out conversations difficult and emotional. “She sort of left the room and left me talk to my dad to, as she explained later, go scream and cry somewhere where I didn’t have to hear her,” Emily recalled (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Connor felt disliked by his mother who, according to Connor, made angry, hurtful comments and treated him more “aggressively” than his sisters. By contrast, Emily’s, Evan’s, and Connor’s fathers provided a calm and thoughtful balance to their mothers’ emotional concerns.

All three participants enjoyed considerable musical and artistic influence at home led primarily by their fathers. In all three households, informal music making was a common occurrence. “It wasn’t like ‘you have to go to piano lessons right here and play scales for hours,’” Evan explained (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Green (2008) summarized the liberating atmosphere of learning music informally: “There is no

imperative to practice unless they feel like practicing, no teacher or parent telling them they must do it, no homework, no tests or exams, no coursework" (p. 9). The richness of Evan's, Connor's, and Emily's musical family life was a key factor in their musical development and interest in school music. Valenzuela and Codina (2014) found that children who come from families with a high level of musical engagement at home obtain a greater optimal experience through music at school. Additionally, Valenzuela and Codina found that children who come from music-making families are more intrinsically motivated to practice on their own. For Emily, Connor, and Evan, informal music making at home helped them freely explore music and theater on their own as well as alongside their parent role models, which instilled in them a genuine love for music and a sense of ease with performing.

At school, peers played a significant role in the participants' music experiences. Several studies highlight ways that music helps bring students together and build positive relationships with each other (Abramo, 2011a; Carter, 2013; Nichols, 2013; Spidel, 2014). As Spidel (2014) stated, "arts provide a safe environment for LGBTQ students . . . where there is positive self-acceptance and membership in group of peers that are accepting" (p. 20). Additionally, research indicates that close friends play an important role in constructing and maintaining students' identities (National Research Council, 2004). For Evan, Emily, and Connor, music provided a safe arena where they could connect with peers, explore themselves, and work together on a common goal.

Emily described herself as the most supported of the three by her peer groups in middle school and high school. She had several friends with whom she identified and

trusted which enabled her to safely transition. Because Emily felt safe and supported in chorus, engagement with her peers *through* music was allowed to take precedence which helped Emily experience music in deeper, more meaningful ways. As Weinberg (2009) noted, "students who feel like they belong do their best work" (p. 50). Additionally, Emily benefited from making music informally with a "fun" size group of friends, which gave her a more intimate connection with her peers through music (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Evan's peer experience differed from Emily's because their satisfaction and commitment to music activities was largely dependent upon the level of peer acceptance and support they received, stating that "in chorus I was liked by people" (Evan, August 7, 2018). Because Evan's school harbored a more hostile school climate than Emily's, Evan did not always feel safe and supported in their other classes. Music and theater became safe places where Evan felt accepted and liked by their peers. Evan's experience is similar to "Rie" in Nichols's (2013) study who found a group of "musically minded peers" that supported her when the rest of the school did not (p. 273).

Unlike Emily's and Evan's peer experiences, Connor's relationships with peers were often negative and stressful. Peer relationships were complicated for Connor because of his ASD, which made social interactions challenging (Jacobs et al., 2014). As Connor explained, "I didn't really have a good grasp on, like, what people thought of me. . . . I can't really tell humoring compliments from genuine compliments, they kind of sound the same" (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Intolerance for people who do not subscribe to heteronormative ideals is a common theme in literature highlighting

underrepresented youth (Darwich et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2017, McGuire et al, 2010; Spidel, 2014). The duality of Connor's experience as both an individual who identified as autistic and trans masculine compounded his relationships. Although Connor did not feel physically endangered by his peers, he was often ignored and excluded. For students who are challenged socially, music can be an interactive experience from which they can grow and learn (Hourigan, 2009). In Connor's case, although he felt un-liked by his peers, music and theater provided a space for him to develop his social skills as well as a way to experience positive interactions with his peers through performing. "People liked me as a performer," Connor stated (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). Feeling respected and "liked" as performers was a common theme among all three participants.

In addition to peers, teachers and administrators play a key role in establishing a safe and supportive school environment for students and families (Chappell et al., 2018). Both Emily and Connor reported feeling safe at school and developing positive relationships with many of their teachers. For Connor, early intervention from administrators was key to feelings of safety. When teachers and administrators take action to protect students, reduce harassment in schools, and employ inclusive practices, students feel safer, stay more engaged in their learning, and develop deeper connections with others (McGuire et al., 2010). Connor also appreciated the autonomy he was granted in school after he transitioned, which helped him feel respected. "They didn't tell me, like, 'you have to use the women's [bathroom],' Connor recalled (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). An exception to Connor's overall positive experience was his one year in Special School when there were no performing arts classes available and the teachers

were verbally and physically disrespectful to him. As discussed earlier, Connor felt physically, academically, and emotionally damaged by his year in Special School, and indicated that this was one of the reasons he chose not to participate in music classes during his senior year.

In contrast to Emily's and Connor's high schools, Evan described an aggressive, homophobic environment at their high school with teachers and administrators who were ill equipped to protect and support gender-diverse students. When Evan came out, school personnel often made inappropriate comments or ignored Evan's requests for change. Mock (2014) described a similar situation, "the people outside my home, specifically the school's staff, weren't equipped with the resources and experience to help a student like me" (p. 146). Teacher training may help educators avoid mistakes and better understand the needs of trans students (Garrett, 2012). Although the three participants experienced varying degrees of support from school staff, peers, and family members throughout their high school (and college) careers, the loyalty and encouragement they received from some people provided them with the stability they needed to move forward with positivity and overcome obstacles.

Singing Alone and With Others

Connor's, Evan's, and Emily's voices were both a source of pride in musical things accomplished as well as the cause of much distress as they worked to negotiate heteronormative music settings. As Hearns and Kremer (2018) summarized, "nowhere else in the musical arts are gender roles as staunchly established and upheld as in voice" (p. 4). The participants often worried that their singing voices weren't "good enough"

(GALA Choruses, 2014) and, although they wished to keep singing, they felt the weight of various gendered expectations in chorus and theater. As Miller (2016) explained, “because transgender voices do not always ‘match’ their outward gender expression, trans people may be silenced from speaking or singing out of fear or embarrassment” (para. 5). Analysis of Emily’s, Evan’s, and Connor’s singing experiences revealed four subthemes that were important to their well-being in the music department: singing in chorus, sense of belonging, singing solo, and wishing for “T.”

In chorus, conflicts between voice part and gender identity were most evident with Evan and Connor, who both sang soprano in their choruses but wished they could sing alto or tenor. Singing in the soprano section brought on feelings of vocal dysphoria which made being in chorus stressful. Hearns and Kremer (2018) described vocal dysphoria as a “detachment from the sound of one’s own voice” that creates feelings of anxiety and discomfort when speaking or singing (p. 7). Additionally, vocal dysphoria can distort self-perceptions of one’s voice, making it difficult to accurately assess progress (Manternach, 2017). Managing vocal dysphoria while transitioning in a chorus can be challenging and some people leave the group, (GALA Choruses, 2014). When the discomfort they were experiencing in chorus became too difficult to bear, Evan and Connor left their choruses: “I decided it wasn’t worth it,” Evan lamented (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

Not all transgender individuals experience vocal dysphoria, however. For some people, it is important to align their bodies and voices with traditional gender norms whereas, for others, finding a voice that is authentic and comfortable, regardless of range,

is a priority (Hearns & Kremer, 2018). In Emily's case, she viewed her tenor choral voice very matter-of-factly, as a fixed part of her identity— a bodily instrument that was governed by biology— something that "just is." For Emily, singing tenor in various elite vocal ensembles was an affirming part of her musical identity and a source of pride.

Both Evan and Emily valued the community aspects of chorus which bolstered their sense of acceptance and belonging in school. Researchers have noted the social as well as musical benefits of being in a school ensemble (Hourigan, 2009; Nichols, 2013; Parker, 2011). Parker (2011) found that belonging to a music ensemble allows students to identify with a social group, adjust their mood, and develop autonomy. Evan shared positive feelings about singing in an ensemble, despite their vocal discomfort. "Singing in an ensemble is essential to functioning," they stated, "it's therapeutic" (Evan autobiography).

In a similar manner, Emily enjoyed the "communal" nature of chorus and valued the musical "togetherness" it evoked (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). "There's something real, I don't know, animal bonding about that," she stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Parker (2011) described this musical interaction as a social, "feelingful" experience (p. 308). For Emily, the physical experience of singing within an ensemble strengthened her sense of belonging rather than a need to socialize with her peers. Additionally, Emily liked the feeling of anonymity that comes with singing tenor in the middle of a complex choral sound. "Somebody has to look a little carefully and notice which part you're singing," she stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). In a sense, chorus served as both a veil and a source of inspiration for Emily's voice.

The enjoyment that Emily and Evan felt singing in groups contrasted with Connor's choral experience. For Connor, being in chorus was uncomfortable vocally as well as socially, a feeling that was symptomatic of both his vocal dysphoria and his ASD. Connor's discomfort was further was complicated by a lack of male representation in the chorus. Research points to the importance of male role models for the development of boys' voices and identity in chorus (Ashley, 2009; Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2010; Hall, 2005; Koza, 1993; Williams, 2011). Hall (2005) found that peer modeling increased participation in chorus. In Connor's case, peer modeling was needed, not only to affirm his masculinity in the classroom and to contradict widely held beliefs that singing is a "girl thing," but also for Connor to be able to see and interact with the future self he aspired to be as he transitioned from female to male (Connor interview, August 29, 2018).

In addition to singing within their ensembles, Emily, Evan, and Connor worked on exploring their voices independently. They discussed extending their vocal range as an important goal of their musical and personal growth. Kozan and Hammond (2019) stated, "the most important guideline here is that there are no "right or wrongs" in what range or ranges in which the singer chooses to sing" (p. 291). Connor worked on extending his vocal range by practicing scales and using the piano to measure success. Emily admitted that exploring her upper range was "gender affirming" and she enjoyed choral warm-ups that allowed her to improvise (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). In this way, Emily could experiment with both range and chord structure.

Having a solid vocal technique was important to both Connor and Evan. Evan

took private voice lessons and valued their teacher's advice. Additionally, voice lessons helped Evan with managing their breath support when singing became difficult as a result of binding. Although Connor could not afford voice lessons, he took a proactive role in aligning his voice with his male personae by working independently to extend his lower range and working on his "belt" voice. Researchers have found that vocal therapy and singing lessons can improve an individual's self-perception of "masculine" or "feminine" (Carew and Dacakis, 2007; Constansis, 2008; Hancock & Helenius, 2012 Hershberger, 2005). Additionally, McNeill et al. (2008) found correlations between vocal therapy and transgender individuals' increased feelings of happiness. What is remarkable in Connor's case was his independence and willful initiative to assess what he needed to do, vocally, to reinforce his masculine identity, and then to seek out resources online and teach himself. It is, perhaps, due to his homeschooled upbringing and somewhat solitary lifestyle that he was able to develop this musical independence and self-reliance.

Emily took private voice lessons in college after she transitioned to female. This was Emily's only experience with solo singing other than the occasional choral solo. Contrary to Evan's and Connor's solo experiences, Emily found voice lessons to be dysphoric and "not useful" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Emily valued her upper range and indicated that she was interested in exploring her countertenor voice, but neither she nor her voice teacher considered this possibility in her lessons. At the same time, Emily worried about losing her light high choral voice if she committed fully to voice lessons which might require her to develop a richer tenor timbre. While many musicians find value in one-on-one learning, Emily's experience with private voice lessons caused her to

question their significance and points to the need for more honest communication between teachers and students.

Singing and acting in the theater department provided another artistic outlet for Evan and Connor. They enjoyed performing in their schools' musical theater productions where they were allowed to align their bodies and voices with masculine characters. Evan stated that they felt more comfortable singing soprano in the musical theater ensembles because the tessitura was lower than in chorus, but they preferred singing in the alto or tenor range for solo parts. Connor preferred male characters on stage but remained fluid in his singing endeavors using his voice in a variety of ways. Contrary to the participants in Manternach's (2017) study, Connor seemed unconcerned about finding audition repertoire to sing. His vocal concerns centered, instead, on extending his range and increasing his "masculine" tone quality. Although Sims (2017a) cautioned singers about the amount of "hyper-masculine" themes found in tenor and baritone solo literature, Connor moved freely through this slant by finding songs that were sometimes hyper-masculine, and sometimes not, depending on his needs.

Although being allowed to perform male characters in their schools' theater departments opened up a myriad of possibilities for Evan and Connor, vocally, the practice posed problems due to heteronormative expectations embedded in the musical theater scores. Musical theater and opera are laden with binary, gendered stereotypes that are sustained by a "performance industry . . . still not prepared for gender-diverse talent" (Hearns & Kremer, 2018, p. 51). For this reason, Evan and Connor were often challenged to align their bodies and voices with desired roles. To meet these challenges, Evan

worked with their directors to transpose and rearrange voice parts and Connor worked on strengthening his "belt" voice to sing in the tenor octave.

All three participants believed that gender-affirming hormone therapy (HT) was an important part of their transition process. Many trans individuals elect to engage in HT to introduce hormones that align with one's gender identity (WPATH, 2011). While Emily, Connor, and Evan did not discuss the details of their situations, Evan and Connor were hopeful that they would be starting testosterone ("T") soon, and Emily had begun feminizing hormone treatments with estrogen. Although the benefits of estrogen therapy vary by person, most research indicates that estrogen therapy has little effect on the MTF voice (Sims, 2017b). As Sims explained, "once adolescence has occurred, the larynx roughly doubles in size and hormones cannot undo this process" (p. 280). Emily was resigned to the fact that estrogen therapy was not going to affect her voice and stated matter-of-factly, "I'm still basically a tenor" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Testosterone's effects on the voice are more pronounced and include a lengthening and thickening of the vocal folds which results in a deepening of the voice (WPATH, 2011). Although Connor and Evan were both looking forward to starting "T" soon, they were concerned about the effects on their voices because the changes are permanent and not always reliable (Van Borsel et al., 2000). While a few singers report satisfaction with their voices and a lower range of more than an octave (Constansis, 2008; Manternach et al., 2017; Sims, 2017a), many singers experience a loss of range, a loss of flexibility, and a hoarse tone quality as a result of androgen treatment (Damrose, 2009; Gurss, 2018; Manternach, 2017; Manternach et al. 2017; Riverdale, 2009; Van Borsel et

al., 2000). “It’s...kind of scary,” Connor summarized, (Connor interview, August 17, 2018).

Both Connor and Evan have decided to stop singing with others until their voices “settle down,” even though research suggests that vocal therapy and voice lessons can help with FTM vocal transitions (Constansis, 2008; Manternach, 2017; Sims, 2017a). The decision not to sing publicly during transition presents an intriguing contradiction: Although Connor and Evan viewed gender expression fluidly in the theater, they could not envision singing as a fluid and evolving activity where they could safely transition in the presence of others.

