

**Roles of Music Making in the Lives of Sexual and Gender Minority Youth**

by

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## Glossary

Within music education, research concerning the experiences of sexual minorities is just emerging. As is often the case for new fields of study, terminology is inconsistent. Coupled with the rapidly changing political and legal landscape for LGBTQ people around the world, the language used to discuss this population is wrought with confusion, disagreement, and a general fear of discourse.

In discussing marginalized populations, Carter (2014) says: “I recognize the inherent problems associated with established social categories yet acknowledge the relevance of utilizing the categories to begin the process of examining our complex Western social ecology” (p. 538). For the purposes of clarification, I will define expressions and terms used throughout this study with the acknowledgement that these terms will change or may not be consistent with other areas of research. Unless noted, all definitions will be gathered from the Media Reference Guide (2014) provided by GLAAD<sup>1</sup>. The Media Reference Guide was created for members of the media for the purpose of providing an online guide of appropriate terminology to use when discussing matters pertaining to the gay and transgender community.

Asexual<sup>2</sup> – The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.

Biphobia – Fear of bisexuals, often based on stereotypes, including inaccurate associations with infidelity, promiscuity, and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

Bisexual, Bi - A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender. People may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetime. Bisexual people need not have had specific sexual experiences to be bisexual; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

Cisgender - A term used by some to describe people who are not transgender. “Cis-” is a Latin prefix meaning “on the same side as,” and is therefore an antonym of “trans-.” A more widely understood way to describe people who are not transgender is simply to say non-transgender people.

Closeted - Describes a person who is not open about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Better to simply refer to someone as not out about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

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<sup>1</sup> Terms and definitions based on information from multiple sources, some of which include Diamond (2005), Savin-Williams (2005, 2011), Wenger (1998).

<sup>2</sup> From GLAAD, 2010

Coming Out - A lifelong process of self-acceptance. People forge a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity first to themselves and then they may reveal it to others. Publicly sharing one's identity may or may not be part of coming out.

Gay - The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). Sometimes lesbian (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals" an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

Gender Dysphoria<sup>3</sup> – Clinically significant distress cause when a person’s assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term – which replaces Gender Identity Disorder – “is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults.”

Gender Expression – External manifestations of gender, expressed through one’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Identity – One’s internal, deeply held sense of one’s gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Minority – An umbrella term used to describe members of the Transgender community.

Genderqueer<sup>4</sup> - Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Heterosexual - An adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex. Also straight.

Homophobia – Fear of lesbians and gay men.

Lesbian - A woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women.

LGBT / GLBT - Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." LGBT and/or GLBT are often used because they are more inclusive of the diversity of the community.

LGBTQ – Acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.”

Living Openly / Living Out<sup>5</sup> – A state in which LGBT people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.

Nonbinary<sup>6</sup> – An umbrella term for all who don’t identify as just female or male. Though there

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3 From GLAAD, 2010

4 Terms and definitions based on information from multiple sources, some of which include Diamond (2005); Savin-Williams (2005, 2011); Wenger (1998)

5 Terms and definitions based on information from multiple sources, some of which include Diamond (2005); Savin-Williams (2005, 2011); Wenger (1998)

6 From nonbinary.org

are many kinds of nonbinary gender identities, some people identify as “nonbinary” only.

**Outing** - The act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumor and/or speculation) or revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent. Considered inappropriate by a large portion of the LGBT community.

**Queer** - Traditionally a pejorative term, queer has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even within the LGBT community and should be avoided unless describing someone who self-identifies that way or in a direct quote. When Q is seen at the end of "LGBT," it typically means queer and/or questioning.

**Sex** – The classification of people as male or female based on a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

**Sexual Identity, Sexual Orientation Label** - The way a person chooses to describe their sexual orientation to themselves or others. One’s sexual identity or sexual orientation label may or may not change with time based on different personal, political, cultural, or sociological factors.

**Sexual Orientation** - The scientifically accurate term for an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual (straight) orientations. People need not have had specific sexual experiences to know their own sexual orientation; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all.

**Sexual Minority**<sup>7</sup> - Someone who’s sexual orientation is different from the majority of people within the same community; generally, someone who’s sexual orientation is not heterosexual or straight.

**Trans** - Used as shorthand to mean transgender or transsexual - or sometimes to be inclusive of a wide variety of identities under the transgender umbrella.

**Transgender** – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including transgender. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

**Transgender man** - People who were assigned female at birth but identify and live as a man may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten it to trans man. (Note: trans man, not “transman.”) Some may also use FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male. Some may prefer to simply be called men, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

**Transgender woman** - People who were assigned male at birth but identify and live as a woman

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<sup>7</sup> Terms and definitions based on information from multiple sources, some of which include Diamond (2005); Savin-Williams (2005, 2011); Wenger (1998)

may use this term to describe themselves. They may shorten to trans woman. (Note: trans woman, not “transwoman.”) Some may also use MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female. Some may prefer to simply be called women, without any modifier. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transsexual – An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed – or seek to change – their bodies through medical interventions (including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries). Unlike *transgender*, *transsexual* is **not** an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word *transgender*. It is best to ask which term and individual prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: transsexual woman or transsexual man.

Transition - Altering one’s birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one’s family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Avoid the phrase “sex change.”

As discussed earlier, the terminology used for LGBTQ matters is inconsistent and rapidly evolving. The words “gay,” “queer,” “sexual minority,” “sexual and gender minority,” and “same-sex attracted” are all used interchangeably for the greater LGBTQ community, throughout this study. Whenever possible, I chose the terms that participants felt best represented them and used during our interviews or casual discussions.

## ABSTRACT

### Roles of Music Making in the Lives of Sexual and Gender Minority Youth

by

Erin M. Hansen

People make music for a variety of different reasons. Some may love performing for an audience; others might gain a sense of achievement after figuring out how to play something they heard on the radio. The motivations to make music - and the roles of music making - are as unique and idiosyncratic as are the musicians. There are a number of studies that explore the roles of music making in the lives of young people (Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003; Campbell, Beegle, & Connell, 2007; Fetter, 2011; Parker, 2010, 2011). However, when examining young people's perceptions of music making, there is little to no research capturing the voices of youth who do not identify as being heterosexual or cisgender. By illuminating the experiences of sexual and gender minority youth, researchers, music educators, school administrators, policy officials, and other community members can gain a greater understanding of their daily school and music experiences and begin to make changes to ensure a safer, more supportive school and music learning environment.

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to examine the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth. Three research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How did participants describe their past and present music making experiences?
2. How did participants describe their sexual orientation and gender identity?
3. In what ways did participants' answers to questions 1 and 2 provide information on the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth?

Data sets were generated through multiple individual interviews, a focus group interview, video recordings of participant music making, participant supplied artifacts, participant-researcher communications, and researcher journal entries.



Music making intersected with sexual orientation and gender identity in multiple ways. Music making allowed participants to explore aspects of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Participants' music making also helped them express thoughts and feelings they found difficult to express with words. Additionally, for participants who felt disconnected from the queer community, music making in ensembles (e.g. drum corps, choir, quintets, etc.) fulfilled their need for socializing and support, for the time being. Finally, participants were most happy when they experienced an integration of identity and community. The findings from this study contribute to the growing discussion of LGBTQ-focused studies within music education and provide insights to inform the practice of music educators.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

People make music for a variety of different reasons. Some may love performing for an audience; others might gain a sense of achievement after figuring out how to play something they heard on the radio. Teens commonly gather in basements and garages hoping to become rock stars. Alternatively, others are forced to take music lessons by their parents. The motivations to make music - and the roles of music making - are as unique and idiosyncratic as are the musicians.

There are a number of studies that explore the roles and meanings of music making in people's lives. When exploring the meanings of music for adolescents, research indicates that children recognize the value and importance of music in their lives (Kastner, 2009). Playing or singing in an ensemble allows youth to develop diverse friendships (i.e. between multiple races, ethnicities, ages, and geographical areas) and can deepen interpersonal relationships (Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003; Parker, 2010, 2011). Within schools, students remark that belonging to a music ensemble helps them make new friends (Adderley et al., 2003; Campbell, Beegle, & Connell, 2007; Fetter, 2011; Kuntz, 2011), allows them opportunities to be musical with others (Adderley et al., 2003; Kuntz 2011), and can create a more positive school atmosphere (P. S. Eerola & Eerola, 2013). Creating and performing music can aid people in understanding and controlling their emotions and is ultimately an expression of their true selves (Abril, 2013; Campbell et al., 2007; Kuntz, 2011; Pellegrino, 2010). In addition to being fun (Abril, 2013; Kuntz, 2011), some students feel that music teachers can provide additional social and academic support and help them bridge the social worlds of the music classroom, the greater school, home, and local community (Kruse, 2013).

#### **Rationale**

The above studies focused on the experiences and voices of young people from a variety of music areas. However, when examining young persons' perceptions of music making, there is little to no research capturing the voices of youth who do not identify as being heterosexual or

cisgender<sup>8</sup>. There are several reasons why it is important to investigate the musical experiences of this population: first, the National Association for Music Education states as its mission statement: “The mission of the National Association for Music Education is to advance music education by encouraging the study and making of music by all” (NAfME: Mission Statement, n.d.). Learning about this underrepresented community will bring music educators closer to fulfilling their mission. Findings from this study will provide information for music educators on the unique challenges faced by sexual and gender minority youth while in school; curricular suggestions on how to support student members of the sexual and gender minority population; pedagogical suggestions to help music teachers develop the music identities of sexual and gender minority students.

Second, according to findings from a 2013 national school safety survey, over 74% of LGBT students were verbally harassed in the past year because of their sexual orientation and over 55% because of their gender expression; over 55% of LGBT students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and over 37% because of their gender expression; 61% of LGBT students reported avoiding extracurricular activities because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable; and nearly 40% were physically assaulted at school due to their sexual orientation and over 22% because of their gender expression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). The same survey reported that LGBT students who experienced LGBT-related victimization or discrimination at school had higher levels of depression, lower levels of self-esteem, lower GPAs than students who were less often harassed, and were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month when compared to those who had not. However, LGBT students who attended schools with an LGBT-inclusive curriculum were less likely to hear homophobic remarks at school and were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation. These figures positively increased when LGBT students reported having supportive staff at their schools. Music educators could positively affect the daily lives of many students with knowledge of how to support and encourage students who are part sexual and gender minority. More music education research on students within the LGBTQ community is needed to combat the discriminatory and abusive behaviors that are experienced by sexual and gender minority students on a daily basis.

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<sup>8</sup> Cisgender refers to people who do not identify as transgender (GLAAD, 2010). See the Glossary for other LGBTQ-related terms.

Music students often express that they feel welcomed and supported in school due to their involvement with a music ensemble (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hallam, Rogers, & Creech, 2008; Parker, 2010). From a qualitative study of lesbian and gay musicians reflecting on their high school music making experiences, Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2011) indicate that lesbian and gay students may feel a greater sense of safety and belongingness in music than in other classes:

All of our participants referred to feeling safe or accepted within their high school music classes. Most of the participants also sought out extracurricular musical activities with other “serious” musicians in order to find a community to which they could belong. Chloe explains: “And I always felt like I was around my own people, you know, when I was at summer programs, I was like “ahhh,” I’m around people who can understand me!” (p. 23)

By illuminating the experiences of young people from the sexual and gender minority community, educators, administrators, policy officials, and other community members can gain a greater understanding of these students’ daily school experiences and begin to make changes to ensure a safer, more supportive environment.

Third, research that illustrates the experiences of sexual and gender minority youth is needed to have a greater and more in-depth understanding of music’s role, both in and out of schools. As previously mentioned, young persons’ involvement with music making has been shown to affect them socially, emotionally, and psychologically in addition to musically. What are the connections, if any, between music making, sexual orientation, and gender identity? It is vitally important that today’s research not only illustrates a reality better aligned with the experiences of today’s youth, but also provides insights so that we, as educators, can help create a better learning environment for LGBTQ students by providing safe spaces and opportunities for them to explore their developing identities and express themselves in ways that may not be found in other academic and social arenas.

### **Evolution of Study**

I was drawn to this topic from a number of personal experiences and reflections. I always found it peculiar, both as an adolescent and reflecting back as an adult, how much time I spent playing the cello. Unlike many of my middle school peers, I remembered spending several hours each day, alone, practicing my cello. Oftentimes, these marathon practice sessions were an opportunity to release emotions of frustration, confusion, or hurt (as depicted in the second vignette), but many times my cello playing was for fun or to decipher a musical challenge.

It was not until college that I admitted to myself that I might be gay. Like other people of

a minority sexual orientation, I spent years moving along the spectrum<sup>9</sup> and re-entering and exiting the proverbial closet<sup>10</sup>. Through these developmental years, I remained connected to music and the people who made music. I felt closer and most comfortable being myself with this population than with other groups of people. My best friends were musicians and we spent time together making music in formal ensembles and in impromptu small groups. I often felt that I could communicate best when making music: that I was able to express something beyond the notes and rhythms with my cello playing.

Looking back, I wondered if I was subconsciously (and sometimes, not so subconsciously) trying to understand my sexual orientation and greater social identity through my music. American poet Wayne Koestenbaum states: “Historically, music has been defined as mystery and miasma, as implicitness rather than explicitness, and so we have hid inside music: in music we can come out without coming out, we can reveal without saying a word” (Koestenbaum & Kushner, 2001, pp. 189-190). Was music making my personal closet *and* refuge?

I taught in the public schools for nine years before entering graduate school. During this time, I kept my sexual orientation hidden from all but one or two co-workers. Like many new teachers, I threw all of my energies into my work leaving little time for personal music making. For a while, I gained enough musical satisfaction from helping my students find ways in which they could connect with their music making. It was surprising, though it probably should not have been, that very few of my students connected with music in the ways that I did; some students liked the technical challenges of playing an instrument and some just enjoyed having a break from academic learning, during which they could make music with their friends. There always seemed to be one or two students, though, who made music their main passion; these students seemed to make music an essential part of their lives. At the time I assumed that, like me, they felt safe in my classroom and that they also used music as an emotional outlet; in graduate school, I learned that there were other personal reasons for their intensive involvement with the music program.

I began my Masters in Music Education after nine years of teaching fifth through twelfth grade orchestra. During this year of Master’s work, I had the opportunity to co-author a study on

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<sup>9</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>10</sup> See Glossary.

the experiences of undergraduate gay and lesbian students who participated in their high school music programs (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011). The participants in this study sought out music making opportunities to: (a) discover a sense of community; (b) an atmosphere in which they “fit in” and felt safe; (c) a way to negotiate different emerging identities (e.g. sexuality, race, religion, musicianship, etc.); and (d) as a way to express themselves. I presented these findings at the Establishing Identity conference; the first conference concerning LGBTQ studies within music education. The resulting conference proceedings (DeNordo et al., 2011) were the first publications of LGBTQ-focused scholarship within the music education community. Although this conference was ground breaking, to me it served as an indicator that more scholarship was needed concerning issues of importance to the LGBTQ community, especially concerning grade-school students, of which there was still none.

Upon beginning a doctoral program the following year, I chose to research and study as much as I could on “all things gay:” the coming out process, identity development, gay students’ and teachers’ experiences in school, and the absence of studies on gay people in music education. Graduate school, for me, served as an opportunity to immerse myself in my own wonderings, questions, and study as much as possible about matters relating to the sexual minority; little did I know they were forming the backdrop to this inquiry.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth. Three research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How did participants describe their past and present music making experiences?
2. How did participants describe their sexual orientation and gender identity?
3. In what ways did participants’ answers to questions 1 and 2 provide information on the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth?

To help others understand the experiences of sexual and gender minority youth, a personal account was needed. The next section describes literature that contributed to a conceptual framework, my experiences with music making, and how I developed this subject of study through personal reflection.

### **Approach to Study**

In a review and commentary on studies of marginalized populations in music education, Carter (2014) states: “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” (p. 539). I agreed with Carter and knew that this study needed to be qualitative because of my desire to examine and present individuals’ experiences, but I struggled to find a method that captured the voices of individuals yet helped me see the greater meaning behind our collective experiences. I finally decided that a case study would best allow me to illustrate personal experiences and interpret greater phenomena.

### **Developing a Case**

There are three characteristics common to case studies: particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). Particularistic means that the study focuses on a particular event, person, program, or phenomenon. Focusing on a particular case allows readers to have a greater understanding of the phenomenon of which it represents. Descriptive refers to the end product of the study, which is a “rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Merriam clarifies the term *thick description*, explaining that it is a literal description of the entity being studied that uses many variables and illustrates their interaction over a period of time. Lastly, heuristic means that case studies can reveal to its readers new meanings and understanding of the phenomenon. Stake describes the heuristic quality of case study in the following quote: “A case study provides vicarious instances and episodes that merge with existing icons of experience” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 44).

The subject of this study developed from a reflection process I borrowed from heuristic inquiry techniques (Moustakas, 1990). Though my intent in completing these exercises was not to develop a case study, per se, the end result was helpful in defining the case of this study. Earlier in Chapter I, I described various life events that contributed to the evolution of this topic. To help focus my inquiry, I looked through previously written journals and started new written and audio-recorded journals to guide my reflection on the intersections between my past experiences and my current studies. In addition, I talked with former LGBTQ students about their experiences in school music, and discussed the “fit” of sexual orientation in music education research with friends and colleagues.

Once I decided to focus my dissertation on sexual minority young adult musicians, I completed five heuristically focused writing exercises, as suggested by Moustakas (1990), to help define the object and case of this study. The five exercises were as follows:

- List all aspects of particular interests or topics that represent curiosities or intrigues. Do this freely, jotting down questions and thoughts even if they are not complete.
- Cluster the related interests or topics into subthemes.
- Set aside any subthemes that imply causal relationships, and any that contain inherent assumptions.
- Look at all the remaining subthemes and continue to consider them thoughtfully until one basic theme or question emerges as central, one that passionately awakens your interest, concern, and commitment.
- Formulate it in a way that specifies clearly and precisely what it is that you want to know. (p. 42)

From the exercises, I created a purpose and research questions, submitted the study proposal and was approved to begin the study. Unfortunately, the study was delayed due to multiple factors regarding access to the planned recruiting site (to be discussed in Chapter III). After months of trying different recruiting locations, proposal revisions, and modified institutional review board (IRB) applications, data collection began.

### **Conceptual Framework**

According to Merriam (2009), “Qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (italics in original, p. 13). Though a theoretical framework was not used throughout this study, there were several literature bases that contributed to my understanding of study topics. As the study progressed, I consulted additional areas of research to better understand the data I had collected. Below, I present some theories that helped me organize study findings.

Pellegrino (2010) used Wenger’s (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) to examine the meanings and values of music making in the lives of string teachers and recommended using this theory for future studies. In this study, the CoP theory helped organize many of the findings concerning music making and identity development. Theories of sexual orientation identity development and gender identity development were also helpful during analysis. Surprisingly, stage theory models of sexual orientation and coming out (e.g. Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Grierson & Smith, 2005; Kus & Saunders, 1985; Troiden, 1989) were more visible in participants’ experiences than expected; the more recent move away from stage theory models will be discussed in Chapter II. Finally, literature on the dimensions of sexuality and gender in the minds of today’s youth (e.g. Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2010; Russell, Clarke, & Clary,



2009; Savin-Williams, 2011) helped frame discussions where terminology played an important role in self-identification.

### **Historical Perspective**

The oldest study participant was born in 1994. To provide a historical context to participants' shared experiences, I have provided a chronological list<sup>11</sup> of major events between the years of 1994 and 2016 regarding the LGBTQ community, below:

- 1994: Department of Defense issues the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.
- 1996: U.S. Supreme Court decides that Colorado's 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment, denying gays and lesbians protections against discrimination, is unconstitutional, calling them "special rights"; President Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act into law.
- 2000: Vermont becomes the first state in the U.S. to legalize civil unions and registered partnerships between same-sex couples.
- 2003: U.S. Supreme Court rules that sodomy laws in the U.S. are unconstitutional.
- 2004: Massachusetts becomes the first state to legalize gay marriage. New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Iowa, and Washington D.C. follow suit in the following six years.
- 2008: California voters approve Proposition 8, making same-sex marriage in California illegal.
- 2009: The Matthew Shepard Act is passed by Congress 11 years after Matthew Shepard was tortured and murdered because of his sexual orientation.
- 2010: A federal judge in San Francisco decides Proposition 8 is unconstitutional; U.S. Senate repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" allowing gays and lesbians to openly serve in the U.S. Military.
- 2011: New York State passes the Marriage Equity Act.
- 2012: President Obama became the first sitting president to come out in support of gay marriage; San Francisco became the first U.S. city to cover costs of gender reassignment surgery; Maine, Washington, and Maryland legalize gay marriage.
- 2013: Same sex marriage was legalized in Delaware, Rhode Island, Minnesota, New Jersey, Hawaii, New Mexico, Utah, and Illinois; U.S. Supreme Court rules Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional.
- 2014: Same sex marriage was legalized in Oregon, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Oklahoma, Virginia, Kansas, Montana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin.
- 2015: U.S. Supreme Court legalizes gay marriage across all 50 states; Boy Scouts of America ended its ban on gay adult leaders.

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<sup>11</sup> List of events: (PBS, n.d.).

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a backdrop to the study of the roles of music making for sexual and gender minority youth. Specifically, I shared how this topic was personally relevant and how it evolved, its importance within the field, and the methods I used to explore this subject. In Chapter II, I will review pertinent literature within the areas of music making, adolescent development, sexual orientation development, and school and music making experiences for LGBTQ youth.

Looking ahead, Chapter II reviews scholarly literature that contributed to the background and analytical framework of this study. Specifically, chosen works focus on the following areas: (a) roles and meanings of music; (b) construction of musical meaning; (c) theories of identity development; (e) theories of sexual orientation; (f) theories of gender identity; (g) school experiences for sexual and gender minority youth; and (h) studies of LGBTQ youth in music education.

Chapter III outlines the methods used to conduct the study including the purpose statement and research questions, description of design, recruitment technique, data collection, analysis and interpretation strategies, ethical considerations, and expected contributions of the study. The findings are presented in Chapters IV, V, and VI; Chapter IV presents findings based on single case analyses, whereas Chapters V and VI include findings from cross-case analysis. Lastly, Chapter VII includes a summary of findings, conclusion to study, and suggestions for future research and teacher practice.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to explore the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth. As described in Chapter I, my arrival at this topic of research was gradual, meandering, and exploratory. The literature that contributed to my initial thoughts on this subject was anything from fictional (e.g. the 1950s lesbian pulp fiction series by Ann Bannon), to self-help / how-to (e.g. *Lesbianism Made Easy* by Eisenbach, 1998), to narrative shorts (e.g. *One teacher in 10* by Jennings, 1994, 2005), to historical (e.g. *Queering the Pitch* by Brett, Wood, & Thomas, 2006). As I moved closer to a study proposal, I focused more on peer-reviewed scholarship in the fields of psychology, sociology, identity, sexual orientation and gender expression development, music-making and musical meaning. I present a review of scholarly literature that formed a theoretical platform from which I observed, absorbed, analyzed and interpreted the data.

This chapter will begin with an analysis of the word “meaning” and explore studies that discuss the roles and meanings of music and music making, specifically for young adults. Then, I will provide an overview of identity development before considering models of sexual orientation and gender identity development. Finally, I will review scholarship on school experiences for LGBTQ youth and present studies regarding young adult sexual minorities within music education.

#### Roles and Meanings of Music

Before discussing the meanings of music, as interpreted and expressed by individuals, it is important to discuss *meaning*, its construct, definition, and purpose in this study. From the outset, I think it is important to state that it is not my intent to define “meaning” - this is a task beyond the scope of this study. In the case of this study, would *meaning* refer to *why* an individual is motivated to make music, or *what* someone is trying to express through their music making? Perhaps the meaning of music making is an affective response to the activity of creating music. Regardless, I do not believe I can define meaning for my participants. However, an

understanding of how others have defined meaning, both generally and in relation to music making, is a helpful backdrop to understanding the roles of music making in people's lives.

### **The Construction of Musical Meaning**

It is difficult to discuss what something means to someone, especially something for which words often fail to express (e.g. music). Music, often hailed as a "universal language," is not always understood or interpreted similarly by all who listen to or create music. For example, someone familiar with Western classical music may garner more meaning from a recording of a Beethoven symphony than someone who has not heard music of this style simply because of a greater understanding of the inherent meanings derived from the musical material (i.e. sonic structures). The listener unfamiliar with Beethoven, or works of similar style, will experience more difficulty connecting the incoming aural information to previously experienced music than the listener who is more accustomed to similar chordal structures, dynamic contrasts, or the musical form of Beethoven's era.

In this section, I will explore meanings of music and music making by chronologically examining five different viewpoints, beginning with Meyer (1961) who identified four ways in which people give meaning to music. The first is an intellectual perception and understanding of a work of music (*formalism*). The second relates to the emotions and feelings connected with a musical performance (*expressionalism*). Third, Meyer labels those who believe that the meaning of music lies exclusively within a musical work *absolutists*. While those who attribute meaning to extra-musical references, such as memory, concepts, character, emotion, are considered *referentialists*.

According to Meyer, a musical work generates meaning for people. For Green (1999), though, meaning is a natural by-product of musical interaction. Green (1999) refers to the meaning derived in response to musical elements as *inherent meaning*; this is analogous to an *absolute formalist*, to use Meyer's (1961) labels. In contrast, *delineated meaning* is the contextual and symbolic meaning that naturally arises when listening to music (e.g. a piece reminding us of a positive event that occurred around the time of first hearing said piece) (Green, 1999). Meyer (1961) would label this form of meaning making as *referential formalism*. Both *inherent* and *delineated* meanings are a natural by-product of musical interaction; they both affect each other, the music and the listener, though in different ways. If the inherent and delineated meanings are in agreement, the music listening/making experience can be positive. If

they are in disagreement, than the music listening or making experience may not be positive and one of the meanings may overpower and influence the other. Green (1999) gave the following example: “If a listener is convinced that women cannot compose, then the delineation that a particular symphony was composed by a woman might prevent that listener from being affirmed by the inherent meanings” (p. 164).

This relationship between inherent and delineated musical meanings can affect students’ and teachers’ experiences with regards to music making and learning in school music programs. Green (1999) expands this idea of delineated meanings and their sociological affects on musical meaning:

The power of musical delineations is such that it can override even the best of intentions on the part of teachers: pupils have their own delineations, their own desires and their own agendas in relation to music, and these can be reinforced by the school, or they can remain in a cultural sphere which is separate from the school. Musical delineations are not just heard, but they are adopted as symbols of social identity. . . music can be taken on and worn rather like a piece of clothing, to indicate something about your class, ethnicity, gender, your sexuality, religion, subculture, political values and so on. . . Particularly in the case of children and adolescents who are searching for identity as new adults in a changing society, music can offer a powerful cultural symbol, which aids in their adoption and presentation of a ‘self.’” (p. 167)

The idea of music serving as a symbol of identity is prevalent in school music experiences. According to Green (1999), classical music often delineates femininity and possibly effeminacy; some boys, therefore, may feel uncomfortable performing classical music if they equate doing so with acting effeminately. Other scholars have also explored this theme. For example, some studies indicate that participation in school music study may be influenced by students’ delineated perceptions that some instruments or vocal ranges are to be performed by people of particular genders or sexual orientations (Abeles, 2009; Conway, 2000; Hallam, Rogers, & Creech, 2008; Koza, 1993). The connections of music, personal and social identities will be further explored in this chapter.

Small (1999), a contemporary of Green, feels that meaning is created within the relationships that are formed through the act of music making. Before going further into Small’s theory of musical meaning, it is important to step back and explore Small’s definition of music, or rather, “musicking.” According to Small (1999), the meaning and function of music have to do with performing and listening; it is possible to have music without a listener, but not without a performer. Therefore, music should be considered an action, a verb rather than a noun: “To

music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance” (p. 12). He further explains the different “capacities” of a musical performance, which includes performing, listening, composing, practicing, dancing, as well as elements of the performance space. Furthermore, a performance can be both informal and formal as well as a solo or an ensemble. To better describe the act of music, Small coined the term “musicking.”

Musicking creates meaning between those involved; Small explains: “The act of musicking brings into existence among those present a set of relationships, and it is in these relationships that the meaning of the act of musicking lies” (p. 13). Relationships are built between those taking part in the performance, the physical performance setting, between the sounds being produced, and between any combinations of these elements. Small believes that these relationships model how we see ourselves relating to the wider world, as well as how we would like it to be: “Musicking empowers us to experience our existence, our place within the cosmos and how we out to relate to it” (p. 14). However, not everyone perceives relationships and experiences the same. Small believes that people seek out different kinds of musicking in order to find different kinds of relationships; musicking allows people to experience the meanings of these relationships in ways that words are not able to adequately articulate. However, because individuals bring their own experiences and meanings to a musical performance, the meanings of musicking must also consider other related, outside variables: “Any attempt to explain the meaning of musicking, and its function in human life, that does not at least try to deal with all the tremendous variety of human musicking, however strange, or primitive, or even antipathetic it might sound to our ears, isn’t worth the paper it’s written” (p. 20). Understanding the context of a musical performance and its participants is shared by the final theorist explored, Turino (2008), who believes that the meaning of music is to find and be part of a collective social identity through music participation.

Music making, according to Turino (2008), is better defined by the social field in which it takes place. A *social field* is a specific domain of activity that determines the roles, relationships, social positioning, status of actors and activities within its field. A community orchestra, a drum circle, or pop-music recording artists are examples of musicians within three different social fields. The *domain* of an activity is defined by the purposes and goals of the activity as well as the values, power-relations, and types of capital (e.g. money, academic degrees, level of fame, instrumental playing abilities) belonging to the members partaking in that activity. Turino

identifies four fields within music: participatory, presentation, high fidelity, and studio audio art. Participatory music is when everyone actively contributes to the music making; there is not distinction between the artists and the audience. Presentation music is contrary to participatory in that one person, or group of persons, provides music for another. High fidelity and studio audio art music are part of the recording fields of art. High fidelity music are meant to index live performances, whereas studio audio art music has no expectation of live performance and often makes use of electronically created sounds. Considering the prior examples of social fields, the members of the community orchestra would be considered part of the presentational field, whereas the members of the drum circle engage in participatory music making.

When examining the meanings of music making among young people, it is necessary to consider biological and sociological developments. Turino (2008) cites Frith (1987) and Russell<sup>12</sup> on some of the effects adolescent development has on their connection with music. According to Frith, the musical artists and genres individuals experience during their adolescence and young adult years remain powerful throughout their lifetimes. This is because the music of adolescence and early adulthood is an index of their identity formation, their “becoming.” While adolescents work to solidify their identities, they seek social situations to “try on” different personalities and receive affirmation from their peers (Marcia, 1966). The increased desire for social interaction is important to young adults, both in and out of the classroom. After examining students’ reasons for not continuing in school music classes, Russell theorized that school music programs, especially at the high school level, gear their curricula to highly specialized presentation performances rather than collective music making experiences. Consequently, students leave school music programs in search of other music events that are more about socially creating or participating in music making activities such as drum circles, community singing in churches or coffee houses, contra dances, etc. What is it about music that motivates some students to seek out these music making experiences? Why does music, matter to humans?

Turino (2008) posits two theories to this question; first, through music<sup>13</sup> individuals can be part of a collective social identity. For example, as an ukulele player, I feel an affinity towards other “uke” enthusiasts and know that we have at least one commonality. Additionally,

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<sup>12</sup> Turino (2008) does not cite a source for ethnomusicologist Melinda Russell’s work.

<sup>13</sup> In his book, Turino uses the term “art.” However, because this discussion is about the specific art form of music, I have decided to only refer to this particular art.

individuals attending a live concert are able to “sonically bond” through movement and sound (both produced and absorbed). The second reason for the importance of music, according to Turino, is that music is able to communicate both conscious and subconscious sensations, imagination, and experiences. Turino describes linking ideas and images that one might not consciously connect as a “primary process” which results in an “integrative wholeness.” People may experience a deeper connection through communal art experiences because they are connecting as fully integrated beings:

Within the semiotic chains of effects produced by iconic and indexical signs in music and art, sensual perception, feeling, physical reaction, and symbolic thought may *all* eventually occur, thus involving and integrating different parts of the self which are sometimes conventionally referred to as ‘emotion,’ ‘physical,’ and ‘rational.’ This type of fuller integration is more likely to occur in response to phenomena like music and the other arts as opposed to fields where symbols predominate and primarily exercise the analytical parts of the self. (Turino, 2008, p. 15; *italics* in original)

When reflecting on the chronologically presented theories of Meyer (1961), Green (1999), Small (1999), and Turino (2008), a progression of the impersonal to the connected begins to emerge. Consider the impetus for musical meaning: starting with Meyer, meaning is derived from *a musical work*. Next, contemporaries Green and Small posit that meaning occurs because of *musical interaction* (Green) or is created *within the relationships* of musicking. Finally, music making becomes a vehicle through which people can be part of *a collective social identity* and fully connect with each other (Turino, 2008). Examining the source of musical meaning prompts one to wonder if the purpose for music making, as a collective human phenomenon, is moving from something one does for the musical experience to something one does primarily to connect with others. However, if meaning is derived from social connection, what motivates individuals to make music by themselves? This question will be addressed, in part, by the theory of *flow*.

Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004) is a state of being people reach when completely engaged in an activity that is appropriately challenged to one’s skill level, during which a feeling of timelessness occurs. From his study of creative people in many different fields (e.g. artists, scientists, CEOs, etc.), Csikszentmihalyi determined that when a person reaches a state of flow, seven conditions occur. First, one has complete focus on the task at hand. This intense concentration leads to a sense of ecstasy and clarity that is beyond normal: one instinctually knows what needs to occur to complete the task and can judge their performance. The task feels



doable and the individual feels equipped with the needed skills. At that point, one experiences a sense of serenity and timelessness; engaging in the activity becomes its own reward.

One will achieve flow when the challenges are higher than average, for each individual, and require higher than average skills. If an activity is too challenging for a person's abilities, one will feel anxious. Conversely, if an activity is too easy and does not require an individual's skill, boredom sets in. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between challenge and skill and the different states of being, including flow.

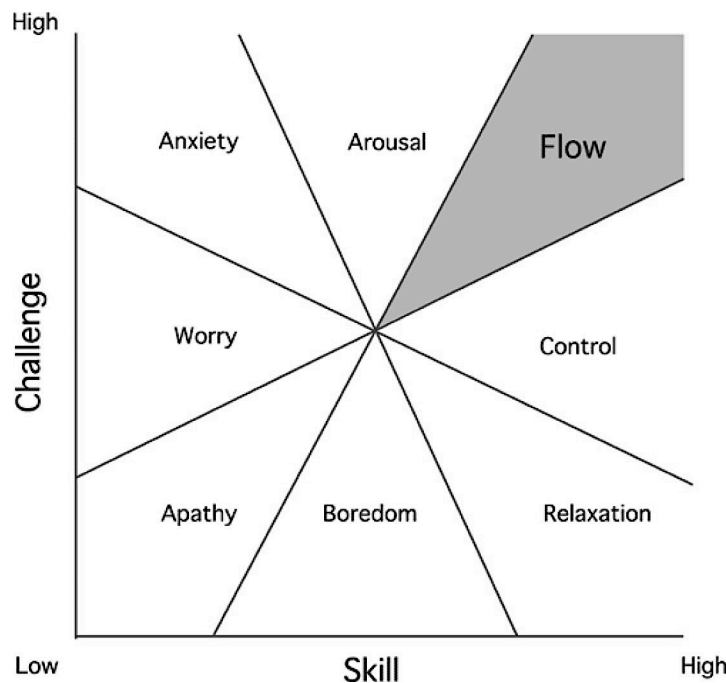


Figure 1. Flow Theory Visually Depicted as Relationship Between Challenge and Skill. Adapted from "Flow, the secret to happiness," by M. Csikszentmihalyi, 2004. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly\\_csikszentmihalyi\\_on\\_flow?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow?language=en)

The theories discussed represent just a handful of many philosophical discussions on the meanings of music. Less prolific, though still plentiful, are discussions about the meanings of *music making*. What music education is lacking, though, are empirical studies on the roles and meanings of music making, especially for young people. The next section presents an overview of such research.