In summary, Emily, Connor, and Evan manipulated their voices in various ways to empower their performances and align with their identity, including taking lessons, utilizing a “belt” technique, and rearranging voice parts for theater. Despite these efforts, however, singing remained a source of anxiety in chorus for Evan and Connor. Only Emily felt successful by immersing her tenor voice in the choral sound.

Negotiating Traditions

Trained musicians perpetuate traditions by embracing and endorsing certain knowledge considered normal and then passing it on to newcomers (Froehlich, 2007, p. 23). Traditions found in music practices, language, and materials frame students’ beliefs and music making. While some music traditions may reinforce some students’ feelings of safety, belonging, and pride, others exclude people or bring on feelings of discomfort. In this section, I examine Evan’s, Connor’s, and Emily’s engagement with language, choral practices, and policies to explore behaviors that shaped their identity as trans musicians.

Language

Language was noted by all three participants as one of the most important determinants of comfort and well-being. Emily, Connor, and Evan indicated that they felt safer and more respected when people used their correct names and pronouns, and when people communicated with gender-neutral language. Emily recalled that both her high school and college chorus directors sometimes struggled to remember gender-neutral language, by referring to basses and tenors as "men" and sopranos and altos as "women," which became even more of an issue as she transitioned to female in college while continuing to sing tenor. Hearns and Kremer (2018) stated that binary gendered language "excludes, or in some cases, completely erases gender-diverse people" (p. 20). In Bartolome's (2016) study, gendered language acted as "a trigger" for anxiety and stress (p. 37). Use of binary language in choral settings has become so normalized that even Emily characterized some gender-neutral terms as "awkward" and "silly." She stated, "Doing [gender-neutral language] the right way may involve using words that feel awkward...Even if 'sopranos and altos' feels silly or 'upper voices' feels silly, 'silly' is probably better than the alternative" (Emily interview, September 7, 2018).

Reactions to gendered language may differ according to context. Evan viewed some gendered language from their peers as a sign of endearment, for example, and was concerned about losing that connection when they came out. They stated, "people would be, like, 'Hey, girl,' which is 'cheesy,' but it was a way that people showed that they liked you" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Evan's comments indicate that tolerance for gendered language may be lower in the classroom than in social settings.

In addition to gender-neutral language, recognition of pronouns was one of the most significant affirming behaviors in Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's experiences and a thread throughout all of our conversations. Connor felt that most people were "pretty good" about remembering his pronouns after he came out during his sophomore year (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). By contrast, Evan and Emily struggled to have their non-binary identities and pronouns understood by others. Identifying as gender non-binary or gender variant can be particularly difficult because the language and understanding in many communities is still new (Palkki, 2016).

Emily adopted they/them pronouns for a short time in college but chose to reveal this information only to a few close friends and family rather than continually explain herself. Evan began using "they/them" pronouns in high school, but often felt like their pronouns and identity were ignored by their non-music teachers, stating "they didn't think it was important . . . that it wasn't just some *thing* I was doing" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Additionally, some teachers outside of the music department questioned Evan's pronouns and challenged their meaning instead of voicing support. Perhaps most distressing was that some of Evan's peers purposefully mis-gendered them and ignored their pronouns as a form of harassment. Rejecting pronouns is often used as a sign of disrespect and disapproval from others (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Mock, 2014). In Evan's case, pronouns acted as a source of control by teachers and peers who harbored misinformation and transphobic beliefs. Furthermore, Emily's and Evan's experiences with non-binary identity and they/them pronouns may point to differences in attitudes between high school and college settings.

Choosing new names, sharing them with others, and having them recognized was also a source of stress for all three participants. Although both Connor and Evan changed their names during high school, Evan chose to keep their name private until college. Evan wanted to be sure they made the right decision before sharing it with others. This also gave them time to explore their new name without criticism from family, stating "I'm still avoiding telling people about it, "even though I've done the first step of coming out" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Connor changed his name and pronouns during his sophomore year of high school. Although Connor was clear in his desire to use a new name, some teachers outside the music department questioned his request or refused to honor it. Additionally, Connor was not allowed to change his name on official rosters until the end of his senior year of high school, which meant that he had to continually correct people. Several writers have noted the importance of changing names on rosters and official forms to help students feel safe and supported, regardless of whether there is legal documentation or not (Alvarez, 2017; Weinberg, 2009). In music environments, the importance of name recognition moves beyond class rosters to seating charts, booster clubs, field trip forms, college auditions, and music festivals.

Choral Practices

Music practices play a pivotal role in students' feelings of safety and well-being in the classroom (Garrett & Spano, 2017; Palkki, 2016). However, heteronormative traditions, such as gendered uniforms, seating, repertoire, and casting, impose binary restrictions on students and teachers that impede learning (Bos, 2017). Examination of choral practices includes gendered concert attire, chorus seating, and the Western choral

canon (a discussion of SATB voicing was featured earlier in "singing alone and with others").

Chorus dress codes in high school were a constant source of discomfort for Emily, Evan, and Connor. For Evan and Connor, wearing a dress brought intense feelings of discomfort and resentment: "I hated that," Connor recalled spitefully (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Similarly, Emily felt uncomfortable wearing a tuxedo, but she did not see any other choice. Emily stated, "It didn't even occur to me that there was something I could do," (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Several scholars point to student uniform requirements as a leading source of struggle within the trans youth community (Erber, 2015; Lewis, 2017; Mock, 2014). A participant in Erber's (2015) study remembered feeling nauseous whenever they wore girl clothes. Connor and Evan both named concert attire requirements as one of the main reasons for leaving the chorus before their senior year.

Though Emily remained in chorus, she felt even more conflicted about concert attire in college as she worked to transition to female. "I was exploring my gender identity more and was feeling more strongly about it," she recalled, "And choir was the exception. It was the thing that was holding me back," (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Eventually, Emily found relief from the dress code requirements during her final year of college when she was assistant director of the choruses, which was a position that allowed her to dress as she desired.

In addition to concert attire, both Emily and Evan discussed seating with regard to comfort and well-being in chorus. Seating is different from voicing because of the social

aspects and exposure to others that may affect students' stress levels. In Evan's case, the discomfort and dysphoria associated with their soprano voice was compounded by feeling exposed and self-conscious standing at the end of their section near the teacher. "It made me more self-conscious," they stated (Evan email, August 28, 2018). In contrast to Evan's experience, Emily was allowed to sit where she wanted in both her high school and college choruses. The flexible seating policies enabled Emily to place herself near one of her teacher role models during high school who also identified as gay. "I mean, there certainly weren't assigned seats," Emily recalled, "But I liked the people I sat near . . . . I remember sitting near the math teacher I had all four years who I liked a lot. He was a good singer (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). Kozan and Hammond (2019) recommend letting singers move between sections. Allowing singers to move freely helps them feel cared for physically and emotionally, and may help them develop more autonomy within the group.

All three participants described choral practices which included performing major works of the Western choral canon, also commonly known as "masterworks." The repertoire performed by Emily's, Connor's, and Evans' choruses affected not only how they experienced music and identity in the classroom, but also their perceptions of the choral music canon itself. Both Emily and Evan described their choral programs as "pretty serious" with repertoire that included "a lot of sacred pieces" and at least one multi-movement oratorio with orchestra each year. They seemed to equate "serious" and "good quality" repertoire with these masterworks and were proud of their performances. "Each year we would do one thing with the orchestra in the winter concert . . . which is a

good thing," Emily recalled, "we also did [names several motets, masses, and one spiritual]. . . . It was pretty serious" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Although the participants appreciated the significance of the sacred masterworks canon, Emily and Evan struggled with the Christian lyrics. Evan grew tired of singing the Latin texts, stating "they don't mean anything to me" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Emily became even more conflicted in college when she began to embrace her Jewish heritage. In both cases, the singing of Christian music had become so normalized in school that understanding of Latin texts was taken for granted and rarely reviewed in class. Shaw (2012) commented that it is mistake to assume that any musical tradition is representative or relevant to all people in a group. Additionally, the normalization of Western European music in American music education and the elevation of Western classical music as "serious" devalues other kinds of music (Brett, 1994, p. 12). The implied hierarchical system of good versus inferior music creates boundaries which exclude diverse perspectives, limit students' thinking, and perpetuate a hegemonic view of the choral canon.

Emily and Evan had grown to believe that singing sacred masterworks was a valuable, but inevitable, part of the choral experience. When asked about other repertoire that was meaningful for them, they had difficulty recalling more than a few poetic works and protest songs, and implied that a lot of their other repertoire was inferior or trivial. I noted, however, that the concert programs they shared with me listed several madrigals, love motets, folk songs, and other secular pieces (Evan and Emily artifacts). For Evan and Emily, singing choral masterworks simultaneously validated their identities as

“serious” musicians and suppressed their queer identities by limiting their experiences and reinforcing musical hegemony.

Policies

Gender-inclusive policies send the message that all people will be accepted, validated, and respected with dignity (Alvarez, 2017). GLSEN defines comprehensive policies as ones that explicitly include protections for both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (Kosciw et al., 2017). In all of the participants’ schools (including Emily’s college), policies were in place to protect students from harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression with the exception of Connor’s high school, which simply read as follows: “Harassment is prohibited on basis of sex and sexual orientation” (Gerston website).

In all of the participants’ school websites, access to inclusive and protective school policies was difficult and I often had to click through several web pages to locate them in the student handbook. In no schools were the policies listed directly on the website or available through a search engine. Though the participants indicated an awareness of their rights through participation in their schools’ GSA programs, that fact that inclusive and protective policy information was buried, rather than easily accessible on the schools’ public websites, calls into question their importance in the community as well as their effectiveness.

The music website pages for each school were varied. Emily’s and Connors’ high school performing arts pages contained no images of student performers, whereas Evan’s high school featured pictures of the chorus dressed in their traditional white shirts and

black dresses as described earlier by Evan (Urbanton, Gerston, and Wilkshire Smith websites). Similarly, the music page at Traditions College featured a full-page picture of the orchestra and chorus clothed in traditional dresses and tuxes even though Emily indicated that the dress code had changed (Traditions website). Though many school music departments publish their own handbooks, links to specific music related handbooks or policies were not present on any of the participants' music webpages.

Websites and public documents are often the first introduction to a school for parents, students, and teachers. Investigation of Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's school websites revealed inconsistencies in communicating and displaying support for all students. Careful attention to the language, images, and ease of access on websites, with regard to communicating inclusive policies and practices, sends a united message to the community and may help students feel safer and more supported in school and music environments.

In summary, Emily's, Connor's, and Evan's school experiences revealed inconsistencies in supportive language, practices, and policies. While some practices, such as flexible seating, helped participants feel welcome and protected, other traditions, such as gendered concert attire and gendered language, perpetuated heteronormative stereotypes that stifled Connor's, Evan's, and Emily's music experiences. Additionally, language was used by Evan's peers as a form of harassment through purposeful mis-gendering and homophobic slurs. Only Emily benefited from a consistently supportive high school environment where she could openly share her queer, non-binary identity without fear of repercussion. Exception to this was in chorus, where Emily continued to

experience gendered concert attire and language.

Meaningful Performance Experiences

In this section, I examine ways that Emily's, Connor's, and Evan's identities were shaped by music making, itself, through the participants' relationship to lyrics and sound. Scholars have found that compositional elements, such as lyrics, articulation, texture, timbre, and other sonic qualities found in music, contain overt as well as hidden messages that simultaneously suppress and reinforce parts of people's identities (Alaghband-Zadeh, 2015; Brett, 1994). Examination of meaningful music experiences is organized into four areas that were important to the participants' music making: singing, playing instruments, composing, and theater.

Meaningful singing experiences in school helped Emily, Evan, and Connor feel empowered, more confident, and rewarded in class despite oppressive practices. All three participants valued excellence and commitment from others and found it exciting to be musically challenged. Emily enjoyed her high school chorus and found it to be intellectually stimulating. Her chamber choir experiences fueled her passion for early music and a cappella chamber singing, and the Christian texts did not bother her much in high school because she was not yet embracing her Jewish heritage. For Emily, the sonic experience of singing complex polyphony in a small select ensemble was equally as powerful, if not more powerful than the text.

Unlike Emily, Connor preferred being a part of a large ensemble where the sound was less intimate and where he could share space with more male role models. He recalled a joint concert with two other schools of a multi-movement secular work with

orchestra. The large ensemble forces, combined with Connor's passion for history and language, made the concert one of his most powerful music experiences. As Connor described:

> [It] was one of my favorite things I've ever performed musically. It's just such a grandiose, almost memetic thing...we learned about the idiosyncrasies of [the language], the composer's rather odd career, and how the musical styling worked with the poetry. (Connor email, September 1, 2018)

Similarly, Evan enjoyed the visceral experience of singing in a large group. They described connecting to "protest music" and "bigger, more meaningful stuff" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). de Quadros (2018) found that some men feel emasculated by music experiences that make them feel vulnerable. For Connor and Evan, singing powerful, large-scale works not only satisfied their artistic needs, but also reinforced their trans-masculine identities.

All three participants appreciated the poetry and meaning of some of their secular choral works. In particular, Emily related to texts that expressed "transparency" and "vulnerability," which gave her the ability to transcend (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Feelings of "transcendence," "transparency," and "vulnerability" were common artistic themes for both Emily and Evan that would surface later in their senior projects.

Emily and Evan were particularly inspired by their experiences in state music festivals where the caliber of singing was high and where they were surrounded by other musically motivated students. Emily summarized the festival experience:

> It's a different kind of music making— that sort of 'all-in-one-weekend,' no real chance to get to know each other as a choir. But it was a stunning and beautiful thing to sing with that many people and pretty well (Emily interview, July 5, 2018).

Evan and Emily described their first festival experiences as pivotal moments of self-discovery in their journey as musical artists. For all three, meaningful singing experiences formed the crux of their school music experiences and became one of the strongest reasons they stayed singing in chorus despite oppressive circumstances.

A common thread among all three participants was their commitment to artistic endeavors beyond singing. Emily played a number of musical instruments as well as conducted, Connor played tin whistle and had a passion for Shakespeare, and Evan played piano and was a budding multimedia artist. In all three of the participants' experiences, artistic activities beyond singing served to reinforce their gendered, creative beings by enabling them to safely express themselves through another medium, as well as provided them with an artistic space to relax and work independently.

Emily's long-term study on a variety of instruments provided opportunities to engage deeply with music on her own terms, which increased her sense of empowerment. "[I] took recorder lessons from first through eighth grade," she stated proudly, "taught myself the guitar and still am pretty confident on the piano" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She enjoyed exploring the guitar on her own as well as informally with friends. As Jenkins (2011) noted, "the mood of exploration and discovery may empower learners, putting them in charge of their own destinies" (p. 188). While Emily enjoyed playing

guitar with others, Evan and Connor preferred learning instruments on their own and placed value on mastering certain skill levels. Evan stated, "I'm not spectacular or anything, but I can read a piece of music and teach myself a song" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Green (1997) labeled the desire to master technical skills as a "masculine trait" in her discussion of inter-sonic/delineated meanings. For all three participants, playing instruments was a source of pride and validation of musical identity as well as a means to express themselves.

In addition to freely improvising on various instruments within their homes, Emily and Evan prepared compositions for performance that reflected aspects of their trans identities as well as their musical talents. Similar to "Rie" in Nichols's (2013) study, Emily and Evan used composition both as an emotional outlet as well as a way to explore their identities. Evan spent the latter half of their senior year producing and illustrating a short film featuring two trans characters. The project featured several elements that reflected their trans experience including fluidity, vulnerability, and loneliness. In addition to the ghost-themed storyline, ideas of transparency and loneliness were also expressed in Evan's piano music which featured light, arpeggiated piano chords in a major key. Evan's musical direction over the project displayed a "technical mastery" that validated their masculine identity (Green, 1997).

Similar to Evan's work, Emily's capstone project at Traditions displayed elements of fluidity and vulnerability that resonated with her trans feminine identity. As a genderqueer participant in Hawkins's (2009) study described, "I like the idea of being in motion somewhere . . . moving toward something or away from something . . . moving

and fluidity" (p. 61). The lyrics contained elements of searching and transition that mirrored Emily's fluid identity, as the music moved freely between dichotomous musical relationships such as major and minor, dissonance and consonance, simple and complex. Emily's conducting completed the experience as she guided the ensemble through the complex array of emotions. Although the participants' approaches to composition varied, their music reflected a powerful and variable queerness which honored their unique journeys.

As stated previously, theater provided and important artistic and personal outlet for Evan and Connor to feel empowered in both physical and emotional ways by exploring their masculine personae on stage. As Connor exclaimed, "I am so much more comfortable when I'm on stage and the cast is referring to me as male, and I am male, and, like, this is good" (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). Evan used theater and singing to build confidence in their trans masculine personae: "Look confident until I am confident," they stated (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Because both schools adopted an unofficial gender-neutral casting policy for all students, Connor and Evan portrayed male characters with acceptance and approval from others. Newman (2018) found that inclusive casting policies were particularly helpful for students who felt marginalized and were seeking positive acceptance from their peers, such as LGBTQ+ students. Similar to Connor's post-graduate experience in *Hamlet,* gender-neutral casting practices in school helped Evan and Connor feel more welcome and freer to be themselves.

Evan and Connor were both honored to take on secondary leading male roles for their senior year musicals. Connor spoke passionately about his role as well as the

musical's connections to history and literature. He considered the experience one of the highlights of his school career. Evan had a mixed reaction, however. While they were "fine" with their role, they also felt hurt that they were the only senior not a part of the main lead cast (Evan interview, August 28, 2018). As Evan explained, "It's more disappointing to not have played a lead in a musical because I know vocally I would struggle with or be unable to play a lead that I'd want to be" (Evan autobiography). For Evan, theater was an important social as well as artistic experience. By separating Evan from their senior peers in the cast, they felt excluded and self-conscious which contributed to insecurity about their trans voice and identity.

In summary, Connor's, Emily's, and Evan's experiences in music and theater provided them with a powerful means with which to connect to themselves as well as others. Additionally, Connor found personal empowerment through scripted models which helped him practice social skills in a safe environment. Through meaningful performances, Emily, Connor, and Evan were able to enjoy a visceral sonic experience with others that reinforced their musical identities and helped them endure oppressive conditions.

Safe Spaces, Safe People

Establishing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth in schools and communities in the United States has been a priority for educators since 1993 and the birth of the safe schools' movement (Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001). The purpose of the movement was to bring more visibility, awareness, and protection for LGBTQ+ youth by establishing a network of Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) in schools where youth could find support and

representation, and initiate change. In this section, I review Emily, Evan, and Connor's experiences with their GSAs, as well as other safe spaces and people that helped them feel accepted and free to fully express themselves.

Although all three participants in this study had a GSA in their high schools, Connor chose not to participate. For Evan and Emily, however, the GSA provided a space to socialize and affirm their non-binary identities, raise awareness, and provide support for LGBTQ+ peers. The presence of a GSA in high schools has been shown to improve school climate and increase LGBTQ+ students' feelings of safety (Johnson et al., 2014; Kosciw et al., 2017; McGuire et al., 2010; Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001). Studies indicate that the presence of a GSA in school is helpful to people's well-being whether or not students choose to participate (Johnson et al., 2014; McGuire et al., 2010; Poirier, 2014).

Evan described an aggressive, hyper-masculine environment at their school, despite having a GSA presence. They felt that there was a lack of peer support for the school's GSA and a negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ people in general. "It wasn't uncommon, especially during my first two years, to hear the f-word or other homophobic comments in the hall or at lunch," they stated (Evan email, November 27, 2018). Evan and the other members of their GSA worked to make changes in the school. "The main mission of the GSA when I was an underclassman was to stop people from using 'gay' as a synonym for bad and to stop other similar behaviors," Evan explained (Evan email, November 27, 2018). Evan's hostile experience at school mirrored Wilchins' (2019) description. As Wilchins stated, "gender harassment overwhelmingly reenacts traditional

norms of male entitlement expressing dominance over weaker members of a group, often to promote masculine bonding among boys" (p. 112). Additionally, Evan found a lack of support from the GSA itself regarding their needs. When Evan (the only gender non-binary member) looked to the GSA for help in pressuring the school administration to add a gender-neutral bathroom, the group did not feel it was important. This left Evan alone to fight for the change.

In contrast to Evan's experience, Emily felt that her school was very supportive of LGBTQ+ students and that differences between sexual orientation and gender identity were a "non-issue" (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). In Emily's case, although the GSA served an important purpose, the need to create a separate safe space for LGBTQ+ students was somewhat lessened because the entire school felt safe. As Emily stated, "I think the need for support groups was relatively low just because the school as a whole was such a lucky place to be in those ways," (Emily interview, July 18, 2018). Both Evan and Emily assumed leadership roles in their schools' GSAs. Emily co-led her GSA with a transwoman friend during her senior year and, together, they worked on educating others about trans identities.

Mayo (2014) noted that there are some who would argue against the existence of GSAs because they perpetuate segregating behaviors and attitudes. At the same time, Mayo admitted, GSAs provide an important safe haven for youth seeking to bond with others who share their beliefs and experiences. For Emily and Evan, the GSA held an important social, activist, and political space whether or not people participated. As Evan stated, "Just holding that place so that it exists when someone wants it *is* important"

(Evan interview, June 7 2018).

In addition to the presence of a GSA in their schools, all three participants reported feeling encouraged by teachers who were also LGBTQ+ role models. Role models provide a key element in the construction of adolescents' positive "possible selves" (Oyserman and Fryberg 2006). Additionally, Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) found that high-risk youth who developed positive possible selves had significantly improved grades and more coping strategies than those who did not. Teacher role models who identify as part of the LGBTQ + community can be a particularly powerful influence (Palkki & Caldwell, 2018). When schools openly welcome and include teachers who identify as LGBTQ+, it benefits all students by normalizing the diverse world of gender and sexuality in their lives.

LGBTQ+ teacher role models were essential to Evan's and Connors' feelings of happiness and well-being because there were so few LGBTQ+ students in their schools. Teacher role models can be particularly important to students who do not see themselves "reflected by their families, schools, or culture" (Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001, p. 138). Additionally, because Connor felt ostracized from his peers, positive interactions with teacher role models were crucial to his success. He developed positive relationships with teachers in the English department where two of the teachers were openly gay and married to each other. "That was, actually, really positive," Connor stated (Connor interview, August 2, 2018). Evan also benefited from gay teacher role models in her school, including her music teacher. Emily stated that there were multiple "out" teachers in her high school, including several who sang in chorus and shared her passion for music

and math. For all three participants, teacher role models not only provided support and representation of a gender and sexually-diverse community, but also presented a glimpse of whom they might become.

Outside of their schools, Evan's and Connor's community LGBTQ+ experiences provided an additional outlet for them to explore their identity and gather emotional support from peers. The local LGBTQ+ alliance was Connor's only dedicated LGBTQ+ space and offered several programs in addition to weekly support meetings, such as poetry readings and open mic nights. The group provided Connor with a much-needed place away from the difficult social scene at school, where he could grow and be accepted as well as find a supportive audience for his performing. Similarly, Evan's Out and About Theater provided Evan with a creative outlet as well as an opportunity to socialize with other queer youth. Evan felt more relaxed when they were at Out and About. As Evan summarized, "Not everything is about being queer obviously, but there is something to be said about how much easier it is to be with other queer kids, especially when I'm just meeting someone" (Evan interview, August 28, 2018). Evan's and Connor's experiences with their community groups helped build the confidence and resilience they needed to confront everyday constraints at school.

Role of Media

Emily, Connor, and Evan engaged in media in a variety of ways that supported them musically as well as personally. Connor recalled that the radio helped him begin to understand himself at age 9 when he first heard Nina Simone's deep voice: "that was the first time I was, like, 'people who have vocal words like mine, can sound like that'

(Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Similarly, Evan first learned about their non-binary identity through the Internet: "I was like, 'this is so cool,'", Evan recalled (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Evan's experience mirrored other stories of revelation and self-discovery via the Internet (Bartolome, 2016; Erber, 2015; Lewis, 2017; Silveira, 2019) such as "Sky" in Lewis's (2017) study in which they exclaimed "this makes so much more sense" (p. 151).

In addition to network broadcasting and film, social media platforms and other audio/visual sources online have increased trans visibility and helped individuals connect with each other as well as find useful resources. Evan admitted to using the Internet regularly to view trans content and connect with LGBTQ+ friends. Hawkins (2009) noted that today's youth generation is the first to have regular access to positive trans role models in the media. Connecting to the trans community online was essential for Evan's emotional well-being because they had very few trans role models in their rural community and school. "I don't think I would have figured it out when I did if I didn't have these online sources," Evan stated (Evan interview, June 7, 2018). Online communities help combat some of the isolation that many trans people experience, and may be one of the only sources of information for people living in a rural area (Erber, 2015). As Mock (2014) explained:

> The rise of social media and online resources has lessened the deafening isolation for trans people. If they have online access, trans people can find support and resources on YouTube, Tumblr, Twitter, and various other platforms where trans folks of all ages are broadcasting their lives, journeys, and even social and

medical transitions. (p. 118)

For similar reasons, Connor valued the Internet as a way to learn about himself and connect with other performing artists. Audio/visual websites, such as YouTube and Vimeo, can be particularly helpful for individuals who are unable to attend live performances due to financial or geographical constraints. Although Connor would have preferred to attend musical theater productions in person, his low SES did not afford him the means to purchase tickets. Instead, Connor used the Internet to view performances that provided him with both personal and artistic models from which to learn and fantasize.

All three participants enjoyed using the Internet to view popular music performances by their favorite celebrity role models. Evan and Emily aligned with popular musicians who were not only talented and charismatic, but who also presented fluidly such as Brendan Urie and Placebo. By contrast, Connor sought out genderfluid models that projected a more masculine image such as Green Day. Researchers have found that popular music assists with forming youth's identities (Abramo, 2011a; Wadley 2014). The ease and availability of popular music online makes it possible for people to watch their favorite performers multiple times and learn from them. Participants in Abramo's (2011a) study used hard rock styles to project their masculine, heterosexual identities. Similarly, Connor embraced the edgy, rebellious, punk rock vocal styles of bands like Green Day which helped him explore his lower vocal range and assert his male personae.

Perhaps not quite coincidentally, all three participants named glam-rock icon

David Bowie (1947-2016) as one of their favorite celebrity role models. Bowie presented a powerful and unique personality, and was particularly popular with the LGBTQ+ crowd who were drawn to his androgynous, sexually charged performances (Bullock, 2017). Through Bowie's embodiment of power, confidence, and fluidity, Emily, Evan, and Connor found a role model that validated their trans identities as well as inspired their artistic quest for musical excellence.

In sum, mass media and the Internet provides a valuable tool for trans individuals to learn about themselves and other trans people (Erber, 2015; Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Not all trans information on the Internet is positive, however, and researchers warn users to be discerning (Gurss, 2018; Wadley, 2014) Additionally, heteronormative messages continue to be embedded in the sounds and images of pop culture, which slows progress towards gender inclusivity (Wadley, 2014). While all three participants were shaped by engagement with music media online, the Internet became a crucial component for Evan's and Connor's experiences as trans musicians with limited access to people and music like them.

Personal Agency and Signifying Identity

Emily, Connor, and Evan demonstrated tremendous strength and resilience throughout their musical and personal journeys. What was remarkable in each of their stories was their sense of agency which gave them the ability to take charge of some situations and make transformative changes, rather than waiting for adult intervention. Like participants in Linville's (2009) study, Evan, Emily, and Connor "promoted an ethics based on the freedom to pursue sexual and gender desires, rather than a morality

imposed by institutional powers" (p. 172). They consistently worked to overcome heteronormative constraints and express their queer identities, even though their desires were not always met. Analysis of the participants' personal agency is organized into the following areas: coming out and taking initiative, empathy and forgiveness, educating others, and being a role model.

The process of coming out is a pivotal moment that requires courageous self-initiative as well as support and affirmation from others (Rivers, 2018, p. 185). Emily, Connor, and Evan asserted their identity in a variety of ways after they came out. Although Connor made changes to his name and pronouns right away, Emily and Evan expressed their non-binary identities in more subtle ways. Emily chose to express her non-binary identity through accessories and attire rather than by changing her name or pronouns, although she still felt too constrained to wear a skirt: "I didn't dare wear a skirt, you know," Emily stated (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Evan chose to come out quietly by posting a message on social media rather than tell people in person. Unlike Emily, they changed their pronouns but were not ready to share their name in high school.

Despite advocating for themselves at home and at school after they came out, changes were not always forthcoming and all three participants described difficulty having their pronouns and identity respected by their parents and teachers. Advocating for themselves in school was especially challenging for Evan and Connor, and speaking up did not always achieve their desired outcomes. Evan's request for a proper gender-neutral bathroom was denied, for example, and Connor's request to change his name on

official school rosters was delayed. Additionally, some of Evan's and Connors' teachers and peers purposely ignored their requests as a form of rejection. Connor's and Evan's experiences are consistent with Beemyn and Rankin's (2011) findings that transgender individuals encounter more harassment and rejection the more widely they come out as transgender (p. 95). Sometimes Evan, Connor, and Emily grew tired of advocating and re-explaining themselves and simply gave up. Similarly, participants in Beemyn and Rankin's study commented that it was "too much effort to convince others to rethink how they conceive of gender and to stop using gendered language" (p. 152).