### **Roles and Meanings of Music Making for Young Persons**

In a large qualitative study, Adderley et al. (2003) explore the music subculture of a

northeastern high school. Through structured interviews with 60 students in the tenth through twelfth grades (20 from band, 20 from choir, 20 from orchestra), the researchers investigated: (a) students' motivations for joining and remaining in their music ensembles; (b) perceptions of the bands, choirs, and orchestras from within each group and by the greater school community; (c) the social climate of the music ensemble classroom; and (d) the meaning of ensemble membership for the participants.

Findings indicated that participants' decisions to join the ensembles were influenced by a number of factors including family members, musical interests, a personal connection with their instrument, and a desire to develop their musicianship. Socially, many participants formed new friendships initially based on their common interest of music making. A band student reported: "most of my friends actually have studied music in some way . . . they think that's one of the main factors why we get along so well . . ." (p. 201). For many, the connections they made through music ensemble participation extended beyond group music making: "student statements epitomized a conception of a music group that was special, one bound together by a common interest or . . . set of shared values" (p. 203). Psychologically, students felt that they had grown in self-esteem, self-knowledge, and self-confidence through the supportive, "freer climate" that their music class provided (p. 199). Participants also expressed that their music-making provided an emotional outlet where they could express themselves, as one student stated: "[Music is] An emotional experience where you can find new feelings within yourself that you haven't felt before" (p. 199).

Scholars Campbell et al. (2007) examined essays, statements, and written reflections to determine the significance of music and music education to middle and high school youth both enrolled and not enrolled in school music programs. The written data was in response to a national essay contest sponsored by Ban deodorant and was conducted through [themusicedge.com](http://themusicedge.com) and *Teen People Magazine*. The contest asked students 13 to 18 years of age ( $N = 1,155$ ) to justify the study of music in school: the winning entries received prizes. Additionally, Campbell et al. examined participants' views on music's role in identity formation as well as any musical and nonmusical benefits of music engagement. At the time, more than a third of the participants were currently involved in, or had been involved in, music learning experiences (i.e. private instruction, ensemble participation, or an academic study of music).

Approximately two-thirds of the applicants felt that music was not just for personal

enjoyment but also for personal and soulful expression (p. 228). “The notion that emerged time and again was that music-making gives adolescents the freedom to just “be”: to be themselves, to be different, to be someone they thought they could never be, to be comfortable and relaxed in school and elsewhere in their lives” (p. 228). Similarly, essay-writers expressed their use of music to therapeutically understand and/or control their emotions. Researchers found that female participants used music as a coping agent two-times more often than males. Essayists also reported that being involved with music provided them with a social group and a sense of belonging. “They considered music’s function as a social ‘glue’ for bringing them together with friends and peers, and as a bridge for building acceptance and tolerance for people of different ages, ethnicities, and other cultural circumstances” (p. 233). There were minimal complaints about school music, though when expressed, they focused on the lack of “popular” music and instruments such as rock and guitar.

Parker (2010, 2011) discovered similar themes of social support and emotional expression in high school choral students. In a 2010 action research study, Parker explored social belonging among 26 high school choral singers. Research questions included: (a) how do high school choral students define social belonging? and (b) what factors of chorus membership contribute to the participants experiences of belonging? Data was collected through seven focus group interviews, each group containing three or four participants. The participants viewed chorus as uncompetitive and a social experience, especially between members of a section (e.g. soprano section). Likewise, participants also stated that making close social ties in chorus helped them negotiate the larger social atmosphere of high school. Students felt that chorus was a safe space where its members were united in a common musical goal: “chorus is a healthy and caring context where they can excel because they are accepted for who they are as individuals” (Parker, 2010, p. 348).

In a subsequent study, Parker (2011) explored 18 choral singers’ beliefs regarding music-making within choir using individual, semi-structured interviews. There were three topics that guided the study: (a) participants’ beliefs regarding the role of music in their lives; (b) participants’ descriptions of music-making experiences; and (c) ways in which participants’ beliefs were reflected, challenged, or clarified existing philosophies within music and music education. Findings revealed that participants thought of singing as an emotional, therapeutic release and a way to work through and share personal feelings in ways that words may not be

able: “As soon as I could talk, I learned you don’t just have to talk to express yourself, you can use musical notes” (2011, p. 310). Working towards a common musical goal allowed participants to feel more comfortable being themselves and taking risks expressing their own feelings through singing, which were, in turn, confirmed and supported by the other voices of the choir. In turn, participants believed that making music with others created a social bond and increased their interpersonal relationships. As one participant stated: “When I am singing with the group, I feel less alone” (p. 310).

There are two common themes among the studies of Adderley et al. (2003), Campbell et al. (2007), and Parker (2010, 2011). First, the act of making music creates a common goal for young musicians, which in turn unites them, creates social bonds that span outside of the music ensemble, and helps create feelings of safety and support. Second, many youth use music making as a form of emotional expression, personal understanding, and psychological comfort. From these examples, it appears that music making is an important resource for young people who are negotiating their identities as individuals within a variety of social spheres. The next section will further explore the themes of identity development and meaning making within social spaces.

## **Identity Development**

### **A Social Construction of Meaning and Identity**

In an explanation of the theory *Communities of Practice*, Wenger (1998) states that meaning is a result of learning. At the heart of this social learning theory is the idea that learning is the result of one’s active engagement with the social world to which one belongs. The ways in which people interpret their experiences and make sense of themselves, within a social community, contributes to their sense of identity. Because individual identity development takes place within social contexts, the common identity and practices of the members of a community are dependent upon its individual members and are mutually influential.

The Community of Practice (CoP) theory developed from Lave and Wenger’s collaborative study of apprenticeship as a learning model (Wenger, 2006, p. 3). CoPs are groups of individuals who share a common interest in an activity and learn how to perform that activity better (Wenger-Trayner, n.d.). It is also a learning theory with the central premise that “engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are” (Wenger, 1998, front cover). Wenger defines four interrelated components of this social learning theory: (a) meaning (made through experiences); (b) practice (active engagement in

social endeavors); (c) community (validation of practice through membership); and (d) identity (influenced and changed through community engagement of a particular activity) (1998, p. 5).

People often have different interpretations of shared experiences. Therefore, the individual ways in which people engage in (practice), interact with (community), and identify with (identity) different experiences within communities results in a variety of personal meanings. This negotiation of meaning, according to Wenger, involves the interaction of two processes: participation and reification. Participation is the active involvement in a social community that, in return, recognizes and engages the individual. In this sense, participation is both an act and a social connection. Participation can also be positive or negative.

Reification is “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). Wenger includes multiple actions when describing the act of reifying such as creating, naming, describing, representing, interpreting, using, decoding or reforming. Reification allows members of a community to give form to something that is abstract. Notated music, for example, can serve as the reified form of a composer’s memories, thoughts, or emotions. An instrument often acts as reification of its musician’s feelings and emotions. And finally, a proudly displayed trophy can reify the practice, teamwork, dedication, and hard work needed to perform well at a festival.

Individuals are full members within a community of practice when they feel a sense of familiarity, comfort, and understanding. Therefore, “membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). One’s identity is under a constant state of negotiation; it’s development is interrelated to new knowledge that one gains based on different types of social engagement (Wenger, 1998). Similarly, depending on their relationship with a community, individuals display different characteristics of their identity. Wenger explains: “As we go through a succession of forms of participation, our identities form trajectories, both within and across communities of practice” (1998, p. 154).

Trajectories represent and connect past, present, and possible future experiences within a CoP. They also provide a sense of importance and purpose, especially in regards to one’s identity in relation to the group. Because most people participate in several communities, identities are a result of multiple trajectories that represent different roles, experiences, and practices inhabited over time in multiple communities.

To summarize, learning is a natural byproduct of active participation in social

communities. Through the dual processes of participation and reification within different social communities, meaning is created. Meaning not only informs individuals of their interpretations of an experience, it also informs them of how they make sense of themselves within the social communities in which such experiences occurred. The next section will continue to explore this social view of identity development for adolescents.

### **Theories of Identity Development**

Schwartz, Luyckx, and Vignoles (2011) discuss the development of identity through their comprehensive review of both psychologically- and sociologically-framed studies. At a rudimentary level, identity is defined as one's implicit or explicit answer to the question, "Who are you?" (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 2). Further exploration indicates that identity can be defined at three different levels: at an individual, relational, or collective level. At an individual level, one's identity can encompass goals, values, beliefs, self-esteem, self-definition, and the individual-level processes that are used to create or discover this identity. At the relational level, identity is formed and defined within interpersonal spaces and illustrates one's relationship to others (e.g. a person's identity as a spouse, parent, co-worker, etc.). Discussion of one's collective identity includes one's identification with the various groups and social categories to which they belong. Examples of such social groups may include race, ethnicity, nationality, spirituality, and sexual orientation, to name a few. This aspect of identity is influenced by the collective meanings, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes people contribute to and attribute to membership with these groups. The multiple aspects of identity (i.e. personal, relational, collective) work interdependently in the forming of one's identity; they may be experienced as harmonious or incompatible.

According to Schwartz et al. (2011), the various theories of identity can be divided into one of two "camps": personal and social identity (p. 7). Personal identity has been examined with more of a psychological lens and is rooted in Erikson's (1950) model of psychosocial growth. Erikson's model consisted of eight stages of development:

1. Trust vs. mistrust (infancy).
2. Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (18 months to three years).
3. Initiative vs. guilt (three to six years).
4. Industry vs. inferiority (six to 12 years).
5. Identity vs. role confusion (12 to 18 years).
6. Intimacy vs. isolation (18 to 40 years)
7. Generativity vs. stagnation (40 to 65 years).

#### 8. Ego integrity vs. despair (65 to death).

Erikson (1950) believed that adolescents (ages 12 to 18) begin to question their identity and how they fit in their community. Resulting from an empirical examination of Erikson's theory of identity achievement, Marcia (1966) discovered four identity statuses that can result from this period of questioning: identity achievement (a secure sense of self), identity diffusion (lack of personal direction), foreclosure (commitment to socially accepted identity), and moratorium (identity crisis resulting in an active search for identity). Key to this literature is that changes in identity occur during specific times of one's life and identity development is an on-going, long-term process.

Research of social identity development can be traced back to beginning studies by Tajfel and Turner (Schwartz et al., 2011). In their seminal article (1979), Tajfel and Turner discuss the components of social identity and its development through social comparison and intergroup conflict. According to Tajfel and Turner, three assumptions can be made about individuals: (a) individuals strive for a positive self-concept; (b) an individual's social identity may be positive or negative depending on how he or she perceives others' views of the social groups to which he or she belongs (in-groups); and (c) an individual evaluates their own social groups (in-groups) based on how their groups' attributes compare to other groups (out-groups): if the comparisons are positive, they are more likely to view their social groups positively. Based on these three assumptions, Tajfel and Turner (1979) note that individuals work to achieve or maintain a positive social identity which is based, in large part, on favorable comparisons between in-groups and out-groups that share similar characteristics of importance. If an individual perceives their social groups to be negative when compared to other relevant groups, they will either leave their social group for a more positively viewed group or work to make their existing group more positively distinct. Three variables must be met in order for out-groups to be considered "worthy" of social comparison: (a) individuals must identify with the "in-group" and consider their membership as an aspect of their self-concept; (b) the attributes under consideration for inter-group comparison must be considered socially significant to both the in-group and out-group (e.g. clothing, accents, money, race, physical qualities, etc.); (c) in-groups only compare themselves with out-groups they perceive as relevant, similar, and important. Inter-group comparison results in increased pressure for the in-group to continue to be distinct. Tajfel and Turner (1979) summarize: "The aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over

an out-group on some dimension. Any such act, therefore, is essentially competitive” (p. 41). When reflecting on high school experiences, one may recall such inter-group comparisons between high schools (e.g. football rivals), social cliques (e.g. cheerleaders and dance teams), or curricular circles (e.g. band and orchestra students).

Though the study of identity development seemingly separates into two camps, individual and social or psychological and sociological, Schwartz et al. (2011) encourage researchers to consider examining identity from a more holistic perspective and to understand the interplay between the personal and social constructions of identity. The multiple aspects of identity (i.e. individual, relational, and collective) can be represented as either (or both) personal or social, depending on the context. Similarly, identity can be viewed both as content and process. For example, I can view my sexual orientation as both content (a personal aspect of my being) and as a process that was socially influenced and developed over time. Schwartz et al. (2011) consider this thinking as similar to the philosophical views of identity as discovered (one’s true self, always in existence) or constructed (one’s sense of self is built) (pp. 11 - 12). In an effort to view identity in its complex entirety, Schwartz et al. (2011) provide this definition:

Identity is simultaneously a personal, relational, and collective phenomenon; it is stable in some ways and fluid in others; and identity is formed and revised throughout the lifespans of individuals and the histories of social groups and categories, through an interplay or processes of self-discovery, personal construction, and social construction, some of which are relatively deliberate and explicit, whereas others are more automatic and implicit. (p. 8)

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the various stages of development each of the participants may be experiencing, personally and socially. Considering the above definition of identity (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 8), it appears that sexual orientation may be regarded as an aspect *and* process of identity. The next section discusses different theories of sexual orientation development as both a context and process of self.

### **Theories of Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation is “a deeply rooted predisposition toward erotic or sexual fantasies, thoughts, affiliations, affection, or bonding with members of one’s sex, the other sex, both sexes or perhaps, neither sex (asexuality)” (Savin-Williams, 2011, p. 672). A sexual orientation label is what describes that predisposition. Sexual identity, though, is how a person chooses to describe their sexual orientation to themselves or others; it is more likely to be chosen and changed by an individual based on context, political or social pressures, or other culturally mitigating factors.



Savin-Williams (2011) clarifies:

For example, a young woman could be sexually attracted primarily to other females, engage in sex with both sexes, and romantically fall in love with males. She might label her sexual orientation as mostly heterosexual and sexually identify as straight. A young man could be attracted to both sexes, engage in no sexual activity, and romantically fall in love with females. He might label his sexual orientation as bisexual and identify his sexuality as gay. (p. 672)

According to more recent studies (Diamond, 2005; Diamond, Patterson, D'Augelli, 2013; Friedman et al., 2004; Higa et al., 2014; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2010; Savin-Williams, 2005, 2011) today's adolescents place less importance on self-labeling; some adolescents refuse to label their sexual orientation. Reasons for doing so may include: (a) not identifying with any of the existing labels of sexuality (e.g. gay, straight, bi) and longing for more "flexible" means of self-identification (Higa et al., 2014; Russell, Clarke, & Clary, 2009); (b) feeling that the label of "gay carries too much baggage" (Savin-Williams, 2005, p. 2); (c) feeling that sexual identity development models do not pay attention to matters of gender expression, race, culture, and geography (Higa et al. 2014; Rosario et al., 2010); (d) feeling that labels over-simplify the complexity of attraction and sexuality (Diamond, 2005).

If today's youth feel that the traditional labels of "gay," "bisexual," or "lesbian" do not accurately represent them, why does social media and research literature continue to use them? Diamond (2005) stated that in order to "promote the health and well-being of sexual-minority youths and adults, social scientists must collect and disseminate information that more accurately represents how sexual identity development is actually experienced rather than recollected" (p. 74). The next five studies will illustrate researchers attempts to gather such information from adolescents and young adults.

**Components of sexual identity: voices of youth.** Friedman et al. (2004) interviewed 50 adolescents of various sexual orientations to assess the importance of various dimensions of sexuality (e.g. attraction, relationships, behavior, self-identity). A secondary purpose of the study was to develop preliminary questions to measure these components and gain feedback from the study's participants. Example questions include "How does someone know if he or she is gay, straight, heterosexual, queer, lesbian, or whatever?" and "How do you know when you are feeling attracted to someone" (pp. 306-307). Data was collected through focus groups ( $n = 36$ ) and individual interviews ( $n = 14$ ). Overall, participants did not feel that one's sexual identification (e.g. gay, lesbian) or sexual behaviors were necessary in determining one's sexual

orientation. Instead, participants identified two components of sexual orientation: sexual attraction and the desire to be in a long-term, committed relationship with someone. Two types of attraction were determined: (a) being attracted to characteristics of a particular sex (e.g. breasts, butt, etc.) and (b) having a physical reaction to someone or some external stimulus that another person causes (e.g. talking with someone or someone smiling at you).

Diamond's (2005) purpose differed from the Friedman et al. (2004) study in that she wanted to illuminate how 89 non-heterosexual women between the ages of 16 and 23 described and understood their current attractions and sexual identities at four different time points. At each individual interview, taken every two to three years, Diamond asked the women: (a) to describe their current sexual identity; (b) to remember how they first questioned their sexuality; (c) to share any changes they had experienced or conceptualized of their sexuality; (d) the percentage of their current day-to-day sexual attractions that were towards other women; (e) the percentage of their current day-to-day romantic or affectional attractions that were towards other women; (f) the number of men and women with whom they had engaged in sexual contact since the previous interview and the number of men and women with whom they had been in romantic relationships.

Diamond discovered that among the participants who initially identified as lesbian (42% at the first time-point), 70% acknowledged attractions to both sexes. By the fourth time-point, all of these women had acknowledged occasional attractions to men. Diamond determined that women, in general, were more nonexclusive in their attractions when compared with previous studies about sexual minority men. In fact, although the participants were "technically" bisexual, they maintained a flexible definition of lesbianism that accommodated periodic other-sex attractions and behaviors, especially if they were "just sex" (p. 79). The remaining findings will be discussed in a later section: *sexual orientation and sexual identity development*.

Russell et al. (2009) examined young adults' responses to a survey question regarding sexual identity. This study was in response to a Savin-Williams (2005) book in which he said that teenagers are "post gay:"

The new gay teenager is in many respects the non-gay teenager. Perhaps she considers herself to be "postgay," or he says that he's "gayish." For these young people, being labeled as gay or even being gay matters little. They have same-sex desires and attractions but, unlike earlier generations, new gay teens have much less interest in naming these feelings or behaviors as gay. . . Teenagers are increasingly redefining, reinterpreting, and renegotiating their sexuality such that possessing a gay, lesbian, or

bisexual identity is practically meaningless. Their sexuality is not something that can be easily described, categorized, or understood apart from being part of their life in general. The notion of “gay” as a noteworthy or identifying characteristic is being abandoned; it has lost definition. As one self-described “pan-erotic” young man I interviewed put it, “‘Gay’ has been annexed and spandexed! It’s been so bent out of shape that it don’t exist no more.” (p. 1)

Russell et al. (2009) recruited participants who were likely to be identified as LGBT or allies of sexual minority youth from a wide variety of GSAs, community groups, LGB youth groups, and electronic listservs in California. A total of 2,560 participants completed the California Preventing School Harassment (PSH) survey over three-years time. After pre-testing survey items with student GSA leaders, word-choice modifications were made to the survey. For example, students recommended that the category of “other” for sexual and gender identities be changed to “write in” (p. 886). Additionally, they suggested including the categories “queer” and “questioning” in addition to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and straight/heterosexual. Categories available in response to “what is your gender?” included male, female, transgender, questioning, and write-in (p. 886).

The researchers collected descriptive statistics about the population in addition to conducting a content analysis to participants’ write-in responses. In response to identifying sexual orientation, 69 participants provided write-in responses. The largest write-in response was pansexual ( $n = 14$ ), the second-largest was *reticent to label* ( $n = 10$ ) which included responses like “no-label. . . gender doesn’t matter” or “I don’t like labels” (p. 887). Table 2 shows a comparison between all of the categories. Interestingly, Russell et al. found that those who provided an alternative sexual orientation label were younger and less likely to be members of their high school GSAs. Based on their findings, Russell et al. disagreed to Savin-Williams’ (2005) conclusion that the traditional LGB labels are irrelevant to contemporary youth. In conclusion, Russell et al. advised scholars to be mindful of the diversity of sexual identities when designing studies.

In a more recent study, Higa et al. (2014) also found that modern youth use terms beyond the traditional labels to identify sexuality and gender in their study of 57 self-identified sexual minorities and 11 “straight” allies. Through focus group interviews ( $n = 63$ ) and individual interviews ( $n = 5$ ), researchers Higa et al. (2014) gathered descriptions of negative and positive life factors and their contexts from adolescents between the ages of 14 and 24 (50-percent of whom were 16 or 17 years of age). Participants positively related that the use of flexible

terminology allowed them to control how they self-identified and presented their sexual and gender identities. The participants did not feel a need to label their sexual orientations nor adhere to stereotypical gender roles. However, participants were fearful of being outed or labeled by others.

Table 1

*Frequency and Proportion of Students' Reports of Sexual Orientation for the Full Sample and Among Non-Heterosexuals*

Response	Frequency	% of full sample, <i>n</i> = 2,558	% of non-heterosexuals, <i>n</i> = 858
Missing	119	4.7	-
Straight	1,581	61.8	-
Gay/Lesbian	290	11.3	33.7
Bisexual	320	12.5	37.3
Queer	45	1.8	5.2
Questioning	11.5	4.5	13.4
Write-in	73	2.9	8.5
Multiple	15	.6	1.7

*Note.* Adapted from “Are Teens “Post-Gay”? Contemporary Adolescents’ Sexual Identity Labels,” by S. T. Russell, T. J. Clarke, & J. Clary, 2009, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(7), 884-890.

It appears that more of today’s sexual-minority youth are creating labels to better classify their sexual orientation than past research has revealed. For some, this freedom has helped students to identify their feelings of romantic and sexual attraction (Diamond, 2005; Higa et al., 2014). However, traditional labels of sexual identity *and* models of sexual orientation development are still being referenced. To better understand and help today’s same-sex attracted youth, one must have an understanding of more “traditional” models. Therefore, the next section will illustrate the development of different models of sexual orientation and sexual identity development.

**Sexual orientation and sexual identity development.** Sexual identity development models were introduced nearly 40 years ago, around the time that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1973). Since then, several theories have formed that illustrate the process of how one comes to identify as gay or lesbian (Bates, 2010; Cass, 1979, 1984; Coleman, 1982; Dank, 1971; D’Augelli, 1994; Grierson & Smith, 2005; Kus & Saunders, 1985; Lee, 1977; McDonald, 1982; Rosario et al., 2010; Troiden, 1989). During the seventies, most studies focused on men, appeared in psychological journals, and were based

upon psychologists' work with their own clients. In the 1980s and 1990s, "student affairs professionals [have] adopted psychosocial models of sexual orientation identity development (Cass, 1979, 1984), and a handful of scholars (D'Augelli, 1994; Evans and Broido, 1999; Rhoads, 1994) have attempted to describe LGBT identity in higher education settings" (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 25). Different models of gay sexual orientation development include stage-development models of sexual orientation (e.g. Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982), theories specific to people of color (e.g. Bates, 2010), a life span approach (D'Augelli, 1994), sexual identity developmental trajectories (Savin-Williams, 2005), and models of identity development for transgender people (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005), among others.

One of the most cited stage-development models of gay sexual orientation formation is Cass' (1979) six-stage theoretical model based upon her psychological clinical work with homosexual men and women. In stage one, *Identity Confusion*, a person is consciously aware that homosexuality may have a personal relevance, and will often ask themselves, "who am I?" Stage two, *Identity Comparison*, brings feelings of inner turmoil and social alienation. In Stage three, *Identity Tolerance*, one is able to say, "I probably am a homosexual," feels inclined to find other homosexuals and to find a supportive community. When one is able to state, "I am a homosexual," he or she has entered the fourth stage of *Identity Acceptance*. The fifth stage, *Identity Pride*, is recognizable by one's sense of gay rights activism and comfort in disclosing their sexual orientation. When one's sexuality is congruent with all other life aspects, such as work and family, Stage six, *Identity Synthesis* has been achieved.

The summary of Cass' model (1979) was used to illustrate one model of homosexual identity development. Though varying in subtleties, stage theories tend to share the following developmental stages: (a) A personal sense of difference when compared with others; (b) self-labeling as gay, bisexual, or heterosexual; (c) socialization in the LGBTQ community; (d) coming out or disclosing one's sexual orientation; and (e) integration within the greater community and redefining "gay" as a positive identity. Stage models of sexual orientation development are similar to Erikson's model of adolescent identity exploration in that the preferable outcome would be one of a stable identity; in this case, a stable and positively viewed "gay" identity (Russell et al., 2009; Savin-Williams, 2005). Common to most stage theories is the belief that individuals may not adhere to the order of stages and may skip certain stages altogether. Though, critics of sexual orientation identity stage theories feel that they are too rigid

and do not capture the fluidity of sexual attraction (Savin-Williams, 2005). Additionally, existing stage theories have focused exclusively on men, have lumped women in with men, or only considered a binary definition of gender (i.e. male and female). As the field of sexual orientation development expands, new(er) studies indicate that women experience attraction and coming out differently from men (Bates, 2010; Diamond, Patterson, D'Augelli, 2013; Jordan & Deluty, 1998; Maguen, Floyd, Bakeman, & Armistead, 2002).

One such critic of these models of sexual identity development designed a longitudinal study to more accurately explore and represent how sexual identity development is experienced by adolescents and young adults (Diamond, 2005). In addition to the information presented earlier, Diamond discovered that questioning one's sexual orientation does not end after identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Seventy percent of the women in Diamond's study ended up changing their sexual identity label at least once after first coming out as a sexual minority. Diamond explained: "For many women, the process of questioning their identities had led them to conclude that their emotional feelings were more important criteria for sexual identification than their sexual attraction" (p. 82).

Savin-Williams (2005) similarly asserts that researchers are not accurately portraying LGBTQ adolescents due, in part, to study design. In a comprehensive book compiling past literature on same-sex attracted adolescents, Savin-Williams (2005) states:

Researchers, educators, and mental health professionals "invented" gay adolescence in the 1970s and then watched it flourish in the 1990s. Gay adolescence came to be what we researchers wanted it to be – what we were. It looked remarkably like the adolescence of the researchers who were themselves gay – tough, difficult, painful, secretive, mysterious. (p. 23)

As society becomes more accepting and supportive of minority sexual orientations, the experiences and developmental trajectories of queer youth is becoming less different from their heterosexually oriented peers (Savin-Williams, 2005). To address the varying, individual, and contextual factors of sexual orientation development, Savin-Williams (2005) proposes a "differential developmental trajectories framework," of which there are four tenets (pp. 82 - 84): (a) same-sex-attracted (SSA) teens are similar to other teens in developmental trajectories in that they are subject to biological, psychological, and social influences; (b) SSA teens are dissimilar from heterosexual teens in their developmental trajectories in that they have a unique biologically mediated constitution (i.e. same-sex sexual orientation) and are in a culturally heterosexual environment resulting in different psychological development from that of

heterosexuals; (c) SSA teens vary among themselves due to variety of ways that gender, ethnicity, geography, SES, and social cohorts interact and influence; and (d) developmental trajectories are unique to each person: general descriptions of groups may not apply to individuals.

The various models of sexual orientation development can be helpful for individuals negotiating their sexual orientation, or for those working with individuals trying to understand their same-sex attractions within a heteronormative culture. That being said, existing models generally represent a very select audience (e.g. white, middle-class men) and may feel stifling or out of touch with today's cultural norms. As illustrated in the reviewed studies (Diamond, 2005; Savin-Williams, 2005), it is imperative that new studies listen to the voices of today's youth: their experiences and their language.

### **Theories of Gender Identity Development**

Brill and Pepper (2008) outline the developmental stages of transgender youth in their handbook on transgender children. The stages are presented at the typical ages at which transgender children become self-aware. However, Brill and Pepper clarify that these stages will vary between children. These stages begin at the age of two and continue until the age of 18. Though the majority of participants in this study were older than 18, those that identified as transgender shared stories from their childhood and memories of their gender self-discovery. Therefore, I will present the developmental stages as documented by Brill and Pepper (2008) and then follow present additional information on non-binary gender identity development from other scholarship.

Ages 2 – 3: Gender identity emerges influenced by both biology and sociological factors; with internal sense of gender, children seek same-sex models for social cues; some transgender children begin to verbalize a sense of difference to parents.

Ages 3 – 4: Children have sense of their own gender identity and become aware of anatomical differences; gender roles become refined through social play; gender stereotypes begin to emerge; gender segregation begins and intensifies until age 12; transgender children struggle to verbally express feelings of difference.

Ages 4 – 6: Children associate gender with specific behaviors; children can adapt social constructs of gender when given enough examples (e.g. books, storytelling, etc.); indications of gender variance clearly emerge in many children; many transgender children have consistently and persistently voiced their gender identity.

Ages 5 – 7: Children understand gender consistency and stability (e.g. a man is a man regardless of clothing), which results in fuller expression of self and gender; with understanding of gender stability, gender identity is generally set for life, though some may choose not to express their true gender at that time.

Ages 9 – 12: Some children who expressed gender variance when younger reject those thoughts, while some develop greater gender dysphoria; physical changes may lead to depression or self-destructive behaviors for transgender children; some may need therapeutic guidance to figure out gender identity.

Ages 12 – 18: Gender identity becomes fully developed; third most common time for children to realize transgender identity (after toddlerhood and pre-pubescence); many transgender children are nervous about dating, rejection, and being outed, and do not see any possibilities to date.

A recent study (Pinto & Moleiro, 2015) explored how transsexual individuals recognized, acknowledged, and came to terms with their gender identities. Pinto and Moleiro used the term of “transsexual” as opposed to transgender when discussing their participants. The definition of transsexual Pinto and Moleiro used was, “anyone who is currently, or is working toward, living as a member of the sex other than the one they were assigned at birth, regardless of what procedures they may have had” (pp. 12-13). The terms transsexual and cissexual (those whose gender identity is congruent with sex that was assigned at birth) fall under the broader spectrum of transgender.

Pinto & Moleiro used a grounded theory design to focus on the experiences unique to transsexual men and women as several gender identity models were constructed on previous models of sexual orientation identity development. Participants were 22 self-identified transsexual individuals (14 male-to-female and 8 female-to-male) between the ages of 16 and 55; all but two participants identified as heterosexual and nine were married or in a relationship at the time of the study. Findings indicated that participants experienced five developmental stages: (a) confusion and an increasing sense of gender difference; (b) exploring identity: finding an explanation and a label for feelings; (c) exploring options of what to do and when: selective disclosure of identity (d) embracing gender identity by performing a new social identity and undergoing physical modifications; and (e) identity consolidation and invisibility. Other findings included: (a) gender identity was not dependent on genital modification surgery; (b) particular events (transition triggers) helped facilitate movement between stages; and (c) the majority of participants identified as “man” or “women,” selectively disclosing their transsexuality to few



individuals. The next section illustrates the current school environment for both sexual and gender minority youth.

## **Experiences of LGBTQ Youth**

### **School Experiences for LGBTQ Youth**

For nearly 25 years, the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) has worked for equal rights for all school personnel regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (GLSEN: About, 2014). This national education organization conducts a biennial survey about the school experiences of American LGBT youth called the *National School Climate Survey* (Kosciw et al., 2014). The 2013 study examined the experiences of LGBT students with regard to negative school climate and safety. Findings indicate that the majority of American students feel that schools are hostile and unsafe environments (p. xvi). For example, 74 percent of students were harassed because of their sexual orientation and 55 percent because of their gender expression in the past year (p. xvi).

Similar findings have been cited in other studies. For example, Grossman et al. (2009) interviewed 31 LGBT youth in five focus groups on their feelings about the social conditions in their schools. Students voiced universal feelings of hopelessness regarding school harassment and violence as depicted in the following characteristic interview transcript:

*Bobby:* No matter where you go, people are going to be gay-bashing or have derogatory comments about individuals or certain facilities. . .

*Lucky:* I don't think you can escape a person, the pain, or how a person would treat a person of another lifestyle. It is going to be everywhere, even in the [Greenwich] Village, but I'm just saying it can't be stopped. That's all I'm saying. It can't be stopped. Even in schools it won't be stopped. . . (p. 32)

The results from the *National School Climate Survey* (Kosciw et al., 2014) also indicate that school climate has negative affects on students' academic success, school attendance, and mental health. Thirty percent of LGBT students missed at least one day of school each month due to experiences of harassment or discrimination at school. Though school climate seems to be improving when compared with previous years' data, school remains a hostile environment (see Figure 2).

In a meta-analysis of literature depicting the school experiences of LGBT youth from urban areas (San Francisco, New York, Atlanta, Memphis, Salt Lake City, Philadelphia, and Chicago), Blackburn and McCreedy (2009) discovered similar findings. For example, students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression had

much lower grade-point averages than students who were less-often harassed (p. 225). Often, the resulting social stigmatization from being frequently harassed would lead to isolation, depression, and dropping out of school as described by a student who attended an arts magnet school in Philadelphia:

I had friends that just stopped talking to me and never explained why. . . I didn't really care that I didn't have any more friends. I just wouldn't, I just wouldn't go to school. . . It's really hard to sit at a lunch table if you don't talk to anybody. . . When you go to the same school for four years, and then, your senior year, you're alone, you're just like, 'ok,' so you don't go to lunch, then, eventually, you just don't go to school. (Blackburn, 2003, p. 43 as in Blackburn & McCreedy, 2009, p. 225).

On a positive note, those students with access to LGBT-related resources and supports reported better school experiences and greater academic successes. For example, LGBT students with many (11 or more) supportive school staff were less likely to miss school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable (14.7% compared to 50.0%) (p. xx). GLSEN posts the findings to the National School Climate Survey on their website ([www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)) as well individual state reports.

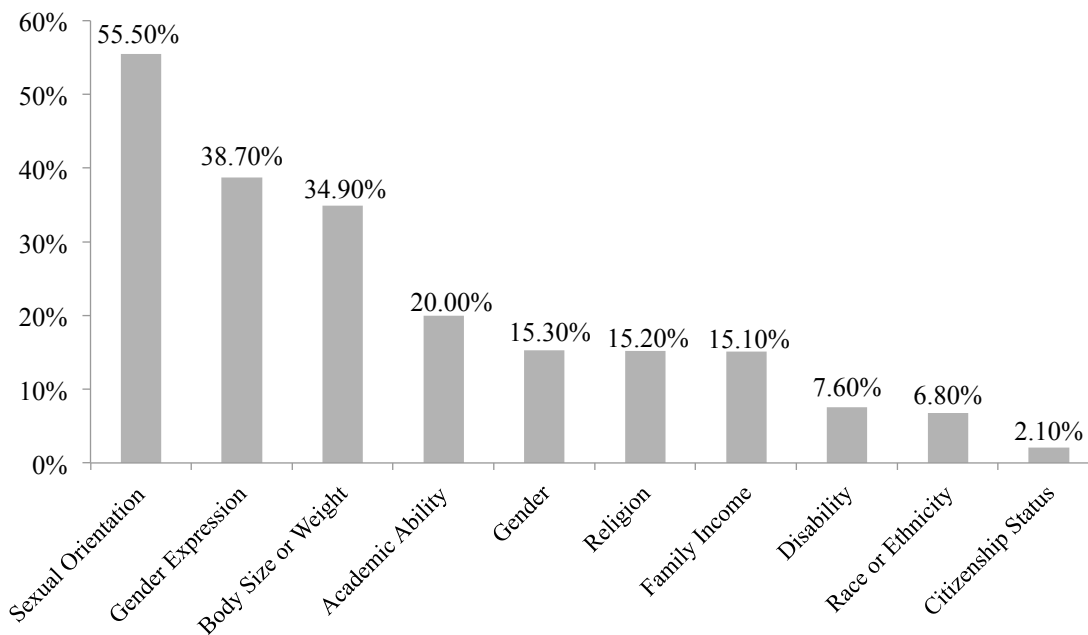


Figure 2. Percentage of LGBT students who feel unsafe at school because of actual or perceived personal characteristics. Adapted from "The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools," by J. G. Kosciw, E. A. Greytak, N. A. Palmer, & M. J. Boesen, p. 13.

National surveys, such as GLSEN's *Climate Survey*, help portray a generalized view of school climate for youth who self-identify as LGBTQ. Unfortunately, as discussed above, it is difficult for large-scale surveys to portray accurate accounts of students who may not identify

with the labels as chosen by researchers. While existing qualitative studies may be more successful in their sampling and accurate portrayals of LGBTQ youth, they are few in numbers; this is particularly true within different curricular subject areas. The next section reviews some of the existing LGBTQ studies in the area of music education.

### **Studies of LGBTQ Youth in Music Education**

There have been very few studies about LGBTQ individuals within music education. Even fewer are the numbers of studies about LGBTQ youth within music education. To date, I am aware of three studies in which LGBTQ participants reflect back on their school music experiences (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hennessy, 2012; Natale-Abramo, 2011) and one study that depicts the current experiences of a transgender youth (Nichols, 2011). Three of these studies were presented at the 2010 Establishing Identity conference, two of which were published as conference proceedings in abbreviated form (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011 and Natale-Abramo, 2011 in DeNordo, 2011); the third was later published in its entirety (Nichols, 2013). These studies will be described, below.

Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2011) individually interviewed four undergraduate students about their experiences in high school music programs in this collective instrumental case study (Creswell, 1998). Using a semi-structured interview format, Fitzpatrick and Hansen inquired about participants' (a) instrumental or vocal music experiences, privately and with others; (b) social experiences in high school, specifically in the music classroom; (c) influential music teachers and other mentors; and (d) experiences of openly identifying or withholding their sexual orientation during high school.

Researchers discovered four themes, the first of which was about fitting in at school. For participants, the music classroom provided both a literal and figurative safe space within school. Participants discovered an understanding and supportive community among musicians that may have supplemented missing LGBTQ communities within school. Similar to other studies of LGBTQ youth (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Savin-Williams, 2011), the participants felt that their sexual orientation was just one part of their identity, intertwined with other developing aspects such as race, religion, gender, and musician. Music also provided participants with a form of expression and a way to communicate with other musicians. Through mutual music making, participants felt privy to the thoughts and feelings of other musicians that they would not otherwise gain through talking. Finally, the community of musicians seemed more inclusive,

accepting, and open-minded than other communities in school.

Natale-Abramo (2011) examined the construction of instrumental teacher identity through the stories of Chris, a band teacher in his twentieth year of teaching. This narrative case study (Creswell, 1998) used in-depth interviews, field notes and audio recordings taken during classroom observations, and journal entries as sources of data. Natale-Abramo used narrative data and analysis (Riessman, 1993) to identify themes relating to identity construction, classroom challenges and successes, and personal meaning.

Though the focus of the study was on Chris' experiences in becoming a music teacher, his stories offered glimpses of his life as a closeted gay adolescent. During adolescence he struggled with his sexual orientation and his perceived need to keep it hidden from others. For Chris, and the participants in Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2011), music was a form of expression and an acceptable alternative activity to sports, which was highly valued in his family. Natale-Abramo explained: "Music provided a valid substitute for sports, as attending concerts, watching Chris perform solos, and supporting his training with private lessons, all mirrored the way Chris' family would support an athlete" (DeNordo et al., 2011, p. 40). Chris used music making to both express his feelings while negotiating his sexual orientation and to hide his sexual identity; as such, music functioned as a type of closet.

Hennessy (2012) worked with lesbian, gay, and bisexual undergraduate music majors to identify the roles that music education played in their lives ( $N = 5$ ). Using a collective instrumental case study design (Creswell, 2006), Hennessy explored (a) ways in which teachers and students created a social climate for queer students within music ensembles; (b) the effects these climates had on queer students; (c) the developing musical and sexual identities of queer college music majors; and (d) possible interactions or disconnections of these identities. Participants were music performance or music education majors enrolled in different colleges in the state of Virginia at the time of data collection. Ages of participants ranged from 18 years to 22 years of age and they self-identified as gay ( $n = 1$ , male), lesbian ( $n = 1$ , female), bisexual ( $n = 2$ ; one male, one female), and bisexual or questioning ( $n = 1$ , female).

Based on data collected from semi-structured interviews, findings indicated that participants negotiated their musical and sexual identities to reflect their perceived social values of their respective music ensembles. Additionally, participants expressed reservations to bring up their sexuality with professors because of an unspoken belief that discussion of sexuality is

irrelevant in the process of music learning and to do so was unprofessional. Hennessy described several ways in which participants drew connections between their developing sexual identities and quality of musicianship. Overall, music, as an area of study, was regarded as a safe place for expression and self-reflection. Similarly, making music strengthened participants' perceptions of self-worth. Participants valued music making opportunities for feelings of belonging and connection with a group of like-minded peers, which often had to do with the ways in which peers and teachers created climates of acceptance.

Nichols (2013) used narrative methodology to tell the story of Ryan and his experiences in public school and school music. Ryan, who used to be known as Rie, considers himself transgender as he explains in this passage:

I consider myself transgender, though I call myself a cross-dresser because I have never taken hormones. I have never considered SRS [sexual reassignment surgery]. It took me a long time to be comfortable in my skin, and now I am. I have always loved the saying, "If it ain't broke don't fix it," and that is kind of how I feel. (p. 266)

Nichols and Ryan met each Wednesday for ten weeks, during which time Nichols listened to and recorded Ryan's stories. Nichols described their relationship as one of narrator and listener (p. 265). Ryan also shared photo albums, school records, concert programs, and musical compositions. Additionally, Nichols interviewed other people who Ryan identified as important in his life story. Ryan acted as a co-researcher by reviewing transcripts; reading, collecting, and reviewing drafts of the manuscript; and discussing themes and revisions with Nichols.

Ryan faced hostility by his community members when he began negotiating his identity by cross-dressing and announcing he was gay. In Ryan's words:

It was a nightmare. I wished I was dead every day because I didn't want to go. 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. I could express myself the most freely through music. So that, to me, was my safe zone because it was my outlet. (p. 267)

Though, he felt that his family was supportive and that his music classes were safe places, Ryan had to eventually leave school. For Ryan, music making and song-writing became ways to reflect upon and express his emotions. Similar to earlier studies (Adderley et al., 2003; Campbell et al., 2007; Parker 2010, 2011), music making helped unite students over a common goal:

The common goal of musical excellence superseded the differences, even the most dramatic ones, between the individual members of the school ensembles. . . Her [Ryan's] inclusion in the community of band and choir was founded upon her musical identity and afforded her a sense of self-worth and accomplishment that was denied to her by the rest of the school community because of her gender identity. (p. 273)

Common to these four ground-breaking studies (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hennessy, 2012; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Nichols, 2013) is the power of music making as a tool for self-expression, as a method of communication, and as a unifying agent that helps create a safe, supportive community. What was uncommon were the challenges unique to Ryan as a transgender person. Nichols (2013) explains: "There is a distinction between the sexed body, the social presentation of gender, and sexual orientation. . . For transgender youth, negotiating this interrelated triad of identity can be an exceedingly complex and painful process, often misunderstood by their parents, peers, and community" (p. 263). The added dimensions of the sexed body and the social presentation of gender will further be addressed in Chapter III.

In this chapter, I reviewed literature about the roles and meanings of music for young people, characteristics of adolescent development, theories of sexual orientation and gender identity development, and experiences of LGBTQ youth. Chapter III will describe the methods used to conduct this study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter describes the methods I used to explore the roles of music making for young people who identify as members of the sexual and gender minority community. I begin with the purpose statement and research questions and then I describe the study's context, participant-recruitment procedures, and various qualitative research techniques used to collect and analyze data, as well as other relevant considerations.

#### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth. Three research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How did participants describe their past and present music making experiences?
2. How did participants describe their sexual orientation and gender identity?
3. In what ways did participants' answers to questions 1 and 2 provide information on the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth?

#### **Research Design**

I used a qualitative case study design for this study. In this section, I provide several views of case study to demonstrate my choice of design. I then detail the different aspects of a case study as they relate to this study.

#### **Approaches to Case Studies**

Similar to other qualitative research designs, those who engage in case study research seek to understand the meanings that people construct of personally experienced phenomena. The researcher, as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, uses inductive strategies to interpret and present information through rich, thick descriptions (Merriam, 2009). The case study approach to qualitative inquiry is frequently cited in social science research, though its definition and focus varies from study to study (Barrett, 2014; Conway, Pellegrino, & West, 2015). Some methodologists view case study not as a methodological design but as a way to focus the scope of investigation (i.e. the "what" to be studied):

Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied . . . By whatever methods we choose to study *the case*. We could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods = but we concentrate, at least for the time being, on the case. (Stake, 2005, p. 443)

Merriam (2009) defines case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 43). In this example, the “bounded system” is the “case” to be studied, bound by elements of time and space. Merriam (2009) considers the treatment of the subject (i.e. the “what”) as the defining feature of case study. Moving beyond the subject of study, Yin’s (2009) two-part definition of case study also considers the *research process*, especially data collection, triangulation, and use of theory to inform data collection and analysis:

[Part One]: A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

[Part Two]: The case study inquiry:

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 18)

After an analysis of different definitions and approaches to case study research, Barrett (2014) asserts that too often, different approaches to case study do not utilize a theoretical framework enough in the development of the subject (i.e. the case). Barrett’s thoughts align with Thomas (2011b), who states:

The ostensible looseness of the case study as a form of inquiry and the conspicuous primacy given to the case (the subject) is perhaps a reason for inexperienced social inquirers, especially students, to neglect to establish any kind of *object* (literally and technically) for their inquiries. Identifying only a *subject*, they fail to seek to explain anything, providing instead, therefore, a simple description in place of a piece of research. For the study to constitute research, there has to be something to be explained (an object) and something potentially to offer explanation (the analysis of the circumstances of the subject). (p. 513)

An appraisal of Thomas’ definition of case studies further clarifies his views on the intersections of the subject, object, and analytical frame:

Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that



provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates. (p. 23)

Using elements from several case study methodologists (Merriam, 1998, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2005; Thomas 2011a, 2011b; Yin, 2009), Barrett (2014) synthesized the definitions of case study to provide a more complete theory. The design of this study aligned itself with Barrett’s (2014) depiction of a case study (see Figure 3) and will be detailed in the next section. Specific elements (e.g. case, purpose, analytical framework) will be further clarified, when needed, by the theorists who informed the guiding model.

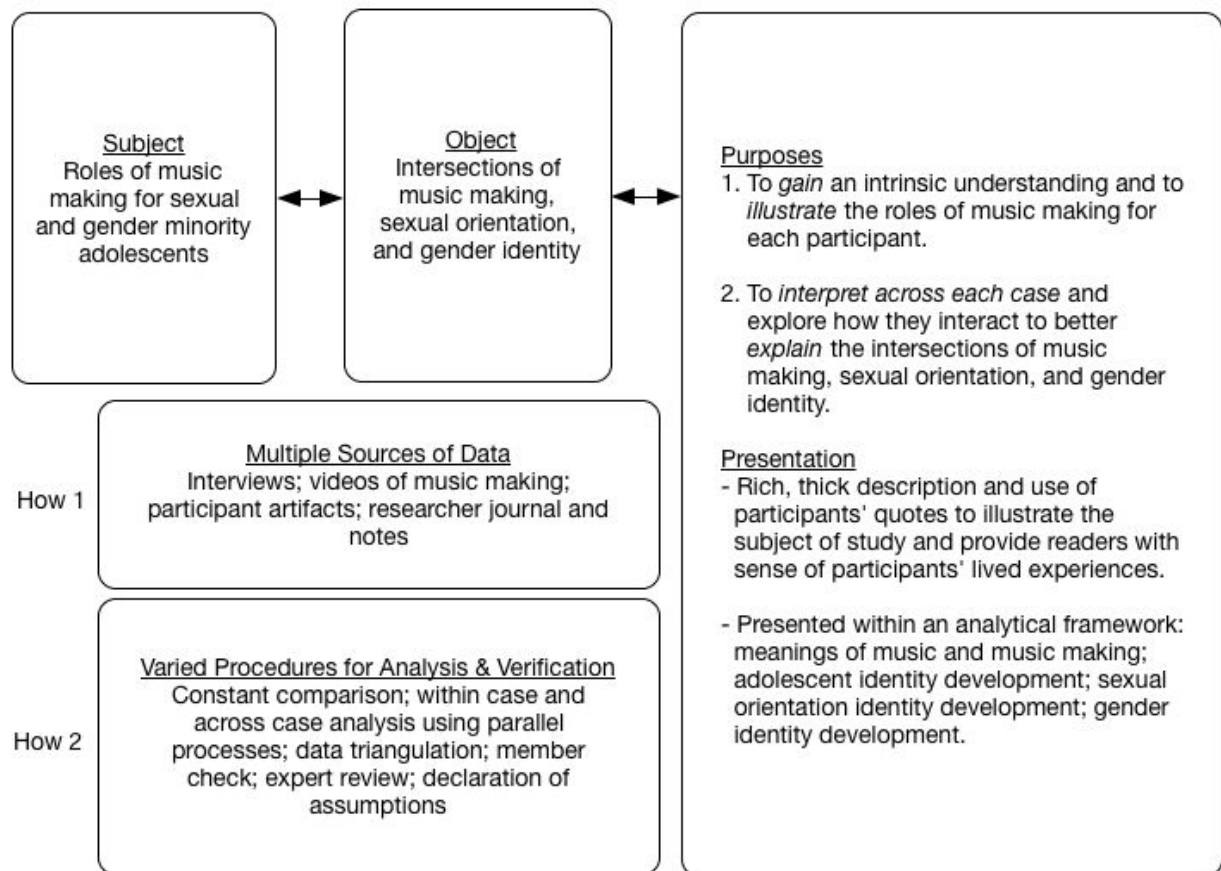


Figure 3. Visual representation of this study based on "Dimensions of Case Study" in Barrett, 2014, p. 119.

### Dimensions of This Case Study

The subject of a qualitative case study is a particular unit, be it a person, group, or program that serves as a case example of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The subject is defined by one’s research questions (Yin, 2009) and relates directly to the object of study (Barrett, 2014; Thomas, 2011a). The object is the “analytical focus that crystallizes, thickens, or develops as the study proceeds” (Thomas, 2011b, p. 514). As Thomas (2011a) explains, a case (i.e. subject) is an

instance of something greater; throughout the study, a researcher should ask oneself “what is this a case of?” (p. 20).

The subject of this study was the roles of music making for sexual and gender minority youth. Thomas (2011a) calls this a “local knowledge case” because of my familiarity with the subjects of music making and sexual orientation (p. 76). Using qualitative methods (to be discussed in the next section), I explored and examined how music making (subject), as described by five individuals between the ages of 16 and 21, informed readers about the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth (object). This subject was bound by a number of ways: (a) the participants self-identified as being part of the sexual and gender minority community; (b) the participants self-identified as active music makers; (c) the data collection occurred over a period of five months. The analytical framework was constructed from past scholarship (see *Chapter II*) regarding: (a) the roles of music making in young persons’ lives; (b) adolescent development; (c) identity development; (d) sexual orientation development; and (e) gender identity development.

To further define and inform the dimensions of this inquiry, I used a worksheet by Thomas (2011a) to help categorically identify the purpose, approach, process and structure (Figure 4). Merriam (2009) suggests that a case study is intrinsic when one wants a better understanding of a particular case (p. 48). When the purpose of the study is to look beyond the case, it becomes an instrumental case study. I was intrinsically drawn to this topic because I wanted to know how other sexual minority youth experience and draw meaning from their music making experiences, given that I knew only of few others’ experiences besides my own. However, after much reflection and research of existing literature, I wondered if there might be a greater connection between sexual orientation, gender identity, and music making. Therefore, by examining individual cases, in part, for the purpose of understanding the greater phenomenon, the interest in the cases was primarily instrumental (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Additionally, this study had an explanatory purpose because of my intent to explain a phenomenon through the sharing of the individual cases and “offer explanations based on the interrelationships between these bits” (Thomas, 2011a, p. 101).

Subject	Purpose	Approach	Process
Special or outlier case Key case Local knowledge case			
	Intrinsic Instrumental Evaluative Explanatory Exploratory		
		Testing a theory Building a theory Drawing a picture, illustrative Descriptive Interpretative Experimental	
			Single or multiple  <b>Nested</b> <b>Parallel</b> <b>Sequential</b> <b>Retrospective</b> <b>Snapshot</b> <b>Diachronic</b>

Figure 4. Kinds of case studies. Adapted from “How to Do Your Case Study: A Guide for Students and Researchers” by G. Thomas, 2011a, p. 93.

The aim of this study was to both illustrate the contextual music making experiences of the participants as well as interpret, across the cases, what their experiences had in common: with each other and in relation to the object of this study. Finally, I explored multiple, individual case studies using parallel processes. In parallel case studies, the individual cases are all happening and being studied at the same time, as opposed to sequentially (Thomas, 2011a).

To summarize, the purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was both instrumental and explanatory. The local knowledge subject was examined using parallel processes and presented using illustrative and interpretative approaches. The next section will discuss specific

methods of sampling, data collection, and analysis; in other words, the “how” of the study (Barrett, 2014).

### **Recruitment**

My experiences in trying to find participants with whom to work were unlike my past study experiences. Prior to this study, I had co-authored two studies with two different professors and solely conducted two other IRB-approved studies (Conway, Edgar, Palmer, & Hansen, 2014; Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hansen, in progress a & b). For each of these studies, the university IRB approval process was quick and relatively "pain-free." I attributed this to a number of factors, such as having an experienced faculty member listed as the lead-researcher, the innocuous subject matter, and the age of the participants. A part of me expected the IRB application for this study to be more defined, especially given my target age group and the subject matter, but I was not prepared for the challenges I had to face.

My examination of past research revealed that studies that focus on members of the sexual and gender minority communities experienced greater scrutiny, amendment requests, and rejection from institutional review boards than other studies of similar design and focus, especially those that involved participants under the age of 18. For example, common findings of DeJong (2014), Donelson & Rogers (2010), and Mustanski (2011) indicated that when working with underage populations concerning sexual orientation or gender variance, researchers designed studies in order to avoid working with underage participants, used recruiting strategies such as snowball-sampling to avoid working with schools, and abandoned studies that were delayed at the IRB-level. Ironically, I reviewed the aforementioned studies hoping to find solutions to the challenges I faced during the IRB-approval process and recruitment. I was disappointed to discover that my experiences were “par” for the queer-research course, so to speak.

The total process from the time I began my IRB application to the final approval of study protocol took 13 weeks and 5 days. The majority of the correspondence with the university IRB was to respond to requests for more information and to insure that all regulatory documentation was in place. In my opinion, two areas were of particular relevance to the study’s population as members of the sexual and gender minority: privacy and consent.

IRB stated that participating in the study would place participants at minimal risk. However, they were quite concerned with participants’ privacy and wanted several safeguards in

place to protect participants from being seen entering, or being overhead, during an interview. I used language similar to other past studies that had been approved by IRB, however, this was not sufficient for this study. Similarly, I used previously approved letters of informed consent to compose the letters for this study; most often I directly copied the text from past letters. The quotes included in Appendix A illustrate the level of scrutiny under which the letters of informed consent were placed.

While I was waiting for IRB approval of my application, I contacted the faculty advisers to the gay-straight alliance chapters in each of the high schools in which I wanted to recruit. I had a long relationship within this school district and had several students, teachers, and administrators express interest in being a part of the study. Additionally, I emailed the director of research for the school district and asked for a meeting to discuss needed permissions to work with students within their schools. I didn't think there would be much of a concern considering that I wanted to talk with students outside of school hours. This began a nearly two-month campaign to gain access into a district that, by all intents and purposes, seemed excited and ready to support their students' participation in this study.

From February 19 until April 6, I composed approximately 45 emails and made 20 phone calls to the district's director of research, school building principals, teachers who directed their schools gay-straight alliances, personal contacts within the district, and two directors of a community-youth center who were currently working with the student members of the district's GSAs. In the end, I had support from students, teachers, and building principals, but not from the school district itself. After being turned down by the school district, I turned to different community groups in the same area hoping to reach some of the students who had already expressed interest in participating. Unfortunately, many groups were suspending their regular activities due to end of the year activities such as standardized testing, final exams, prom, and class trips. I feared that once school was out for the summer, I would have very little chance of recruiting enough high school students for my study design.

At that point, I amended my proposal to increase the participant age range and to recruit from anywhere within the United States using snowball-sampling strategies (Patton, 2001). I reached out to anyone I could think of to help locate participants: Participants from the Fitzpatrick and Hansen 2012 study; former students; college undergraduates I personally knew;

K-12 music teachers; college professors with whom I had a connection; experts within the field of LGBTQ studies; queer-themed Facebook pages; and music-themed Facebook pages.

I created a flier to help advertise my need for study participants (see Appendix A). The flier announced that I was seeking musicians between the ages of 14 and 21 who were part of the LGBTQQIA<sup>14</sup> community to participate in a study. I chose not to define “musicians” on the flier so that I could learn how participants defined this. However, I had decided that “musicians” needed to be those who intentionally make music on a regular basis. These criteria would allow for those who are self-taught and spend time practicing; those who participate in spiritual groups (e.g. church choirs or praise bands); those who belong to casual groups, such as garage bands; those who take private lessons or belong to a youth ensemble; or those who belong to a school music ensemble. Appendix B includes a graphic of an *ideal* breakdown of participants, though it should be noted that I did not intend to recruit or exclude participants in order to achieve this distribution of participants.

Next, I distributed this flier in a number of locations. First, I passed out fliers at Houston Pride 2015 to (a) street musicians who identified themselves as being part of the queer community or who knew of someone who met the study criteria (as indicated on the flier); (b) individuals manning information booths for social clubs, advocate groups, and charities; and (c) people I personally knew who said they would help spread the word. Upon approaching someone, I introduced myself as a doctoral student and a gay musician and shared what brought me to design this study. I felt that it was important to identify myself as a student, musician, and a lesbian for three reasons: first, by disclosing my sexual orientation and placing myself in a position of vulnerability, others could identify me as a fellow member of the queer community and may be more willing to share stories about this part of their lives; second, they may more willingly put themselves in a position of trust and vulnerability after witnessing my demonstration of trust in them; and third, they could see me as a fellow musician, which has a community of its own. As one participant stated in Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2011):

. . . it’s a very vulnerable place to be when you’re performing for people, when you’re playing. . . There’s a universal acknowledgment of that, everybody knows how scary that

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<sup>14</sup> LGBTQQIA stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual. The term queer used to be used as a derogatory term; some individuals still consider the term to be an insult. I chose to use the acronym LGBTQQIA instead of the term “queer” so as not to alienate those who find the term to be derogatory.

is and they're with you. . . at least for me that's probably part of why it feels more accepting, because you have that." (p. 24).

One person I met volunteered to post the flier on a private Facebook group page for their school's "queers and allies" organization. From this post, I received four emails from interested individuals, three of whom met the study criteria and agreed to be part of the study.

Second, Mackenzie, an undergraduate student who wanted to help with the study as part of an independent study of research, volunteered to distribute the fliers among some of her private students, students attending a day camp at which she was teaching, two different schools of music, and a different gay-pride celebration. Additionally, Mackenzie posted a personal call for participants and attached the flier on a private Facebook group for collegiate music education students. One person sent me an email saying that he wanted to be part of the study; he also met study criteria.

Third, I posted the flier (electronically and in person) at several teen and community centers that catered to LGBTQ adolescents and young adults. Two of these centers had vibrant music communities and often had open-mic nights for local musicians. No one contacted me from these attempts. Fourth, I talked, over the phone and through email, with several university-level colleagues about any pre-existing groups they knew of that might be willing to have me work with their students. Unfortunately, most groups were no longer meeting for the remainder of the academic year and I decided not to pursue these avenues.

Finally, I emailed and privately Facebook messaged over 50 school music teachers, private lesson teachers, former students, and participants from an earlier study (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011). I asked everyone to please forward the flier to other teachers, and if possible, to write a personal message and send the study information to any potential participants. From these mailings, five participants emailed me expressing interest and agreed to participate in the study. After a total of six months of recruiting, nine individuals between the ages of 16 and 21, living in seven cities between two states, either agreed to participate in the study or expressed interest in participating. Two individuals had questions about confidentiality and the study's purpose; one participant wanted to continue communicating by email, the other preferred to talk over the phone.

The original study design began with a focus group interview during which time participants would bring a signed letter of consent, complete a short questionnaire, and participate in a group music making session with follow-up discussion. Based on the collected

data from the focus group, I would choose three or four people to interview individually, each three times. The focus groups needed a minimum of five people to successfully run, however, the participants were so geographically distant from each other that I would have needed three different focus group locations and times. Three weeks after the last person contacted me about participating in the study, I decided to cut the focus group interview from the study and instead interview everyone individually, three times. I wrote to the participants and explained the change in design and asked if they were still interested; I did not receive replies from two people after repeated email attempts. At that point, I mailed letters of informed consent (see Appendix C) to seven participants and scheduled the first round of interviews.

### **Participants**

Andres, Brad, Emily, Katie, Matt, Roger, and Sam<sup>15</sup> made up this diverse group of musicians. At the time of data collection, two of the participants lived in the South and five lived in the Midwest United States. I have decided not to identify which participants lived in the South and which lived in the Midwest because location, based on participants' descriptions and stories, did not turn out to be as much of a contributing factor as were family relationships, socio-economic status, or religion. Having lived in both regions, I assumed that those who lived in the South would have experienced more discrimination than their Midwestern counterparts as sexual and gender minorities; however, this was not the case. As it was, four of the Midwesterners had attended the same high school and had even played together in the music program, though they were of two different graduating classes. Based on participants' descriptions, and my personal knowledge, their high school had similar demographics to one of the participants living in the south. Two other participants, one from the south and one from the north, attended very similar schools geared towards the fine arts. Below are Tables 2 and 3 to provide some context as to the participants' surroundings during their formative school years<sup>16</sup>. Table 2 portrays demographic information about the cities in which the participants' lived while in high school and Table 3 indicates demographic information about the high schools that they attended.

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<sup>15</sup> Pseudonyms

<sup>16</sup> Due to confidentiality, citations could not be provided for table data.



Table 2

*Demographic Information About Participants' Residential Cities During High School*

	City A	City B	City C	City D
Population per square mile	3,798	1,748	3,372	2,941
Race				
African American / Black	9%	8%	25%	.49%
Asian	4%	14%	6%	.85%
Native American	.4%	.3%	.7%	.21%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%	.1%	.01%
White	76%	73%	51%	99%
Other Races	6%	1%	15%	.53%
Two or More Races	3%	3.6%	3%	.87%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	25%	4%	44%	2%
Median Income	\$69,892	\$46,299	\$37,000	\$56,426
Political Affiliation	Republican	Democrat	Republican & Democrat	Unincorporated Community

Note. City A: Katie; City B: Matt; City C: Andres; City D: Brett, Emily, Roger, and Sam.

Table 3

*Demographic Information About Participants' High Schools*

	High School A	High School B	High School C	High School D
Attendance <sup>a</sup>	2733	488	699	1363
Race (Student)				
African American / Black	5%	6	19%	1%
Asian	9%	5%	7% <sup>b</sup>	3%
Native American	.3%	.2%	<1%	.37%
Pacific Islander	.2%	-	-	-
White	59%	76%	50%	85
Two or More Races	3%	6%	3%	4%
Hispanic or Latino	24%	6%	22%	6%
Economically Disadvantaged	14.3%	8.81%	18% <sup>c</sup>	19.52%
At Risk	25.6%	-	16%	-
ESL / ELL	2.5%	<10 students	0%	<10 students
Gifted and Talented	8.5%	-	100%	-
Special Education	5.4%	10% <sup>d</sup>	2%	9% <sup>d</sup>
Student to Staff Ratio	11:1	10:1	17:1	6:1

Note: High School A: Katie; B: Matt; C: Andres; D: Brett, Emily, Roger, and Sam. A dash (-) indicates data not available.

<sup>a</sup>Data collected for the year that participants' graduated from high school or current year. <sup>b</sup>Asian/Pacific Islander.

<sup>c</sup>Free and Reduced Price Lunch. <sup>d</sup>Students with disabilities.

Table 4

*Overview of Study Participants*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Gender Identity</u>	<u>Sexual Orientation Identity</u>	<u>Instrument(s)</u>
<b>Andres</b>	20	College; 2 <sup>nd</sup> year; music performance major	Man	Gay	Violin
<b>Brad*</b>	18	Post high school; saving for community college; works 2 part-time jobs	Man	Gay	Viola
<b>Emily</b>	18	College; 1 <sup>st</sup> year; undecided major	Woman	Gay	Piano; trumpet; guitar
<b>Katie</b>	21	College; 4 <sup>th</sup> year; chemistry & German studies major	Woman	Lesbian	Piano; trumpet; French Horn; hand bells; guitar
<b>Matt</b>	19	College; 2 <sup>nd</sup> year (1 <sup>st</sup> year full time); song writing & composition major	Man	Pansexual	Guitar; voice; piano; violin (formerly)
<b>Roger*</b>	18	Dropping out of college at time of study; 1 <sup>st</sup> year; biological sciences major	Trans man	Asexual (sexually) & grey-sexual (romantically)	Bass; viola (formerly)
<b>Sam</b>	16	High school junior	Agender	Likes girls	Voice; cello; piano; ukulele

*\*Brad and Roger stopped communicating after first interview.*

Table 4 presents some details about the participants such as their age, current occupation, sexual orientation identity, gender identity, and instruments played. In Chapter IV, I will share the background stories, per se, for each participant. For now, the only other pertinent information involves two particular participants: Brad and Roger. Brad and Roger, initially, were very excited to be part of this study. They were both mailed letters of informed consent, but at the time of our first interview, they had not returned them to me. They insisted that they wanted to be part of the study and gave verbal permission to conduct the first interview, both promising to mail their signed consent forms the following day; unfortunately, I never received their letters. During the interviews I learned that both Brad and Roger were no longer making music, although they had been when they contacted me about participating in the study. After our first interviews,

I emailed Brad and Roger with copies of our interview transcripts, thanked them for taking the time to share their stories, offered several dates for a second interview, and reminded them to return their letters of consent (I still had not received either of them). I got a reply from Roger saying only that he was busy and would need some time to let me know about a second interview; I did not receive a reply from Brad. I texted and emailed both Brad and Roger an additional four times over the next month without receiving any replies. The remainder of this study will present findings gathered from the accounts of Andres, Emily, Katie, Matt, and Sam.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There are two matters that gave me pause to consider their possible affects on this study: limiting terminology and participants' perspectives regarding their own identity. First, in light of the literature presented in Chapter II, I was concerned that I would not be able to listen openly to my participants - their stories, their choices of terminology – and would, in turn, jump to conclusions or view them in light of a preexisting theory that did not pertain to them. To address this, I had a couple of casual conversations with self-identified queer youth about their choices of terminology. I also discussed these thoughts with Mackenzie, my undergraduate assistant, who is part of this community and asked for any suggested changes before collecting data.

The second consideration had to do with the differences in views of sexual orientation and music making for the participants and me. I came to this study with many years of reflection, trial and error, and changes in identity labels: musically, sexually, and otherwise. Conversely, the participants in this study were in the midst of their identity developments; for example, students who currently identify as a sexual minority may later change their identity label. Knowing that adolescents are trying out new personalities and identities made me question whether they were really capable of reflecting on their current experiences. Therefore, I began this study with an open mind knowing that the findings may direct me towards a different phenomenon than the roles of music making for sexual and gender minority youth.

The University of Michigan's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed an application for this study and approved April 14, 2015 (see Appendix F). Letter of Informed Consent were sent to participants prior to their commitment to participate in the study. Additionally, at the beginning of first interviews, I reviewed the terms of the consent documents and asked if they had any questions before we began. I verbally reassured participants that their participation was voluntary, that their identities and shared information would be kept confidential, that they could

withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were given pseudonyms so that their identities would remain anonymous and my computer was encrypted using the security software specified by the University of Michigan and required for research involving minors of subjects of a sensitive nature.

### **Data Collection**

**Technology.** I used many different types of technology for various purposes throughout the study. Table 5 depicts the technology I used most often; I will refer to items within the table throughout the remainder of Chapter III.

**Individual interviews and observations.** I interviewed participants using an in-depth, phenomenologically-based interview approach as explained by Seidman: “In this approach interviewers use, primarily, open-ended questions. Their major task is to build upon and explore their participants’ responses to those questions. The goal is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic of study” (2006, p. 15). Participants were each interviewed three times. The first interview established the context of the participants’ experiences and focused on their life histories. Two participants were interviewed in person, in a private room; the other five participants were interviewed over the Internet using Skype video chat. Ideally, all of the interviews would have been conducted in person. However, due to participants’ locations and conflicting schedules, I was not able to conduct interviews fact-to-face. There were certain advantages to both interview locations. For example, when meeting in person, both the participants and I had the benefits of being able to read one another’s body language. Additionally, I was able to arrange furniture and offer refreshments, creating a more casual, coffee-shop environment.

Communicating through Skype also had certain benefits, particularly given the personal nature of the topic. I believe that conducting interviews over the Internet provided a sense of comfort and control for the participants, most of whom chose to be interviewed from their bedrooms. Matt was the only participant who chose not to interview from his bedroom, opting instead for his kitchen (interview #1), the bathroom (interview #2), and the living room (focus group). Though I never asked Matt about his location choices, I presumed it had to do with the fact that he wanted to make pizza (during interview #1), he wanted privacy from his roommate and their visiting friends to discuss sensitive topics (interview #2) and that he lived in an

apartment and had more choice of rooms than, for example, participants who lived in dormitories or with their parents.

Table 5

*Types and Purposes of Technology Used in Study*

Item / Brand	Classification / Description	Purpose
Hardware		
Kodak Zi8	Digital Video Recorder	Record Interviews
Zoom Handy Recorder H2	Digital Audio Recorder	Record Interviews
MacBook Pro	Laptop Computer	Storage, Analysis, Writing of Study
SD Card	Digital Storage	Used in audio and video recorder
LaCie Rugged Triple 1T	External Storage	Backup Data and Software of Study
Software		
HyperTranscribe	Transcription Software	Transcribe interviews
HyperResearch	Qualitative Data Analysis Software	Storage, Coding, Analysis of Data
Microsoft Word	Word Processing	Word Processing
Numbers for Mac	Spreadsheet Software	Organize Participant Information
M+Box	University of Michigan implementation of Box.com's Cloud collaboration and storage service.	Storage of all study files
Skype	Internet-based Text, Voice, and Video communication service	Interview Participants
Zotero	Open-source reference management software	Organize and store study resources

An advantage of conducting the interviews over Skype was that participants were immediately able to grab a picture or an item pertaining to our conversation from their bedrooms. Occasionally, participants pulled up recordings and digital files to share with me, taking advantage of Skype's "share screen" feature. Of course, both interview formats had disadvantages. For example, participants interviewed in person could not help but be aware of the audio and video recording devices. When talking over Skype, a roommate would occasionally walk into the room, creating a few minutes of awkward conversation until they left.

During the first interview, I guided our discussion around the following areas:

- descriptions of participant's home(s), schools, and community growing up (i.e. elementary through high school);
- past music making experiences;
- how participant became interested in and started making music;

- how participant came to understand and identify their sexual orientation and/or gender identity;
- coming out experiences and others' reactions to their coming out.

The second round of interviews explored participants' current experiences. Prior to the interviews, I asked the participants to send me a video recording of them actively making music. They were told that their music making could take any form: a practice session; a live performance; solo or ensemble; classical, rock, rap, composing, arranging; the music type was to be whatever they felt represented of their current musical ventures. Pellegrino (2014) identifies three types of data collected from music making: (a) process-of-music-making data; (b) product-of-music-making data; and (c) meanings-of-music-making data. The purpose of meanings-of-music-making data is "to derive the meanings participants make of the music-making in the moment" (Pellegrino, 2014, p. 314). Watching the participants make music, and the participants watching themselves, acted as a catalyst for discussion during the interviews. While watching the videos together, I posed questions and observations about their ways of communicating, their feelings while playing, or memories that arose. Data included transcripts of the audio and video recordings as well as written descriptions of participants' physical reactions to making music, as captured by video recordings.

Participants were asked to upload their videos, or a link to their videos, to a password-protected folder online. Participants had their own folders through M+Box sponsored and run through the University of Michigan. Two participants prepared videos before the interview, two shared videos during the interview, and one sent me a video through email after the second interview. Only one participant, Katie, was able to negotiate M+Box's interface. The other participant, Sam, obtained a video prior to the interview and was confused by the "upload file" link M+Box shared in an email. It seemed that M+Box required users to create an account using their own email addresses, in order to share files. This was confusing for Sam who had never used a cloud-based file-sharing platform. The remaining participants explained that they felt overcommitted and either forgot to prepare a video ahead of time or were "computer-challenged" and did not want to take the time to figure out how to use the software.

The purpose of the video observations was to witness participants' actively making music and, depending on the situation, interacting musically and socially with others. I took written notes during this period and wrote about my experiences and observations following each observation. The notes were then transferred to a researcher journal.