Remarkably, where Emily, Connor, and Evan formally advocated for themselves the least was in music. The positive relationship with their teacher and, in Emily's and Evan's cases, with their peers in chorus, combined with their musical enjoyment, made Evan, Connor, and Emily feel that advocating for themselves in chorus was not only inconsequential, but might also disrupt the positive atmosphere. Their reactions were similar to those of "Melanie" in Bartolome (2016) when she stated, "I felt bad asking them to use my preferred pronouns" (p. 36). As a result, all three participants wore concert attire that was uncomfortable. Moreover, Connor and Evan sang voice parts that made them feel dysphoric, rather than risk disrupting the positive atmosphere by insisting upon change. "I didn't want to create a problem," Evan stated, when their requests for a different voice part and concert attire were denied, "so I didn't make a big deal of it" (Evan email, November 27, 2018).

Connor, Evan, and Emily displayed tremendous maturity and insight as they explored various points of view with regard to their identity and music making, and they

were particularly empathetic with their parents' struggles. Even Connor, who admitted that his ASD diagnosis made empathizing difficult at times, was able to view his experience from another perspective. He described the dual pressures of being an autistic as well as a trans role model with a mixture of self-deprecation and thoughtful insight. "It's basically all on me to either have them not think I'm annoying, or not think I'm trans," he stated (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Consistent with Palkki's (2016) findings, the participants in this study readily forgave people for mistakes as long as they were trying. As Connor summarized:

> Usually, when people correct you on their name or their pronouns, they're not offended, they're not angry at you, they are just letting you know something that's important to them. And really all you need to say is 'OK' and then you start using the right name and the right pronouns. (Connor interview, August 29, 2018).

While Connor's, Evan's, and Emily's ability to empathize with others was admirable, at times their understanding worked to cover up true feelings of frustration. Similar to participants in McGuire et al.'s (2010) study, Emily, Evan, and Connor would often mask their own feelings of frustration or hurt with comments about the other person's point of view or saying that it was not a big deal. Evan often de-emphasized their feelings of frustration with pacifying statements such as "but it was OK," or "but it's fine." Connor viewed his identity as an "imposition" and empathized with other people to an extreme, sometimes blaming himself for others' lack of insight (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). For example, although gendered voice parts and uniforms were clearly a problem in his chorus, Connor continued to blame himself for not being assertive

enough to ask for his needs, stating “because if I didn’t ask, it wasn't their problem” (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Similarly, Emily excused the constraining concert uniform requirements in her high school by blaming herself because she could not articulate what she wanted. In all cases, the participants’ need to exhibit agency was sometimes thwarted by their good manners and a concern for others’ needs above their own.

Being out and visible as trans comes with a responsibility that involves continually sharing yourself with others (Mock, 2014). In addition to being positive, well-mannered trans role models in their communities, all three participants believed that educating others about their trans identities was part of their journey. Evan and Connor felt pressure to be positive trans role models in their schools and communities at all times. “Basically, just being trans, you just, kind of, automatically become the poster child for the entire trans community,” Connor stated (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Evan felt that it was their “job” to answer questions and teach others because of their role in the GSA and because they were the only trans person in their classes (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Connor admitted that it gets tiring: “It’s a little stressful,” he stated (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Evan’s and Connor’s desire to be a good role model was similar to “Melanie’s” sentiment in Bartolome (2016) when she stated, “‘If this is the person’s first experience with a trans person, I want it to be good’” (p. 43).

By contrast, Emily did not feel the need to educate others about her non-binary identity in her high school because she was already surrounded by a group of understanding peers and teachers. Although being a good student was important to Emily,

she was driven by a desire to succeed academically and morally, not necessarily to model non-binary identity. For Emily, the need to educate people outside her family did not present itself until college where Emily felt she was often people's "first trans acquaintance" (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). She described her college experience as occasionally "rough" but mostly without incident, (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). For all three participants, balancing the need to assert their queer identities with their desire to appear socially congenial was tricky, tiring, and sometimes got annoying. As "Joseph" in Silveira's (2019) study proclaimed, "I'm tired of being a political statement, because I'm not. I'm a person" (p. 440).

In music, being a role model student was sometimes complicated and stressful. Although Evan, Connor, and Emily wished to make changes to accommodate their personal needs, they feared upsetting the positive choral atmosphere and drawing negative attention to themselves. "I just didn't want to make things awkward," Connor explained (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). Evan sacrificed their desire to sing alto for the sake of the group. They stated, "we had so few people that having two more altos than sopranos was a lot" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Emily continued to wear tuxedos all through college despite her gradual transition to female. Being a good chorus role model, in other words, meant adopting congenial, heteronormative behaviors, rather than fulfilling personal needs. For all three participants, being a cooperative music student was perceived as being more valuable than being a trans student.

Role of Music Teacher

Educators play a critical role in shaping the day-to-day experiences of students,

including the information that students receive about who they are and whether they feel safe and valued in school (Chappell et al., 2018, p. 112). Music teachers, in particular, have the unique opportunity to build strong, supportive relationships with students because students often stay involved with school music for several years (Carter, 2011; Silveira & Goff, 2016). Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's music teachers provided musical as well as personal role models which helped lay the foundations for their appreciation for music, as well as their understanding of the choral experience itself. Additionally, all three of the participants' music teachers made efforts to help their students feel respected and valued, even though there were inconsistencies and costly mistakes. In this section, I analyze ways that Evan's, Connor's, and Emily's music teachers created safe spaces where the students felt validated as well as artistically stimulated despite heteronormative traditions. The examination is organized into following areas: musical leadership and blind trust, recognition and showing support, teacher openness and creating safe space.

The most salient element present in all three participants' choral experiences was Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's admiration for their teachers' musical abilities. Emily appreciated that Mr. Kendrick taught her about the importance of vowel shaping and tuning, which she continued to use in her own conducting. In hindsight, however, Emily felt that neither Mr. Kendrick nor her college professors gave her much information about vocal technique or sound production. Conversely, Evan admired Ms. Taylor's knowledge of vocal technique but worried about "impressing" Ms. Taylor when binding began to infringe upon their breathing (Evan email, August 28, 2018). The worry increased Evans' feelings of self-consciousness and stress in the classroom.

All three participants valued their teachers' efforts to connect them with the texts and meaning. Pedagogy that engages students in music's history and meaning promotes deep learning and cultural understanding (Shaw, 2012). "She makes us have conversations about the music we're singing and what it means and why we're singing it and why it matters," Evan stated (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Likewise, Emily's music teacher, Mr. Kendrick, made time in rehearsals to discuss poetic texts that were particularly complicated and "less obvious" to understand (Emily interview, July 5, 2018). Connor enjoyed the history and language behind his choral repertoire and, although it was unclear if Miss Miller discussed the texts on a regular basis, he viewed the repertoire as a strength of the program.

Connor, Evan, and Emily believed that their teachers chose challenging, "serious" repertoire, were competent in their teaching abilities, and produced high quality performances. As a result, they were proud of their performances and developed confidence in their own musical abilities. Confidence in their teacher as well as themselves seemed to correlate with the participants' belief in the overall choral system itself, as it was presented in their schools. In effect, Connor, Emily, and Evan did not feel the need to challenge their high schools' choral systems, because they trusted their teachers' knowledge and because, musically, it appeared to be working.

Researchers have questioned the value of director-driven choruses that inhibit student voices (Froehlich, 2007; O'Toole, 2005). O'Toole (2005) described the system as a "normalizing process" in which directors hold sole power over what music should be sung, how the music should be rehearsed and performed, and what details comprise a

good presentation. As O'Toole illustrated:

> It is through the conventions of choral pedagogy, as accepted by both singer and director, that the choir member's experience and knowledge were silenced. It is a paradox, then, that within the space of choral rehearsals, singers are expected to have no voice! (p. 10)

Emily commented that high school music is often students' first experience with choral directors and forms the basis by which they assess other choral situations. She stated:

> I think, on some levels, if you're someone who is really going to end up liking choral music, the first person to really give you instruction is somebody you feel strongly about...I mean, you always remember your first choir director. (Emily interview, July 5, 2018)

For Emily, Evan, and Connor, belief in their music teachers' leadership resulted in a form of blind trust in the choral system which prevented them from moving beyond behaviors considered "normal" or "traditional" to demanding change.

In addition to providing musical leadership, Ms. Taylor, Miss Miller, and Emily's teachers worked to support the participants' trans musical identities in other ways, such as being advisors and role models, providing flexible casting options, honoring names and pronouns, and issuing awards and recognition. Several sources list ways that teachers can be supportive of gender-diverse students and affirm their identities, including honoring names and pronouns among other inclusive practices (Chappell et al., 2018; Weinberg, 2009). Connor appreciated that Miss Miller supported him by honoring his name and pronouns right away without asking questions. Likewise, Ms. Taylor used

Evan's pronouns right away, but also validated Evan's identity by introducing herself with her own pronouns. Ms. Taylor's and Evan's exchange of pronouns demonstrates how teachers and students shape each other performatively through classroom discourse. As Butler (2004) described, "if saying is a form of doing, and part of what is getting done is the self, then conversation is a mode of doing something together and becoming otherwise" (p. 173).

Miss Miller and Miss Taylor also supported Connor and Evan in the theater by being flexible with roles and vocal parts. For Connor's senior year musical, Miss Miller took the initiative by asking Connor if they would rather switch to tenor. Connor described the experience with delight and relief: "that was just really enlightening" (Connor interview, August 17, 2018). Miss Miller's and Connor's brief exchange demonstrates the extent to which a teacher's seemingly small act of support can have a huge impact. Connor did not feel comfortable advocating for his needs so, by offering Connor the option of singing tenor rather than waiting for him to ask, Miss Miller simultaneously affirmed his identity, gave him permission to explore, and relieved him of the discomfort of asking for help.

In another poignant moment of recognition, Miss Miller honored Connor with a senior scholarship for his outstanding dedication to the drama program. Because Connor felt alone and ostracized by his peers at school, Miss Miller's public recognition of Connor as an outstanding performer was pivotal because what he did "mattered," (Connor interview, August 29, 2018). *He* mattered.

Similar to Connor's experience, Ms. Taylor played a crucial role in supporting

Evan both musically and personally at school. In addition to providing musical inspiration and being flexible with voice parts in the musicals, Ms. Taylor was also an LGBTQ+ role model and an academic advisor to Evan. They enjoyed a close relationship and "talked about lots of things" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018). Even though Evan and Ms. Taylor did not discuss identity, Evan credited Ms. Taylor for giving them the courage to come out. As they stated, "Because of my chorus teacher, I ended up coming out to pretty much all of my social circle and my extended social circle," (Evan interview, August 26, 2018).

In contrast to Evan and Connor, Emily's relationship with her chorus director, Mr. Kendrick, seemed the most distant of the three participants. This appeared to be related to impressions from their first meeting when Emily described Mr. Kendrick as "rigid" and somewhat old fashioned. He also upheld gendered norms such as language ("ladies and gentlemen") and gendered uniform requirements, which was remarkable considering he was also leader of a community LGBTQ+ chorus. Despite these inconsistencies, however, Mr. Kendrick supported Emily and her music making in other ways, such as recommendations for select groups, festivals, and choral solos. For Emily, mentoring and recognition from Mr. Kendrick was respectful but tied exclusively to musical support.

Consistent with findings from other research, the participants in this study all indicated that they felt safer in music and theater than in other contexts (Carter, 2011; Palkki & Caldwell, 2018; Newman, 2018; Spidel, 2014). As Carter (2011) stated, "when students feel safe, they are more likely to ask questions and engage in your class in dynamic and meaningful ways— both musically and non-musically" (p. 29). Ms. Taylor

worked hard to create a safe and supportive atmosphere by connecting with students in thoughtful, meaningful ways such as making room for class discussions on sensitive issues. “She creates this atmosphere where there’s just... there’s not shame, Evan stated (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Similarly, Connor described Miss Miller as “very open and accepting” even though he did not feel comfortable approaching her about his needs.

Silveira and Goff (2016) found that most music teachers have positive attitudes towards transgender people and believe they are creating safe and supportive environments. However, results indicated that more teacher training is needed for teachers to understand how to fully support their students because “although many teachers believe in the importance of creating a safe environment . . . they may fail to do so” (Silveira & Goff, p. 152). Similarly, although Emily’s, Evan’s, and Connor’s music teachers worked in various ways to create safe and supportive spaces, by adhering to heteronormative traditions, such as gendered concert attire and voice parts, Mr. Kendrick, Miss Miller, and Ms. Taylor unintentionally created an oppressive situation that grew in intensity as Emily, Evan, and Connor came to know themselves.

Wilchins (2019) noted that teachers uphold gender biases even when they work to overcome them. They stated, “what makes such trends especially challenging is that they hold true even for teachers who are morally opposed to them, and deeply committed to equity” (p. 88). In Evan’s case, Ms. Taylor’s rigid ideas about voice parts and concert attire seemed to contradict other more supportive practices such as her “mindfulness” warm-ups in which she encouraged students to get in touch with their bodies and emotions through breathing and imagery. Similarly, while Miss Miller recognized

Connor's desire to sing tenor in the musical, she remained adamantly opposed to people who were assignment male at birth singing tenor in chorus. As Hearns and Kremer (2018) explained, "associations and expectations about voice and gender may be deep-rooted and difficult to discard . . . but the responsibility to continue to work toward cultural competence lies first with the teacher" (p. 27).

While it is difficult to fully assess the reasons why Ms. Taylor, Miss Miller, and Mr. Kendrick upheld gendered choral traditions in their choruses, what is clear is that Emily, Connor, and Evan felt safe and cared for by their teachers in other ways. Furthermore, the participants did not always equate their struggles with heteronormative conditions to feelings of safety because they felt protected from physical and verbal harassment in chorus, and because they respected their teachers. This contrast between feeling simultaneously affirmed and rejected in the music classroom highlights the tenuous relationship between students and teachers with regard to care and trust.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's stories through a comparative narrative analysis of emergent themes within eight major areas including supportive people, singing alone and with others, negotiating traditions, meaningful performance experiences, safe spaces and safe people, role of media, personal agency, and role of the music teacher. Analysis revealed ways that the participants' performativity and music making were affected both positively and negatively during high school. Furthermore, analysis showed that music making was impeded when performativity was being constrained (such as singing in an undesirable range or feeling

exposed), whereas, positive intersections between performativity and music making created feelings of empowerment (such as the participants' informal music making and Emily and Evan's experiences with composition). A discussion of the participants' performativity and music making, as well as the key findings drawn from these intersections, is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Through a Performativity Lens: Discussion and Conclusion

If school environments are less institutional, regimented, and static— depending on old rigid gender binaries and heteronormative assumptions about relationships— educators can negotiate, co-construct, and make emergent newly safe, welcoming, and inclusive policies and practices. We are in-process. This framing keeps us focused on the kind of future horizon that is responsive to our student population and social justice changes in the larger culture. We recognize that this is a significant shift from more traditional framings of high school campus cultures. However, emergent spaces, guided by social emotional learning practices, encourage educators to recognize students in all their complexities and intersectionalities. We can embrace an environment as both shaped by, and shaping, the practices and policies of school.

(Chappell et al., 2018, p. 191)

This study highlighted the powerful narratives of three young musicians who had recently graduated from high school and identified as trans. Although their stories were heartbreaking at times, they also showcased the participants' remarkable strength and resilience, and I was deeply moved by their positivity and open trust as we explored their lives and music together. In this chapter, I review the findings and relevant themes drawn from my conversations with Emily, Connor, and Evan. This is followed by a discussion of the implications and limitations of the study. I conclude with some final thoughts and recommendations for teacher practice.

The purpose of this study was to examine high school music environments through the recollected experiences of three trans young adults, and to explore the various behaviors and beliefs that shaped the participants' identities and music making. Because students' lives are varied and multifaceted, exploration of the participants' experiences included contexts outside of high school that were crucial to their gender construction and musical engagement (school, family, and community) from which several themes

emerged (Figure 6.1). Music environments can be both affirming and oppressive for students because of heteronormative beliefs that dominate classroom behaviors (Bergonzi, 2009). Trans students offer a unique perspective on ways that music and gender intersect, as well as ways that students and educators can create more gender-inclusive spaces.

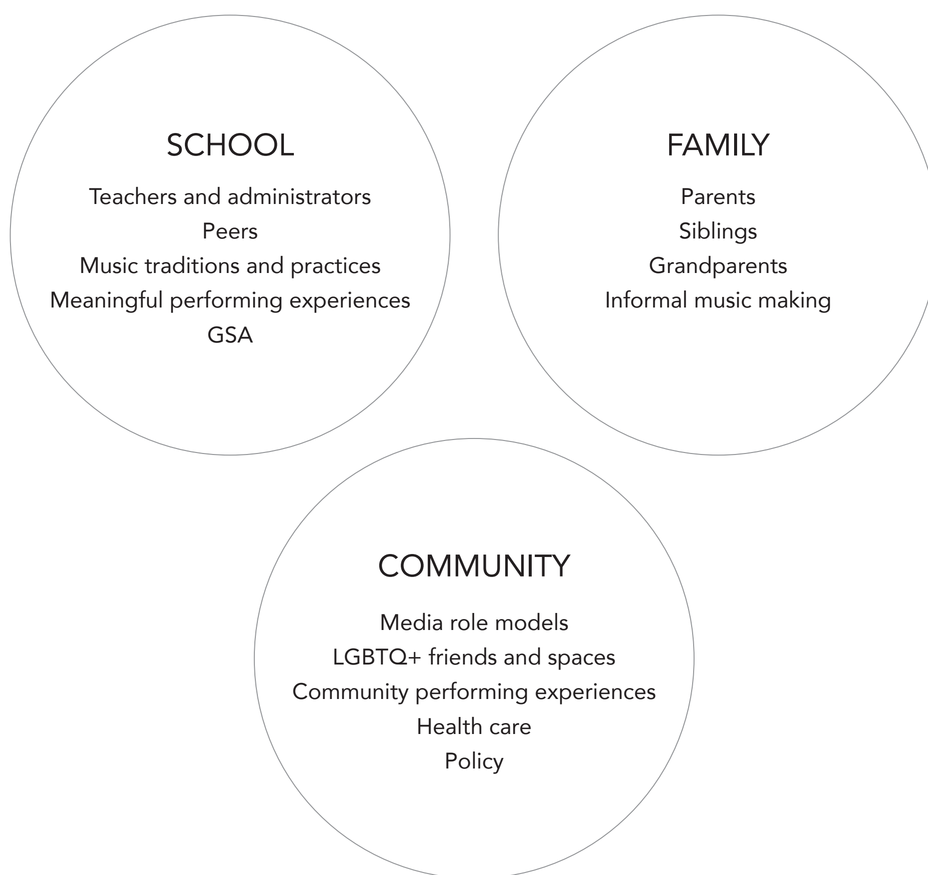

Figure 6.1. Areas of gender construction and musical engagement.

A secondary purpose of this study was to uncover ways that queer ideals of fluidity, variance, and flexibility were present and honored in the classroom, with the intention of highlighting more positive examples of resilience and inclusion. Sharing

positive stories shifts the focus away from positioning trans youth as only victims and, instead, empowers students by recognizing their strength and individuality (Mayo, 2014). My intention was not to negate the discrimination and adverse circumstances that many trans individuals continue to face (Kosciw et al., 2017) but, rather, to highlight successful ways that students and educators uphold each other and create change.

This study builds upon the small but growing body of research in music education highlighting the voices of trans youth (Kruse, 2016; Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2016). Research featuring first person accounts of trans musicians helps humanize students' experiences and gives them ownership of their story (Bartolome, 2016). For this reason, I utilized numerous participant quotes from interviews to share the results of this study, as well as to allow their own unique voices to shine. Additional data for this study included participant artifacts, related websites, and field notes. Performativity provided the theoretical lens through which to explore the participants' unique high school music experiences. According to Butler (1990/1999), performativity involves the reciprocal process of gender construction through bodily communication with others and the environment (Figure 6.2). Because performativity is a complex and continual process, it was difficult to capture every interaction in its entirety and may be an impossible task in reality. Deconstructing the participants' experiences through the lenses of performativity and queer theory, however, provided a glimpse as to the ways music, people, and gender acted upon one another to sometimes enable and sometimes constrain music performance.

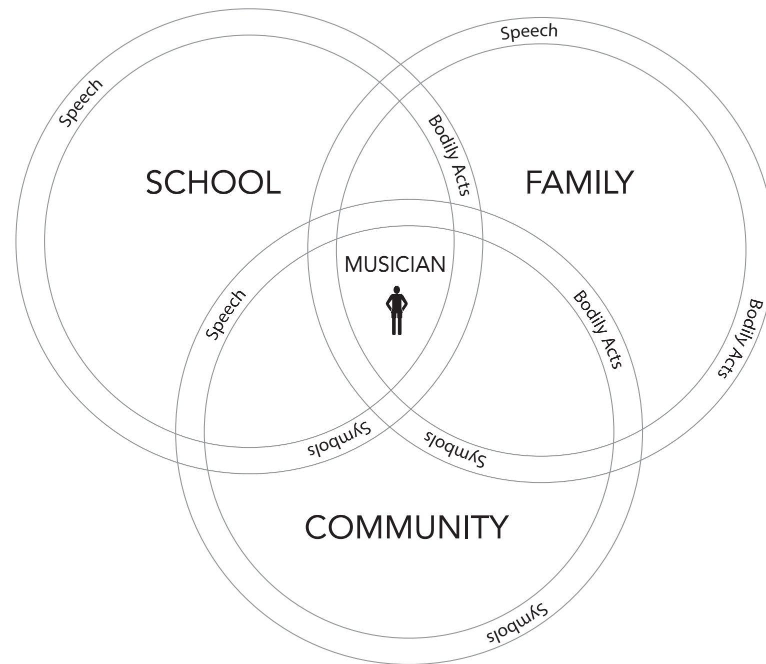

Figure 6.2. Performativity: musician's communication with others and with the environment.

Summary of Research Questions and Key Findings

The overarching question guiding this research was: How do gender performativity and music making intersect in high school music environments? The secondary questions were:

1. What beliefs, behaviors, and practices constrained or enabled the participants' gender performativity and ability to engage with music in high school?
2. How did the participants in this study feel supported or unsupported by their high school music teachers?

Key findings from the secondary questions helped inform the primary inquiry which I address below.

Overarching Research Question: How do gender performativity and music making intersect in high school music environments?

As described earlier, performativity builds upon the widely held belief that identity is both internally felt and socially constructed. Through performativity, gender is signified, reinforced, and re-signified through bodily and speech acts that are communicated with others (Butler 1990/1999). In this study, I extended Butler's concept to explore ways that both music performance and gender are reinforced through performativity. Intersections between music and gender performativity fell into three prominent areas, including the participant's interactions with others, with traditions, and with music.

Interactions with family, peers, and teachers. Interactions with others forms the core of Butler's (2004) concept of performativity. The participants' interactions with family, peers, and teachers affected their music making in numerous and varied ways. Quite coincidentally, all three participants shared similar familial dynamics with regard to support and strain. For all three, the participants' fathers provided the greatest amount of musical and personal reinforcement, whereas their mothers often expressed anger or worry about the participants' transitions. Several sources list parental support as one of the most important contributing factors to students' success and well-being in school (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Simons et al., 2013). Simons et al. (2013) found that transgender adolescents experience a significantly higher quality of life with supportive parents. Through support and encouragement from their fathers, the participants saw themselves reflected as strong artistic beings which laid the foundations for future musical and

personal growth. By contrast, Emily and Evan stated that delays in transitioning were partially because they were concerned about their mothers' reactions. Although Evan and Emily indicated that their mothers were supportive in other ways, their mothers' initial painful rejection of their transitions added to their stress.

In school, interactions with music teachers formed one of the most powerful relationships for all three participants. Music teachers helped bolster the participants' music making through knowledge of music and vocal technique as well as leadership and organization skills. Personal connections with music teachers also helped Evan, Emily, and Connor feel safe and cared for, despite constraining music traditions. A deeper discussion of the role of the music teacher follows in a discussion of Research Question #2 below.

All the participants benefited from interacting with supportive teachers and peers outside of their families, who enabled their music making through knowledge, encouragement, modeling, and validation of both their musical abilities and their gendered identities. An exception to this was Connor's relationship with his peers who supported him musically but not socially, reflecting a contrasting dynamic that may have contributed to Connor's drive to perform in an effort to maintain acceptance from his peers. Connor's story is a heartbreaking example of the painful effects of peer rejection, for the more Connor was rejected socially by his peers, the more he withdrew and grew quiet. Research confirms that peer victimization can lead to school avoidance, substance abuse, mental health issues, and suicide (Greytak, Kosciw, & Dias, 2009). Recent studies indicate that nearly 40% of trans youth has considered suicide over the past year (Herman

et al., 2015). Thankfully, this was not the case for Connor who found peer acceptance onstage where he could assert himself and share his talents with others.

Evan's interactions with music peers differed from Connor's because they enjoyed the social aspect of singing in chorus. In Evan's case, support and validation from people in chorus provided protection from the peer rejection they experienced outside the music department. In effect, negative interactions with others in school served to strengthen Evan's music making by giving them a reason to seek safety and support in the performing arts department. Sixty-eight percent of high school students in Palkki and Caldwell's study (2018) described the chorus room as a safe place in school. Similarly, positive interactions with their peers and their music teacher helped Evan feel safe and reinforced their desire to sing with others in chorus.

Singing together, playing instruments, and acting on stage with family and peers created positive musical interactions for all three participants that reinforced their musical abilities. Similar to Connor's experience in theater, singing in chorus provided Emily with a place where she could simultaneously blend in and be heard at the same time. As stated earlier, Emily felt particularly empowered by the communal aspect of singing in choruses where she could connect with others without exposing her solo voice. In a similar manner, Gould (2010) described feeling empowered by her experience playing in band in high school by stating "music became an imperative in the life of this queer girl through playing saxophone in the band" (p. 2). Like Gould, Emily experienced a "deeply personal and passionate relationship with music," when performing with others which, in turn, strengthened her connection to others in the ensemble (Gould, 2010, p. 10).

Outlining Emily's choral interactions through a performative lens illustrates an example of the reciprocal process between music, identity, and others: As the music inspires Emily's voice, she signifies to others. The other singers then reinforce Emily with their own voices as they all reinforce the music together, and the process repeats. While this performative process may appear ideal to music educators, it is important to note that Emily's experience was quite different when she sang solo. Singing without others not only left Emily feeling exposed, but also eliminated part of the performative process that she needed to feel connected to music and reinforce her identity. As a result, Emily's solo experiences created stress and dysphoria.

Butler (2004) described the performative and political relationship with others as a kind of surrender in which both parties simultaneously give and receive bodily information which then informs their response. She stated:

> It is through the body that gender and sexuality become exposed to others, implicated in social processes, inscribed by cultural norms, and apprehended in their social meanings. In a sense, to be a body is to be given over to others even as a body is, emphatically, 'one's own,' that over which we must claim rights of autonomy. (p. 20)

As findings from this study indicate, not every performative act elicits a positive response. What Butler and other queer theorists make clear is that gender performativity must constantly succumb to cultural and social norms which interrupt the process, thus forcing people to either comply or adjust their way of being. Although Emily, Connor, and Evan benefited from having supportive people in their lives, the heteronormative

ideas ensconced in others' beliefs and behaviors interrupted their performativity, thereby forcing Connor, Evan, and Emily to adjust or suppress parts of themselves. This personal censorship resulted in stress which lessened their music experiences by preventing them from expressing themselves freely.

Interactions with choral traditions and beliefs. Results of this study confirm previous findings by trans writers and scholars in the field that heteronormative beliefs and practices continue to be a problem in schools and music settings (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Miller, 2016a; Wilchins, 2019). Despite their music teachers' efforts to be more inclusive and understanding, heteronormative traditions and beliefs continued to constrain the participants' music making and gender performativity. Gendered concert attire, gendered voice parts, required seating arrangements, and a perceived predominance of sacred repertoire, contributed to feelings of stress and alienation. As previously stated, Evan and Connor indicated that gendered concert attire was one of the primary reasons for leaving the chorus. Several sources have outlined the problems with traditional gendered concert attire which reinforces some students' identities while suppressing others (Bartolome, 2016; Miller, 2016; Silveira, 2019). A participant in Palkki and Caldwell's (2018) survey declared "I hated wearing the dress. If you want a standard uniform, allow the singers to choose which one they wear. Forcing everyone who has a vagina to wear a dress is bullshit." (p. 40). Emily noted, however, that even when students are given a choice, traditional gendered concert clothing ignores the entire spectrum of gender and forces students to choose between only two modes of expression. Furthermore, she stated, giving students only two gender choices may force trans students

to out themselves when they are not ready.

In addition to concert attire, participants struggled with vocal traditions which impeded their ability to make music freely. Traditional choral models in which singers are placed in sections by the conductor eliminates singer choice. Literature on trans voices is a growing field (Constansis, 2008; Kozan & Hammond, 2019; Sims, 2017a) The research confirms that when students are allowed to freely explore their range and align their voices and bodies with their desired expression, they experience music more positively and involve themselves in music more deeply (Hearns & Kremer, 2018). For Evan and Connor, singing soprano caused feelings of dysphoria marked by severe stress and anxiety. Additionally, Evan's binding restricted their breathing which compounded their discomfort and insecurity. Butler (2004) explained the deep symbiotic connection between voice, body, desire, and others, stating:

> The vocalizing larynx and mouth become the part of the body that stages the drama of the whole; what the body gives and receives is not a touch, but the psychic contours of a bodily exchange, a psychic contour that engages the body that it represents. (p. 173)

Requiring Evan and Connor to separate their soprano voice from their desire for a more masculine body, therefore, meant requiring them to give up a part of themselves.