The interviews used a semi-structured format (Merriam, 2009): “This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic,” (p. 90). Though semi-structured in design, I worked to create a laid-back, conversational atmosphere. I used the same interview protocol for all participants during the first interview (Appendix E), each lasting between 45 minutes and one-hour and 45 minutes. The structure of round two interviews was generally as follows:

- observe music making video together, allowing participant to speak freely about whatever came to mind;
- ask questions about what I observed in the video;
- ask follow-up questions I had after reviewing the transcripts from the first interview;
- follow round two interview protocol, modified for each participant.

For the third round of interviews, I asked participants if they would be interested in having a virtual focus group interview instead of individual interviews. My reasoning was that, during individual interviews, participants often talked about feeling isolated from other queer individuals, especially those with a shared interest in music making. I wanted participants to have the opportunity to share common experiences and connect with each other, should they wish to communicate outside of the study. All participants agreed to the change of interview style.

During the focus group (see Appendix G for interview protocol), I asked participants to reflect on the meanings of their experiences as musicians and as members of the sexual and gender minority community, specifically, how they made sense of these two aspects of their identity. Additionally, I asked participants to choose a piece or song that best represented them. Participants shared links to audio or video files found online and shared excerpts of their chosen music with each other.

All interviews were audio and video recorded and transcribed. I transcribed five of the interviews using HyperResearch. I transcribed one interview for each participant. The remaining six interviews were transcribed by a transcription service recommended by a faculty member at the University of Michigan. Data included verbal responses gathered during the interviews plus any artifacts the participants shared (e.g. pictures, recordings, journals, etc.). The recording of additional participant artifacts is further discussed in the next section.

**Participant artifacts.** Participants were encouraged to share any items of personal significance that related to the study’s purpose. In addition to the above-mentioned video

recordings, participants shared the following:

- a college entrance essay, a poem for a scholarship application, and a typed speech, all on the participants' experiences as a sexual minority;
- a digital journal;
- a college term paper;
- self-composed song lyrics;
- pictures of participant artwork.

All of the artifacts were mentioned during interviews and some were shared in the moment electronically through email or Skype messenger. Other artifacts were sent to me through email or a cloud-based file sharing service. The artifacts were stored in the corresponding M+Box folders that I created for each participant. I then analyzed the artifacts using the software HyperResearch.

**Communication log.** I encouraged participants to communicate with me when thoughts or questions relating to the study arose. I shared my email and cell phone number for participants to email, text, or call me. I then compiled these various forms of communication into a database to allow me to sort them by date, topic, or participant and analyze for content (Schreier, 2012). The database was also stored within a M+Box secure, online folder.

**Researcher journal.** To help organize this study and create the guiding question, I documented my thoughts in a typewritten journal that I stored in M+Box. Sometimes I wrote notes on random pieces of paper or in paper notebooks; these writings I later transferred to the typed journal. Additionally, I used my phone to audio recorded my verbal thoughts and self-dialogue. These thoughts were also transcribed and added to my journal.

## **Analysis**

There were three stages of analysis guided primarily by Thomas (2011a). In the first stage, I analyzed each case, individually. Specifically, following the first round of interviews, I either transcribed the interviews using the software HyperTranscribe or I used a transcription service to transcribe the interviews. For the interviews that were transcribed by someone else, I listened to each interview while reading the transcript to correct any errors and make note of any voice inflection changes. Then, I read through the transcripts and made note of any possible statements that could become a code. I did this for each participant, making sure not to compare the participants to each other, but to look at their stories as individual cases. After I went through and made notes on each transcript, I created a mind map that showed all of the possible ideas and started to group them together so that I could see if there were any commonalities. After



combining similarly worded subjects and eliminating others that did not seem important to the participants' overall stories, there remained 85 different subjects (Appendix H). Needless to say, I felt overwhelmed with the number of possible codes. My solution was to use the six main categories from the mind map (Music, Queer, Religion/Faith, Community, Race/Ethnicity/Family Heritage, and Identity) to code the first round of interviews. I used HyperResearch to identify the codes within the transcripts and music videos.

During this time, I completed the second round of interviews. Like the first round, I transcribed – or used a transcription service – the interviews. I repeated the process of reading the interviews individually, noting seemingly important statements. However, I found that I did not need to create any additional subjects aside from two: “say it through music” and “acting/character portrayal.” I updated the original mind-map to include these subjects and then coded the transcripts using the same six categories as before.

Next, I read the interviews separately as well as collectively, but by category (e.g. read all the references of “music” for each participant). From there, using my purpose and research questions as a guide, I further narrowed down the categories into three (Music Activities, Queer, Roles of Music Making), but expanded the number of specific codes to include some of the subjects from my original mind map (i.e. Appendix H). The final coding structure can be seen in Appendix I.

Finally, I created a mind-map for each participant, organizing and depicting the codes as they were in the final coding structure (see Appendices J - N). I read through each participant's set of transcripts while analyzing their mind-map of findings; I did this several times. From this analysis, themes emerged that allowed me to write a character profile for each participant.

In stage two, I conducted a cross-case analysis in light of the common phenomenon (i.e. the object) using examples gathered from the single-case analyses. Specifically, I compiled all the themes derived from the analyses of individuals. Then, I read through the transcripts and looked for examples of each theme, noting instances of common themes among the participants.

### **Trustworthiness**

**Triangulation.** Data collection triangulation was accomplished through the collection and use of multiple types of data: two individual interviews per participant, a focus group interview, participant artifacts (see p. 54), researcher's journal, and participant communications with the researcher.

**Member check.** I included participants in the processes of data collection, analysis, and review as often as they were willing. Areas for participant input and discussion included reviewing transcripts of their interviews, discussing themes as I noticed them, and reviewing parts of the final manuscript that directly pertained to them.

**Peer review.** Peer review is “discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). Merriam (2009) recommends using peer review as a strategy to promote validity and reliability. I regularly spoke with my dissertation chair and experts within the field of music education throughout the dissertation process as a form of peer review. Pseudonyms were used when sharing excerpts from the study document or discussing analysis with colleagues.

**Declaration of assumptions.** Merriam (2009) wrote about the importance of explaining any biases and assumptions the investigator may have regarding the research. Merriam calls on the researcher to “articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study at hand” (p. 219). In Chapter I, I described reflection exercises that I used to help me clarify my assumptions, experiences, worldview, and personal orientation pertaining to this study’s subject. Additionally, I attempted to articulate my past experiences in Chapter I through the narration of how I developed this study.

### **Organization of Findings**

Findings are presented in Chapters IV, V, and VI. In Chapter IV, participants are introduced through individual narratives drawing from single-case analysis of interview transcripts. Chapter V presents findings from data pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity and Chapter VI presents findings about the roles of music making in participants’ lives as members of the sexual and gender minority population. Findings are presented through in-depth portrayals of participants’ experiences that best exemplify the findings. In Chapter IV, findings are presented based on alphabetical order of the participants’ pseudonyms. Chapters V and VI stray from this order and findings are presented in thematic order within the context of related literature. Chapter VII includes the summary, conclusion, and suggestions for future research and teaching practice.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Participant Profiles**

Chapter IV provides participant profiles based on the individual case analyses. Each section begins with a brief description of the participant based on my personal observations and notes made from interviews, interview transcripts, and video recorded data. The next section contains narratives of how the participants came to music and music making and descriptions of their self-discoveries as sexual and gendered or agendered individuals, culminating with their coming out stories. I feel that these three parts - beginning music making, sexual orientation and gender/agender self-discovery, and personal and public identification – will help readers better understand the realities of the participants. Finally, I will conclude the chapter with a summary of participants’ musical activities to provide a basis for discussion in Chapter V of the roles of music making in participants’ lives.

Because there is so little literature on the experiences of young adult musicians within the sexual and gender minority communities, a secondary purpose of this chapter is to share the experiences and stories of these individuals described in an honest and authentic way so that readers may begin to understand the day-to-day and musical realities of young people who are part of the sexual and gender minority population. These five participants - Andres, Emily, Katie, Matt, and Sam – bravely confided in me such personal and delicate memories. In order to authentically depict their experiences, I reconstructed their stories using their words taken directly from interview transcripts. Though this study is not narrative in design, my intent in presenting aspects of the participants’ stories in narrative form is to allow space for readers to question, interpret, and draw their own conclusions; an element that is common to narrative inquiry (Staffer, 2014). As conversations often do, our interview discussions jumped around time and topics. Therefore, the only modifications I made to their narratives were to organize the stories into an order that made sense, from a reader’s viewpoint, and created a context for discussion in subsequent chapters. In some occasions, when participants spoke with such enthusiasm that they would leave out words, I filled in the blanks. Participant introductions are

written from the researcher point of view and are italicized to contrast the first person, non-italicized narratives of the participants.

### **Andres**

*When I first met Andres, he was dressed in dark skinny jeans, a button down black-cotton shirt adorned with ivory flowers, darn horn-rimmed glasses, brown leather loafers, and carried a stylish, brown leather tote bag. I found Andres to be a soft-spoken, reflective, sensitive, and intelligent young man. When I asked a question, he took time to quietly think of his answers before speaking. At times, Andres' mannerisms could seem insecure (e.g. burying his face in his hands or casting downward glances). Other times, he seemed unapologetically confident, especially when describing his beliefs and feelings. Here was a man, in my opinion, so comfortable with himself that he appeared naturally stylish and cool.*

*Talking with Andres was easy, even though his stories were often difficult. Coming to terms with his sexual orientation, and helping his mother come to terms with it, was a long and painful journey for Andres, who often credits music making for keeping him "sane" during this time. We begin his story with his discovery of music and the violin.*

### **Moving**

My parents and I moved from Puerto Rico to the United States when I was five. Basically, I've lived here my whole life, though I do consider Puerto Rico and being Puerto Rican very much a part of my identity. That's probably because my home and family life was sort of a "satellite" Puerto Rico. For one thing, my parents wouldn't let me speak English in the house, you know, to keep the Spanish going. But overall, my parents are very Americanized.

### **Starting Music**

Soon after we arrived, my parents began taking me to orchestra concerts and outdoor music events. The reason for that was because anytime we would go to the store, I would want to go to the toy section, obviously, but I would always find the instruments and just make noise! We had a friend who played piano and she would sit me down next to her while she played and I would keep time. So they thought, "OK, well let's try taking him to the theater. Well, maybe an outdoor theater, that way, if he gets rambunctious we can leave." But, it was totally the opposite experience: I didn't care as much about what was happening on the stage, but rather what was going on in the pit. So those signs led my parents to enroll me in music lessons.

Originally, they were going to put me in piano, but the piano teacher recommended violin after hearing about our family history. See, my mother, though not a musician herself, comes from a family of musicians, at least on her father's side. My grandfather and great grandmother were violinists. My grandfather was in the Vienna Philharmonic, but they left Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to escape the Jewish persecution. And so, after relating that story to the piano teacher, she said, "Oh, no; he needs to be in violin. It'll work." And it did.

So I started violin lessons with a very stern Ukrainian woman, who I still adore. I remember my lessons very well. I was a very fidgety six or seven year old and I remember my teacher would say, "No dancing! This is no dancing class!" I took lessons very seriously, though. For example, every violin or viola student goes through the "bent, 'pancake' wrist at the back of the instrument neck" stage. I remember my teacher threatening to put a nail on the neck of the violin so that any time my wrist collapsed, I would get poked by the nail. And I remember my mother saying, "OK," basically egging her on. I took it so seriously; from then on, I had a perfect left wrist position.

I also remember group lessons and recitals. I loved being on stage. I hated practicing, but loved performing to the point where I'd keep repeating the piece over and over. Once, my mother had to take me off the stage so that I would stop playing.

### **Family Dynamics**

When I was eight or nine years old, third grade about, my dad came out as gay and my parents divorced. At first, I didn't know that his sexual orientation was the cause. It was probably a year after the divorce that I learned about his sexual orientation, but I had wondered. You see, my mother and her mother didn't do very much to hide the hard feelings, to put it lightly, that my mother had towards my father and his sexuality.

We moved into a new house in the same school district, but I attended a new school for fourth and fifth grade. At the time, my mother had primary custody of me, but I went between our houses. Then, my mother remarried and we moved about 30 miles south. I went to a public school there, then a religious school, and then back to a different public school before going to high school. You see, my mother is a Jewish heritage but she disassociated herself from observing any sort of Jewish traditions or holidays, so I don't really remember religion being a part of my everyday life when my parents were together. Religion became important for my mother again after the divorce and after moving away from her family. She converted and is

pretty much Baptist. She's very evangelical. So when my dad came out, my mother spoke openly about my dad and religion and all that. I took to heart was being said to me. I believed what she was saying. I grew very resentful towards my father, for a while.

### **Coming Out**

I can't really describe a moment when I knew about my sexuality. I had been bullied in elementary and middle school before coming out because everyone else seemed to know before I did. I came out when Myspace was still a thing. I was in sixth grade and Myspace was a place where I could explore that part of myself. It was a kind of diary, a space that I could decorate, have my favorite classical pieces play in the background, write little descriptions of myself - the way I wanted to see myself. I guess I was living virtually, but without fear: without fear of my mother seeing. Once, though, I didn't log out.

While I was away at youth group, my mother saw the Myspace page. When she picked me up she said, "We need to speak to the pastor." Oh, I knew; I knew what it was about. So, the first conversation about coming out didn't happen one-on-one with my mother, it happened one-on-two with this religious leader and my mother. It was terrifying. I was so scared. I tried to be cool and advocate for myself. I didn't cower away and I wasn't apologetic in the moment, which I think made it harder for my mom.

The next day, I called my dad from school and told him, "I need to talk to you." He was like, "Oh, about what?" Then I said, "Oh, I can't tell you over the phone...it has to be in person." That's when he knew it was something big. I think, of course, he already knew about me. So, he got off work, drove down, and picked me up from school. We talked about it; he was totally OK with it, of course.

### **Aftermath**

Soon after I came out, my mother made a couple of changes to correct certain *tendencies*. Needless to say, it didn't work. The first change involved changing schools: I moved from public school to a private religious school. Up until this point, I had been in school orchestra, but at the private school, there was no orchestra; there was, however, a band. The band teacher was very, very nice and would let me practice violin during band rehearsal. They didn't have a substantial program and I was far beyond the other students, so I would just practice on my own. I did region contests on violin and I played in the marching band. That was so...God, that was terrible! In the beginning, they had me actually go onto the field with my violin, which was just

the most *ridiculous* thing, in retrospect. Later, I was reduced to playing percussion, marimba or snare drum...it just felt so *wrong*!

Around this time, my mother also sent me to reparative therapy. The sessions took place about twice a month in a small room within this huge mega-church with two “ex-gay” men. It wasn’t ever any sort of yelling or electroshock therapy; they were very diplomatic. It was more like a counseling session where they would ask me a series of questions about where I attributed my same-sex attraction; they called it SSA, like a disorder. Even at that age, I knew it was ridiculous and that no god had anything to do with my sexuality. Just asking a 13 or 14 year-old to rationalize sexuality in not only a psychological, but also a religious context – it was just ridiculous! My mother wanted to take me to a conference called “Love Won Out” that was started by Exodus when Exodus International was still a thing, you know, before the head of it came out. That didn’t end up happening, although, I don’t remember why; I think my dad may have had something to do with that. My dad and I both spoke out against these reparative sessions to my mother. I think my dad may have even threatened to sue because my mother definitely stopped the sessions. We moved to going to Christian family therapy, my mother, her husband, and myself in family therapy; of course, it still had an element of ex-gay.

People say that homosexuality isn’t a choice. But there *is* a choice to be made: whether or not you’re going to own up and live out. And I chose to live out. I think my coming out experience just magnified the divorce, for both my dad and mother. It put them at odds against each other in terrible ways, and eventually it ended up in a custody battle where I decided to leave my mother and her husband because of the abuse.

### **Music Making as Refuge**

It was tough, after the divorce. I don't even remember how my mother and I adjusted. I remember still having to go back for the weekend, and that just being so *weird*, to see my mom, just for the weekend, as I had been seeing my dad for so many years. At that time, I was having lessons on the weekend, so my mom was still taking me to lessons. And I still had youth orchestra on Sundays. Music was pretty much the only stable thing throughout my life. I remember the feeling of like everything falling apart, but at least in orchestra, nobody knows what's going on; I can forget about things and just think about music. I could face condemnation from both my mother and her god, but no one could deny me music.

Orchestra was very good for me because nothing mattered in that space but the music making. It wasn't a place where I had to feel responsible for being out or being closed. Music had definitely been a rock in my life, to just deal with things. I don't want to say "coping mechanism" because it wasn't conscious...maybe it was a coping mechanism, but I wasn't aware of it. Yeah, music has definitely been playing in the background, if you will, for my entire life.

*Near the end of middle school, Andres' father took him to audition for a performing arts public high school magnet program (PAHS). Soon after he started attending PAHS, Andres' father was awarded custody and Andres moved in with him and his partner. Andres still spent part of his week at his mother's and step-father's house, but his "home" was now at his dad's.*

### **High School**

PAHS has a history of being very welcoming towards lesbian and gay students. It's just a part of the school culture and it has been, in that regard, ahead of schools for decades. The school was founded originally as a means for moving desegregation along within schools and having art be a common denominator. And that just extended, eventually, into being open about sexual orientation. I think what sets PAHS apart from other high schools is that everyone is there to work at art. Apart from being just a high school student, there is a respect for individual expression within the art form, and art is an expression of self. So, I think that just fostered a place for people to be more open about themselves. It was just part of everyday: from orchestra to being a leader in the gender and sexuality alliance, or being in the classroom and voicing an opinion. So, in a way, it's not a limiting place, at all. I mean that doesn't go for everyone in the school. It is, after all, still high school. There's just a different...I don't know, I'm really fortunate to have had that environment.

### **Emily**

*At the time of data collection, Emily was 18 and beginning her freshman year in college. Emily was bright, upbeat yet laidback, friendly, and casual. Our interviews took place over Skype, normally with Emily relaxing in a sweatshirt, sitting at a desk in her dorm room, and drinking a smoothie. She was thoughtful and candid with her responses; during our first interview, I remember thinking to myself, "Was I this reflective and poised as a college freshman?" In high school, Emily was a model student: a section leader in band, in the pep band, class president, in National Honor Society, played sports, was homecoming queen, and volunteered in the community. Attending college several hours from home provided Emily with*



*needed space and anonymity to figure out several parts of her identity (i.e. faith, sexual orientation, career, etc.), of which she mentioned throughout our interviews. Emily begins her story with descriptions of her musical family.*

### **It's All in the Family**

I come from a musical family. My mom grew up playing the piano; actually, was she was the organist at her church since she was 11. I think a big link to her and the church is music. She was in church choirs growing up and she was the music director at several churches. You can tell when she's having a rough time; like when she hears bad news, she'll go and play the piano and she'll sing the songs from church that she loves. My dad plays the good ole banjo and my sister studies music education in college. Her primary instrument is piano but she played percussion in high school and is currently in the percussion studio. She's two years older than me and was actually drum major in high school while I was in the marching band. I never auditioned for drum major, I didn't think it'd be a good fit for me. I love playing my trumpet. I love my section and I wanted to be section leader, so I never auditioned. Plus, I didn't want the complication of people assuming that if I did audition and get drum major that it was because my sister had also been drum major. We're close, definitely. Ever since I was little, my sister and I would always have our little instruments. We had this big bin of little toy instruments and we'd bring them on car trips and just hit and play things in the back seat. My parents were very patient.

### **In the Beginning**

I think it was kindergarten when I started playing piano; I took lessons through eighth grade. I also started taking guitar lessons around third or fourth grade. I was really obsessed; I wanted to be a rock star, which probably sixty-percent of elementary students do. I just thought it was *so* cool. I begged for lessons. I was like, "Mom, please! It'd be so cool!" They got me, initially, a cheap *First Act* electric guitar for Christmas. I was so excited that I called my grandma on the phone, who I hardly talked to, and I played my electric guitar for her. I just played a bunch of power chords because that's really all I knew. I was like "It sounds so sweet with the amp. It sounds really legit!" Later, I would always save money and go on Craigslist and buy more guitars. I had three or four at one point. I sold one of them this summer and I have an electric at home that I really love. I also have one here. I always knew that the guitar was such a cool instrument to play; in my fourth grade mind that's all that mattered, and I'm glad because I love it now.

I started trumpet in fourth grade, the year before we chose instruments for school music. When I was younger, I would sit and pretend to play the trumpet while listening to music, all the time. When it came time to choose an instrument, my parents were like, “Are you sure you don’t want to do percussion like your sister? Or maybe the saxophone; the saxophone’s really cool!” But I was like, “Oh, no! I want to play the trumpet!” So I started taking private lessons the year before band started in school. I took lessons through my freshman year of high school. Once I realized that I didn’t want to go into music in college, though, I stopped taking lessons. I kind of do things all-in or nothing; if I was going to pursue the trumpet, I was going to do it one hundred-percent. But even though I decided I wasn’t going to pursue a career in music, it didn’t make me lose my passion for also being *good* in high school. I still wanted to maintain first chair; so I did. I still practiced and I still worked at it, but the amount I would’ve worked at it if I had wanted to pursue a career would have been much higher than what I did. But I wasn’t about to drop it, because I loved it. I loved the atmosphere; I just love playing, so much. I love how I feel when I play and I love the people it involved. I love my director. There’s just so much good associated with it that I was not about to drop it.

### **On Being Gay**

I hadn’t even heard the word “gay” until I was in junior high, and then it was just as a negative statement; I really didn’t understand what it meant. I didn’t start to question my sexual orientation until my junior year of high school. Of course, in retrospect, there were signs. Recently, I found a journal that I had kept for a period during my freshman year. It was buried in a box that I brought to college. There was a sentence in it that said something like, “Gabe asked me out and then I said ‘no’ because I like him as a friend, but I don’t feel attracted to him any more.” It’s really funny because I thought, “Well, that’s the beginning! There it goes.” But I didn’t connect the dots, back then.

I distinctly remember having a sleepover with some of my friends in the third grade and being asked who I liked, meaning boys. I remember opening the yearbook and flipping through the pages and thinking, “OK, who am I going to choose to pretend I like this time?” And that didn’t even seem weird to me! Looking back, a lot of my female friends were obsessed with guys and always had crushes on guys, but I feel like I never had that. It was kind of pretend, fake excitement, for me. I thought everybody else felt the same way as I did, but that they were all

really dramatic. It hasn't been until the past few years, and then looking back, that I kind of get it.

My junior year of high school, I would watch a bunch of coming out videos on YouTube and get really emotional. I'd think, "This is normal, right?" They were emotional videos, of course I'd feel something, right? But then I was like, "Oh, shit; does this mean I'm gay?!" And I always felt a deep connection with people like Rachel Maddow on the Rachel Maddow Show. I'd think "Hell, yes! A gay woman!" Or I'd think things like, "Oh, a gay person already did that, so I wouldn't be the first one. Wait – I'm a gay person?" It was really, really weird. Very Freudian.

### **Identifying as \_\_\_\_\_**

The first person I came out to was my friend Addison. I didn't even say I was gay; I thought I was bi, for a while. When I told Addie, I cried and told her, "I don't think I'm straight." I don't really know why I said that. I identify as gay, but sometimes it's more complex than that. When my friends ask me, sometimes I'll say that I'm 75-percent gay; that's how I explain it to them. I'm still not 100-percent gay, but I'd never be in a relationship with a guy. Once in a while I'm attracted to guys, a little bit, but I have no urge to date a man and have any romantic involvement with them; if I'm attracted, it's purely physical and it's fleeting. So, I don't really know what a proper way is to identify that is. I think the identity I most strongly identify with is "gay."

I came out to my parents after telling a couple of friends. At first I only told a few people. Then they started to ask, "Is it okay to tell people? Is this a secret?" I was like, "It's not really a secret, I'm just starting to figure it out." The information kind of slowly seeped out. So after I told a few friends, I wrote a note to my parents and handed it to them before school; like, I gave it to them as I was walking out the door. I thought my mom would text me during the day and say something like, "It's OK. We love you!" My parents have always been politically progressive and pretty liberal, so even though it'd still be uncomfortable to tell them, in my heart I knew it would be ok; they weren't going to kick me out or anything extreme. Because, if there was that risk, maybe I wouldn't have told them. But she didn't text me! So I was driving around, after school, and texted her, "Is it OK to come home?" She said, "Yes. Of course." She just wanted to wait until she could see me in person. When I got home, she gave me a hug. We both cried and talked. It was fine. There were quite a few more occasions where we had to talk things

out; my parents had questions and wanted to understand. A few of the times, though, were really frustrating. One time, my dad printed out an article (my parents are both psychologists):

Emily's Dad: It's hard to know your sexuality until you're 20. A lot of people change their sexuality.

Emily: Yes, sexuality is fluid, but I still can come out as whatever I'm feeling, right *now*. Even though I don't think it's going to be fluid for me, because it hasn't. I've known something's been up all while growing up, I just didn't really understand what it was.

It was really frustrating, but they came around. Now my dad will send me selfies of him with his rainbow-pride mug, which he proudly keeps on his desk at work.

### **Katie**

*The first time I met Katie, she greeted me with a big smile and upbeat chitchat. Katie was agreeable to being interviewed and enthusiastically shared stories, talking faster than I had ever heard. At the time of the study, Katie was in her fourth year of college studying chemistry and German, though she was still a very active musician. She was the executive producer of her college marching band, which meant that she designed the half-time marching shows, wrote the narrative scripts for the announcers, and played in the shows. She also played classical piano and created arrangements of popular songs for piano. Though she came off as self-confident and secure about her identity, she would negatively describe herself as distracted, stubborn, compulsive, or uncreative. Despite her self-perceptions, Katie was generous of spirit, especially towards her younger brother, whom she often talked about. Her story begins with Katie and her two brothers choosing an instrument to study.*

### **Starting Instruments**

So both of my parents are, well, they're not professional musicians, but they definitely have a strong music background. My dad is a trombone player. He played in the community church orchestra and occasionally plays valve trombone for special things. My mom actually was a music major for oboe and played saxophone in the marching band, but then switched over to German studies and she's now a German professor. So, right before 3rd grade, my older brother, my younger brother, and I got to pick an instrument. Dad had showed us all the instruments and he introduced us to the fellow instrument players in his orchestra. There were just so many just fantastic sounding trumpet parts! So, my parents were like, "Go pick an instrument, any instrument." I knew I wanted to play trumpet and was like, "I like this one." So I picked "that one," the trumpet.

At the time, my mom played in a hand bell choir at the church that we went to, and one of the fellow players was a retired band director. She was *really* awesome and said, "Oh, I'll give your kids private lessons." She was super upbeat, lots of energy, which was kind of what I needed because I was a very rambunctious child. She was great!

My dad always plays Canadian Brass whenever it's Christmas. So when I first started playing trumpet, I was like, "Oh, I sound horrible!" Because all I had heard was the Canadian Brass. So my teacher showed me mouthpiece exercises and how to slur notes up and down to get the proper pitches and sound quality - lots of exercises like that. And we had those Essential Elements books. I would always want to go onto the next song, but she'd say, "No, no. You have to get this one correct, first!" So, the first couple weeks it was, you know, learning notes. But then, the third page had *a* song! I already knew how to play rhythms and to read music because of piano and chime camp. I started piano when I was five and when I was six I went to my first chime camp through our church. So I knew how to play, how to do rhythms, and how to read music.

### **Musical Challenges**

I took piano lessons up until ninth grade and I did piano competitions in middle school, ninth grade and tenth grade. And I really took pride in beating my siblings, 'cause we were really competitive. I didn't realize this until after I stopped taking lessons; all of my music teachers have pushed me to do harder things than I think I can do. I really enjoyed the fact that I kept playing these challenging pieces! I got a little bored with classical, though, so we had Scott Joplin come in. I stopped taking piano lessons in tenth grade because I broke three of my fingers in volleyball. My piano teacher got really mad and was like, "No!" and I stopped taking piano lessons; I wanted to do volleyball, instead.

I stopped taking trumpet lessons right before seventh grade. I was in a band program and I didn't really need them because I was first chair and I didn't really have time. Middle school band was boring. They were all learning how to play, so it was a waste of time. But then I joined the community orchestra at the church that my parents go to. That was actually fun! I arrived and they said, "Here's your music." I looked at it and I was like, "it's in the same key as my dad's." They said, "yeah, you have to transpose." I got to learn how to transpose in middle school. It was amazing!

One of my favorite things about playing in that group was definitely that everyone was different ages. I hated middle school band because they were all middle schoolers, and middle schoolers are horrible people. But with the adult group, it was cool because they let me call them by their first names; the music was harder and I could jump around parts. They started me off on third part, but then they were like, “Hey, play first part on this one to practice your upper notes.”

High school band was much better because they had three different bands. My two good friends from high school were in band with me and we hung out all the time. And we definitely got to play much better music. The band director was cool, too. The summers after freshman and sophomore year, I also did drum corps. I really enjoyed marching band, the concept of the artistry of movement with music. Corps was much more complex than high school marching band: it’s a longer show, you have to have the entire show memorized, you’re moving faster, and the music was fantastic. It was super difficult. I loved it!

I played mellophone in corps and I discovered that one of my favorite things is playing harmonies, if they’re really well written. I really enjoy making my part sound like it fits with the music. And one of the big things we practiced, all the time, was blending. It was a lot more paying attention to everyone else in the band. And because it’s a lot of strenuous activity, it was not only playing attention to “are you blending in with them,” but “how are they experiencing it? Are they doing OK? Are they experiencing the emotion?” And you get a sense of brotherhood and family from the corps; not like an ooey-goey, “let’s hear about your feelings,” but in a “I will support you through whatever.”

### **If I Had a Choice**

All of my friends had started dating in middle school and I was completely oblivious to anything. One of my friends asked, "Are you asexual?" And I was like, "No!" I'm not grossed by the idea of sexual contact, I just never really cared. I was too busy doing other things.

So, my senior year, my friends were talking about who they were taking to senior prom. I thought to myself, "Who *am* I going to take?" I had never thought about it! And then I thought, “*Why* am I not thinking about taking someone to prom?” That got me thinking about it and I thought to myself, “Well, who do I find attractive?” And then, after thinking about it, I was like, “But, that’s a girl. Wait...that’s a thing, isn’t it?” I think my only exposure to gay people at that age was seeing a movie with a gay person in it; it was Philadelphia with Tom Hanks. And, you know, sex ed in schools here is the whole don’t-have-sex-because-you’ll-get-pregnant-and-die

speech. Especially if you're a man, then it's "Don't have sex with a man because you'll get HIV and die." So with Philadelphia, I was like, "Ohhhhhh, gay - so that's what that is." Later, I was just trolling around [Tumblr](#) and I was like, "There's this whole world out there!" So now I generally identify as a lesbian because I don't really think about men as attractive human beings. I mean I've definitely experimented with men, so I guess someone could say I was bisexual, but I don't really care. If I had a choice, I'd pick a lady.

### **Coming Out**

I never told anyone in high school besides my two good friends. It was funny; I told my friends and one of them was like, "Yeah, I'm gay, by the way." So, then we had our whole bonding moment. The only other person I told was my little brother, Cole, and he was like, "Whatever." I never felt the need to tell my parents. I don't know, I didn't think about dating anyone; most of the time, I just forget that it's a thing.

I actually just came out of the closet to my parents last year while I was studying abroad in Germany. I was going to tell my parents as soon as I got back from Germany, but my little brother, Cole, decided to beat me to it. See, I came out to Cole about four years ago when I was in high school and he came out to me as transgender about six months before telling our parents. Originally, I was going to come out first and then Cole was going to come out in a couple of years so we could see our parents' reaction; because in their eyes, lesbianism is still not as - "bad's" the wrong word - as *new* as being trans. But that plan changed once Cole decided to tell them three years ahead of schedule!

I was in Germany and I got a text from Cole saying, "Can you have your GroupMe chat open in 30 minutes? I'm going to tell Mom and Dad." I was like, "Right now? What?!" So there we were, in an international group text conversation, with Cole coming out and Mom freaking out. She wasn't saying anything negative, more like bouncing from one extreme to another: "Did I do something?" to "Maybe she has a hormonal imbalance - we can fix that!" So when Mom asked if it would be easier for Cole to be a lesbian - keep in mind that Cole likes *boys* - I just reacted: "Mom, if you wanted a lesbian, I'm right here!" Her response was "OK?" I texted her on the side and I was like, "No, I was actually serious." She was like, "OK." I think there was just so much happening with Cole that Mom was just overwhelmed. It was good to overwhelm her with both things, though, so she couldn't focus on one.

When I came back from Germany we actually talked about it. We were watching HGTV on the couch and she was like:

Katie's Mom: So, about that comment you made...

Katie: Yes, Mom?

Katie's Mom: So, are you dating someone?

Katie: Yes

Katie's Mom: How'd you meet them?

So I told her about how we met in class and were friends for six months before I realized that I liked her. My mom has always said, "You want a guy with a good personality because that's more important than looks." So I told her I was demi-sexual and that I just don't see a woman and think, "Oh, I want to start dating her!" I knew she'd appreciate this term, demi-sexual, and sure enough: boom! She was like, "OK. I'm fine with that. As long as you're happy." I haven't told my grandma, but she's a racist, bigoted, old white lady. She'd freak out if I was dating a black guy and she'd freak out if I were dating a girl. The fact that I'm dating a black girl, right now; she'd probably have an aneurism and die!

### **Matt**

*It's hard to describe Matt without using the word "cool." When I first met Matt over Skype, I felt that he was guarded, waiting to see how much of himself he should share with me. He had dark, thick hair that either fell into eyes or stood straight on end if my Skype call woke him from a midday nap. Matt and I had already talked over the phone and through emails, so I knew a bit about him: I knew that he played guitar, had a band that was successful at the local level, and was beginning his first full-time year in music school. To a small, select group of individuals – of whom I felt privileged to belong – Matt also shared that he was transgender.*

*Matt had a decided "look:" words like dark, androgynous, pretty, and rock came to mind, as did artists like Freddy Mercury, Adam Lambert, and David Bowie. If I were Matt's age, I would not have felt cool enough to hang out with him. However, Matt was quick to smile and laugh, at which point our interview began to feel like a good conversation between two friends. Matt's story begins in Colombia with his description of popular media.*

### **Gender is Fluid**

I was born in Colombia in South America and lived there until I was about nine years old. My idea of gender was always kind of fluid because I grew up watching television. So, Colombia doesn't have their own animation TV; they license it from other countries. And most of the TV



that I watched was Japanese television, you know, like anime. Everyone in Colombia watches anime. Like, Dragon Ball plays on TV, so everyone in Colombia has seen Dragon Ball. My ideas of what men look like were very fluid because a lot of the men on TV seemed very effeminate. Women didn't really have a look, either. I didn't really think about it then, but I think that I heavily identified with these characters that were very gender non-conforming. My family also has very strong, very academic, not-stereotypical women; like, my mom's a neuroscientist. I don't know; I didn't really think about gender very much, growing up.

I moved to the US in the middle of fourth grade. Elementary school was good, but it was hard because I didn't actually speak any English before I came over. I had a hard time because of language, but I made friends pretty quick. It was cool; I had my little friends and I guess my main worry was language. You know, you weren't thinking in terms of gender; I don't even remember people having crushes on each other or anything! I remember that everyone just wanted to play. Everyone was very uniform. I really enjoyed that time.

### **Middle School (is a Hellhole)**

Middle school was like a hellhole from another planet: it was the worst! Cliques were developed and the ways you looked developed. I have very specific memories of people asking me out; it wasn't because they *liked* you, it was just a thing. People were *supposed* to have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, but it was totally fake and totally uncomfortable.

After three or four months of sixth grade I was like, "Wow, I feel like *not* myself. I feel really fake." I think in elementary school, I didn't really think about gender. Then, beginning of middle school, as soon as I got an idea of what I understood it as, I was like, "Alright, this is not right for me." I immediately told my mom and we sought out a therapist, who is this really cool person at the university. It took my mother about a year to completely process things. She didn't have a hard time understanding my previous kind of *lack* of gender ideas; it was funny, but when I was like nine or ten, she would use gender-neutral pronouns and say things like "my kid." So I think she just had a hard time thinking of me as a man. She was reluctant to get out of gender-neutral pronouns; it was like a different kind of gender transition, I think.

I asked all my middle school teachers to call me Matt and use male pronouns. Some were more cool than others. It was odd to me because my family was not reluctant about it, so it was odd that other adults that didn't really know me were. Yeah, that was like the worst time of my life, thus far: middle school! Some people were confused about my gender, what I was doing,

who I was, the music I liked; people just *did not* get me. That's when I turned to rock music. Only David Bowie got me.