Conflict between voice and gender was not the case for Emily who was comfortable with her tenor voice within the vocal ensemble. Emily's experience is similar to participants in Manternach's (2017) study who identified as trans feminine, but were comfortable singing in their bass-baritone range. By contrast, however, Emily

experienced dysphoria when singing solo and admitted a desire to sing higher parts when she was alone. The participants' desires to align themselves with the traditional vocal ranges for male assigned at birth and female assigned at birth reminds educators that heteronormative beliefs remain deeply embedded. Although many gender-inclusive educators may find it desirable to encourage students to disregard gender norms by singing wherever their voice feels best regardless of traditional parts (this researcher included), the majority of Western culture has not yet arrived at a completely fluid symbiotic state of being. Trans singer role models who break gender norms with voice and body are only beginning to surface (Lucas, 2019). Being open to students' varied vocal choices with regard to fluidity with gender alignment, therefore, is important to honoring and respecting their uniqueness.

A noticeable change in this study was the de-emphasis on problems with language practices within music contexts. Whereas previous research indicated that names and pronouns were a continual problem in school, Evan, Connor, and Emily felt that the majority of their music teachers and friends in school respected their names and pronouns and tried to use gender-neutral language. Exceptions were Emily's high school chorus teacher who continued to use gendered language, and Evan's experiences with teachers and peers outside of the music department who refused or continually forgot pronouns, or used mis-gendering as a form of harassment. Several writers have noted the importance of using gender-neutral language, and correct pronouns and names in school settings to help students feel cared for and respected (Alvarez, 2017; Chappell et al., 2018; Miller, 2016). Results of this study indicate that understanding and acceptance of the language of

gender inclusivity may well be underway but more change is needed.

Interactions with music. Interactions with music itself reinforced Emily's, Connor's, and Evan's gendered identities in a variety of ways, including meaningful music experiences, informal music making, practicing solos, performing in musical theater, and composing. Alaghband-Zadeh (2015) explored performativity and the sonic qualities of music and concluded that audible signs of gender are equally as powerful as visible signs during music making. Similarly, all three participants recalled music experiences where interactions with lyrics and music strengthened their musical identities and temporarily pushed aside the classes' gendered constraints. Emily indicated that meaningful music experiences were among the reasons she stayed in chorus throughout high school and college despite gendered constraints. Evan and Connor felt empowered in the theater, where they aligned their voices and bodies with lower vocal ranges and male characters. Symonds and Taylor (2013) described song and dance as a performative interaction between performers and audiences, which signifies a complex array of cultural beliefs and practices that are unique to each circumstance. In a similar manner, the participants' interactions with music communicated aspects of themselves which they may or may not have been able to share offstage.

Alongside their school performances, participants in this study found space for making music informally which further enhanced their musical experience. Green (2005) noted ways that informal music making benefits students in both musically and personally. On the musical level, students learn aural, improvisational, compositional, and technical skills; on the personal level, students learn to make choices, self-direct, and

assimilate music in "haphazard" ways (Green, 2005, p. 2). In line with Green's work, independent music engagement reinforced Connor's, Evan's, and Emily's performativity by instilling independence and building confidence in their abilities, as well as providing a means to explore their feelings and identities away from the gaze of others.

Composition provided another way for participants to interact with music in ways that embraced their trans musician identities. As described earlier, Emily's composition mirrored aspects of her fluid and complex identity through sonic qualities, such as thick, rich harmonies that moved swiftly through various modes and lyrics that reflected her fluid state. Similarly, Evan's multimedia senior project reflected their trans identity through visual and aural elements as well as the storyline. Several scholars have explored relationships between the sonic qualities of music and identity (Brett, 1994; Gould, 2016; McClary, 2002; Solie, 1993). They noted the presence of identity markers within various music elements such as instrumentation, vocal timbre and register, harmonic relationships, articulation, and ornamentation. Examining Evan's and Emily's compositions through a performativity lens reveals how their choice of music elements simultaneously sustained cultural markers of identity contained within the music and reinforced their gender identities.

A final consideration is Emily's, Connor's, and Evan's engagement with online media which enabled them both musically and personally. Several sources have noted the importance of media to provide support and visibility for the LGBTQ+ community (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Mock, 2014; Wadley, 2014). Steinmetz (2014, May 29) stated, "the Internet has been a revolutionary tool for the trans community, providing answers to

questions that previous generations had no one to ask, as well as robust communities of support," (para. 14). The participants in this study utilized online sources in a variety of ways to learn about themselves, connect with others, and engage with music. Viewing music role models on YouTube provided Emily, Evan, and Connor with a means to fantasize as well as identify through music. The participants' mutual idolization of David Bowie and other genderfluid musicians is similar to Kruse's (2016) study in which the participant, JJ, drew inspiration for their black, genderqueer identity, from the sounds and moves of charismatic female rappers. Additionally, Connor's engagement with musical theater online provided a tool for learning social skills as well as fueling his artistry. While engagement with online media can be somewhat one-sided, the stable quality of prerecorded videos and anonymity options of social media offer a safe space in which students can interact and identify, without fear of rejection. This can make it an ideal source for listening to and learning music in a free, unaltered state.

Secondary Research Question #1: What beliefs, behaviors, and practices constrained or enabled the participants' gender performativity and ability to engage with music in high school?

Results indicated six major areas where beliefs, behaviors, and practices shaped the participants' music experiences through performativity. First, all three participants indicated that support from home was crucial to their feelings of well-being and musical success. Although Connor, Emily and Evan experienced tension and worry from their mothers, their fathers provided unconditional support and nurtured their love of the arts and music. Informal music making at home helped the participants gain autonomy and

confidence in their abilities.

Second, interactions with peers and teachers in school affected how the participants' felt about themselves, the music, and singing in an ensemble. For Evan, music and theater provided a safe haven away from a heteronormatively charged school environment. For Connor, musical theater became a way to interact with peers through meaningful performance. Emily benefited from a supportive school where she interacted freely with others and felt empowered by the communal interaction of singing. By contrast, Evan and Connor experienced harassment, alienation, and disrespect from some of their peers and teachers high school, which resulted in feelings of hurt and loneliness.

Third, bodily behaviors and practices such as concert attire, voice part, and engagement with gender affirming hormone therapy (HT), altered how the participants felt about themselves as well as their music environment. Negotiating heteronormative traditions in chorus with bodily expectations was the cause of great stress which contributed to Evan and Connor leaving chorus. All three believed that HT would help alleviate some of their bodily stress, and Evan and Connor hoped it would lead to their eventual return to singing.

Fourth, engagement with music itself re-signified the participants' identities in ways that were both negative and positive. While the communal aspect of meaningful ensemble performances reinforced the participants' connection to music, others, and self, conflicts with bodily voice and sacred repertoire choices interrupted this connection and became a source of stress. By contrast, composition and musical theater performance provided a means for the participants to express their trans identities through music,

lyrics, and the embodiment of male characters onstage.

Fifth, interactions with LGBTQ+ role models, peers, and teachers in person and online provided essential validation and encouragement that the participants needed in order to learn about and view themselves positively. Emily benefited from a progressive high school where she was surrounded by several LGBTQ+ role models. By contrast, relationships with the LGBTQ+ community outside of school helped strengthen Evan's and Connor's identity and resolve. Online LGBTQ+ role models helped reinforce all three participants' trans identities through music and theater.

Finally, the participants' strong personal agency was a key factor in determining the outcome of their endeavors. Emily, Evan, and Connor displayed an impressive amount of independence and courage and, while their agency did not always achieve intended results, their initiative and resilience sometimes led to music opportunities and change. Agency and resilience became crucial to Connor's and Evan's musical success in high school where trans representation was limited and the pressure to conform to heteronormative bodily expectations in chorus created tension and stress. Emily worked to overcome similar tensions in the heteronormative setting of her college.

Secondary Research Question #2: How did the participants feel supported or unsupported by their high school music teachers?

As was previously stated, interactions with music teachers formed one of the most powerful relationships for all three participants. The participants felt musically empowered by their teachers' commitment to excellence and recognition of their musical strengths through solos, admission into select ensembles, awards, and casting. However,

the music teachers' validation of Emily's, Connor's, and Evan's gender identities was inconsistent. While the music teachers acknowledged some aspects of their identities (such as names and pronouns), they ignored or did not notice other aspects (such as the participants' need for non-gendered attire or a different voice part). Emily's and Evan's relationships with their teachers were further complicated by intersections with religion in which the teachers' frequent use of sacred repertoire without explanation felt alienating. As a result, Connor, Emily, and Evan experienced simultaneous validation and rejection from their teachers, which strained parts of their music experiences. Emily's, Evan's, and Connor's experiences with their music teachers is consistent with Silveira and Goff's (2016) findings in which music teachers may think they are being inclusive when, in fact, they are not.

The participants indicated that their music teachers worked to create inclusive spaces in various ways. First, all the participants valued their teachers' musical leadership and knowledge which served the students in both positive and negative ways. While the participants were proud of their performances and the music skills they were learning, their teachers' heteronormative beliefs and practices brought on feelings of discomfort and dysphoria which lessened their positive music experiences. Second, the participants felt valued and "liked" by their music teachers through personal recognition of their names and pronouns as well as through various means of musical/artistic recognition. Third, teacher openness helped Evan and Connor develop trust and consider approaching their teachers about their needs, even though they never did. All three participants admitted to feeling more comfortable with their teachers after experiencing small acts of

inclusion and/or kind gestures. Positive teacher relationships contributed to the participants' decisions to remain in chorus and musical theater as long as they did, despite constraining practices.

Additional Findings

Results of this study illuminated additional elements that affected the participants' school experiences and performativity. First, they indicate that students may be less forgiving of teachers' mistakes than mistakes made by family and peers. Evan indicated that they expected their teachers to educate themselves and know better. At the same time, they empathized with their mothers' mistakes and appreciated that "she's trying" (Evan interview, June 26, 2018). Emily was equally critical of her teachers' missed pronouns and gendered attire requirements while, at the same time, she sympathized with her mother's struggles with change. These findings suggest that teacher training may be crucial to maintaining students' trust and respect.

Second, these results verify the importance of respecting space and time for LGBTQ+ support groups and clubs, such as the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). Evan felt disrespected by their school's administration because they often used club times for other academic needs. Respecting space and time for meetings shows students that they are valued and that there is respect for the club's mission and purpose. It is not enough to simply support the existence of a GSA; teachers and administrators need to help facilitate by providing spaces and avoiding conflicts with other school events. Evan and Emily noted that the GSA and other LGBTQ+ spaces are important keep in place even if no one comes or it seems that they are not needed.

Finally, results indicate that the students in this study felt the weight of the effects of the national climate and the changing trans rights policies. Evan reported an increased hostile school climate as well as a decline in enrollment in their school's GSA following the 2016 election. This change was also evident in the language that Evan used to describe the harassment they experienced; labeling vocal acts of aggression before the election as "homophobic comments," but then labeling harassment after the election as "homophobic beliefs." By contrast, Emily's GSA was a somewhat liberating experience because she attended high school four years prior to Evan. For Emily, supportive changes in national transgender policy prompted discussions of gender-inclusivity and helped raise trans-awareness in her school.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study contributes to the growing body of literature in the field music education and gender studies that explores ways that schools and communities can be more gender inclusive in their endeavors. Results of this study indicate that, while the climate has improved for gender-diverse music students over the past decade, progress is slow and there is still much work to be done. A brief comparison of Perrotti and Westheimer's (2001) suggestions for creating LGBT inclusive environments with today's recommendations (Lewis, 2017; GLSEN 2019a) illustrates this point by revealing striking similarities that include avoiding gendered activities, providing sensitivity training to students and educators, including LGBT in the curriculum, challenging gender norms, creating gender-neutral bathroom and locker spaces, and working to normalize gender diversity in schools and communities (Perrotti & Westheimer, 2001).

In music, teachers and students often perpetuate binary beliefs and uphold heteronormative traditions despite guidelines issuing the contrary, as this study confirms. In effect, information from 20 years ago continues to be repeated because true changes to the system have yet to occur. As Hendricks (2018) stated, “North American music education programs often cling rigidly to authoritarian and teacher-centered approaches, asserting standards and pedagogical principles that privilege certain musics, people, and approaches over others,” (p. 215). Research which keeps the issues surrounding gender and music education relevant and visible, as well as calls upon educators to take action, may help move the field forward and incite change. More studies which explore the correlations between gender and music practices may help inform teacher training and point to new ways that schools and educators can create music environments where all students feel free and able to fully participate.

Related to music practices and teacher training is the role of the music teacher. The participants’ music teachers in this study were all a defining force in the participants’ musical lives and school identity. Although the participants liked and respected their teachers, they also indicated that their teachers displayed both supportive and unsupportive behaviors with regards to gender inclusivity. Research which explores the beliefs and perceptions of teachers, and how they create safe spaces as well as shape understanding, may provide additional insight as to ways educators can queer their classrooms and connect more deeply with their students.

This study also adds to the growing body of literature which highlights positive messages of hope and resilience that counter rhetoric depicting trans students only as

victims. The participants in this study viewed themselves as strong, independent leaders in their arts endeavors and, while they experienced the stress and loneliness of negotiating heteronormative environments and intolerant peers, they wished to showcase their unique musical and personal strengths as opposed to just their challenges. They were proud of their trans musical identities and excited to share their stories of success and achievement. Scholars and trans activists note the importance of spreading positive stories to help normalize gender diversity in schools and communities (Mock, 2014; Mayo, 2014). As Kruse (2016) stated, scholarship based on "strength as opposed to pathology" may contribute more useful considerations to the field (p. 104). Research featuring empowering stories of trans youth musicians (especially methods which utilize the musicians' words most directly) may help music educators continue progress towards inclusivity by illuminating ways that music departments, schools, families, and communities are creating positive change.

Intersectionality is another area for consideration in future research. The three participants in this study embodied multifaceted identities which were often dynamic and difficult to capture. Intersections between their trans identities, SES, religion, and abilities provided additional perspectives on ways that students manage multiple levels of oppression in music environments. Examining music students' experiences through an intersectional lens invites critical dialogue which raises educator awareness and promotes understanding (Carter, 2014). Research that considers music students' multiple realities, including intersections with gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, ability, religion,

and SES, may provide a richer narrative as well as increase educator understanding of the complex power systems affecting each student.

Emily's experiences highlight the need for more research in the area of trans music students in higher education and trans conductors. In her conducting experiences in college, Emily experienced relief from the gendered chorus attire. She also received positive support in her college music department and was pleased to be consulted about gender-inclusive changes. However, Emily experienced dysphoria when working with mirrors and recordings in her conducting class. Additionally, mandatory voice lessons and solo voice recitals created problems. Silveira (2019) noted similar challenges in college sight-singing and methods courses. Literature documenting the experiences of transgender preservice music educators is scant and information concerning the needs of transgender music conductors appears to be non-existent (Bartolome, 2016; Silveira, 2019). Research which investigates the full spectrum of preservice music classes, as well as the ensembles, may reveal additional ways that college music departments can work to be more inclusive.

A final consideration for future research is the examination of students' engagement with music, itself, as a reflection of gender identity. Examination of Evan's, Connor's, and Emily's music choices and compositions presented an intriguing addition to this study and revealed additional ways their identities were performatively validated through music engagement and listening. While several writers have investigated connections between music's sonic qualities and individuals' identity (Alaghband-Zadeh, 2015; Green, 1997; Symonds & Taylor, 2013), there has been little research in this area

with trans high school musicians. Research that includes a deeper examination of the music listening, composing, and solo experiences of trans youth, in addition to sociological considerations, may enrich participant narratives and highlight nuanced ways that music helps support students' identities.

Limitations of Study

Discussion of limitations helps situate the study by illuminating peculiarities and identifying elements that were unavailable (Glesne, 2011). There were several limitations in this study beginning with the small participant sample which resulted from the narrow study criteria. Small participant samples are not unusual in narrative inquiry because the goal is to capture detailed stories and life experiences of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this narrative inquiry, the life experiences of trans individuals offered unique perspectives on ways that gender and music intersected in high school. A small, select number of participants was needed in order to fully to comprehend the details each individual's complex circumstances.

A second limitation in this study was the geographic location. As stated earlier, the location of the study was restricted to the northeastern area of the United States which limited the participant pool as well as the study's potential. Expanding this study to include participants beyond the Northeast may provide additional insight as to behaviors and beliefs particular to certain regions.

A third limitation was the similar demographic among the participants. Specifically, the participants were all young white adults from two-parent college educated households. While the participant sample provided ample variation with which

to learn about gender and music, a more diverse participant pool with regard to race, ethnicity, and other identifying demographics would offer opportunity to gain additional perspective and to examine new forms of intersectionality.

Diversity among music disciplines was another limitation of this study because all the participants were primarily choral singers. Examining trans lives in other music disciplines, such as band or orchestra, would give educators a greater understanding of how students negotiate gender and music in different classes. How do students experience gender identity and music in guitar class, for example? Or composition class? Or percussion ensemble? Additionally, qualitative research which examines trans lives within the wider context of the entire music department might broaden conversations of intersectionality to include power issues between the various disciplines themselves, as students and teachers negotiate their musical identities within the department.

Another limitation in this study was the methodology which focused only on the perceptions of trans youth. Although this appeared to be beneficial in terms of the participants' trust and engagement, in a sense, the conversations were one-sided. For a more complete description of participants' experiences through the reciprocal lens of performativity, interviews with all parties involved would be appropriate, including teachers, peers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders. As explained earlier, *all* individuals experience performativity (Butler, 2004). Therefore, examination of the ways in which all people experience performativity in the music classroom might help underline inequities that exist in heteronormative environments, as well as uncover new approaches to gender inclusivity.

A final limitation in this study was the ever-changing landscape of gender and music, as well as the growing field of trans studies in music education. Since the onset of this study, there have been numerous new studies, books, news articles, workshops, and conferences devoted to upholding the lives of trans individuals. Trans advocacy, visibility, and even the language itself keeps growing and changing. Alongside these encouraging actions, constant shifts in public policy, both positive and negative, have made it difficult to synthesize the changes and keep current. The result has been writing in a continual state of flux, much like the fluidity that underlines this study. In their epilogue, Symonds and Taylor (2013) discussed the fluid act of reading, interpreting, and responding, and noted that writing itself is a performative act. A final report such as this one, therefore, represents only a moment in this dynamic, performative process and not a static reality.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations for Practice

Results of this study indicate that high school music experiences can be both affirming and constraining for students, particularly trans students. Additionally, the findings reveal that the traditions and practices which are upheld by some music teachers can greatly affect the class climate and students' participation in music. Although numerous sources have illuminated ways that heteronormative, binary beliefs stymie students' well-being and performance in the classroom (Abramo, 2011b; Bergonzi, 2009; Hawkins, 2009; Miller, 2016a; Palkki, 2016; Wilchins, 2019), the question remains: Why do music teachers uphold gendered traditions when there is evidence that these practices create stress and exclude students?

All three participants in this study were from the northeastern region of the United States, an area known for its relatively progressive stance on issues of diversity and inclusion. Additionally, the participants' music teachers all demonstrated knowledge of gender diversity and cared about their students. Why, then, did the music teachers in this study continue to uphold rigid norms regarding gendered concert attire and voicing, despite their empathetic attributes? Their actions are perplexing and call for more research in this area. Emily, Connor, and Evan made several recommendations to address these issues and more. Although many of their recommendations have been covered extensively in recent years, their repetition appears to be warranted because, as this study demonstrates, changes to the gendered choral system are still slow to take hold and oppressive conditions continue to exist. Acting upon these recommendations, therefore, becomes one of the crucial elements needed for students and educators to engage in meaningful change.

Emily, Connor, and Evans' Recommendations for Practice

From the onset of this study, the three participants expressed a desire to help other students and educators by telling their stories. When I asked them what messages they wished to convey to teachers, they offered several suggestions. Based on their suggestions and the results of this study, Emily, Connor, Evan, and I make following recommendations for music teacher practice:[17]

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[17] These recommendations for practice are not verbatim. I have taken the liberty of compiling the participants' statements and rephrasing when necessary to present them in a manner which clearly and succinctly expresses their ideas.

1. Keep mindful and aware of language. Trans terminology, inclusive language, and ideas about what is acceptable/desirable are constantly changing and vary according to each individual. Research and learn from reputable sources like GLSEN.
2. Do not make assumptions about students' gender or pronouns. Find ways to solicit this information privately through class surveys or audition applications.
3. Consider non-gendered performance attire. Feelings of discomfort and dysphoria associated with wearing binary, gendered concert attire has been noted in all the literature, including this study. Teachers wishing to create inclusive music experiences should reconsider the gendered uniform traditions they uphold, and reflect upon their importance. As Palkki (2017) stated, "choral teachers may need to decide whether or not some of the traditional choir uniforms (e.g. dresses and tuxedoes) best honor the gender identity of all students" (p. 30).
4. Consider letting students self-select their voice part. Requiring trans or questioning students to sing a part that does not align with their gender identity triggers stress and vocal dysphoria. By allowing students to choose where they sing, teachers respect students' need to identify and explore. As Evan advised, "Do not put it on the students to come forward if they are uncomfortable with the way you are dividing things . . . . Like, especially in high school. They're kids. They are afraid. Likely of you, even if you're great" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).

5. Whenever possible, work with individuals privately to help them discover their voice and ask/listen for their input. Supplement lessons with open conversations about vocal health to help students explore with guidance and support. Teaching is a performative act. Listen and respond compassionately and openly to students' desires.
6. Adopt a gender-neutral casting policy for solos and musical theater roles. Avoid labeling solos and roles with gender or voice parts at auditions. Consider transposing solos to accommodate students' transitioning voices. As Evan recommended, "Find shows and music that don't leave people out or that tell stories that we don't know as well" (Evan interview, August 7, 2018).
7. Avoid a predominance of the sacred choral canon which can further alienate gender-diverse students. Consider why you program pieces and discuss this with the students.
8. Consider performance-based assessments which may trigger dysphoria. Make recorded assessments an option. Invite students to discuss their concerns and work with them to seek solutions.
9. Be prepared to support students at all stages of transition. Do not wait until they present a certain way or make requests. Consider gender non-binary and questioning students' needs.
10. Educate yourself and reflect on your own practice and pedagogy. Question the traditions you uphold and decide if they are really necessary and inclusive. Be aware of biases and assumptions, and open to new ways of thinking. As Emily

stated, "[Directors] shouldn't deal in the abstract like 'there's no singers in my group that are trans so it's not a problem.' It probably will continue to not be until you make it a place that people actually want to enter" (Emily interview September 7, 2018).

11. It is OK to make mistakes. Learn from them and move on. Over-apologizing forces "the person about whom the mistake was made to take emotional care of their conversation partner" (Hearns & Kremer, 2018, p. 33).
12. Find every way possible to show that gender diversity is welcome and valued in your classroom. Work to educate the whole class by modeling gender-diverse ideals in practice, curriculum, repertoire, language, and physical setting. Solicit students' involvement as peer leaders and ambassadors of queering the classroom. Normalize and honor diversity.

Moving Beyond "Open and Affirming" to Taking Action

The experiences and recommendations from Evan, Emily, and Connor teach us that our work is not done. Gender and sexually diverse students are still being left out of school music environments, even under the best circumstances, and with the most empathetic teachers. It is crucial, therefore, that educators work to activate change by taking action and adopting practices that lessen the force of heteronormativity in the classroom and that fully include a diverse array of people and ideas. When students and educators think beyond their heteronormative and hierarchical understandings of what music and music making is *supposed* to be, they can begin to imagine new ways of teaching, learning, and music making. As Boyce-Tillman (2018) summarized:

> We are all participating in this fluidity, which is rhizomatic in character. This may set us all free to fulfil a variety of roles freely in the course of our lives—to sing at whatever pitch we like (in various phases of our lives), to play whatever instrument we wish, to enjoy stories that honor fluidity and diversity. It will be a profound detraditionalization of our society, involving a much wider of range choices than ever before. (p. 28)

Looking beyond what is believed to be “correct” “excellent” “perfect” “winning” “important” “the way it is supposed to be” or “the way I was brought up,” then, helps students and educators see new possibilities and take action.

Taking action and activating change can be hard work and requires courage, especially in situations where the action feels unsupported. Yet, it is imperative for educators to move beyond simply having an open and affirming attitude to *doing* something. More teacher training which provides effective strategies and support for music educators wishing to take action may help students and teachers move with confidence towards a new classroom ideal. The stories of Emily, Evan, and Connor remind us that even the smallest acts of recognition and signification can have a major impact on students’ lives, such as adding pronouns to written correspondence, holding a quiet conversation about voice part, giving students a place to share, or giving them a choice rather than assigning. All students are sensitive, yes, but especially with students who have been marginalized or excluded, no act of kindness can be taken for granted. When Miss Miller quietly invited Connor to sing in the tenor section in the school musical, it may have seemed like small gesture to her but, for Connor, it was a powerful

affirmation of voice and identity that made a lasting impact.

As educators of music and social justice, we need to listen deeply to our students, pay attention, and anticipate their needs. The three participants in this study all succumbed to music practices that made them feel uncomfortable because they felt it was expected and because no one presented them with alternatives. It is up to us, as educators and guardians of well-being in the classroom, to recognize heteronormativity and offer alternatives. Don't wait to be asked, as Emily and Evan advised. Underage children and youth who are bound by family rules, compulsory schooling, and community laws are especially in need of our careful guardianship. These students do not yet have the freedom to make all their own decisions, nor the privilege of walking away from difficult situations. Oftentimes, their music experiences in school are the students' only music experiences beyond their own private listening. K–12 music educators, therefore, who act as the sole facilitators of music knowledge as well as custodians of well-being in the classroom, must carefully examine and question the lessons and practices which shape students' understanding of music, music identity, and music making. Then they may begin to queer the classroom by taking action to abolish oppressive beliefs and right the injustices which are embedded in outdated modes of learning and music making.

Queering the classroom is a continual practice of reflecting, questioning, imagining, and doing. Throughout this project, I have worked to transform my own teaching by engaging in reflexive practice and adopting new practices. The research process has made me acutely aware of my own privilege and biases, as well as my lack of knowledge. It's forced me to continually examine my own beliefs and behaviors— to

deconstruct myself— as I work towards creating a more supportive and inclusive classroom. The research experience has also affirmed my commitment to queering the classroom in all aspects of my teaching by blurring the boundaries which separate people and ideas. “What is ‘classical’ music?” I ask my classes and then challenge their responses. “Is it always serious?” “Why do you think it is better or worse than other music?” The work has been exhilarating and inspiring but also humbling, and I find myself overcome with guilt when I make mistakes. Above all, I am so grateful to Emily, Connor, and Evan for their honesty and trust, as I continue to be inspired by their stories of strength, courage, and music. It is my greatest hope that we, as music educators and scholars, will find ways to honor their being by making positive changes that affect not only their musical lives, but the musical lives of all those who follow.

Conclusion

Creating music classrooms that are dynamic and that welcome all students is the focus of every educator. When students feel welcome and free to be themselves, they may engage in music more deeply and develop stronger relationships with others. As Emily stated, “Turns out you can’t make music fully if you are squashing part of yourself and you will, in fact, be able to enjoy it more and, also, make better music if you stop trying to suppress it” (Emily interview, September 7, 2018). In this study, I examined the recollected experiences of three trans young adults through the lenses of queer theory and performativity to uncover ways that gender was enacted and reinforced in the music classroom. Although findings from this narrative inquiry are unique to each participant and cannot be generalized, it is my hope that information gleaned from this study may

inspire educators and students to examine their own circumstances and seek ways to continue to create lasting change.

Results of this study indicate that gender performativity and music making intersected in a variety of ways that were shaped by behaviors and beliefs present both within and outside of the classroom, including those that resided within the family, the community, and the school. While some of these beliefs and behaviors enabled the participants' gendered beings and music making, other acts placed heteronormative constraints on the participants' experiences which created stress and inhibited their music making. These findings indicate that more change is needed and that it is incumbent upon educators to take action.

Information about ways that students, educators, and other professionals can create more welcoming and inclusive spaces has been available for several years now. Literature devoted to inclusionary practices (Chappel et al.; Hearns & Kremer, 2018; Palkki 2017), ways to create safe space (Bergonzi, 2009; Carter, 2011; Palkki & Caldwell, 2018), and the importance of teacher training (Garrett, 2012; Palkki & Sauerland 2018; Sweet & Paparo, 2010) has provided administrators, educators, and parents with information about making schools and music environments more supportive, as well as practical steps they can take to make a difference. Yet, despite these directives, schools and communities remain caught in the dominance of heteronormativity and have been unable to make impactful changes.

We need to do better.