### **A School's Reaction**

I didn't show up to most of middle school, or if I did, I would show up in pajamas. Part of it was because I didn't want to be there and part of it was that I would feel physically sick when I would get up in the morning. Once I hit puberty, I would get really, really sick, all the time. I don't think it was anything related to intersex, but whatever my hormones were supposed to be, they weren't. I'd have to go to the doctor's, like all the time. Then, once I started taking testosterone at a higher level, my hormones started to even out.

So I was sick all the time, my mom knew I hated school, and she kind of let me skip a lot of school. It's not like I was a terrible student, but I was the *idea* of a bad student. I think a lot of the teachers didn't understand why I wasn't showing up and didn't see my potential. They didn't realize that I'd taken and aced college courses; they just thought I didn't like to work. But I *hated* being there. I didn't really get picked on, but I got in mild fights; not physical fights, more like people would say something and then I'd get really angry and yell, "Fuck you!" So I would show up to school in my pajamas because that was the only way my mom could drag me out of the house.

This one day, I got sent to the principal's office. My principal and my first hour science teacher sat me down, looking all sad. They said:

School officials: All right, Matt. We understand you're having a really difficult situation with your parents and your siblings.

Matt: Uh, huh.

School officials: We know that your mom works a lot of jobs and you stay at home with your siblings, a lot. And we know it can be difficult and you're in a very difficult financial situation.

Keep in mind that I don't have any siblings: it's just me and my mom. And my mom's a neuroscientist with *one* job at the university. They basically told me that they thought my mom was like a maid or something, with like three jobs and could never be home. That's *obviously* why I didn't go to school, because I had to take care of my siblings. I just laughed at them and said, "No, I just don't show up 'cause I hate you." They didn't understand why I was uncomfortable, so they made up the whole idea. I didn't tell my mom about it until much later, so she couldn't really do much about it. When I did tell her, though, she laughed her ass off.

At the time, there wasn't any support; no GSA or anything. Our health teacher was very openly gay and I guess she was welcoming, but for some reason I remember thinking that she wouldn't understand what I was going through because maybe she only dealt with things related to people's sexuality. And I remember that teachers put up "safe space" stickers, but it was *so* not true. I think that people put up those stickers when they are like, "I am not a homophobic or transphobic person. And I'll mostly try to be respectful towards you." But when other kids are shitty to you, they don't do anything about it. Sometimes, teachers make up their minds that they are accepting people, but they don't realize that your role as an ally is more than just being "accepting." I think, as a teacher, you have to set an example, one hundred percent. And I think a lot of teachers didn't do that.

### **Beginning Music**

I definitely developed a severe passion for music when I was in middle school. I started taking guitar lessons when I was nine or ten, but I kind of took a break in middle school because I felt really off; I needed to figure out how I wanted to live my life. I started taking lessons on and off again when I was 12, but I didn't take lessons seriously until high school. In seventh, eighth, and ninth grade I focused really intensely on queer things because I wasn't understood by a lot of people in school. I felt like I was surrounded by people who did not understand what I was going through. I just wanted to talk to someone and there wasn't really anybody available; you kind of feel like an alien. So, I was just listening to music, I did art, and I played in orchestra.

I took music in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. I did orchestra and I played violin. I'm bummed, I should've kept playing; I was pretty good. I auditioned for summer music camp and they gave me full scholarships every single year. I always really liked orchestra. I *loved* playing violin; I just got so into it. I would like fucking thrash around with it. It was awesome, yeah. Playing the music felt kind of like you had a super power. I felt, towards the end, that I was *good* at it. I think it was one of the few things I probably enjoyed until the very end.

I think orchestra was one of the better places to be, because even though they didn't really get what was going on with me, everyone there was kind of nerdy and they got picked on anyway, so they weren't going to pick on me. Plus, there's not a lot of talking involved in orchestra. You can imagine what the orchestra looked like; it was funny because I was this super goth kid and then everyone else, well they were either like the super intense kids with super-

strict parents that forced them to play or they were really nerdy kids into like Pokemon. I don't know why I was there. I definitely stuck out like a sore thumb.

### **A Welcoming Environment = More Music Making**

My high school is the best high school in the world and someone can fight me about it! I used to run the QSA<sup>17</sup> there and the dean was very supportive of it. There was just a lot more support there and the teachers were *always* very on top of calling people out, one-hundred percent! As I got older, I also got more confident on calling people out for hate speech. The other thing is, later in high school they upped my testosterone dosage. I didn't have the everyday hassles of people being as confused by my gender. You don't even realize how much time that takes up and how draining that is, just the amount of time it takes them to process you. People didn't often misgender me, but you could tell they spent a long time trying to figure out how to think about you, trying not to offend you, being unsure of what to say. In a way, it was good, but in a way it was upsetting to think that upping my dosage and doing all that stuff did make my life so much easier because that (testosterone) wasn't so accessible to a lot of my friends. It just seemed shitty that *that* was the ultimate answer and it made me think, "Wow, some of my friends that are just gender nonconforming may never feel comfortable, for even like a little bit." My high school was not perfect, but it's definitely the best space that I found outside of a queer space in terms of dealing with that.

Unfortunately, I stopped playing violin because my high school didn't have an orchestra. The orchestra kids could go to a different high school, but it was a hassle to get there. They would give you bus tokens to walk to the fucking bus station, so that's like 15 minutes, and take a bus that takes 30 minutes to get to the other school. You'd always be late. All those kids would miss half of the day; it was not a solution. I remember thinking about that when I first went to high school. Then I was like, "Noooo...I shouldn't leave because my school's nice." It did not sound like a great idea, at the time.

I picked up guitar seriously again my sophomore year of high school. I went back to where I first took lessons and started up guitar lessons, voice lessons, and some piano lessons. I did jazz band my last year of high school. I should've done it earlier, but jazz didn't make sense to my ears, at all. I had no appreciation for it. Coming from a classical orchestra background, jazz sounded *crazy* to me! When I joined jazz band, the first half of my jazz band experience felt

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<sup>17</sup> Queer-Straight Alliance


painful. But once I kind of got it a little bit, I was like, "This is awesome! This is like some next level shit!" It was very freeing. Our teacher was amazing, very informative. I learned a lot about guitar; I didn't really know guitar that well before that, I was playing it very casually. I just understood a lot more about music and musicians from being in jazz band, and a lot of things started to click in my head.

### **Sam**

*Sam was a well-spoken, reflective, and cheerful junior in high school. Sam identified as agender and preferred "they," "them," and "their" pronouns. They come from a close, supportive family who supported Sam's gender and sexual orientation identities (Sam liked girls), and also used Sam's preferred pronouns. Sam played cello in school orchestra, though it was obvious that they preferred to sing in choir and school musicals, which Sam particularly enjoyed because it allowed them to use their acting skills.*

*Sam's interviews often ran the longest of all the participants. I attributed this to several factors: first, Sam talked very quickly; secondly, Sam used many analogies and personal examples to explain their views; and thirdly, being the youngest participant in the study, Sam was the least secure of their identity. Often Sam would present three or four possible answers to a posed question that could be answered with a "yes" or a "no." It was clear that Sam was actively thinking about, researching, and trying out various aspects of their identity. Sam begins their story by introducing us to their equally musical family members.*

### **It's All in the Family**

Our whole family is very musical. My mom sings; my dad sings, too. He also does a lot of theater. So, I guess we kind of grew up with that, all the time, like randomly singing. My family has this habit, especially me and my dad, where if somebody says something that reminds us of a song, we'll be singing (snaps fingers) just like that. I also have memories of writing random little songs and then singing them to my mom. I remember I'd been going to zoo school and learning about animals. So I wrote this song about how different animals were nocturnal or crepuscular; I really liked that word. It was like: "Roosters in the morning, owls at night. Bunny rabbits in the twilight." 

### **Elementary Music Instruction**

My older brother, David, played piano, so of course, you know I wanted to. My mom said I could start when I was five or six, so I started lessons when I was in kindergarten. My

teacher was pretty great; when I started, she also taught my mom, for a while. Daniel and I would have lessons at the same time; David would play piano while I did theory and then we'd switch and I'd play while he did theory.

Technically, we live outside of our school district, but my parents wanted us to go to [school] because it has a good music program. The elementary music teachers were all really great! You had your normal music classes where you did things like recorders, rhythms, and little bits of singing, things like that. There was also a choir that you could do after school and beyond that there was the honors choir that you could try out for; that was for all the elementary schools. If you were in honors choir, you would go over and practice at the junior high with everyone and the junior high choir director. Well, I always really liked singing and I always really liked music. I wanted to be in the choir because then I could sing more. Then, I wanted to try out for the honors choir. To me it was kind of a given because I just loved all this stuff that much already. So it was kind of like "well, of course I'm going to do choir!" So I did that in elementary school.

In fifth grade, when you get to choose an instrument, I think I had already decided I wanted to play cello because I'd seen it before and I'd heard it played. I liked the low notes and how smooth it was; I thought it was cool. I admit, I was one of those kids who was like, "Everybody chooses violin and I'm not going to do that." When you signed up for orchestra, they would have high schoolers there playing the instruments and helping people fit the instruments. You'd go and sit down and hold the instrument that you wanted to try out and they'd let you mess with it for a few minutes. Some of them would demonstrate and play some things. So I basically went in, looked at the cello, and I got fitted and just went for it. Everybody went home as soon as they got their new instruments and tried to play something. Then, when we got to class they were like, "Don't take out your bow because you're all holding it wrong." We all really desperately wanted to play with bows! We didn't realize how hard it was. Of course, it was kind of awful the first time we did. But, I knew at some point they were going to get to the part that I really liked about cello; sometime I'd be able to make it sound like that. And maybe I'm still not there, but I'm trying.

### **The Social Norms of Junior High**

I don't think anyone really likes junior high. I had a bunch of weird friends in seventh grade. Looking back on it, I would not like any of them now. Eighth grade was not fun; eighth

grade was really not great for me. That is when I started figuring out a lot of stuff about gender and sexuality.

Up until that point I never wanted to date anyone. When people in seventh and eighth grade started wanting to go out with people, I honestly thought everybody was faking it. I thought, for the longest time, that nobody actually wants to be in a relationship, they just do it because they think they have to. I honestly thought they were faking it because I just did not feel that way. When my friend asked to date me I was just sort of like, “Okay,” because she was a close friend of mine. I guess it’s kind of weird, but I’d never really thought about it. Up to that point, I hadn’t gone, “Yes, I like girls, I’m gay;” I hadn’t done that. So when my friend said that she wanted to date me, I was like, “Okay, that sounds good to me. Why not?” It was kind of a non-event.

So eighth grade was when that started happening. And on top of me figuring that stuff out, some problems were manifesting with my friends, sexuality, some mental illness, and things like that. Many of my friends were having problems with depression and anxiety. So when we were in a bad place, we started doing this and it got out of hand: we were self-harming. To be honest, I don’t know why I did it. I think it was kind of a coping mechanism. And once you start, it’s really hard to stop; it’s literally an addiction because your body produces chemicals to deal with pain. None of us really had a healthy support structure, at least not that we were turning to. You know, I had a good, healthy family life, but I wasn’t going to them.

### **Searching for Answers**

My eighth grade girlfriend introduced me to a specific blogging site that is basically a huge LGBT community. I’ve always enjoyed it because it’s one place where somebody can just go and tell you all this stuff, right out, like, “Yes, I’m this and this and this and this and this” and actually say it, for once. Like, you don’t walk up to someone and say, “Hi, I’m agender and bisexual and this and this and this,” you know? You don’t do that, most of the time; it’s kind of nice to be able to. The Internet isn’t perfect, but if you’re on there a lot you start seeing stuff. I’m firmly of the belief that if more people knew that this existed, transgender and non-binary people especially, then more people would be able to actually identify themselves. I feel like there are a lot of people who don’t know why they feel the way they do because they don’t know there is a possibility besides male and female.

So, being on the Internet a lot, I started seeing this possibility and after knowing it existed I could really think about it and realize that it did apply to me. Originally I wasn't using agender. At first I looked up things and was like, "Well, I don't totally feel like I can't be a girl; I don't completely feel like that." At the time I thought, "Well, do I really have a problem with having breasts? Do I mind all the time or just sometimes?" It progressed from that to, "Well, sometimes I want to buy a binder and sometimes I want to wear it, but I'm okay with it most of the time." At this point, I think I'm planning to get top surgery when I turn eighteen.

Originally, I saw the term gender-fluid and thought that might describe me, because sometimes I was more okay with being seen as a girl and presenting as a girl, than not. Eventually, it sort of progressed from that to less and less feeling female and more and more like I just didn't want a gender at all. I switched terms several times; for a while I was just saying non-binary or gender-queer or whatever. I had already seen the term agender by this point and eventually I was like, "I think that one is the one that best describes me right now."

### **Support Systems**

The summer after eighth grade I started going to a therapist. Somebody, one of my friends I think, ended up going to the school guidance counselor and telling them about some of the self-harm things I was doing. They're kind of required to do something, once they know, so they gave me a list of people to choose from and I had to start seeing a therapist. I kind of had to do it, but it was also a good thing.

That same summer, I started changing my name, outside of school. I was talking to a therapist and basically it got to the point where I was like, "Yeah, I need to ask my parents so they know I want to be called Sam." At the end of eighth grade, I would draw little pictures of myself and write Sam next to it because I was already thinking about it. I started writing it down and figuring out how it looked and sounded, and realized I wanted it to apply to me. I'd done all that thinking already, so at this point I was like, "Okay, now I have to tell my parents." So, my therapist and I brought my parents in and I told them that I wanted to go by Sam. Later, once they already knew about my gender, I started asking them to use the "they-them" pronouns. This is actually really recent; actually asking people to use the pronouns and not just thinking of them in my head. It took them awhile to get used to it, but they really did; they really got there, you know. I've been so impressed with them, to be honest, with them and my brother; they all really rose to the occasion. Yeah, I'm really lucky.



## **Musical Escapes**

When I'm in school, and during those times in junior high, there was choir and orchestra; those were classes that I looked forward to. Whatever else was going on, it was like, "Wow, I really love being in orchestra because I love my teacher and it's so much fun!" I don't know if I feel like music was connected to all of this and connected to my discovery, but it was definitely something that I enjoyed doing and so I kept it kind of separate from everything else going on.

## **Discussion**

The participants discussed several types of music making experiences of past and present. Emily's, Katie's, and Sam's parents were active musicians and either made music in front of them or musically interacted with them as children. Emily's mom played piano, guitar, and sang in church choirs, and her dad played the banjo. Katie's dad played trombone in a community orchestra and for different musical events. Her mom, a former music major in oboe performance, played saxophone in the marching band and hand bells in their church hand bell choir. Sam recalled oftentimes breaking into song with their mother, father, and brother, all of whom are singers.

Emily, Katie, and Sam all expressed a family appreciation for music making. Therefore, it was not surprising that they all began private piano instruction at age five. Emily and Katie continued their private piano study through eighth grade and Sam was still taking private lessons at the time of the study. Additionally, Emily and Katie took private lessons on secondary instruments. After dreams of becoming a "rock star," Emily was given her first guitar in fourth grade; and Katie's start on trumpet coincided with her two brothers, with her parents urging. Though their parents did not participate in music making activities, Andres' and Matt's parents encouraged their music education. Interestingly, both Andres and Matt began taking private lessons shortly after moving to the United States; Andres was age five and Matt was age 10.

All five participants participated in their respective schools' music programs. Emily, Matt, and Sam recalled choosing an instrument to learn in their school's instrumental music program in the fifth grade: Emily chose trumpet, Matt chose violin, and Sam chose cello. Andres and Emily also participated in their schools' programs, though not as beginners. Table 6 illustrates the musical activities in which the participants took part.

Table 6

*Music Making Experiences*

	Private Instruction	School-Based Music Activities	Outside School Music Activities
	<u>Instrument, Age of Study</u>	<u>Activity, Age of Study</u>	<u>Activity, Age of Study</u>
Andres	Violin: 5 - present	Orchestra: 11-12, 13-present Band: 12-13 Marching band: 12-13	Suzuki Group Violin Class: 5 - 11 Youth orchestra: 11-18 Outreach: 17-present
Emily	Piano: 5 – 14 Trumpet: 9 – 15 Guitar: 8 - 10	Band: 10-18 Marching band: 13 – 18 Pep Band: 14 - 18	Guitar: 9 – present Song writing: ? - present
Katie	Piano: 5 – 16 Trumpet: 7 - 12	Band: 11 - 18	Chime camp: 6 (camper) – high school (assistant) Hand bell choir: 6 - 18 Guitar: 19 - present Drum Corps: 16 - 18 Community orchestra: 11 - 18
Matt	Guitar: 9-10, 12-13, 15-18 Voice: 12-present Piano: 16	Orchestra: 10 – 14 Jazz Band: 17 - 18	Band (Rock ensemble): 18 – present Song writing: ? - present
Sam	Piano: 5 – present Harp: 15 – 16 Voice: 14 - present Cello: 10 - present	Choir: 10 - present Honor choir: 10 – present Orchestra: 10 - present	Ukulele: 15 - present

All participants valued their school and community music experiences. School music offered everyone something different to look forward to, a break in their otherwise stressful day. Andres and Matt knew that they were safe from harassment in their respective orchestras, while Emily, Katie, and Sam felt physical and emotional relief from playing and singing in their ensembles. Additionally, each participant had at least one teacher with whom they connected; Andres and Katie enjoyed working with their private lesson teachers, while Emily, Matt, and Sam valued their school music teachers, professionally and personally.

As participants gained music making skills (both instrument and voice), they enjoyed making music more. For example, Matt enjoyed playing his guitar after learning more about music theory and guitar technique. Similarly, Sam and Katie enjoyed their opportunities to make music with other talented musicians, especially when coupled with quality literature.

This chapter illustrated participants' discoveries of music making, coming to terms with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and coming out to family members through personal accounts. Findings were presented as first-person narratives to better portray

participants' personalities and allow readers to more easily connect with the participants. Chapter V will further explore participants' journeys of sexual orientation and gender identity development. Exploring these aspects of identity will provide the necessary context to understand the roles music making played in participants' lives, which is presented in Chapter VI. Chapter VII will conclude this study with a summary of findings and suggestions for research and practice.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

Chapter IV presented individual case findings through personal narratives about each study participant, using participants' words taken from transcripts of our audio and video recorded interviews. This chapter looks beyond individuals and illustrates common experiences of participants' journeys of self-discovery, exploration, and identification of sexual orientation and gender identity. Findings will be presented in the order in which participants experienced them, moving from childhood to the point of data collection. That being said, participants' experiences of sexual orientation or gender identity development did not move linearly, though several key experiences occurred at similar ages. When appropriate, findings will be examined in light of literature discussed in Chapter II. Chapter V will conclude with a discussion of select findings.

#### **Childhood**

From birth, most children are assigned the gender of male or female based on their genitalia. Repeatedly, children receive messages (overtly and subtly) from family members, media, religious leaders, school officials, peers, and others about how they should view themselves and behave. For some kids, these messages pass over their consciousness as they choose to focus on greater things of interest: "I really enjoyed climbing trees. So, if I wasn't inside figuring out how to read something, or breaking something, I was probably outside in a tree or practicing" (Katie, Interview #1). For Matt, moving to the United States and learning English were his main concerns: "I just remember everyone just wanted to play. I really enjoyed that time. I had a hard time because of language, but I made friends pretty quick and we were all on that whole train of, you know, 'we're just kids,'" (Interview #1).

Inevitably, children gain an awareness of differences between themselves and others. Emily remembered feeling different, but was not able to label those feelings:

I think when I was growing up, I knew something was weird about me. I didn't really understand what it was. I always had that kind of feeling, but I didn't know what it was

until I officially figured it out. I was like, “oh shoot, I’m gay” in my junior year. I was like, “that all makes sense now.” So it was kind of an internal feeling I had for a lot of the years that I couldn’t really put my finger on when I was young. (Interview #2)

For some, like Emily, the feeling was an unnamable sense of difference; for others, it was an awareness of social expectations:

In elementary school, when people were playing or that sort of thing, there was sort of this strict dichotomy that the kids just did themselves. It wasn't like anyone was telling us to do this: the girls would do certain things and the boys would do certain things, and I was under this impression that if I didn't want to do the girl things, then I just had to be a boy. I was like, ‘there's no other option!’ So if I don't want to be a girl and do these girl things, then I have to try and play flag football with the boys and be a boy, you know? I can't hangout with the girls because I don't want to be that...I mean, some of it was about what they were actually playing that I didn't want to do...it wasn't that I didn't *like* the girls, but it was like I didn't want to be associated with *that*, as a girl. So it was, ‘ok, the other option is *be a boy* as much as possible...even if I don't like it.’ (Sam, Interview #2)

In Sam’s mind, activities either determined *who* could take part in them or the appropriate way they should *portray* their gender; there was no gender or behavioral middle ground, at least not one perceived by Sam.

## Noticing

### Feeling Different

Awareness of differences, questioning thoughts, and self-reflection intensified for participants around the time of middle school (i.e. between the ages of 10 and 13). Social roles, especially concerning dating and relationships, started to change and be more clearly defined. For example, both Emily and Sam thought that their peers were pretending to have crushes or be interested in dating others. Sam recalled, “When people in seventh and eighth grade started wanting to go out with people, I honestly thought everybody was faking it. I thought, for the longest time, that nobody actually wants to be in a relationship, they just do it because they think they have to. I honestly thought they were faking it because I did not feel that way,” (Interview #1).

From a young age, Emily knew she was different from her friends, but did not understand what that feeling meant: “I definitely felt different, but I just didn't know it meant gay, what that was. I was like, ‘there's something a little weird here, but I'll forget about it, deny it,’” (Interview #2). For Katie and Andres, it seemed that others saw their “differences” before they began to think about it. Katie remembered that she, unlike her peers, did not think about or care about dating. Katie’s peers noticed her lack of interest; at one point, one of her friends asked if she was

asexual because she did not romantically show interest in others. Andres also remarked that others were aware of his differences: “I was the last to know that I was gay. Schoolmates were quick to label me; ‘sissy’, ‘faggot’, the works. Somehow, they had an innate clairvoyance that led them to those conclusions,” (College Essay).

### **Physical Changes**

Physical changes also prompted some participants to question their gender identity; such was the case for Sam:

I was *terrified* when I started [developing]. Part of it was just that I didn't know what was going on. But when I first started [developing], I was terrified because you can *feel* something. It scared the hell out of me! I had no idea what was going on. (Interview #2)

Dysphoria can lead to individuals - especially those who identify as transgender - altering their bodies to better match their feelings. Both Matt and Sam experienced dysphoria. Matt had the support of his mother, a psychologist, and an adolescent transgender social group soon after he came out as a boy. Because he had support, financially and emotionally, Matt was able to address certain aspects of his dysphoria with hormone therapy. His hormone therapy coincided with the natural changes that come with puberty. Later, he was able to have surgery to further alter aspects of himself that did not agree with his internal image. Matt felt discouraged that, because of his access to such things as hormone therapy, he experienced less discrimination than his friends who also identified as transgender and experienced dysphoria:

It was upsetting to think that upping my dosage and doing all that stuff did make my life so much easier, because that wasn't so accessible to a lot of my friends. And it just seemed shitty that that was the ultimate answer. And it made me think, ‘Wow, some of my friends that are just gender nonconforming may never feel comfortable, for even like a little bit.’ (Interview #1)

Sam’s feelings of dysphoria differed from Matt’s in that Sam did not identify as either male or female; Sam wanted to look the way they felt, which changed on a daily basis. Sam explained how they experienced both a public-type of dysphoria and a personal one:

Sometimes, in public I'm uncomfortable wearing [a skirt] because people will see it and immediately go, ‘that's a girl’ because a skirt is such a gendered piece of clothing. Sometimes, I don't even care. Sometimes, I want to wear a skirt enough that it doesn't matter to me, but sometimes that bothers me. However, there are other types of dysphoria, like, with my [body part]. I think I would be dysphoric about my [body part] if I were on a deserted island. It has nothing to do with other people seeing my [body part] and assuming things; it has to do with me. And it has to do with me feeling something that doesn't fit with my identity, however I feel. (Interview #2)

For both Matt and Sam, it was important for their external appearances to match their views of themselves. Trying to decipher internal feelings and reconcile those feelings with their physical form was challenging; it became harder when others would question or ignore those efforts.

As mentioned in Chapter II, it is common for many sexual and gender minorities to develop an early sense of difference (Bates, 2010; Brill & Pepper, 2008; Cass, 1979; Dank, 1971; Manguen et al., 2002). Whereas heterosexual and cisgender children have regular access to models of heterosexual relationships (e.g. television, family members, etc.), sexual and gender minority youth often do not have examples and language by which to compare themselves. “The person who has sexual feelings or desires toward persons of the same sex has no vocabulary to explain to himself what these feelings mean,”(Dank, 1971, p. 182) and consequently label their feelings as “different” from their peers. In addition, according to Brill and Pepper (2008), prepubescence (ages 9 – 12) is the second most common time for children to realize their transgender identity, often coinciding with gender dysphoria; such was the case for both Matt and Sam.

## **Questioning**

### **Searching for an Explanation**

To find an explanation, resolution, or support, participants consulted various resources. The most primary used source was the Internet. Andres used the Internet to “try on” new aspects of his identity (i.e. his MySpace page; see Chapter IV) and to find answers to pressing questions:

So my searches ranged from anything from hearing religious perspectives on why all gays are going to hell or on HRC's website, or something like that. And that made it really difficult having that kind of dichotomy everywhere; I didn't know who to believe. (Focus Group)

Emily consulted the Internet throughout her self-discovery in a multitude of ways. One way was to “see” members of the queer community, to expand upon and normalize her idea of what it meant to be gay. In the following quote, Emily explained how the Internet was helpful to her:

When I was figuring myself out and coming out, I literally Googled ‘am I gay?’ enter. That was me for a few months. And I watched a bunch of coming out videos on YouTube, for hours. I didn't realize I was gay at that point. I was just like, ‘Oh, this is really engaging.’ It was good because I didn't really know anyone in my community who was gay at that point. It was good to feel validated by other sources...So basically, it was very beneficial for me to have the Internet involved in my whole process of figuring myself out and figuring everything out. It helped me learn a lot about people who have had different struggles than I have, like people who identity as non-binary or trans, 'cause I'd no idea about any of that. I didn't know any trans people at that time. So just having

those resources I think helped me become a better ally to people who struggle more than I do. I really like that. (Focus Group)

Sam also found an online community that helped them think outside the binary gender model, which helped Sam come to understand themselves better:

The first thing that I started noticing on the Internet was basically a *ton* of people in different communities being really open. If somebody had a page on the Internet, I would go there and look at it, and they'd talk about their identities super openly; they would just state it, flat out. Like, 'I'm this and this and this.' And I was like, 'Well, what's that?' And then I'd read about it. Once I started figuring out that I wasn't really a boy or a girl, I was like, 'Well, ok - there's so many options from there, what does that even mean?' (Focus Group)

Participants agreed that labels of sexual orientation and gender could be problematic. However, they also felt that labels were helpful when they were trying to identify feelings or aspects of themselves they had not previously encountered. In Sam's case, the Internet provided a base of terms, definitions, and examples that helped them focus their identity-focused reflection.

### **Gender Identity is Separate from Sexual Orientation**

Both Matt and Sam questioned their birth-assigned gender, though they did so in very different manners. For example, as a child, Matt vaguely remembered his mother using gender-neutral pronouns, though he was not sure if he asked her to, only that he preferred them over female pronouns. When attraction and dating became part of his peers' social dialogue, Matt knew that his true gender identity was male; he did not think that his feelings of "something's not right" had to do with his sexual orientation. The following passage is Matt's response to my asking whether he questioned his sexual orientation when trying to determine his gender:

I've never had that. Never. Never. Never. This freaked me out, so much, when I found out that so many people went through this, that I had like a fear of lesbians, in my head. Like, I was like *scared* of gay women. It seemed like when I started meeting other trans men, they all had this thing in common where they were like, 'yes, we used to identify as lesbians and then we realized we were men.' Never. That *never* even crossed my mind. Which is funny because I've always liked women and I've always liked men, too. Even when I was like, 'I don't know what my gender is, but I like women.' Never did I think, "I must be gay." That was *never* a thought that I ever had... Basically, I was like 'I don't think about gender' and then I was like 'what is gender?' for like 3 months. And then I was like, 'I'm a guy' and I never questioned it. That was the entire conversation with myself to the point where like I spent years figuring out my sexuality after I had figured out my gender. I don't think I had a concrete idea of my sexuality until *now*!

In contrast, Sam was unsure of their sense of "difference," but because they were more familiar with gay or bisexual individuals than transgender people, they first started questioning



their sexual orientation. When Sam started looking for answers on the Internet, they came across other words that described gender:

I think for *me* the reason they kind of merged was that if you're finding out stuff about your sexuality on the Internet or even trying to be more accepting of other people...it gets to be this mixture of 'now I'm looking for a word to describe me but now there are these things that are starting to describe me. It sort of ends up merging into maybe you discover something about *yourself*. (Interview #2)

During the study, Sam felt comfortable labeling themselves as agender, but they were still trying to figure out their sexual orientation. Because, in Sam's mind, people are more knowledgeable of matters of sexual orientation, Sam chose to label themselves as "gay" to people they did not know well:

I say "Gay" because it's easier. I think some of it was searching for a word to describe me but it just sort of happened that I happened to come upon these words... I still use like the word "gay" to describe myself. 'Cause there's not really a good word I mean basically my romantic orientation is like 'I don't like guys!'... There's probably not a perfect word for how I would describe [myself]. I don't feel a lot of sexual attraction and I'm still thinking about that. But then, romantically I've this orientation that doesn't really have an identity label, you know? And then, gender-wise...um..." (Interview #2)

When someone is questioning both their gender identity and sexual orientation, it can be hard to differentiate between those feelings. Language and identity labels can be of help, but only if they accurately describe one's feelings. Sam's feelings of gender, unlike Matt's, did not match the words available to them causing Sam to search for something more accurate. Consequently, the lack of descriptive language added a level of confusion to Sam's negotiation of both gender identity and sexual orientation.

### **Physical Indicators of Trouble**

All participants experienced some sort of stress while coming to terms with their sexual orientation or gender identity. It seemed as though the most difficult period for the participants was after they acknowledged their feelings of difference but before they identified or were able to label those feelings; an identity limbo, so to speak. This state of limbo, coupled with other coming-of-age challenges, manifested itself physically for several participants. Sam, as well as some of their friends, turned to self-harming as a way to cope with their struggles. Andres, after attending a queer-supportive school and escaping the abusive home environment at his mother's, lost over 50 pounds: "I think that physical shedding was also sort of a shedding of barriers internally that just manifested itself also in terms of my physical appearance or state" (Interview #1). Emily's internal struggle also affected her weight:

I actually had a lot of issues with an eating disorder during that time. That was a struggle for me, for quite a few years. I started to gain weight again, which is good, my junior year. It was getting really bad. I think a lot of that was due to the stress of figuring out who I was, having a sense of self. (Interview #1)

Matt also displayed his worries physically, though in a different way from Andres and Emily. In middle school, Matt was beginning hormone treatments to help him physically develop as a man. However, as he was also going through puberty, his hormones fluctuated, making them difficult to regulate. Often, Matt awoke feeling physically ill and stayed home from school. It was unclear, from Matt's descriptions, whether his bouts of sickness were a result of naturally occurring hormones, hormone treatments, psychologically-related issues, or a combination of all three; perhaps the cause of his pains did not matter as much as how they affected Matt's daily life.

### **Summary of Questioning**

There are several studies that discuss emotional and psychological difficulties people have endured after becoming aware of differences in their sexual orientation or gender identity (Cass, 1979; Dank, 1971; Kus, 1985). For example, from sexual orientation identity literature, Cass (1979) labels this period of questioning as *identity comparison*, during which one accepts the possibility that he or she may be gay. At that point, the person may react to feelings of confusion and social alienation by *passing* as heterosexual to give him or her time to cognitively address those feelings (Cass, 1979, p. 227). In the earlier mentioned five-stage model of transsexual identity development, Pinto and Moleiro (2015) said that during the *exploring identity* stage, participants actively search for explanations to accurately label their feelings.

Past research has stressed the importance of community for queer people, especially when coming to terms with their sexual orientation or gender identity (Cass, 1979; Grierson & Smith, 2005; Kosciw et al., 2014). Socializing with other queer people who are confident with their identities allows individuals in the initial stages of their sexual orientation or gender identity development to redefine what it means to be a sexual or gender minority. For the participants of this study, the Internet acted as a virtual community, providing peer support and answers to their questions.

## Identifying

### Labels

Both Matt and Sam felt secure in their gender identities at the time of the study; they seemed less secure about their sexual orientation. However, participants did not express any urgency to identify their sexual orientation with a label or to adhere to one label. *All* participants acknowledged the fluidity of sexual orientation, whether it was for themselves or their view of sexual orientation as a part of identity. Consider the following statements:

[I am] Gay, for sure. Although I do consider sexuality to be fluid. So, at least, at this moment in time, I identify as that. (Andres, Interview #1)

Erin: You mentioned romantic versus physical attraction; do you see those as being separate?

Emily: I think it depends on the person... But, for me, sometimes they can be separate. I'll appreciate a guy's attractiveness from afar. I'm like, 'oh, he's really hot.' Then, 'wait, is that okay to think that? I'm gay, right?' And then I'm like, 'yeah, because I can't imagine him being closer to me than that.' So, I think there is, but I don't know how to classify that and I don't know if I'm classifying it in the correct way, or if there is a correct way. (Interview #2)

I feel like my sexuality keeps getting confused... I tell people I'm pansexual. Although I once was told by a business manager, 'you gotta be careful with the words you're throwing out there. You can't just tell people you're pansexual. I know what it means, but one day you're going to be doing an interview with [X] and they're gonna give you shit about it.' I've been advised several times by several people to be vague, but not actually say things. They're like, 'You're this cool ambiguous dude, so it'd be cool if your image was like 'do you fuck girls, do you fuck guys, you don't know!' But, don't actually say that you don't care.' I don't know. I don't get it! I think it's *so* stupid! (Matt, Interview #1)

The labels participants used to identify themselves were simultaneously helpful and limiting; helpful because it provided a name for their feelings, but limiting in its meaning and others' interpretations of its meaning. Additionally, participants often used a different label when thinking about themselves than when identifying themselves to others. For example, Sam did not try to correct most students and teachers in high school when they misgendered them: "I'm still not super out about gender because I feel like in high school, I don't want to have to explain to everybody... People really don't know about non-binary genders and I don't feel like trying to explain it to everyone" (Interview #1). Sam asked their family members and close friends to use

the appropriate pronouns, but felt it was too much effort to correct the general public, most of whom had known Sam since elementary school.

Similarly, Matt changed his identification depending on individuals and circumstances. Most often, Matt referred to himself as “queer” because it encompassed both his sexual orientation (which he was unsure of how to label) and his gender identity. Additionally, he saved the identification of “transgender” for select individuals:

I identify as male. I go by "he, him, his." I would say “transsexual” or “transgender” person, but to me that's just a medical fact. I have friends who identify as transgender. They're like, ‘I'm transgender. I'm a trans woman.’ ‘I'm a trans man.’ I don't identify. I just say, "I'm a guy." And if you know me very, very well, you happen to know that fact about me. But, at this point it's pretty rare... it's just kind of personal, to me. (Interview #1)

Matt’s reluctance to label himself as a “transgender man” aligns with the participants of Pinto and Moleiro (2015) who also preferred to identify as simply “man” or “woman,” disclosing their transsexual identity to a select few.

### **Coming Out**

Coming out is a major rite of passage for sexual and gender minorities. Unlike other rites of passage, like a bar/bat mitzvah, graduating from high school, or getting married, coming out is not a single event; it is ongoing. In some instances, one’s coming out is celebrated; in other situations, coming out can result in abandonment or abuse. Regardless, almost all coming out experiences are associated with uncertainty and apprehension; additionally, this coming out to others is an ongoing hurdle to be cleared. Some people find that coming out becomes easier with time.

In Chapter IV, participants shared select coming out stories. Each account was unique and illustrated bravery when faced with an unknown reaction. While it is impossible to generalize a deeply personal experience such as one’s coming out, nor is it my intent to do so, I would like to illuminate some of the findings common to participants’ recounts of revealing their true sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**The Internet.** The Internet played a prominent roll in participants’ self-discovery (see above) and coming out. Participants felt that they could virtually come out anonymously, behind the safety of their screens, almost like a virtual sounding board. Emily recalled:

Because the anonymity could be helpful; if I came out to somebody on the Internet and they were really supportive, I could be like ‘oh, look. Somebody who barely even knows

me still thinks there's nothing wrong with me.' But if they're a jerk, I can be like, 'they don't even know me.' So it offers two benefits to have that kind of anonymity and it definitely helped me create a mini support system before I decided to tell any friends and then my family. (Focus Group)

Andres also appreciated the anonymity of identifying as gay on his MySpace page. Additionally, letting friends know of his page allowed Andres to come out to his non-virtual friends, indirectly. For both Emily and Andres, the Internet provided them a space to freely express themselves and find a support system. Katie also appreciated the Internet during her self-discovery. However, coming out in a group chat room did not allow her to see her parents' reactions to hers or her brother's news.

**Methods of sharing.** Table 6 illustrates the different ways in which participants came out. There are three points of interest I would like to address. First, all participants, excluding Matt, came out to friends before family members. Matt first addressed his gender concerns near the beginning of sixth grade (one of the youngest to come out) by confiding in his mother. I believe this was due to Matt having a close relationship with his mom and because she was Matt's only family member living in the United States. Second, Matt and Sam spoke directly to their family members when they decided to come out as transgender. Those who came out about their sexual orientation did so indirectly, through written word. Finally, most participants decided to come out to their parent(s) within a year of coming out for the first time. The exception to this was Andres and Katie; Andres did not consciously choose to come out to his mother (she discovered his Myspace page where he was open about his sexual orientation) and Katie felt compelled to come out to distract her mother from focusing solely on her younger brother during his coming out. Both Andres and Katie are the oldest members of the study, which may have something to do with their expectations of their parents' acceptance and support.

### **Reactions to Coming Out**

Participants experienced several different reactions to their coming out experiences. Andres faced interrogation, bullying, alienation, and abuse in the form of "treatment." Katie, who was in Germany at the time, did not receive support from her parents, nor did she experience any negative reactions. Katie's coming out experience was overshadowed by her brother's coming out as a transgender man. When I asked Katie how she felt about her parents' lack of response, she replied: "For Mom, I got the 'no comment' because I think she was just

thinking about it. I think that's why she waited to ask me in person, because she wanted the time to mull it over" (Interview #2).

Table 7

*Participants' Methods of Coming Out*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Who First Told</u>	<u>Age came out (Year)</u>	<u>Identity</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Age told parents</u>
Andres	Posted on MySpace; friends through MySpace page	~11 years (2006)	Gay	Mother discovered Myspace page	~ 12 years
Matt	Mother	~11 years (2006)	-	Spoke with mother	~ 11 years
Sam	Friends	~13 years (2013)	Sam <sup>a</sup>	Told during therapy session with therapist	~ 14 years
Emily	Anonymously online; friends	~17 years (2014)	Not straight	Hand written note	~ 17 years
Katie	Friends	~18 years (2013)	Lesbian	Group text with parents and younger sibling	~ 21 years

*Note:* Matt was unsure of his exact age and how he identified when he came out to his mother.

<sup>a</sup>The way in which Sam came out to their parents was by asking their parents to call them "Sam," as opposed to the name they were assigned at birth.

Emily and Sam knew that they would be received with love, though it was still scary for them to reveal that part of themselves to their parents. For a while, both Emily's and Sam's parents questioned their identities. Emily recalled:

When I first told my dad, he...well, the classic 'it's a phase, obviously.' Then, he would print out articles about how people at young ages don't really know their sexuality and I was almost 18. I was like, 'Dad, this is saying if you're 13; a lot of kids aren't sure and that's normal, but I'm 18 and I'm pretty damn sure!' I was really offended because that was so soon after I told him. I didn't feel I was being taken seriously or being heard. I wanted them to understand. If I wasn't so sure about this, I would not have told them. In order for me to articulate to them, and it's so scary to do, I wish he would've trusted that I thought about this thoroughly and for a long time; that I'm very sure about it. (Interview #2)

Similarly, Sam remembered:

So, I'm still doing this, and he's much better, but my dad still asks me and my brother questions, a lot. And we explain and we help him figure it out, because he *doesn't* get it always. And that's ok because he wants to know. (Interview #2)

Overtime, parents began to understand and except their children's sexual orientation and gender identity. Parents began to show their support in the following ways: Emily's dad began to display a rainbow pride mug on his desk at work to indicate his support of his daughter, but also to let clients know that he was supportive of members within the queer community. Katie's mom eventually said that she just wished for Katie to be happy. Lastly, Matt's mom regularly visits him and shows her support by attending his music performances.

### **Summary of Identifying**

As discussed earlier, finding a queer community is important for individuals, especially when coming out. This virtual support system helped many participants come to terms with, and identify, their feelings in a safe, anonymous environment. In early identity development models (Cass, 1979; Dank, 1971; Troiden, 1979), theorists found that gay men and women relied on members of the gay community to sort through confusing thoughts and feelings. Additionally, the gay community provided information about the gay "lifestyle" and positive gay role models for those questioning their sexuality. "Contacting homosexuals is viewed as 'something that has to be done' in order to counter the felt isolation and alienation from others" cited Cass (1971, p. 229). Similarly, Dank (1971) quoted a participant: "It let me find out it wasn't so terrible... I met a lot of gay people that I liked and I figured it can't be all wrong. If so and so's a good Joe, and he's still gay, he can't be all that bad" (p. 185). These quotes are reminiscent of the participants from this study, who also felt validated when they came across successful queer people on the Internet. For today's youth, perhaps there is less of a need to join a queer community, in person, because of the ease of finding other queer individuals online.

Finally, the ways in which participants came out to friends and family members is similar to findings from past research (Jordan & Deluty, 1998; Rossi, 2010). In general, queer youth tend to come out to friends first, followed by siblings and then parents. Additionally, for participants of this study and others, the process of coming out may be difficult and initially viewed as a negative event, over time, the experience may be positively reflected upon (Rossi, 2010).

### **Discussion**

There were several commonalities regarding sexual orientation among the participants. First, participants often said that they thought of sexual orientation as something fluid that may change over time. None of the participants seemed worried about the prospect of their orientation

changing, nor did any express a desire to have a different sexual orientation. In fact, Matt liked being a part of the queer community: “I think *everything’s* better when it’s gay!” (Interview #2).

Second, participants viewed sexual attraction and romantic attraction as two separate elements of sexual orientation, a finding supported by past research (Diamond, 2005; Friedman et al., 2004). A disheartening third commonality was that everyone regularly heard instances of homophobic, especially the use of the word “gay” as an insult. Finally, as discussed in Chapter II, scholarship within fields of sexual orientation and gender identity development also indicate that the ways in which young people use labels differs from those older. Research indicates that today’s youth place less importance on self-labeling and some young people refuse to label their sexual orientation (Diamond, 2005; Diamond et al., 2013; Friedman et al., 2004; Higa et al., 2012; Rosario et al., 2010; and Savin-Williams, 2005, 2011). Participants in this study agree with past findings that labels do not allow enough flexibility to accurately describe their feelings (Higa et al., 2012; Russell et al., 2009). Contrary to past research, though, participants felt that labels were a helpful starting place during self-identification and did not adhere to being “label free.”

Chapter VI returns to the subject of music and illustrates the roles of music making in participants’ lives as sexual and gender minority youth.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Roles of Music Making**

Chapter IV portrayed the individual paths participants took to become musicians. Participants shared stories about musical family members, beloved private teachers, ensemble members that were like family, and fun music making experiences. Participants also described how they came to understand themselves as queer individuals and how they shared this knowledge with others. Chapter V further explored aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity. Examining the experiences of all the participants, as a collective, portrayed the power social expectations can have on such elements as gender roles, attraction, dating, body perceptions, and identity. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the roles of music making in participants' lives as sexual and gender minorities.

Each participant discussed music, particularly music making, in different ways. Some used words equated with strong emotions, such as “love,” “passion,” and “fulfillment;” others were more action-focused and spoke of words like “perform” and “experiment.” During analysis, a theme began to emerge: each participant “used” their music making for different purposes and the role of music making changed depending on the current needs of the participant. Music making played several important roles in participants' lives: this chapter will outline the ways in which participants interacted with their music making as individuals, as members of a community, and as sexual and gender minorities. Findings in this chapter are discussed in two sections: music making to negotiate feelings and music making to negotiate identity.

#### **Music Making to Negotiate Feelings**

There were three different ways that participants used music making to negotiate feelings: (a) to explore and understand feelings; (b) to express feelings; and (c) to manage feelings (Figure 1). I will illustrate each of the three ways that participants used music making to negotiate emotional terrain, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, using examples from the collected data. At times, the role of music making was for a single purpose (e.g. to express feelings). Most commonly, though, music making occupied multiple roles, at

once. This section will begin by exploring music making as a way to explore and understand feelings.

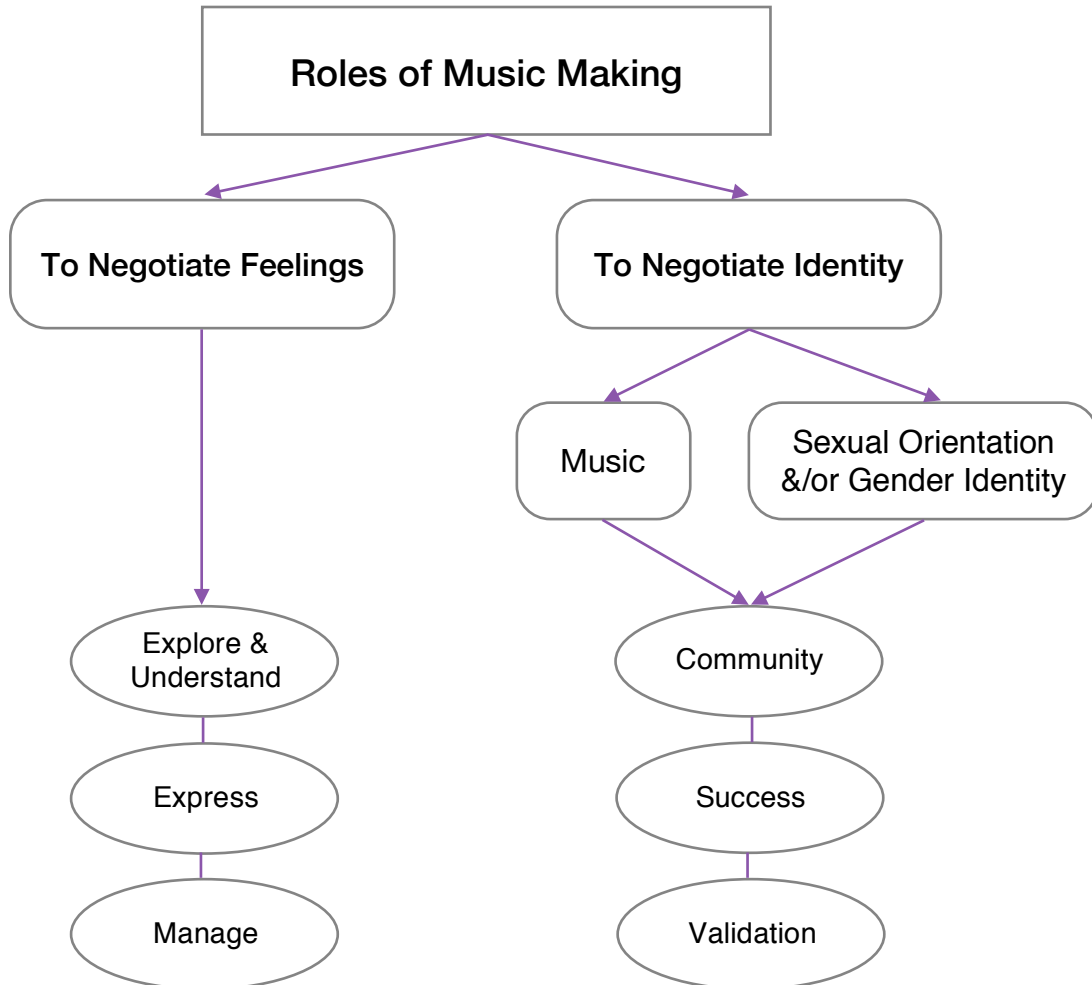


Figure 5. Roles of Music Making

Music making was a way for participants to explore and work through feelings that were confusing. For example Sam was interested in music and theater and particularly enjoyed performing in musicals so that they could “get everything and that’s really great” (Interview #2). Sam enjoyed acting because it provided opportunities to experience different characters. However, without the musical component, Sam felt there was a disconnect between self and character. Sam explained the difference between portraying a character in a play and portraying a character through song:

It is different because acting is much less... when you're doing the rehearsals, it's similar to your rehearsals for singing. Then you do the performance and it's a lot less...thoughtful. That sounds weird, but once you've got this character in a play, you just *do* what you know to do. You've done enough with it; you've run it and now it's not like your running through the emotions anymore, you're just doing this character. You're walking through this character's life; through this time period that the play is set. So it doesn't require thought. It's fun and you're into it, but when [I'm] actually on the stage doing it, I'm not consciously into it. I mean, I'm acting, but I'm not consciously going like, 'what would this character do?' because at this point, I know. I've been *being* this character for months and I *know* how this character acts in this situation. I know this character, I've *been* them. But with singing, it's shifted in the other direction. You have this character in mind, depending on the song; sometimes you don't. But, you think through the song and you learn it and you get your muscle memory going. But then, you just *pour* whatever it is you've got into it. And you do that somewhat with acting, but it's a little different way of doing it, and I don't know exactly how to explain it. (Sam, Interview #2)

Singing, especially music that had a character component, allowed Sam to try on different personalities and experience emotions without having to commit to a particular role, all while expressing herself. Music making allowed Sam to explore, travel to distant lands, meet new people (figuratively and literally), try new experiences, and occupy different social roles, all from a safe environment.

Oftentimes, participants discussed having feelings while making music, though they found it difficult to describe those feelings or identify their source. During and after instances of music making, especially in the form of songwriting, participants said they were able to make sense of feelings that were, at one point, unidentifiable.

I write music so that I can play it live. Playing it live is like when you get to that point in a therapy session where you kind of realize that your life isn't going down the drain and that everything is fixable. Like when I sing those lyrics up on stage and I tell them to people, I'm like, "OK. I get it. I think I get it now." But when writing them, I'm just like, "fuck everything!" (Matt, Interview #2)

Both Emily and Matt wrote or arranged their own music as a tool of personal reflection and understanding. They often talked about the emotional connection they have with song lyrics, most often with the lyrics they write. Emily found that by keeping a Google Doc on her phone, she was able to document her feelings, in real time:

So whenever I'm thinking of something, I'll open up Google docs on here and type down a phrase. I feel like I'm creating more. And then, if I am feeling like writing, I often go to those thoughts that I had recorded to trigger feelings I've had so I can expand on that. 'Cause if I'm just walking down to class and I'm feeling really emotional about something, I can't just whip out a guitar and write in a notebook. (Emily, Interview #1)

Simply documenting the feelings in the form of a journal or poem was not enough for Emily; instead, turning those thoughts into music and performing them was most therapeutic.

Just being able to be more organic with what I'm feeling and creating it into a song is really empowering, almost. It makes my feelings feel more productive, like I'm doing something with them. And I can get them out. It's therapeutic. (Emily, Focus Group).

Matt also compared music making to therapy, as a way to understand himself and express his feelings: "I definitely say all the thing that I don't want to say to other people, or to myself...but mostly to myself, interestingly enough," (Interview #2). Matt was also an accomplished painter and said that he needed to participate in music making, painting, and activism to feel like a whole person. I asked Matt if he was able to achieve the same sense of self-comprehension from painting. He explained that, when he was a middle school student, he did not play guitar regularly:

I felt that I couldn't really completely express myself with music because I wasn't at a point where I could do that. I have pretty bad dyslexia and sometimes when I get into music, and when I start writing, I just get the same feeling I get when I'm trying to write an essay and it's not really coming out; or I'm writing it and it's coming out backwards. It feels like it's not working. Whereas with painting, even if it doesn't turn out exactly the same, I feel like it's a lot easier for me to say what I'm trying to say. (Interview #2)

Now, though, since his guitar playing abilities have become stronger, he feels more comfortable writing and performing his music. I asked Matt to compare how he feels when he paints to making music, to which he responded:

Music making is technical. Music making is like long-term-therapy therapy; it's complicated and it's frustrating and it's eventually really fruitful and gift giving. But it's like this thing that you rediscover over and over in different ways. And sometimes it's very difficult to see. Whereas painting is a screen shot of your emotions at one time. (Interview #2)

Before, Matt's technical abilities on guitar prevented him from musically understanding and expressing his feelings in a way that was emotionally satisfying. However, with increased technical skill, Matt could explore his feelings through music making more than once, allowing him time to better understand his emotions. It seemed that Matt appreciated being able to return to his feelings, over time, to explore them from a different point of view.

Participants described music making as a form of expression, a language, and a way to communicate. "I just love the feeling [of performing] because it's a way that I feel that I am heard, that I'm expressing myself," (Emily, Interview #2). In this instance, the *act* of making music and expressing herself was the purpose of Emily's performance. In other cases,

participants wanted the audience to hear or *feel* the emotions that they were trying to convey. Sometimes the emotions belonged to a character of a programmatic piece, other times the emotions were personal. For example, Sam described what they wanted to achieve from their solo performance of “Nel Cor Più Non Mi Sento” by Giovanni Paisiello:

I sing a lot of songs kind of like that one, and that's a lot of what I do. I love doing that. I love it. I have fun. I try and bring as many people into it as possible and if they can feel what I'm feeling when I'm singing, then I've done it. I've done what I want to do, you know? ... Sometimes it's expressing what a character feels or what a song *means* or something like that. But it is about expressing something from within you. (Interview #2)

Matt was a very theatrical performer and songwriter; the main purpose of his performances was to tell a story. Sometimes this story was told in third person, other times in first person. Matt shared two videos of his band performing two of his compositions. One song, “Widow,” was inspired by an animé series titled *Tokyo Ghoul* in which a quiet, bookworm-ish young man had to have many of his organs replaced with those of a woman he liked; little did he know she was a ghoul. In turn, the protagonist had to learn to hide his true identity as half-human, half-ghoul from the real world while trying to come to terms with the monster into which he has turned.

Matt wrote the second song, “Doll,” in response to an awkward phone conversation he had with his dad while he was recovering from a gender-related surgery. Music making and composition helped Matt understand his feelings, though, he was better able to come to terms with how he felt after performing his music: “When I sing those lyrics up on stage and I tell them to people, I'm like, ‘Ok. I get it. I think I get it now.’” (Matt, Interview #2). As illustrated earlier, making music allowed participants to understand and feel what they were afraid to feel; to express difficult feelings in a safe way, to themselves, and to others. In a sense, they were able to come out without saying anything. The most significant example was Matt’s song *Doll*:

[Doll] is about a conversation I had with my dad, right before I did one of my surgeries. We were just trying to find some common ground and us not being able to find it, or communicate very well, 'cause we're just very different people... And it's a reflection. So the chorus is, ‘I've become a rag doll’ and that's me talking about being in the hospital. And the tag line for everything is, ‘I'm still waiting for you, again.’ And it's kind of how I feel about my relationship with my dad. I'm just always waiting for him. You know, my dad never comes to see me, and... I don't know. It's gotten better over the years, but my father has always had difficulty communicating with me. I think I'm always waiting on him... When I was little, I my dad would tell me he was going to come and show up to pick me up, and then he'd never show up. And I'd wait around for him for hours. So, it's a slight reflection of me being - you know, in a metaphorical sense - I've always been

waiting for him. But in a physical sense, when I was little, I did a lot of waiting around for him to show up, too... I don't think he's ever heard that song. (Interview #2)

Though “Widow” expresses emotion through story and “Doll” has an intentional message to convey, both songs poignantly express feelings Matt has had to contend with while negotiating his sexual orientation and gender identity. Excerpts from both songs are juxtaposed, side-by-side, below:

#### Widow

She goes out of her way to seek stars,  
but these cold nights never look out for her,  
this beautiful maiden, what was her name?  
As she cries like the widow of the night.

She is keeping secrets, she'll never slip,  
hidden inside of, merry lips.  
This beautiful maiden, what was her name?  
As she cries like the widow of the night.

Chorus:

She's crying I hear her,  
She can't go back.  
She's crying I hear her,  
I can't go back.

She lives inside of a rundown world,  
and in this hole she makes her home,  
that beautiful girl what was her name?  
She cries like the widow of the dark.

#### Doll

Blood pumps don't say,  
all the words I've wanted to tell you,  
they only filter out the grime,  
the vile inside.

Sometimes talking to you isn't easy but I've  
moved on, one stitch at a time.

Did you know it swells when they cut deep,  
along the sharpie lines they'll dig,  
so inserted tubes can help me out,  
help me call out, help me scream out,

Chorus

that I've become a rag doll cut up and jaded,  
my resting place is high on the counter top,  
won't you pay a last good by,  
to your sweet loving doll,  
still waiting for you again.  
Still waiting for you again.

Andres also talked about expressing emotion through music making, though in less personal ways. Andres talked about feelings and emotion in music as a way to musically enhance his playing, to make it more interesting. However, instead of attributing specific feelings to a musical passage, he tried to convey ideas and characters that epitomized certain musical phrases and elements.

As far as channeling and *emotion*, I think it's more about channeling characters. So, music being an art - a very theatrical art form – I don't think it's possible for us to attribute an emotion, a specific event to everything that's going on, even in this one movement. So, just characters... I think that's what I like so much about the classical period of music, because it's *so* theatrical and so operatic. The variety in articulation that you can do – it was so important to the music, I think, in the classic period. (Andres, Interview #2)

Unlike the other participants, Andres did not use music making to sort out his feelings; instead, music making was his emotional escape, a way to manage his feelings.

Emily and Katie both shared that music making also helped them manage certain feelings, especially stress. Emily described how important a role music making was during the height of her identity crisis, in eighth grade:

I remember going into band, which was my third hour, and sitting down and playing. I remember, I can't make myself feel that relaxed by just sitting, or trying something else. There is no other way that I can get to that state other than playing an instrument. So, getting into band and playing and realizing “Oh, this is how I'm supposed to feel. I'm not supposed to feel that high-strung and that nervous all the time. This is how I should feel.” So, having that hour – I would not have been able to get through my school if I didn't have music at least once a day. (Interview #1)

Katie, similarly, described her high school band class as her “de-stressing outlet” (Interview #1).

You have to get good grades, especially when one of your parents is a PhD and the other one has a nice job. And you're like ‘Hmmm, I should get good grades and go to a nice school.’ So, it was definitely pressure. And band was like ‘I can go and I can breathe. I don't really have to practice, too much, cause I've played for more years than everyone else here.’ (Interview #1)

Different types of music, instruments, and ensembles had different affects on Emily's and Katie's moods. For example, when Katie was feeling stress, she preferred to play familiar, slow pieces. Additionally, playing on an electronic keyboard (which she used for her arranging projects) did not offer any stress relief; she liked the feel of the weighted keys on an acoustic

piano. When she wanted to procrastinate, Katie liked playing new music that presented some technical challenges and that were upbeat.

When Emily played trumpet, she was able to relax. When asked what she focused on while playing the trumpet, whether she thought about the music or trumpet technique or certain parts of her day, Emily responded “I’m just feeling” (Interview #2). She then compared the feeling of playing trumpet to playing guitar or piano:

I love it, in different ways... When I play my guitar, or even if I play the piano, I’m like “I miss this, so much” and I love them. But then, when I play the trumpet, it’s like a new sense of relief. It can’t be fulfilled by the other instrument... If I had to forfeit instruments, the first one to forfeit would be piano. I still love it, I just don’t have the skill to- my skill level isn’t as high on the piano that I can just pick things up really easily. And I don’t have the patience to really take time to do that. And on guitar, I can do that pretty easily, and I like that. (Interview #2)

Most common among the participants, was the notion that their various music-making spaces were places of refuge, mentally, emotionally, and physically. There were several factors that contributed to this phenomenon. One reason was that music making required a singularity of focus, unless the required skill to perform the music was perceived by the participant as “easy.” In the next passage, Andres described what practicing is mentally like for him:

It’s a different state of mind. And it’s not so much thinking, a lot of the time it’s like unconsciously willing your hand to do things. And your ears responding to that and then your brain is adjusting. So, I think because of that, the thought process is totally different so there’s no room for thinking about other things. Unless I’m practicing a passage of like straight triplets for a page and a half, and I need the metronome, and I’m just increasing the tempo every now and then, then I can sort of think about, like, what I’m having for dinner, or something. (Interview #2)

For Katie, the quality of the music determined whether or not she was mentally able to “let go” of her personal troubles during her music making: “That was my favorite thing about music, as a whole, is when you get good pieces and it’s just like, ‘Forget everything else! Forget that you have a midterm tomorrow. You’re going to play this’ (Interview #1).” “Good” music, for Katie, was music that had an interesting melody, complimentary harmonies, instrumental parts that challenged her, and often had an accompanying story (i.e. programmatic music).

School music offered participants a physical separation from the rest of the school, where some of the participants experienced bullying. As Matt said of middle school orchestra:

I think it was one of the better places to be because everyone there was kind of- I mean, they didn't really get what was going on with me, but at least they were kind of like nerdy and they got picked on anyway, so they weren't gonna [pick on me]. (Interview #2).



For others, just having music as a break in their school day was enough to help them forget about challenges they faced outside the rehearsal room.

I remember the feeling of everything falling apart, outside of rehearsal. But, at least in orchestra, nobody knows what's going on and I can forget about things and just think about music... Nothing else matters but practicing and getting better at the violin. Any emotional trauma or whatnot from the day, or the year, or whatnot, is just irrelevant at the time. And I think that's what's comforting and why so many musicians are insane.  
(Andres, Interview #2)

Music that was enjoyable to play or sing, and that was appropriately challenged, offered participants an alternative focus and an escape from their daily challenges.

As illustrated, study participants used music making to negotiate their feelings in three ways: (a) to understanding feelings; (b) to express feelings; and (c) to manage their feelings. Interacting with music making, as described above, also helped participants come to better understand themselves. The next section will continue to explore the roles of music making by examining how participants were able to negotiate aspects of their identities (see Figure ###).

### **Music Making to Negotiate Identity**

An individual's identity is comprised of many elements; this is evident in how people describe themselves (e.g. I am a father, a teacher, a musician, African American, Buddhist, etc.). A major function of youth is to experience new things, to try on different personas, and to begin to answer the question "who am I?" Music making played a part in participants' lives and the ways in which they self-identified and portrayed themselves to others. There were three components of music making that helped participants negotiate aspects of their identities: (a) being part of, and contributing to, a *community* of musicians with a shared purpose; (b) feeling musically *successful*; (c), and having their musical efforts *validated* by the members of their community (see Figure ###).

The music making communities to which participants belonged were varied; sometimes the sense of community came from family members and their cultural backgrounds, other times it came from belonging to an organized music group. For example, Emily, Katie, and Sam all came from musical families; for all three, their parents and siblings played musical instruments and sang. Music making was modeled for them, consequently, becoming music makers felt very natural, if not expected. Sam recalled:

My whole family has *been* doing musical things, mostly singing, forever. There wasn't a point when I was like: "I should start trying to sing now." It's just sort of been a part of my life and I've always *loved* doing it so I just *kept* doing it. (Interview #2)

Whether participants were brought up in a family of music makers, joined their school music program, or discovered a passion and skill for it, music making became part of their identities through participation in a music community.

Participants felt part of a community when they shared a musical goal, such as preparing for a performance. In an environment such as drum corps, individuals were encouraged to focus on their fellow musicians and think about the ensemble and its musical goals, above the needs and goals of the individual players.

It was definitely a lot more paying attention to everyone else in the band, in [drum corps] because it's a lot of strenuous activity. It was also not only paying attention to 'are you blending in with them,' but 'how are they experiencing it?' Are they flagging? Are they sand bagging? Are they not playing? Are they doing OK? Are they experiencing the emotion?'...It was definitely a lot of looking and you see these dramatic, very artistic color guard members and you get a sense of brotherhood and family from the corps. (Katie, Interview #1)

Katie felt part of the drum corps community not only because of her membership, but also because of a heightened awareness the musicians had of each other. This awareness made Katie feel that, should she need their help, her fellow corps members would support her.

Katie spoke with great fondness about her experiences in drum corps and the "family" that developed because of their shared music making experiences. Matt, similarly, referred to the members in his band as "family." In comparison, Sam spoke about their high school choir and its members differently: in choir, there was a universal agreement to put aside any personal differences within the group during rehearsals so that rehearsals could be effective.

We're very unified this year where; not necessarily that we're all best friends with each other but we know each other and we know how each other sings and everybody really does their part. I mean, obviously, outside of choir there's going to be people who complain or people who want to talk bad about stuff but it's never brought back to the choir, because once we're in *there* it doesn't matter. Like there might be some people who rub me the wrong way, but it doesn't affect the group. Everyone's going to be willing to listen to one another and it's friendly; it's welcoming. (Interview #2)

Whether or not participants were friends with their fellow music makers, they were still bonded over their shared musical goals and trusted each other's musical abilities and work ethic. In turn, the common group membership (e.g. "We're in choir") strengthened participants' individual music identities.

For some, the mutual trust that developed between musicians carried beyond participants' music identities. For example, Katie did not feel like she was part of her school's queer

community, even though she would occasionally volunteer to help with LGBTQ-focused activism on campus. Though she craved the support of the queer community, playing in her school's marching band provided Katie with a different kind of community:

The friends I've made in band support me, immensely. The director of bands - who's in charge of the marching band, the jazz band, and the symphonic band - I officiated his wedding. I was talking to his wife and she's like, 'Oh, my gosh. I have to get you a boyfriend!' And [the band director] was like, 'Honey! Gotta find her a *girlfriend*.' And she's like, 'Oh, oh - We can do that!' It's not even a question for him. He's like, 'that's fine; this is Katie. She's great, I'll support her.' The social aspect helps me enjoy the music more. (Focus Group)

Not only did Katie connect socially with members of the band and their director, she felt valued and supported, which affected her relationship with the music.

Matt also received social support from his musical community. At the time of the study, Matt was keeping a part of himself hidden from all but a select few individuals. From the time he began to consider his gender, especially in relation to his peers, Matt identified as male; he did not openly identify himself as a transgender man.

At the start of this study, only one member of his band – the group of guys he considered as family – knew that Matt was transgender. Matt was very open about being queer, he just did not specify what “queer” meant. For example, he gave himself testosterone injections in front of the band members, without telling them what the injections were for:

I think what they think is, 'Matt has this hormone thing and I don't really get it. He does this thing and that's cool.' In a way, they are very accepting, but they also don't understand it. But they don't think on it. (Interview #1)

Though Matt openly identified as queer, and he was proud of that identity, he preferred not to discuss his transgender identity. To the general public, Matt identified solely as a man.

Sometime after our first interview, Matt came out to all but one of his band members about his gender identity. He shared:

“I finally told them and it definitely feels like a weight lifted off my shoulders... [my guitarist] gave me a hug and was just, 'I wasn't sure you were going to tell me and I really didn't know, but I knew that you had to tell me something, and I've known that for a long time. And I was kind of sad that you felt like you couldn't tell me.’” (Interview #2)

Keeping a part of his identity from his band mates was emotionally exhausting for Matt.

However, Matt felt that the group members had developed a mutual respect for each other that, in turn, created a safe and productive environment for music making. Poignantly, Matt described

why he chose to continue working with his band members rather than with other, more experienced, musicians:

As much as we get frustrated with each other, it feels like family. Whereas, even if it would sound perfect the first try and there would be no fighting... I think as we grow as friends, that the projects will evolve with that. And I think you'll see it in the music and I think that's what's important. I think music has a soul to it, and I think nurturing these relationships is nurturing the music. (Interview #1)

Both Katie and Matt joined a community of musicians, but it was having shared musical goals and communal music making that built a sense of trust, respect, and community. As a result, Katie and Matt felt supported to be their complete selves.

When participants experienced musical successes, they experienced a heightened sense of confidence and belief in their musical abilities; this strengthened their music identities. For example, Sam was confident in their music abilities, but more so with voice than cello. When I asked Sam why they consider themselves more of a singer than a cellist, Sam replied: "It's hard to pin down. I think there's probably a part of it that's about, for lack of a better word, talent..." (Interview #2).

Katie also spoke of her musical abilities when recalling childhood memories. For example, she mentioned several instances of being asked to sub within the community orchestra or the handbell choir while in grade school. Katie was confident of her sight-reading abilities and knew that her ensemble directors shared this view. Perhaps most telling, though, is the difference in how Katie described her younger self. Katie described herself as a "rambunctious child who got in trouble all the time" and couldn't focus; as someone who would jump between activities without seeing them until the end; compulsive; impulsive; getting sent to detention "all the time;" and as being "not the most creative of people." Yet, when Katie described herself as a musician she said things like "I can sight read really fast" or "I could play better than everyone else" (Interview #1). Katie's belief in her musical abilities seemed connected to her musical successes, which were validated by her teachers.

When a community of people validated participants' efforts or abilities at a musical task, their self-concepts and identities strengthened. For Emily, Katie, and Sam, being recognized by others as a "good" musician was important to their identities. Emily recalled: "I remember in 8th grade auditioning for all-state band and getting into that and how that was like 'o.k. I have a place. I have a strength.' I feel that gave me a lot more confidence. It helped me gain a sense of self," (Interview #1). In eighth grade, Emily struggled with anxiety as she began to question her

sexual orientation. Making a spot in the all-state band validated her work as a trumpet player and helped her feel less lost as she questioned another aspect of her identity. Even after Emily decided to suspend private trumpet lessons and pursue a non-music degree in college, she still worked to maintain her section leadership and reaffirm her identity as a strong member of the band.

Music making also helped Katie identify personal strengths when she was feeling unsuccessful in other areas:

I picked a major that I'm interested in, but is very challenging for me. I keep up with all of my music activities because if I can excel in that, even if I get a bad grade in one of my chemistry classes, I still feel like I'm validated somewhere in my academic performance or extra-curricular performance. And it's definitely an amazing outlet for validation!  
(Focus Group)

Experiencing musical success helped reaffirm Katie's abilities, which also gave her confidence outside of music. Andres recalled a similar sense of validation from making music in middle school: "Music was something that I could be validated in without having to 'be my self.' So it's a nice avenue in that regard. To be a musician before anything else was just easy," (Focus Group). In this example, Andres was validated as a violin player and an important member of the orchestra, irrespective of his sexual orientation. Receiving positive recognition for the musical part of his identity was important for Andres at a time when he was receiving negative attention for his sexual orientation identity, outside his music communities. Correspondingly, Emily, Katie, and Andres needed to feel good about *some* part of themselves until they, and others, were able to positively view their sexual orientation identities.

### **Discussion**

This chapter discussed the roles of music making in participants' lives in two parts: music making to negotiate feelings and music making to negotiate identity (Figure 1). The ways in which participants interacted with their music making changed depending on their needs and purposes. Participants used music making to negotiate their feelings in three ways: (a) to explore and understanding feelings; (b) to express feelings; and (c) to manage their feelings.

As discovered in past music education research (Cambell et al., 2007; Parker, 2011), participants said that music making helped them make sense of feelings that were confusing or unidentifiable. Additionally, music making helped participants confront their feelings in a safe and productive way. For example, Matt better understood the feelings that inspired his compositions after performing them for an audience. Similar to the findings noted in Parker

(2011), music making was often referred to as “therapeutic” as it was a safe and productive way to explore their emotions. Participants felt that music making was a way for them to work through personal feelings in ways that words were not able.

There were several past researchers who described the ways in which participants used music making to express their feelings and communicate with others (Adderley et al., 2003; Cambell et al., 2007; Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hennessy, 2012; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Parker, 2011; Pellegrino, 2010, 2015a, 2015b). In this study, for example, Sam said they loved when the audience could feel what they were feeling. Additionally, playing chamber music was a way for Andres to communicate with other musicians. Another way participants shared their feelings was through song-writing. As Ryan used song-writing to reflect upon his experiences of coming out as transgender (Nichols, 2013), Matt used his self-composed music to tell stories and express the feelings he struggled to communicate to his father. Turino (2008) explained that people are better able to connect through communal music making experiences because, in part, music is able to communicate both conscious and subconscious sensations, imagination, and experiences. Perhaps that explains why Matt finds performing his own music to be so therapeutic.