In the words of State Representative Ayanna Pressley (Moulite, 2020), "I'm not

here just to occupy space, I'm here to create it."[18] As educators and leaders of equality and social justice in our schools, we must create new space, not simply open up existing space. We must actively take steps to expand people's heteronormative understandings, break confining traditions, and find more ways to honor (not just welcome) all forms of being in the classroom. As the results of this study show, empathy, kindness, and respect for names and pronouns are simply not enough. Queering the classroom calls upon educators to create space for *all* students to think and learn beyond binary limits, and to rightfully honor the lives of people who have been excluded by a heteronormative society (de Quadros, 2019). It calls upon schools and communities to imagine a world where gender and sexuality are not defined by umbrella categories that divide and other but, rather, a world where people share in a single humanness that is replete with variety. As Butler (2004) summarized:

> It is not a question merely of producing a new future for genders that do not yet exist. The genders I have in mind have been existing for a long time, but they have not been admitted into the terms that govern reality. It is a question of developing, within law, within psychiatry, within social and literary theory, a new legitimating lexicon for the gender complexity that we have always been living. (p. 219)

Queering the classroom invites music students and educators to take action and share in the creation of a new inclusive space by examining the dynamic intersections of gender

[18] In a public announcement with *The Root*, Representative Pressley recently revealed that she struggles with alopecia. Pressley indicated that she did not wish to hide from the truth but, rather, to "create space" to move forward with her new normal (Moulite, 2020).

and music in their classrooms, interrupting the heteronormative routines which restrict students' experiences, and honoring the infinite array of perspectives that exist. We can and must move beyond the boundaries that are ensconced in our schools and music traditions to discover new pathways for learning, embrace new ways of understanding, and activate profound change.

Appendix A

Study Invitation

Participant Message (Online Inquiry)

Advertisement of the study to be distributed to various LGBTQ+ and Trans support groups, campus diversity offices, members of the Trans health community, and community music groups:

Seeking transgender and gender non-binary musicians between ages 18–24 who participated in music during high school for a new study on music and gender. If you are interested in being interviewed about your high school music experiences, please fill out the short 10-question survey linked below. All questions are optional and all answers will be kept completely confidential.
<Survey link>

Participant Survey (Online Survey)

Greetings!

Thank you for your interest in being a part of this study about music and gender in high school. I am a music educator and voice teacher in the greater Boston area and I work with teenage transgender, gender non-binary, and cisgender singers. This study is part of my doctoral research at Boston University. I am seeking volunteers between ages 18 and 24 who participated in music during high school and who identified as transgender, agender, two-spirit, bigender, pangender, genderqueer, genderfluid, gender variant, gender non-conforming, intersex, androgynous, gender non-binary, queer, or questioning in high school. If chosen for the study, you will be asked to take part in three (3) interviews at a safe location that is mutually convenient for both of us. All the interviews will remain completely confidential and no identifying information will be shared in the study. By participating in this study, you will help music educators and students learn more about the ways that music and gender intersect as well as ways that teachers can create music environments that are more respectful and inclusive.

If you are interested in being a part of this study and talking about your music experiences during high school, please fill out the short 10-question survey below. All questions are optional and all information will remain confidential.

Thank you so much for considering this study. I look forward to hearing from you!

Lynn Shane, graduate student
Dr. Bruce Carter, faculty supervisor Boston University
College of Fine Arts
855 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA 02215
slshane@bu.edu carterbruce@me.com

Music and Gender Survey

1. How did you hear about this survey? [Organization names withheld], College/University _______, Community music group ___________, other___________?
2. Birth date: Month_____ Year _______
3. Gender identity: _____________________
4. Pronoun(s): __________________
5. How did you identify yourself in high school? _______________________________
6. Instruments you played or voice part(s) you sang during your high school years both in an outside of school (check all that apply):

   Flute/piccolo
   Clarinet
   Oboe
   Saxophone
   Bassoon
   Violin
   Viola
   Cello
   Bass
   Guitar
   Ukulele
   Trumpet
   Trombone
   French Horn
   Baritone/Tuba
   Percussion
   Piano
   Soprano voice
   Alto voice
   Tenor voice
   Bass voice
   Other _______________________

7. Music classes or activities you participated in during your high school years both in and outside of school (check all that apply):

   chorus/choir
   vocal a cappella
   band/marching band
   orchestra
   jazz ensemble

rock ensemble
percussion ensemble
music theater
guitar/ukulele
piano
songwriting/composition
recording/music production
music theory
music history
other ________________

8. Number of years you participated in HS music classes or activities? 012345
9. Number of years you participated in community music classes or activities? 012345
10. How would you describe your high school? (check all that apply):

Public __ Private __ Religious __ Home school __ Urban __ Suburban __Rural __

If you would be interested in being interviewed about your high school music experiences, please leave your name and contact information (all information will remain confidential, for my use only):

First name ________________________ Email _________________________________
Phone ____________________________Best time to call - morning/afternoon/evening

Appendix B

Participant Initial Interview Questions (First Interview)

Researcher prompt: *I'd like to start by gathering some basic demographic information about you and your music background. Some of the questions you answered in the online survey, but other questions are new. All the questions are optional; you can pass on any question you wish.*

1. What name and pronoun(s) would you like me to use during the interview? No matter what name you choose now, we will pick a pseudonym for the final report.
2. What is your birth month and year?
3. How do you describe your race and ethnicity?
4. Do you practice any religion? If so, please tell me about your religion.
5. How do you describe your gender identity now? How did you identify yourself in high school?
6. What instruments did you play or voice parts did you sing in high school?
7. What instruments do you play or voice parts do you sing now?
8. What music artists did you admire in high school?
9. What music classes did you take in high school and how many years of each?
10. What music activities do you participate in now?
11. What was the highest grade you completed in high school? Beyond high school?
12. For community demographic information, it would be helpful to know the town or zip code where your school is located. I will not contact the school.
13. What was your living arrangement in high school: with family, with friends, alone, other?
14. How would you describe your SES status growing up: lower class, middle class, or upper class?
15. Did your HS have a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)? If so, why did you/did you not participate?
16. Did you or do you participate in any other LGBTQ or Trans support groups outside of school? If so, please tell me about your support groups.
17. At what age did you begin to express your true gender?
18. What age did you socially transition to your true gender?
19. We've been talking a lot about music. What non-musical activities do you enjoy?

Appendix C

Autobiographical Participant Questionnaire (Homework)

Please write or type your responses to the following questions about your life and music. I listed some prompts under each main question for you to consider. All questions are optional and you may write as much or as little as you wish. When you are done, please U.S. postal mail your responses to me in the envelope provided or email them to me at slshane@bu.edu

1. Please tell me about your life and music experiences during childhood (before high school).
   What was your family like? Your school? Your friends?
   What music activities did you do as a kid? What non-music activities did you do?

2. Please tell me about your life and music experiences during high school. What are some of your favorite memories from high school?
   What are some of your least favorite memories from high school?
   What were your dreams in high school?

3. Please tell me about your life now.
   Are you still involved with music? What non-musical activities do you do? What are your goals and dreams?

Anything else you want to add to your life and music story?

Appendix D

Participant Interview Questions (Second and Third Interviews)

The researcher questions listed below serve as a guide for the semi-structured interviews. The questions may be revised and additional questions added depending on the responses and rapport established during previous meetings.

1. How did you express yourself both personally and musically in high school – your gender, your personality, your temperament, your style, your passions, etc.?
2. Describe a typical week in high school.
3. Describe any particular people, classes, activities, or routines that helped you feel more comfortable to be yourself and express yourself more fully.
4. Describe any people, classes, activities, or routines that made you feel uncomfortable and suppressed your ability to be yourself.
5. Describe your music environment in high school –students, teachers, physical spaces.
6. What role did peers play in your high school life and music making? How did they express themselves and their identity?
7. Describe your relationship with your music teachers. How did they express themselves and their identity? What about other school personnel?
8. Describe the music you played/sang/created during your high school years.
9. Tell me about some positive or powerful music experiences you had during your high school years.
10. Tell me about negative or challenging music experiences you had during your high school years.
11. What about people outside of school – were there people outside of school who supported you and your musical endeavors?
12. Describe your family and your relationship with them.
13. What advice would you give music teachers to help them create more inclusive and expressive environments? What would you like music teachers to know about you and people like you?
14. Where are you musically today?
15. What would you say to your younger self?

Appendix E

Terminology

Terminology is constantly changing the LGBTQ+. Many definitions are disputed, even within the LGBTQ+ community itself. Therefore, I have chosen the terms and definitions that have been recommended to me by scholars and colleagues, and those that fit most appropriately with this study. Many of these terms are also listed on the website of the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE, 2019c), the Human Rights Campaign (HRT, 2019), and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD, 2019).

Affirmed gender – One's true, authentic gender; the gender by which one wishes to be known.

Cisgender – Refers to someone whose sense of personal identity corresponds with the gender assigned to them at birth.

FTM – Female to Male transgender individual. Also known as a "transgender male"

MTF – Male to Female transgender individual. Also known as a "transgender woman"

Gender assigned at birth – Sometimes referred to as "birth sex"

Gender non-conforming – A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity (GLAAD, 2019).

Gender non-binary or Genderqueer – Terms used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Gender dysphoria – A medical diagnosis labeled by the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2019b) that is associated with feelings of distress or unhappiness

about the incongruence between one's gender assigned at birth and one's affirmed gender. In the United States, a diagnosis of gender dysphoria is often prerequisite for medical interventions and health insurance coverage related to trans identity (WPATH, 2011).

Gender expression – External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics (GLAAD, 2019).

Gender identity **–** A person's internal, deeply held sense of their gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity differs from the gender they were assigned at birth (GLAAD, 2019).

Gender-neutral pronouns – Examples include: ze, sie, hir, s/he, they, them. Self-identifying terms that may or may not coincide with a non-binary identity (Stryker, 2008).

Gender role – Socially constructed gendered behaviors and practices that match the cultural expectations for that gender.

Gender spectrum – The concept that gender exists beyond a simple "male/female" binary model. Instead, gender exists along an infinite continuum that transcends the two.

Gender variant/Gender diverse – Terms used by the medical community to describe children and youth who express themselves in a way that differs from dominant gender norms.

Heteronormative – Refers to Western essentialist beliefs that heterosexuality is normal and all other forms of sexuality are deviant. Includes hegemonic masculine beliefs that

men are superior to women.

LGBTQ+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning plus all other gender and sexual identities that extend beyond heterosexual, cisgender identity.

Pansexual – Individuals whose romantic, emotional, and physical attraction is to people of all gender identities and biological sexes.

Queer – An umbrella term used to refer to all sexual or gender identities that differ from the binary, cisgender, heterosexual categories of "male" and "female" (Stryker, 2008). Once a derogatory term, today's generation uses the noun 'queer' as an empowering description of one's non-conforming, varied, and flexible identity (Dilley, 1999; Hawkins, 2009).

Questioning – A term used to describe those who are in the process of discovery and exploration about their sexuality or gender expression.

Sex – Refers to an individual's reproductive capacity. Biological. Egg producing versus sperm producing (Stryker, 2008).

Sexual orientation – Describes a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same (GLAAD, 2019).

Stealth – An outdated term used to describe transgender individuals who do not disclose their transgender status in public or private lives. The phrases "maintaining privacy" or "not visibly transgender" are preferred, instead (GLAAD, 2019).

Trans **–** Used as shorthand to mean transgender or transsexual - or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella (GLAAD, 2019).

Transgender – Describes a person whose sense of gender identity and gender expression differs from their gender assigned at birth (GLAAD, 2019). It is an adjective and not a noun or a label.

Transsexual – An outdated term denoting a person who has undergone medical treatment in order to acquire the physical characteristics of the opposite sex (Stryker, 2008).

Transition – The time when a person begins living as their affirmed gender rather than the gender they were assigned at birth. Transitioning may or may not include changing one's name and pronoun, dressing or grooming differently, medical intervention, and changing identity documents.

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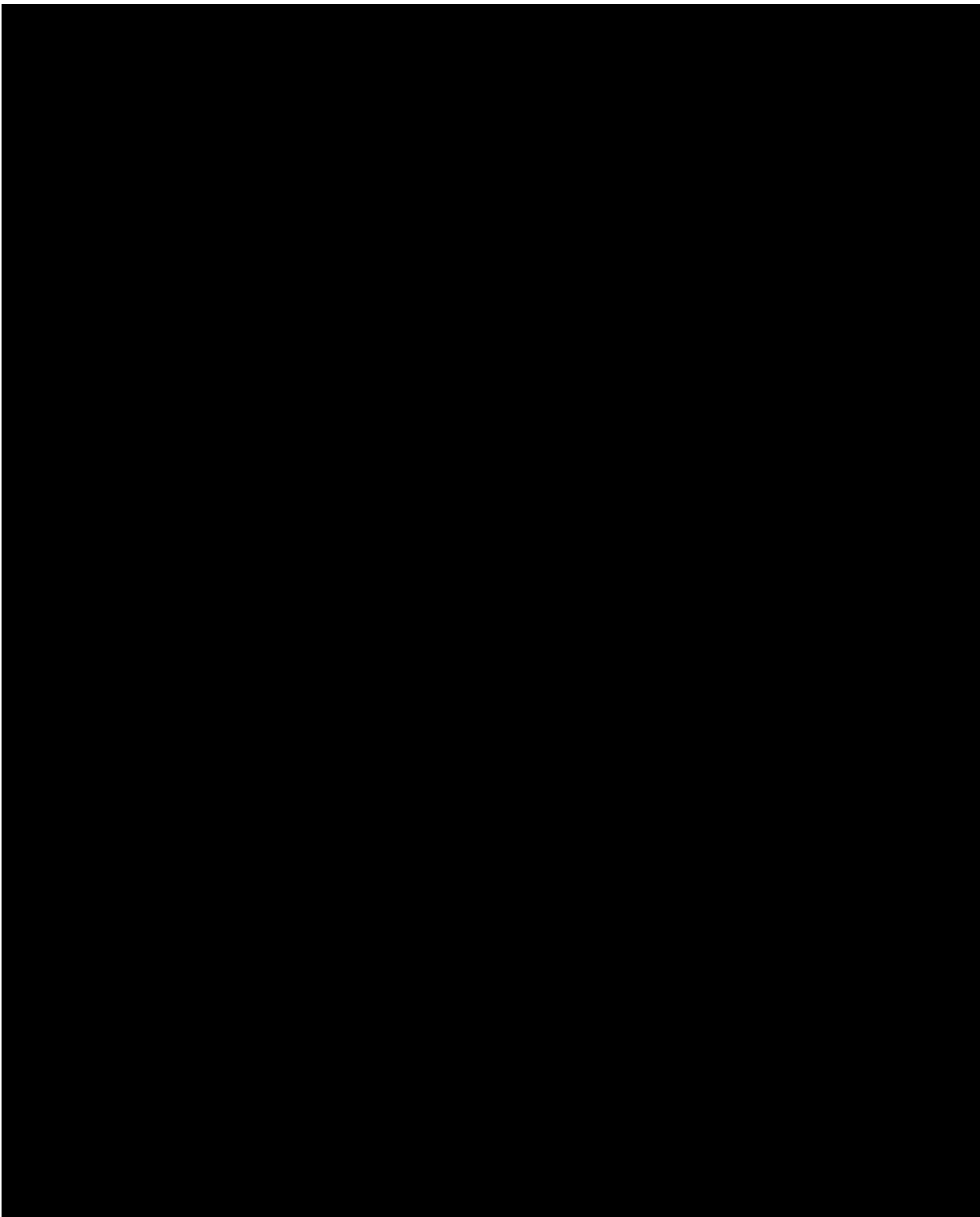

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