Third, music making helped participants manage their feelings. Most often, participants shared that making music helped them relieve stress, find an inner calmness, and have fun. For example, Emily felt relief from her everyday worries while making music, helping her focus in the moment and relieve her stress. Similarly, Katie described being able to “let go” of her personal troubles during her music making. For Andres, rehearsal offered a refuge, in part because of making music and in part because he was free from bullying while there.

The view of music making spaces as places of safety and support are not unique to this study. The sexual and gender minority participants in Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2011), Hennessy (2012), and Nichols (2013) all felt safe, free from bullying, and supported in their music classes. Additionally, participants also felt that members of the music community more accepting of differences.

The music selection, difficulty of music, and the technical abilities of the participants affected how effective music making was in helping participants negotiate their feelings; these elements were also reminiscent of Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 2004). The more technical skills a participant had on an instrument, the easier time they had using music making to express

the complexity of their emotions. Such was the case for Matt who initially used painting, instead of guitar, as a way to understand his feelings. The greater technical skills of a participant determined the complexity of the music in which they could engage, which was an important factor in how much a participant became engaged in their music making. If participants felt the music was too easy for them, they were not able to connect to the music. If the music was challenging, but technically within reach so that they could focus on musicality (e.g. tone colors, articulation nuances, etc.), participants were able to lose themselves in the performance and “forget” the outside world. This was exemplified in the video performance Andres shared with me: the passages Andres deemed “challenging” brought a sense of anxiety, whereas the music he considered “easy” allowed Andres to relax, have fun, and be in the moment of his performance.

As illustrated, study participants used music making to help them negotiate their feelings in a variety of ways and for different circumstances. Through primarily their solo music making, participants were better able to understand their feelings. In addition, participants were active in several different musical communities. Making music with others helped participants better understand themselves and how they related to others. Feeling successful in community music making experiences validated participants’ identities as musicians and members of the sexual and gender minority community (see Figure ###).

According to Wenger (1998), to belong to a CoP, one must actively engage in a community that, in turn, recognizes and validates that participation. When individuals feel competent and supported by their community, they develop an increased sense of belonging to the group. However, those who feel that their skills will not contribute to the group, or those who feel they will not learn from the group, will not feel a sense of belonging. Wenger states that learning is a natural byproduct of active participation in social communities; this knowledge contributes to individuals’ perceptions of self within the social communities in which they participate. As such, an identity reflects a way of being in the social world.

As defined in Chapter II, a CoP is a group of people who “share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Trayner, n.d.). Making music within a community of musicians provided participants with a safe space to socially connect, escape persecution, and express themselves. Participants belonged to several different types of music communities, such as family, school, community ensembles, and rock bands. Despite differences in population, group members all shared a love of music making and

a desire to learn the music and perform it well. For example, music making helped Sam and Emily bond with family members. Having a shared musical goal helped the members of Sam's choir connect, to look beyond personal differences, and to support each other. Participants' identities as musicians were reified through such things as performance uniforms and self-composed songs.

Participants in this study needed to experience musical success and feel that they were good at making music. When they experienced musical successes, they gained self-confidence and felt valued. When members of their communities recognized their musical successes, participants felt heard and validated as musicians and individuals. For example, Katie used music making to remind herself that she was good at *something* when she experienced challenges in other academic pursuits. Sam's perception of their singing abilities convinced Sam that they were more of a singer than a cellist. However, Andres began to scrutinize his music making after he identified as a music major which, in turn, affected his violin playing.

When other members of their communities positively recognized participants' music making efforts, they felt validated as a musician and a person. Emily felt like she had a *place* she fit in after she made All State Band on trumpet. Validation as a violin player and artist was important to Andres when his sexual orientation was being invalidated. The shared musical goals, community music making, and success as a group help Matt and his band members feel trust and respect for each other, allowing Matt to come out.

Past music education scholarship also reports similar findings of community music participation as a contributing identity factor. Adderley et al. (2003) indicated that music ensemble participation gave students a sense of belonging and helped form new friendships initially based on their common interest of music making. For many participants, the connections they made through participation in an ensemble extended beyond group music making. According to Parker (2011), working towards a common musical goal allowed her participants to feel more comfortable being themselves and taking risks expressing their own feelings through singing, which were, in turn, confirmed and supported by the other voices of the choir. In turn, participants believed that making music with others created a social bond and increased their interpersonal relationships.

Small (1999) felt that meaning is created within the relationships that are formed through the act of music making. These relationships, according to Small, model how we see ourselves



relating to the wider world and how we would like it to be. Different kinds of music making experiences can result in different kinds of relationships. Considering Small's (1999) views provides one possible explanation as to the variety of music making experiences in which the participants of this study engaged; a variety of experiences may have provided participants with more knowledge of how to exist as sexual and gender minorities within multiple communities. Of the five participants, only one was able to easily move between communities while remaining true to himself as a queer musician. Before concluding this discussion on the roles of music making, I want to present an additional finding regarding music and queer identities.

### **Coda: Happiness as a Result of Identity and Community Integration**

Andres' relationship with music making used to be one of escape. From late elementary school through middle school, Andres' life felt unpredictable, scary, out of his control, and at times, filled with emotional abuse. For Andres, the role of music making was to provide a distraction from reality: "I remember the feeling of like everything falling apart outside of rehearsal, but at least in orchestra, nobody knows what's going on. I can forget about things and just think about music" (Interview #2). Private lessons and rehearsals were safe spaces away from home, a physical escape. Additionally, music making provided Andres with mental and emotional relief:

Music was pretty much the only stable thing throughout my life. And orchestra was very good for me, I think, because nothing mattered in that space but the music making. It wasn't a place where I had to feel responsible for either being out or being closed. So, music had definitely been a rock in my life to just deal with things. I don't want to say "coping mechanism" because it wasn't... Maybe it was a coping mechanism, but I wasn't aware of it. (Interview #1)

Life improved for Andres after he started attending a performing arts high school (PAHS) and moved in with his father. Andres could work on his music within a community of artists. He could also live "out" without fear of harassment; PAHS faculty and students were supportive of the sexual and gender minority community. Andres became a leader in his school's gender and sexuality alliance, a group that was comprised of other members of the fine arts community. At PAHS, Andres successfully merged his sexual orientation identity and his music identity, and they complimented each other.

In high school, and that exploratory phase that most people go through, it was just something that everyone was experiencing at once. That created an environment where it was just part of everyday; from orchestra to being a leader in the gender and sexuality alliance, or in the classroom and voicing an opinion, or something like that. Whereas in

college, it was just music-music-music, and it's the practice room, and it's the lesson, and it's the rehearsal... (Interview #1)

In college, Andres felt that he no longer needed to come out. He was at peace with that part of himself and, for reasons unknown, it was a subject rarely acknowledged: "I don't have to come out anymore. And it's strange thinking about that. But, I don't find myself having to tell people, 'Oh, by the way...'" (Interview #1). Andres could now focus on becoming a professional violinist. He no longer needed music to be his escape. But what role would music now serve?

Before it became my job or major, as a student, [music] was just for fun- I mean, it still is. I love music, but it's a lot more serious now, obviously. And making a mistake or not having a good performance has more weight now than it ever did; and the fear of that is motivational.

This passage demonstrates the complicated nature of Andres' relationship with his music making: music making used to be a pleasurable diversion from reality. When he chose to make music - previously his pastime and coping mechanism - his career, he added a level of scrutiny. Before, his music community was made up of friends and colleagues who accepted him and had fun making music as a collective. As a performance major, his music community became his audience, his critique, and his competition.

Andres spoke with longing for the integrated community he experienced while in high school. While attending PAHS, Andres was recognized as a violinist and a member of the gay community. In college, his identity as a violinist was recognized and valued only within the school of music and not within the gender and sexuality alliance. Consider the following quote:

Erin: How is [your college GSA] different from the one at PAHS?

Andres: I was friends with the people in the other club. Yeah, it's funny to think about that, but, yes.

Erin: Were there more musicians in the PAHS group?

Andres: Yes, absolutely! And that may have something to do with it. Being at a performing and visual arts school, we were all performing and visual arting. Whereas, in college, I'm the only [musician] in the entire club. (Interview #2)

Within his college GSA, Andres was without a music community. However, it was within the music space that Andres felt most comfortable:

Erin: How would you finish the sentence 'I am blank'?

Andres: Gay, for sure. Although, I do consider sexuality to be fluid. So, at least at this moment in time, I identify as that.

Erin: Do you identify that before you identify your musicianship?

Andres: No. Or at least I don't think I do. I think music has become more of my identity

as a person... [music] has been the space where I can be myself to the fullest. People say, 'I couldn't imagine myself doing any other thing.' But, really, I couldn't. Not just because of the love of music, but because of the safety, I guess... I think it's the culture. Just having something in common with everyone within a music space. Something that I can relate to with everyone and something that makes me the same...or normalizes me in a music space with so many things that don't, in other contexts. (Interview #1)

In college, Andres felt like his truest self within a music space. Additionally, he no longer needed as much support from the queer community as when he was in grade school. Perhaps the nostalgia reflected in Andres' description of his high school was for a more integrated community within a music space. For when both his music identity and his sexual orientation identity were recognized and valued, as they were at PAHS, Andres was at his happiest.

As discussed in Chapter II, one's identity is made up of several aspects and is ever-changing. There are many different theorists and researchers of identity. However, most who study identity will agree that individuals feel most at peace when the multiple aspects of their identities (e.g. music, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) are congruent with the different arenas of life (e.g. personal, relational, collective) (Cass, 1979; Pinto & Moleiro, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2011; Wenger, 1998). As illustrated above, Andres was happiest and most at peace when both his music identity and his sexual orientation identity were recognized and valued by other members of his communities. For participants of this study, music making helped them negotiate various aspects of their identities. Perhaps a role of music education should be to: (a) provide multiple and varied opportunities for successful music making and learning; (b) provide safe spaces for musicians to explore, express, and manage their feelings through music making; and (c) acknowledge student musicians for all that they are and validate their music making efforts.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

#### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth. Three research questions guided this inquiry:

1. How did participants describe their past and present music making experiences?
2. How did participants describe their sexual orientation and gender identity?
3. In what ways did participants' answers to questions 1 and 2 provide information on the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth?

#### **Overview of Related Literature**

There have been very few studies in music education concerning individuals who are part of the sexual and gender minority community. Even fewer are the numbers of studies about sexual and gender minority youth within music education. There are several reasons why it is important to investigate the musical experiences of this population: first, the National Association for Music Education states as its mission statement: "The mission of the National Association for Music Education is to advance music education by encouraging the study and making of music by all" (NAfME: Mission Statement, n.d.). Learning about this underrepresented community will bring music educators closer to fulfilling their mission. Second, according to findings from a 2013 national school safety survey, over 84% of LGBTQ students experience harassment at school; over 55% of LGBT students feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; and nearly 40% were physically assaulted at school due to their sexual orientation (Kosciw et al., 2014). By illuminating the experiences of young adults from the sexual and gender minority community, educators, administrators, policy officials, and other community members can gain a greater understanding of these students' daily school experiences and begin to make changes to ensure a safer, more supportive environment. Third, research that illustrates the experiences of young people within sexual and gender minority

community is needed to have a greater and more in-depth understanding of music's role, both in and out of schools.

Past research indicates that youth involvement with music making has been shown to positively affect them socially, emotionally, and psychologically in addition to musically. For example, research indicates that children recognize the value and importance of music in their lives (Kastner, 2009) and feel that music is an integral part of, and reflects the cultural identity of, American society (Campbell et al., 2007). Playing or singing in an ensemble allows adolescents to develop diverse friendships (i.e. between multiple races, ethnicities, ages, and geographical areas) and can deepen interpersonal relationships (Adderley et al., 2003; Parker, 2010, 2011). Within schools, students remark that belonging to a music ensemble helps them make new friends (Adderley et al., 2003; Campbell et al., 2007; Fetter 2011; Kuntz, 2011), allows them opportunities to be musical with others (Adderley et al., 2003; Kuntz 2011), and can create a more positive school atmosphere (P. S. Eerola & Eerola, 2013). Creating and performing music, students claim, can aid them in understanding and controlling their emotions and is ultimately an expression of their true selves (Abril, 2013; Campbell et al., 2007; Kuntz, 2011). In addition to being fun (Abril, 2013; Kuntz, 2011), some students feel that music teachers can provide additional social and academic support and help them bridge the social worlds of the music classroom, the greater school, home, and local community (Kruse, 2013).

Within music education, there are four studies in which sexual and gender minority participants reflect on their school music experiences (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hennessy, 2012; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Nichols, 2013). Participants from these studies claimed that music making aided self-expression and communication between musicians (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hennessy, 2012; Natale-Abramo, 2011; Nichols, 2013). In addition, music making and song writing provided ways for people to reflect on and express their emotions (Nichols, 2013). Physically and emotionally, the music classroom was considered a safe space within school (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011; Hennessy, 2012; Nichols, 2013) and helped unite individuals through the common goal of music making (Nichols, 2013) which increased feelings of self-worth and belonging (Hennessy, 2012).

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The subject of this study was music making experiences for sexual and gender minorities. Using qualitative methods (to be discussed in the next section), I explored and examined how the

roles of music making, as described by five individuals between the ages of 16 and 21, informed readers of the roles of music making in the lives of sexual and gender minority youth. This subject was bound in a number of ways: (a) the participants self-identified as being part of the sexual and gender minority community; (b) the participants self-identified as active music makers; and (c) the data collection occurred over a period of six months. The analytical framework was constructed from past scholarship (see Chapter II) regarding: (a) the roles of music making in the young persons' lives; (b) adolescent development; (c) identity development; (d) sexual orientation development; and (e) gender identity development.

The aim of this study was to both illustrate the contextual music making experiences of the participants as well as interpret, across the cases, what their experiences had in common: with each other and in relation to the object of this study. Finally, I explored multiple, individual case studies using parallel processes.

Other researchers within the field of LGBTQ studies have noted various troubles they encountered with either institutional review boards or school administrators when trying to gain access to work with queer students under the age of 18 (Donelson & Rogers, 2004; de Jong, 2014), this study was no exception. I created a flier to help advertise my need for study participants and distributed it in a number of locations. Snowball-sampling methods (Patton, 2001) helped distribute the flier electronically. After six months of recruiting, seven individuals between the ages of 16 and 21, living in seven cities, either agreed to participate in the study or expressed interest in participating. Two participants left the study resulting in five total participants.

### **Data Collection**

Andres, Emily, Katie, Matt, and Sam made up this diverse group of musicians. At the time of data collection, two of the participants lived in the South and five lived in the Midwest United States. I interviewed participants using an in-depth, phenomenologically-based three-interview approach (Seidman, 2006). Participants were either interviewed in person or over the Internet using Skype. The second interviews explored participants' current experiences. Prior to the interviews, I asked the participants to send me a video recording of them actively making music; the music type was to be whatever they felt represented of their current musical ventures. Videos were coded and analyzed using HyperResearch. All interviews were audio recorded and

transcribed. Data included verbal responses gathered during the interviews plus any artifacts the participants shared (e.g. pictures, recordings, live music making, journals, etc.).

There were three stages of analysis guided primarily by Thomas (2011a). In the first stage, I individually analyzed each case. In stage two, I conducted a cross-case analysis in light of the common phenomenon using examples gathered from the single-case analyses. Lastly, after an interpretation of common themes, I made an assertion about the phenomena while considering the purpose of this study (Barrett, 2014).

### **Findings**

Findings were presented as individual profiles in Chapter IV, and as cross-case themes in Chapters V and VI. Chapter IV findings were presented as narratives to better capture the personalities of the participants. Findings included: (a) school music classrooms provided participants with a safe space and an emotional break from school bullying; (b) a common musical goal helped unite musicians and created a diversion from what participants were otherwise bullied; (c) performance of self-composed music helped participants understand their feelings and validated their feelings; (d) music making helped participants express emotions without having to say them out loud; and (e) increased music making skills helped participants enjoy making music more.

### **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

Participants experienced several commonalities when negotiating sexual orientation and gender identity. First, participants experienced feelings of difference that intensified for them between the ages of 10 and 13. Social roles, especially concerning dating and relationships, started to change and be more clearly defined. Physical changes and feelings of dysphoria prompted some participants to question their gender identity.

To better understand and explain their feelings, participants used the Internet to ask questions, connect with other sexual and gender minorities, and to practice coming out. Participants' coming out experiences, and subsequent reactions, varied among each other. However, all participants felt that their parents began to accept them with time.

Additional commonalities included: (a) participants thought of sexual orientation as something fluid that may change over time; (b) participants viewed sexual attraction and romantic attraction as two separate elements of sexual orientation; (c) participants regularly

heard instances of homophobic speech; and (d) participants felt that labels of sexual orientation and gender identity were both helpful and problematic.

### **Roles of Music Making**

Cross-case analysis revealed several shared themes among participants' experiences. Participants used music making to negotiate their feelings in three ways: (a) to understanding feelings; (b) to express feelings; and (c) to manage feelings. First, participants said that they were able to make sense of feelings that were confusing or unidentifiable before making music; music making was a way for participants to work through personal feelings in ways that words were not able. Music making also helped participants face their feelings in a safe and productive way. Participants often referred to music making as "therapy" as it was a safe and productive way to explore their emotions.

Second, music making was used to express feelings and communicate with others. Participants said that music making validated their feelings and efforts and they felt heard while performing. Some enjoyed feeling connected to the audience while others enjoyed connecting with other musicians through group music making experiences. Participants were also able to subtly and overtly share their feelings by performing their self-composed songs. Third, music making helped participants manage their feelings. Most often, participants shared that making music helped them relieve stress, find an inner calmness, and have fun. Additionally, making music created an emotional, psychological, and depending on the rehearsal space, a physical refuge from bullying and harassment.

The music selection, difficulty of music, and the technical abilities of the participants affected how effective music making was in helping participants negotiate their feelings. The more technical skills a participant had on an instrument, the easier time they had using music making to express the complexity of their emotions. The greater technical skills of a participant determined the complexity of the music in which they could engage, which was an important factor in how much a participant became engaged in their music making. If participants felt the music was too easy for them, they were not able to connect to the music. If the music was challenging, but technically within reach so that they could focus on musicality (e.g. tone colors, articulation nuances, etc.), participants were able to lose themselves in the performance and "forget" the outside world.



Music making also influenced identity development. There were three interactive components of music making that contributed to participants' identity negotiation: community, success, and validation. First, participants needed to feel part of a community that also valued music making. Second, participants needed to experience musical success and feel that they were good at making music. Lastly, when other members of their communities positively recognized participants' music making efforts, they felt validated as musicians and as queer individuals.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

It has been six years since the first LGBTQ Studies & Music Education conference, yet the amount of music education research regarding members of the sexual and gender minority community remains shockingly small. To better serve the sexual and gender minority in educational settings, teachers need an in-depth understanding of lived experiences of sexual and gender minority students and teachers. A purpose of this study was to create a space within music education research for the voices of queer youth. More qualitative research, narrative studies in particular, is needed to best capture the voices of, and illustrate the daily experiences of, queer student musicians and music educators. In addition, more studies of sexual and gender minorities are needed to educate institutional review boards and K-12 school administrators of the unique needs of the queer population so future studies do not experience the challenges I faced.

Emily, Katie, Matt, and Sam discussed the benefits of different art and sport activities, such as painting, acting, and volleyball. What are the similarities and differences between music making and these other activities in the negotiation of feelings? Do some activities lend themselves better for self-expression? Do some forms of music making lend themselves better to expression, such as improvisation or song-writing? Considering that technical ability affected participants' abilities to emotionally connect with their music making, how might the ways in which beginning music makers use music to negotiate feelings differ from more advanced music makers? Could music making be used as mindfulness or meditation practice? What are the roles of music making for other demographics?

Quantitative research methods are also needed to provide music educators with the "bigger queer picture," so to speak. What are the current demographics of queer student musicians and music teachers in public and private schools? What elements of school music programs best help queer students feel safe and supported? Lastly, what are the effects of teacher

characteristics, music selection, or inclusion of queer-focused curricula on students' feelings of safety and support in the music classroom?

### **Recommendations for Practice**

During our final focus group interview, I asked participants to provide suggestions for music educators. Interestingly, all of the participants' suggestions revolved around K-12 school experiences, not about private lesson teachers, community music ensemble directors, or chamber music instructors. Therefore, my suggestions for practice will also mainly focus on K-12 schools.

#### **Curriculum-Focused Recommendations**

**Keep providing excellent musical education!** Katie spoke fondly of her teachers that provided her with musical challenges that were within her abilities, yet helped her grow as a musician. "All of my music teachers have pushed me to do harder things than I think I can do...I realized that I really enjoyed the fact that I kept playing all of these challenging pieces" (Katie, Interview #1). Providing within-reach musical challenges and maintaining high expectations provided Katie and others with a sense of accomplishment and confidence. Motivation scholars have also found that children are more likely to engage in future challenges if they can attribute past successes to their efforts and feel that they are equipped with the necessary skills to accomplish a task (Ames, 1992; Eccels, 1983; Weiner, 1985).

**Choose quality literature.** Participants enjoyed programmatic literature or pieces that had interesting historical connections. For example, one of Katie's most vivid music making moments was playing a piece for concert band titled *When the Clowns Cried* by Quincy Hilliard. The programmatic piece is a tribute to the tragic Ringling Bros. Circus fire in 1944. Katie passionately described, in detail, particularly emotional moments from the piece:

...you hear the tent start to catch on fire. And the woodwinds are the shock of the audience, like 'what's going on?' Then the horns (I was on horn for that one) you get the siren call of the fire trucks. And then you have this giant disgusting chord as the crash happens; that was like everyone decides to stampede out. Then it went into this really, really sad, minor rendition of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, kind of like everyone's mourning for the people that died. And it's just...*gorgeous!* It made you want to cry, but it was beautiful...It was like [sighs, deeply]. That was my favorite thing about music, as a whole; when you get good pieces and it's just like, 'Forget everything else! Forget that you have a midterm tomorrow. You're going to play this.' (Interview #1)

The programmatic element helped Katie connect emotionally with the music.

As all music ensemble teachers know, if students do not like a piece, they will not work on it. However, if they like a piece, they are extremely motivated to work on it and they may

connect with it on a deeper level. Participants of this study spoke about pieces that moved them: often, they contained a new technical or musical concept to challenge them; they were musically interesting to play and listen to; they were fun to play or sing; and they were well written.

**Provide a variety of music making experiences and music course offerings.** I believe that schools would better serve their students if they were to offer more variety in music course offerings. As illustrated by Emily and Matt, music composition and song writing, culminating in performance, can be particularly helpful in understanding and expressing confusing feelings. music making experiences that encourage composition and song writing, culminating in performance. Within a traditional performance classroom, chamber music encourages musicians to connect differently from how they connect in a large ensemble. For example, consider Andres' statement:

Erin: What's your favorite way to make music.

Andres: [thinks] Chamber music.

Erin: Why so?

Andres: The sound, definitely. The intimacy, the intimacy of the sound. You can hear everything more clearly in a chamber situation, I think, than in orchestra. The timbre is obviously different from a string section to one violin and viola and cello. But, it's so different... I don't know what it is. It's electrifying, chamber music, because of the fact that so much depends on so few people instead of a full orchestra and a conductor making all the decisions. (Interview #2)

Providing a variety of music making experiences helped participants connect with their music making in different ways. More recent music education scholarship also supports this point through its discussion of vernacular, or non-traditional, music making experiences (Green, 2005, 2008; Kastner, 2014; Woody & Parker, 2012).

### **Pedagogy-Focused Recommendations**

**Do not gloss over hard subjects, but be mindful of students' comfort-levels.** Several stories shared by participants concerned instances when matters of sexual orientation or gender identity arose in school, but were awkwardly handled, or not addressed. For example, after winning the audition for concert master, Andres received a phone call from his director congratulating him on being the first openly gay concert master in the history of the ensemble. As a sophomore, Andres felt uncomfortable with his teacher acknowledging this aspect of his identity. Other participants also recalled some of their teachers trying to connect with them about their sexuality. Though they appreciated their efforts, they felt uncomfortable in the manner in

which they tried to do so (e.g. through Twitter or Facebook; phone calls to students' cell or home phones; making jokes in class).

Based on participants' stories, trying to acknowledge matters of sexual orientation or gender identity in the classroom is important and appreciated, but the manner in which teachers do so should be dependent on the individual student, their stage of development (e.g. are they particularly focused on how others perceive them, as middle school students are apt to be?), and how relevant the matters of sexual orientation or gender identity are to the topic at hand. To better illustrate, I share another of Andres' stories of playing Tchaikovsky in a youth orchestra:

Andres: In youth orchestra we played, my senior year, the Tchaikovsky 6th. And my director reached out to me saying that he wanted to talk about Tchaikovsky's homosexuality; he was kind of going to me as, not a representative, just a source, I guess. He made a big deal, in rehearsal, whenever we were getting to a particularly impassioned section in the music, pausing and talking about that. Which was cool, but also like 'OK' [a little uncomfortable].

Erin: Talking about the fact that he was gay and repressed?

Andres: Yeah, that Tchaikovsky was gay and, you know, the persecution and the inner turmoil and all of that stuff and how that's all over the music...which I think people do, too much.

Erin: How did you feel that he came to you, though, on the side?

Andres: It was a little weird, I have to admit. I just thought, "That's great that you want to be so inclusive. But at the same, that's just like...*gay* [chuckles]."

As we have seen, participants felt that their sexual orientation was just part of their identities. In an instance like the one portrayed above, teachers may want to ask themselves how they would have liked their teachers to bring up their sexuality; ask themselves whether they discuss *other* composers' sexual orientations and if so, how? If teachers do decide to address matters of sexuality or gender identity, for educational purposes, be aware of how the lesson may be received in different spaces (i.e. privately or with the entire class). If unsure of the best way in which to do so, I recommend consulting models of youth development (see Chapter II) or online resources such as [glsen.org](http://glsen.org) or [pflag.org](http://pflag.org).

**Teaching is more than relaying content!** In Chapter IV, Matt recalled feeling alone in middle school: "I just felt like I was surrounded by people who did not understand what I was going through and I just wanted to talk to someone. And there wasn't really anybody available" (Interview #1). This is just one example of the many roles students need their teachers to occupy. Edgar (2012, 2015) suggests that interacting with support personal (e.g. counselors,

psychologists) and consciously engaging in interpersonal communication with students by having “open-door” policies will benefit students and strengthen the student-teacher bond.

**Listen more; listen better.**

I asked all my middle school teachers to call me Matt and use male pronouns. Some were more cool than others. I had one teacher who was weird about it and then he stopped being weird about it. I talked to him and he's like, ‘Oh, I talked to this other teacher and I realized you were being serious, 'cause a lot of kids do like, whatever...’ I don't know. He kind of had one of those kids-are -shits kind of attitudes. I had a fifth grade teacher named Mr. Jensen and he was fabulous. If there was an adult who had really understood kids and legitimized their opinions, you know... So there are good people out there! [laughs] I just think there's a lot of teachers who need to be a little bit more open. (Matt, Interview #1)

Past scholarship on an ethics of care in education and music education (Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Bates, 2004 & 2009; Edgar, 2014) indicates that teachers that model listening, caring, and empathy benefit their students and provide students with the skills to care for others. As illustrated by Matt’s above quote, he needed his teachers to be more than purveyors of knowledge; he needed to feel listened to and cared for while at school. In the above quote, even if Matt’s teacher believed that he was joking or being flippant in his requests, his teacher would have done better to try to understand *why* Matt would have taken the time to ask his teachers to address him differently. Matt expanded upon the above quote during the focus group interview when I asked the participants for suggestions for school officials:

I realize that a lot of the problems I had with the teachers that claimed to be accepting in high school were that they just didn't *listen* to students. Sometimes you just need to sit there and listen to somebody share their experience, share what's happening, even if you don't completely understand it. Being able to listen to teens’ experiences and acknowledge [their experiences] as legitimate instances. (Matt, Focus Group)

Participants also appreciated the teachers’ efforts to be accommodating to their needs and particular situations, such as allowing a change in performance uniform or allowing a student to eat lunch in the safety of the music classroom. In the following quote, Sam describes the challenges one of their friends faced when requesting to use a different gender bathroom:

I mean there are gender-neutral bathrooms for the teachers in the halls and I think letting him use those or letting him use the men’s room would have been nice. I understand why they did what they did, but I know he had some problems with the principal feeling like he already knew everything there was to know about transgender issues and not listening to the actual transgender person who is trying to explain things to him. (Sam, Interview #1)

Katie also discussed her desire for teachers to be more accommodating.

Katie: I took them [piano lessons] until 9th grade. I did piano competitions in middle school and 9th grade and 10th grade, but then I kind of got into volleyball, a little bit. I broke my fingers and my piano teacher got really mad! I broke 3 of them and she was like ‘no!’ and I stopped taking piano lessons.

Erin: Because of her reaction, or because of the fingers, or because you just decided it was time?

Katie: I decided I wanted to do volleyball [chuckling] instead of piano. (Interview #1)

Katie’s piano teacher did not recognize the need for Katie to try new experiences and presented Katie with an either/or choice. Had Katie’s teacher accommodated Katie’s new interest in volleyball, Katie may have continued piano lessons, an activity she greatly enjoyed.

**Call out bullying!** Participants’ suggestions for practice, as stated above, stressed a greater need for teachers and other school officials to be vigilant of bullying in schools and to stop bullying when witnessed. Participants knew which teachers would turn a blind eye, so to speak, and which would work to create a safer learning environment by calling out those who bullying, among students and other staff members. Sam recalled one teacher who promised to support Sam and their girlfriend if they encountered any problems purchasing tickets to attend prom: “There was one teacher who basically told [us] ‘if they give you any trouble about this form or don’t want to let you go, I will walk down there in a righteous fury and let them have it!’” (Interview #1). Similarly, Katie spoke about bullying in a more global sense:

A general suggestion for any teacher, anywhere, would be to keep your eyes open for any sort of bullying. Not just bullying of LGBT kids. But if you see something happening, speak up for the kid and make sure that the kid knows that they can talk to you. (Katie, Focus Group)

Past literature also states the importance of school officials halting bullying behaviors as well as engaging in “whole-school” anti-bullying programs (e.g. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program) that aim to educate students and staff, decrease bullying, and improve school climate. emergent studies of peer-to-peer bullying indicate that more educational, whole-school approaches yield greater successes in preventing and reducing the number of reported instances of bullying (Kosciw et al., 2009; Payne & Smith, 2013). Payne and Smith (2013) propose a new definition of “bullying” and call for schools to examine their building culture and address beliefs, values, and rituals that reinforce gender conformity and heterosexuality (e.g. prom).

**Create a safe space.** All participants mentioned specific teachers, especially music teachers, who created safe spaces for their for them to “be” during the school day, and who

valued their contributions to the class, musical and otherwise. In the following quote, Andres describes how his relationships with his teachers prevented him from feeling lonely.

Andres: I was better friends with the teachers around me than with the students; I mean, thank God for them.

Erin: Is there a particular teacher that comes to mind?

Andres: There are so many, honestly. But, just the safety, I think.

Erin: You felt safe in their classrooms?

Andres: Yes. I think I would gain their trust by being a good student and then being comfortable with them just happened through that. The bullying was there at school and then at home but, I don't know, [at school] it was solace. It wasn't solitude. (Interview #1)

Participants in Fitzpatrick and Hansen (2011) also addressed the importance of having safe spaces, and the teachers who create them, within the greater school environment. As one participant said:

...[The school district] had its own its own little champions in it that made it possible for students like myself to make it through without completely losing it, who we knew that we could be safe around, not specifically to talk about queer stuff, it's just we could be in that room and nothing would happen to us. (Fitzpatrick & Hansen, 2011, p. 26)

When I asked participants for suggestions for the teaching profession, the topic of creating a safe space was talked about more than any other topic. Andres and Sam felt that promoting some spaces as “safe”, often with a sticker or poster, was a positive *initial* step for their high schools:

Andres: At my school, while I was with a gay, lesbian, straight network, we brought safe space kits. It's basically an information packet. It even includes some basic curriculum for teachers to offer: the sticker, the poster, and all of these things. And even though there were still instances of micro-aggressions and things like that, as long as there's a support system there, I think that's better than nothing. Things are still going to happen. But as long as there are people who are informed, and people who are going to call it out, I think that's at least a step in the right direction. (Focus Group)

Sam [in response to Andres]: There is something along those lines at my school. It's pretty low-key, but if you're looking for it or if you need it, you'll see the sticker in certain teacher's rooms. I think that's a good thing and that it should be advertised more. A lot of students and a lot of teachers don't know that they can get one. But yeah, I think it's a good thing. (Focus Group)

Matt, remembering his experiences, did not feel that stickers or posters were enough to help students *feel* safe while in school:

Matt: And I remember they put up [uses air quotes] ‘safe space’ stickers, but it was so not true. It was like really shitty.

Erin: How did you get that feeling that it was not true?

Matt: Because I think that people put up those stickers when they are like, [sarcastically] ‘I am not a homophobic person, or a trans phobic person. And I’ll mostly try to be respectful towards you.’ But then, when other kids are shitty to you, they don’t really do anything about that. Sometimes teachers make up their minds that they are accepting people, but they don’t realize that your role as an ally is more than just being [uses air quotes] ‘accepting.’ Especially as a teacher. I think, as a teacher, you have to set an example, one hundred percent. And I think a lot teachers didn’t do that. (Interview #1)

One way in which teachers could help create feelings of safety beyond the music classroom is by starting a gay-straight alliance (GSA) in their schools. Emily and Katie lamented that they did not have access to a GSA while they were in high school; Sam’s school (Emily’s former high school) started a GSA at the same time this study began. Both Andres and Matt were presidents of their schools’ alliance chapters and spoke highly of the affects the GSAs had on their development and the school environment.

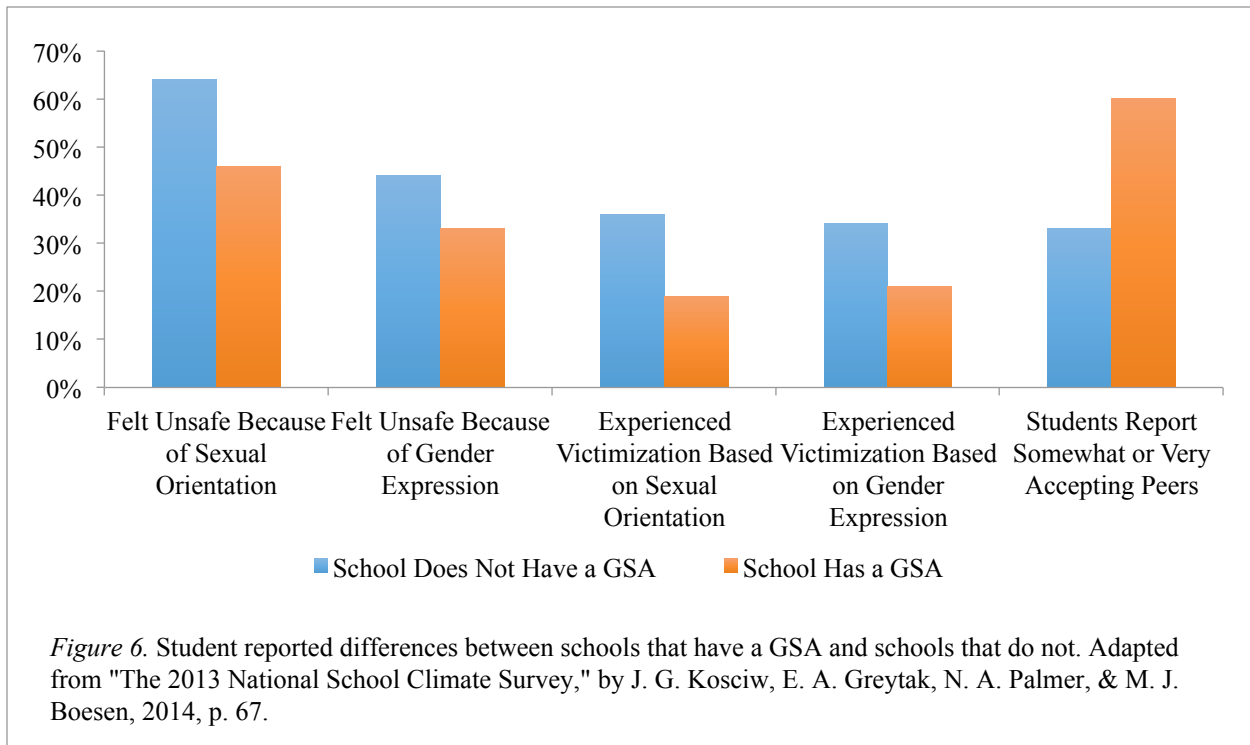
We found the purpose of our club was to educate people more and create a safe space to talk about the marginalized community, even within our own community at PAHS<sup>18</sup>. So gender non-conforming students or trans students, or people going through those things and those narratives that don’t resonate as well for uninformed or un-open people. We would host events, speakers, but mainly it was a discussion-based group. So, we would either talk about a current event or some sort of LGBT history thing. We wrote letters to presenters, trans prisoners; sort of [an] activism factor as well as a social factor within the club. And eventually gender and sexuality from that grew the transgender-cisgender alliance. So, I think just the fact of that club is evidence that we achieved something. (Andres, Interview #1)

Survey data (Kosciw et al., 2014) indicates that only half of LGBT students attend schools that have a GSA or similar club that addresses LGBT issues in education (p. 55) and approximately 18% of students were restricted from forming a GSA (p. xvii). Figure 5 illustrates just a small number of advantages students receive from belonging to a high school that has a GSA. There are several online resources on starting a GSA within schools. Those interested in more information may consider such organizations as GLSEN.org, gsanetwork.org, and aclu.org; search for “GSA.”

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<sup>18</sup> PAHS is a pseudonym for the performing arts high school Andres attended.





**GSAs: serve your population!** Even though Matt knew of out gay teachers in his middle school, he recalled feeling like they would not understand his troubles and feelings as a transgender man:

I wonder what I would feel like if I talked to her now. Our health teacher was very openly gay and I guess she was very welcoming, I don't know...for some reason, I remember thinking maybe she wouldn't understand what I was going through because maybe she only dealt with things related to people's sexuality. That's like the thought that I had... Thinking back of all the stuff she said, I actually think that she was friendly to anybody in the LGBTQ community and was really involved, but I hadn't even thought about that. (Matt, Interview #1)

As a member, and later a president, of his school's alliance chapter, Andres worked hard with the members of his GSA to create a diverse social support group within his school, which eventually expanded into a separate transgender-cisgender alliance.

We tried to be as informative and inclusive as possible...within the LGBT community there is still heavy erasure and silencing of transgender people or asexual people or intersex people. So, I think that infiltrated, in a way, what we were doing regardless of our intent. But we had an evolutionary process, I guess, or we had a growing stage. Because in the beginning, I didn't have all of this knowledge going into it and a lot of us didn't, so of course our first issue was marriage equality and then, eventually, we started steering away...like, 'This isn't an issue for youth. We need to be thinking about different things, and having more important conversations.' (Andres, Interview #1)

As learned from my discussions with Matt and Sam, gender identity development *is* different than the development of one's sexual orientation, though they can appear to be one and the same. Transgender students need safe, supportive spaces in which to talk with other students also struggling to identify their feelings.

**Be a[n out] role model.** Students need queer role models. Survey data (Kosciw, 2014) indicates that LGBT students feel most comfortable talking to teachers about queer-matters than other school officials:

The presence of LGBT school personnel who are out or open at school about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity may provide another source of support for LGBT students. In addition, the number of out LGBT personnel may provide a visible sign of a more supportive and accepting school climate. (Kosciw, 2014, p. 61).

Additionally queer music teachers need support from heterosexual and cisgender colleagues to be out in the workplace. Without putting themselves in places of danger, teachers who are members of the sexual and gender minority need to “live out” so that queer students know who they can trust, confide in, and consider a model of success.

**Teachers need resources.** Both Andres and Matt experienced bullying while in middle school. Unfortunately, they could also recall instances of teachers turning a blind eye to student bullying. Many teachers do not know how to support sexual and gender minority students; how to intervene when queer students are being bullied; how to respond when students come out to them; how to respond to students who do not have family support; or how to create activities that promote exploration and expression of feelings, for all students.

Music teachers often have a closer relationship with their students than teachers of other subjects because they work with them, year after year. Because of this, music teachers need professional development on how best to acknowledge and support queer students; however, *all* teachers would benefit from such education. College and university campuses often have LGBTQ-support organizations that offer sensitivity training. Teacher educators and pre-service teachers would benefit from attending these training sessions. In-service teachers can also request that an anti-bullying program facilitator be brought in for their school's professional development training. Finally, GLSEN.org (the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) has many online resources available for both students and teachers.

## Final Thoughts

This study began with personal reflections of my past experiences as a gay musician and educator. In working with Andres, Emily, Katie, Matt, and Sam, who bravely and thoughtfully shared their stories, I not only learned about their experiences as queer musicians and students in today's world, I gained perspective and a greater understanding of the roles of music making during my developmental years.

As discussed in Chapter III, I faced several challenges in trying to work with a “vulnerable” population (i.e. queer students under the age of 18). Studies about sexual and gender minorities are minimal within music education; I fear that the opposition I faced will continue to marginalize this area of research and group of peoples. Mustanski (2011) encouraged those who work with sexual and gender minority youth to “document participant comfort with research participation, innumerate any negative consequences, and characterize the benefits. These findings need to be published and synthesized so that they can be included in IRB applications” (p. 683). I would like to respond to Mustanski's call to action by sharing feedback I received from participants about being part of this study.

Andres: Wow. Just wow. It's strange to see all of this on paper, but it all looks great! Thank you so much for taking the time to get this information accurately and safely. I feel like I should have been paying you for our conversations and for this experience, because it's taught me so much about myself and music-making/identity in general. (Email Communications)

Emily: I liked [being a part of the study]. At first it was a little weird because I didn't know you and I just had to talk to you via Skype. Other than that, though, I thought it was kind of cool to find a little community within a community. (Focus Group)

Katie: Yeah, I also thought [being a participant] was good. It also made me think about my experience with music and my own sexuality more, which I hadn't really done before. (Focus Group)

Being a participant in a qualitative, social-science research study can be awkward, even difficult at times, depending on the subject matter. Having been a participant, I speak from personal experience. Before I met the participants of this study, I worried about a number of things: “What if they are uncomfortable talking to me? What if they feel that my questions are too personal and want to leave the study? What if their experiences were nothing like mine?” After the first round of interviews, I could not help but marvel at the bravery of these young people. Without ever having met in person, Andres, Emily, Katie, Matt, and Sam entrusted me with deeply personal information. Each person was reflective, open, and candid in their

responses. In addition, participants formed their own community among each other and continued to communicate, outside this study. The maturity of these five young people struck me as special, which prompted me to share these thoughts with Matt during our second interview; the following quote is his response to my musings:

When you have an identity that is discriminated against, or not completely accepted in our society, it brings you to a deeper part of yourself...I pride myself on the fact that I feel like I've experienced a lot of different forms of life, throughout my life, trying to play different roles. And whether or not those roles were me or not me, I still played them and I understand how socially I interacted in them. And I think I feel a little bit more enlightened in that sense...In a way, being queer gives you a wider understanding of different aspects of the world. I think that when you are queer, you are drawn to artistic endeavors because it's the freest form of expression you can have...it's a form of expression when you are unable to express something. (Matt, Interview #2)

Perhaps Matt was right: is insight a by-product of personal discrimination?

It was never a purpose of this study to generalize findings to the greater field of music education, but to create a forum for five young people to share their personal experiences as musicians within the sexual and gender minority community. I have been asked, "What is the point of studying such a specialized, small group of people?" As a response, I would like to quote a passage from *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Though Guinier and Torres speak of race, the analogy is also effective for members of the sexual and gender minority community, or as Matt said, any group who has faced discrimination.

Miners often carried a canary into the mine alongside them. The canary's more fragile respiratory system would cause it to collapse from noxious gases long before humans were affected, thus alerting the miners to danger. The canary's distress signaled that it was time to get out of the mine because the air was becoming too poisonous to breathe.

Those who are racially marginalized are like the miner's canary: their distress is the first sign of a danger that threatens us all. It is easy enough to think that when we sacrifice this canary, the only harm is to communities of color. Yet others ignore problems that converge around racial minorities at their own peril, for these problems are symptoms warning us that we are all at risk. (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 11)

The participants of this study are like the miner's canary. To the five canaries: thank you. May we learn from your experiences and collectively work to make our spaces, musically and otherwise, a better place for us all. I hope that the knowledge gained from your stories will benefit not only sexual and gender minority youth, but extend beyond to members of the greater music making community.

## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A**

### **IRB Requested Changes**

#### **Requested Changes Regarding Privacy**

You have provided information about how you will protect the confidentiality of the data, but not how you will protect the privacy of participants. Privacy is the right of an individual to determine with whom, under what circumstances and what personal information will be shared. Privacy is a particular concern with focus groups. (3/2/15)

You have provided information about how you will protect the confidentiality of the data, but not how you will protect the privacy of participants... Please note: Confidentiality and Privacy are different concepts. Maintaining confidentiality of the data is the responsibility of the investigator. Privacy is the right of the subject. Please elaborate on PRIVACY. (3/20/15)

The privacy question is tricky, especially for focus groups. You should describe the setting and how you will protect the focus group from being overheard. (3/24/15)

#### **Requested Changes Regarding Informed Consent**

The reading level is too high. Write your ICDs at 6th to 8th grade level. Doing so is especially important for the parent permission. Use simple sentences. Do not use compound sentences. Use simple language. Do not use passive voice. (3/2/15)

The language level of both the assents and the parent permission forms remain too high - at about 11+ grade reading level. Since you are writing to children and their parents, you must reduce the complexity of the documents. (3/20/15)

I've reread the assents and permission and think that they are okay. (3/24/15)

Why are [you] collecting Date of Birth? (4/6/15)

Appendix B  
Recruitment Flier

# MUSICIANS NEEDED

Greetings!

My name is Erin Hansen and I'm a doctoral student at the **University of Michigan** and a professor at the **University of Houston**. I'm looking for **MUSICIANS**, ages 14 - 21, who are part of the **LGBTQQIA** community to be part of a **ground-breaking** study I'm conducting for my dissertation. The study would involve being part of a two-hour group discussion about what music-making means to you. This study is approved and monitored by the **University of Michigan** and is completely *confidential*. If you would like more information, please email me at the address below.

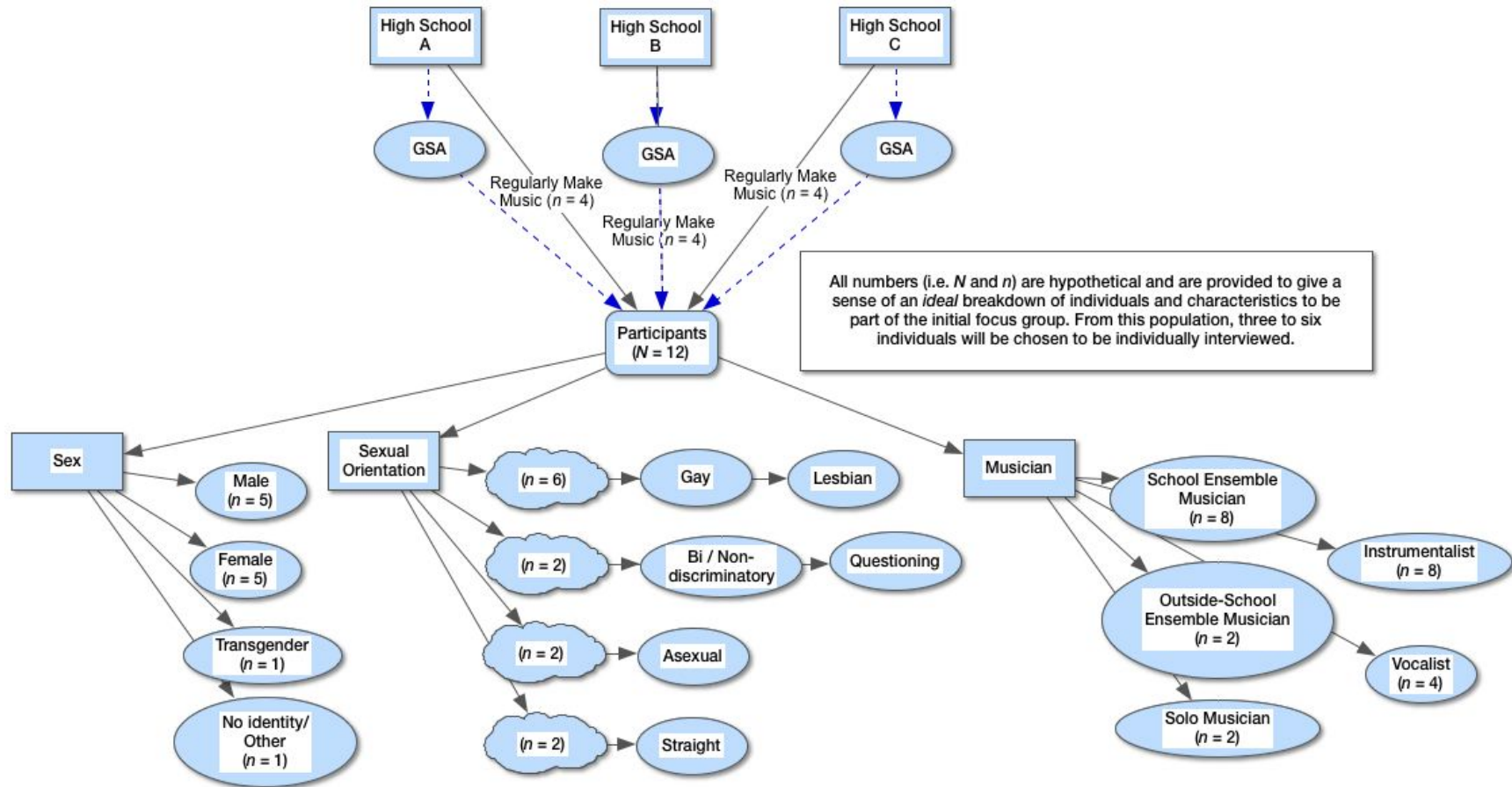
Thanks!

Erin Hansen

[erinhans@umich.edu](mailto:erinhans@umich.edu)

## Appendix C

### Ideal Breakdown of Participants





## **Appendix D**

### **Letters of Informed Consent**

#### **Letter of Informed Consent: Under 18 Years**

##### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

Principal Investigator: Erin Hansen, M.M., doctoral student in Department of Music Education, University of Michigan; erinhans@umich.edu; 734-395-5004

**Faculty Supervisor: Colleen Conway, EdD., Department of Music Education, University of Michigan; conwaycm@umich.edu; 734-615-4105**

Greetings! My name is Erin Hansen and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Music Education at the University of Michigan. Prior to graduate school, I taught orchestra, guitar, and fiddle music to fifth through twelfth grade students. Currently, I teach music education at the University of Houston. I enjoy working with student musicians and discovering what music making means to them.

##### **An Invitation**

You are invited to be a part of a research project that I am conducting in order to complete the needed requirements for an advanced degree. This project looks at what music making means for individuals who identify as a sexual minority. I hope to use the information I learn from talking with musicians to educate teachers, school officials, and policy makers so they can make changes to ensure a more supportive environment for sexual minority students. I am asking you to participate in this study because you are an active music maker and a member of the sexual minority community.

##### **Description of Your Involvement**

If you agree to be part of this research study, I will interview you individually three times. In the first interview, I will ask questions about your past musical experiences: how you started making music, what music meant to you when you were younger. I will also ask you how you started to identify yourself as a sexual minority. This interview will take place over the Internet through Skype or University of Michigan's sponsored BlueJeans software; I will help you get set up with the technology.

In the second interview, I will ask you to describe your current music making experiences and day-to-day experiences. Prior to this interview, I would like to observe you in a music making session. This could be an in-person observation or a something you video record and share with me. You would choose what environment you most enjoy whether it is practicing alone, in a school music class, during band practice; we can discuss this later. Then, during the second interview, I will ask you questions about this observation such as how you felt during the session and how it compares to other music making experiences. This interview would take place in person.

In the final interview, I will ask you to share with me your thoughts on being a part of this study. This interview will take place over the Internet, similarly to the first interview. The first two interviews will last about one hour, each. The third interview will take about 30

minutes. I will audio record the interviews and transcribe them afterwards. The format of the third interview may also take the form of a virtual focus group depending on your level of comfort in talking with other study participants; you will be given a choice as to which interview format you would prefer after the second interview.

#### Benefits

**You may not receive a direct benefit from participating in this study. However, some people find sharing their stories to be a valuable experience.**

#### Risks and discomforts

Sometimes, answering personal questions may be uncomfortable. You may choose not to answer any discussion question and you can stop your participation in an interview at any time.

**While unlikely, there is a chance that another member of a focus group could reveal something they learned about you during the discussion. All focus group members are asked to respect the privacy of the other group members. You may tell others that you were in a focus group and the general topic of the discussion, but actual names and stories of other participants should not be repeated.**

#### Confidentiality

**I plan to publish the results of this study. I will not include any information that would identify you or people you discuss during the focus group. I will keep your information safe. The recordings and any notes I make will be stored on a computer that is password-protected and encrypted. In addition, all information pertaining to the study will be backed up on a cloud-based server that is protected through the University of Michigan. Your real name will not be used in the written copy of the discussion; I will give you a pseudonym to help protect your identity.**

**After each interview you will have the opportunity to read its transcripts. You will also be able to read what I write about you in the final paper before I submit it for review. Each time, I encourage you to tell me if there are mistakes or if I misquote you. Additionally, you can ask me to remove any sections about you from the study that you would prefer not to share. I plan to keep this study data to use for future research about musicians within the sexual minority community.**

**There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to your information. The people work for the University of Michigan to make sure this research is done safely and properly. Also, if you share something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed we may report that information to the appropriate agencies.**

#### Voluntary nature of the study

**Your guardians have given permission for you to participate in this study, though it is completely up to you whether you want to be in the study. Even if your parents or guardians say you can talk to me, you do not have to do so. Even if you say yes, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may also choose to not answer a question for any reason.**

**Please review your rights:**

1. I understand that informed consent is required of me.
2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop participating in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
3. Any risks or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Erin Hansen at [erinhans@umich.edu](mailto:erinhans@umich.edu) or 734-395-5004.

**If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 2800 Plymouth Rd. Building 520, Room 1169, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800; 734-936-0933, or toll free 866-936-0933; [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).**

**Assent**

**By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. I will give you a copy of this document and will keep a copy in my records. Be sure that I have answered your questions about the study and you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact me if you think of a question later.**

*I agree to participate in this study. As part of my consent, I agree to be audio and video recorded.*

---

**Signature**

**Date**

**Date of Birth (xx/xx/xxxx)**

## Letter of Informed Consent: Guardian

### Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

My name is Erin Hansen and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Music Education at the University of Michigan. My faculty advisor is Dr. Colleen Conway, also in the Department of Music Education at U of M. Prior to graduate school, I taught orchestra, guitar, and fiddle music to fifth through twelfth grade students. Currently, I teach music education at the University of Houston. I enjoy working with young musicians and discovering what music making means to them.

**An Invitation.** Your child is invited to participate in a research project I am conducting in order to complete the needed requirements for an advanced degree. The purpose of this study is to explore what music making means to individuals who identify as being a sexual minority. You and your child are being contacted because your child is an active music maker and has identified himself or herself as a member of the sexual minority community to someone who knew of this study and helped put us in contact. The University of Michigan Human Research Protection Program has reviewed this study to ensure participant safety. Please consider giving your consent by signing this form.

**What does this mean for your child?** I would like to talk with your child about their experiences with music making. If you consent to his or her participation of this research study, I will interview your child individually three times. In the first interview, I will ask questions about past musical experiences: how your child started making music, what music meant to him or her when younger. I will also ask how your child started to identify as a sexual minority. This interview will take place over the Internet through Skype or University of Michigan's sponsored BlueJeans software; I will help set up your child with the proper technology.

In the second interview, I will ask your child to describe his or her current music making experiences and school experiences. Prior to this interview, I would like to observe your child in a music making session. This could be an in-person observation or a something he or she video records and shares with me. Then, during the second interview, I will ask questions about this observation such as how he or she felt during the session and how it compares to other music making experiences. This interview would take place in person.

In the final interview, I will ask your child to share with me thoughts on being a part of this study. This interview will take place over the Internet, similarly to the first interview. The first two interviews will last about one hour, each. The third interview will take about 30 minutes. I will audio record the interviews and transcribe them afterwards. The format of the third interview may also take the form of a virtual focus group depending on your child's level of comfort in talking with other study participants; he or she will be given a choice as to his or her preferred interview format after the second interview.

**What does this mean for your child?** Taking part in this study is voluntary and you or your child may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time. Additionally, your child may choose not to answer any discussion questions that make him or her uncomfortable. While your child may not directly benefit from participating in this study, I believe that this study will provide important information for educators, school officials, and policy makers so they can make changes to

ensure a more supportive environment for sexual minority students. In addition, some people find sharing their stories to be a valuable experience.

**Confidentiality.** I plan to publish the results of this study. However, I will not include any information that would identify your child and will assign a pseudonym to help protect his or her identity. I will keep all information safe; the recordings and any notes I make will be stored on a computer that is password-protected and encrypted. In addition, all information pertaining to the study will be backed up on a cloud-based server that is protected through the University of Michigan.

After each interview your child will have the opportunity to read its transcripts. He or she will also be able to read in the final paper before I submit it for review. Each time, I will encourage your child to tell me if there are mistakes or if I misquote him or her. Additionally, your child can ask me to remove any sections he or she would prefer not to share.

I plan to keep this study data to use for future research about adolescent musicians. During and after the study, I will maintain your child's confidentiality within legal limits.

**Please review your rights:**

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.
2. I have been told that my child may refuse to participate or to stop participating in this project at any time before or during the project. My child may refuse to answer any question.
3. Any risks or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my child's participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Erin Hansen at [erinhans@umich.edu](mailto:erinhans@umich.edu) or 734-395-5004.

If you have questions about your child's rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 2800 Plymouth Rd. Building 520, Room 1169, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800; 734-936-0933, or toll free 866-936-0933; [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).

**Statement of Consent**

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions to my satisfaction. I give consent for my child to participate in this study. As part of my consent, I agree to allow my child to be audio and video recorded.

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow my child to participate in the second stage of this research project:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to have my child audio recorded:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for considering your child for participation in my research project! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I will give you a copy of this document and will also keep a copy in my records.

I look forward to learning about the musical experiences of your child!

Sincerely,

Erin M. Hansen

University of Michigan, Department of Music Education

erinhans@umich.edu

(734) 395-5004

## Letter of Informed Consent: 18 Years and Older

### Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Erin Hansen, M.M., doctoral student in Department of Music Education, University of Michigan; erinhans@umich.edu; 734-395-5004

**Faculty Supervisor: Colleen Conway, EdD., Department of Music Education, University of Michigan; conwaycm@umich.edu; 734-615-4105**

Greetings! My name is Erin Hansen and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Music Education at the University of Michigan. Prior to graduate school, I taught orchestra, guitar, and fiddle music to fifth through twelfth grade students. Currently, I teach music education at the University of Houston. I enjoy working with student musicians and discovering what music making means to them.

### An Invitation

You are invited to be a part of a research project that I am conducting in order to complete the needed requirements for an advanced degree. This project looks at what music making means for individuals who identify as a sexual minority. I hope to use the information I learn from talking with musicians to educate teachers, school officials, and policy makers so they can make changes to ensure a more supportive environment for sexual minority students. I am asking you to participate in this study because you are an active music maker and a member of the sexual minority community.

### Description of Your Involvement

If you agree to be part of this research study, I will interview you individually three times. In the first interview, I will ask questions about your past musical experiences: how you started making music, what music meant to you when you were younger. I will also ask you how you started to identify yourself as a sexual minority. This interview will take place over the Internet through Skype or University of Michigan's sponsored BlueJeans software; I will help you get set up with the technology.

In the second interview, I will ask you to describe your current music making experiences and day-to-day experiences. Prior to this interview, I would like to observe you in a music making session. This could be an in-person observation or a something you video record and share with me. You would choose what environment you most enjoy whether it is practicing alone, in a school music class, during band practice; we can discuss this later. Then, during the second interview, I will ask you questions about this observation such as how you felt during the session and how it compares to other music making experiences. This interview would take place in person.

In the final interview, I will ask you to share with me your thoughts on being a part of this study. This interview will take place over the Internet, similarly to the first interview. The first two interviews will last about one hour, each. The third interview will take about 30 minutes. I will audio record the interviews and transcribe them afterwards. The format of the third interview may also take the form of a virtual focus group depending on your level of comfort in talking with other study participants; you will be given a choice as to which interview format you would prefer after the second interview.

## Benefits

**You may not receive a direct benefit from participating in this study. However, some people find sharing their stories to be a valuable experience.**

## Risks and discomforts

Sometimes, answering personal questions may be uncomfortable. You may choose not to answer any discussion question and you can stop your participation in an interview at any time.

**While unlikely, there is a chance that another member of a focus group could reveal something they learned about you during the discussion. All focus group members are asked to respect the privacy of the other group members. You may tell others that you were in a focus group and the general topic of the discussion, but actual names and stories of other participants should not be repeated.**

## Confidentiality

**I plan to publish the results of this study. I will not include any information that would identify you or people you discuss during the focus group. I will keep your information safe. The recordings and any notes I make will be stored on a computer that is password-protected and encrypted. In addition, all information pertaining to the study will be backed up on a cloud-based server that is protected through the University of Michigan. Your real name will not be used in the written copy of the discussion; I will give you a pseudonym to help protect your identity.**

**After each interview you will have the opportunity to read its transcripts. You will also be able to read what I write about you in the final paper before I submit it for review. Each time, I encourage you to tell me if there are mistakes or if I misquote you. Additionally, you can ask me to remove any sections about you from the study that you would prefer not to share.**

**I plan to keep this study data to use for future research about musicians within the sexual minority community.**

**There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to your information. The people work for the University of Michigan to make sure this research is done safely and properly. Also, if you share something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed we may report that information to the appropriate agencies.**

## Voluntary nature of the study

**It is completely up to you whether you want to be in the study. Even if you say yes, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may also choose to not answer a question for any reason.**

## Please review your rights:

1. I understand that informed consent is required of me.
2. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop participating in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
3. Any risks or discomforts have been explained to me, as have any potential benefits.
4. I understand the protections in place to safeguard any personally identifiable information related to my participation.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Erin Hansen at [erinhans@umich.edu](mailto:erinhans@umich.edu) or 734-395-5004.



**If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 2800 Plymouth Rd. Building 520, Room 1169, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800; 734-936-0933, or toll free 866-936-0933; [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu).**

**Consent**

**By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. I will give you a copy of this document and will keep a copy in my records. Be sure that I have answered your questions about the study and you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact me if you think of a question later.**

*I agree to participate in this study. As part of my consent, I agree to be audio and video recorded.*

---

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth (xx/xx/xxxx)** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E**

### **First Interview Protocol**

#### **Interview 1 - Establishing context & personal history**

- Describe where you grew up (e.g. home, schools, community).
- Describe any childhood musical experiences.
- How did you become interested in music?
- When and how did you start making music?
- Describe your current musical experiences.
  - Within school - ensembles, private, genre, type, etc.
  - Outside of school - outside ensembles, private, listening, performing, genre, type, etc.
- How do you identify (i.e. sexual orientation and gender identity)?
  - Do you have a coming out story you'd like to share?
  - How did you come to identify as [their self-identified sexual orientation]?

**Appendix F**  
**IRB Study Approval**



Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB-HSBS) • 2800 Plymouth Rd., Building 520, Room 1170, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800 • phone (734) 936-0933 • fax (734) 998-9171 • [irbhsbs@umich.edu](mailto:irbhsbs@umich.edu)

---

**To:** Ms. Erin Hansen

**From:**

Thad Polk

**Cc:**

Colleen Conway  
Erin Hansen  
Mackenzie Sato

**Subject:** Initial Study Approval for [HUM00097578]

**SUBMISSION INFORMATION:**

Study Title: Meanings of Music Making for Sexual Minority Adolescents

Full Study Title (if applicable):

Study eResearch ID: [HUM00097578](#)

Date of this Notification from IRB: 4/14/2015

Review: Expedited

Initial IRB Approval Date: 4/14/2015

**Current IRB Approval Period: 4/14/2015 - 4/13/2016**

**Expiration Date:** Approval for this expires at **11:59 p.m. on 4/13/2016**

**UM Federalwide Assurance (FWA): FWA00004969 (For the current FWA expiration date, please visit the [UM HRPP Webpage](#))**

**OHRP IRB Registration Number(s): IRB00000245**

**Approved Risk Level(s):**

Name	Risk Level
Individual interviews	No more than minimal risk
Focus group interview.	No more than minimal risk

**NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL AND CONDITIONS:**

The IRB HSBS has reviewed and approved the study referenced above. The IRB determined that

the proposed research conforms with applicable guidelines, State and federal regulations, and the University of Michigan's Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). You must conduct this study in accordance with the description and information provided in the approved application and associated documents.

**APPROVAL PERIOD AND EXPIRATION:**

The approval period for this study is listed above. Please note the expiration date. If the approval lapses, you may not conduct work on this study until appropriate approval has been re-established, except as necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research subjects. Should the latter occur, you must notify the IRB Office as soon as possible.

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR INVESTIGATORS**

**APPROVED STUDY DOCUMENTS:**

You must use any date-stamped versions of recruitment materials and informed consent documents available in the eResearch workspace (referenced above). Date-stamped materials are available in the "Currently Approved Documents" section on the "Documents" tab.

**RENEWAL/TERMINATION:**

At least two months prior to the expiration date, you should submit a continuing review application either to renew or terminate the study. Failure to allow sufficient time for IRB review may result in a lapse of approval that may also affect any funding associated with the study.

**AMENDMENTS:**

All proposed changes to the study (e.g., personnel, procedures, or documents), must be approved in advance by the IRB through the amendment process, except as necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to research subjects. Should the latter occur, you must notify the IRB Office as soon as possible.

**AEs/ORIOs:**

You must inform the IRB of all unanticipated events, adverse events (AEs), and other reportable information and occurrences (ORIOs). These include but are not limited to events and/or information that may have physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic impact on the research subjects or other.

Investigators and research staff are responsible for reporting information concerning the approved research to the IRB in a timely fashion, understanding and adhering to the reporting guidance (<http://medicine.umich.edu/medschool/research/office-research/institutional-review-boards/guidance/adverse-events-aes-other-reportable-information-and-occurrences-orios-and-other-required-reporting>), and not implementing any changes to the research without IRB approval of the change via an amendment submission. When changes are necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject, implement the change and report via an ORIO and/or amendment submission within 7 days after the action is taken. This includes all information with the potential to impact the risk or benefit assessments of the research.

**SUBMITTING VIA eRESEARCH:**

You can access the online forms for continuing review, amendments, and AEs/ORIOs in the eResearch workspace for this approved study (referenced above).

**MORE INFORMATION:**

You can find additional information about UM's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) in the Operations Manual and other documents available at: <http://hrpp.umich.edu>.



Thad Polk  
Chair, IRB HSBS

## Appendix G

### Focus Group Interview Protocol

#### Prior to Discussion:

- Thank you, so much, for making time to meet and wrap up interviews today!
  - Purpose of today is to debrief about our experiences being part of study; to discuss some of the themes I'm noticing; to talk over final stages and member checks.
- Confidential and respectful space!
  - Please be mindful of differences.
  - Listen to each other.
  - Do not share personal information about others outside of this space or with those not in this focus group.
  - Video and audio recording is for me to analyze, not to publicize.
  - Because words get lost when more than one person speaks at the same time, please raise your hand if you'd like to contribute.
- Introductions: Name, what we currently "do" (i.e. student), and how we make music.

#### Possible Discussion Questions:

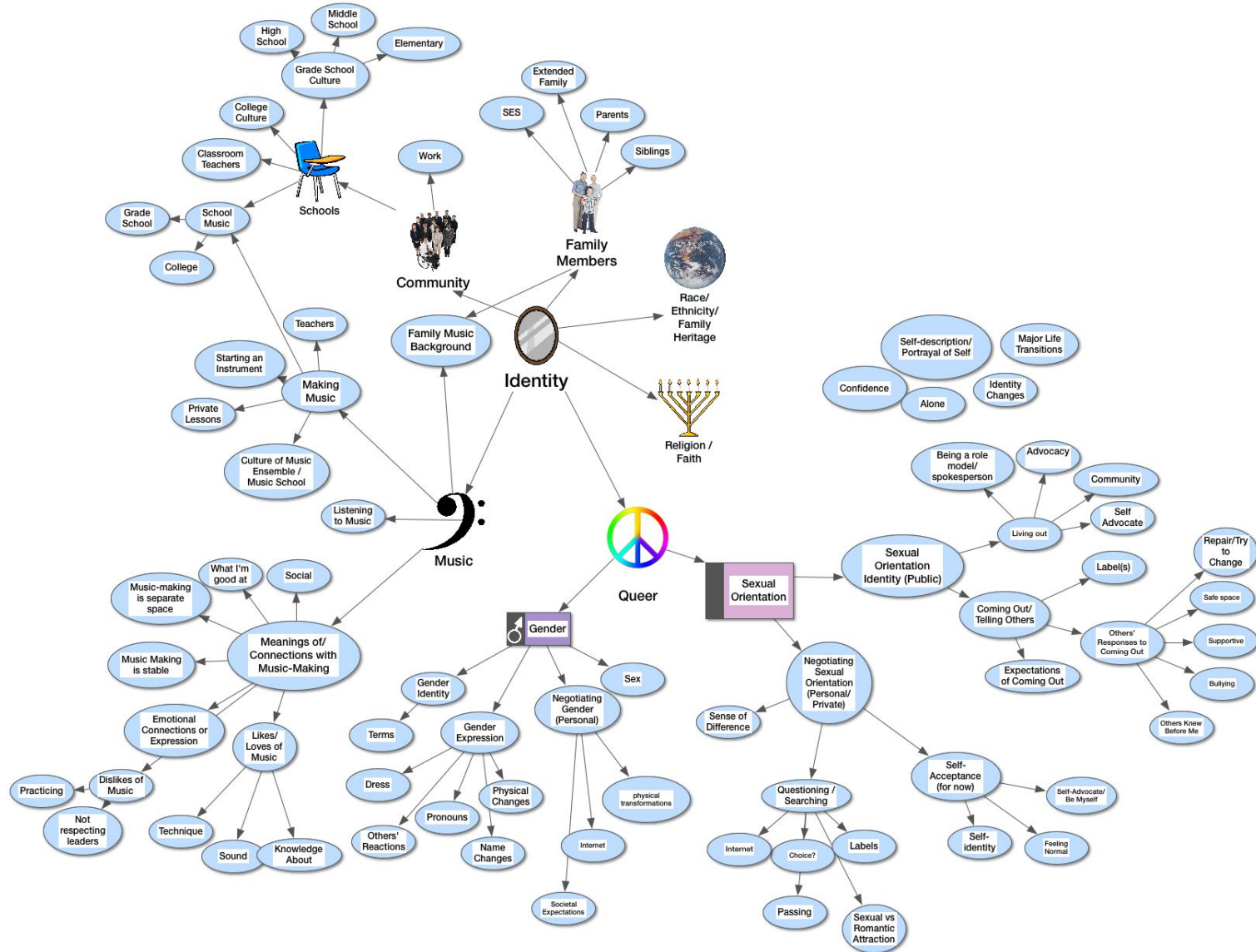
- What was it like to be part of this study?
- The Internet seemed to play a big role for many of you during your time of identity discovery. What were some of the search terms or where were some of the sites you visited?
- Being "good" at your craft was important for most of you, especially for those who were part of an ensemble in school; it wasn't enough to just belong to an ensemble or to play your instrument. *Why* was it, or why is it, important to be good?
- For those of you who compose, write, or arrange your own music to play, would you agree with the following statement: I write or arrange my own music because there isn't music out there that truly expresses how I feel? Why or why not?
- What do you wish was in place for you, or wish teachers would have done, during times of bullying?
- For non-music majors, do you feel like you have enough opportunities to make music in a way that is fulfilling and in ways that you enjoy? What experiences do you wish you had?
- Should we support the study of music in grade schools? Why?
- What would you want teachers to know; in my suggestions for best practice, what messages should I deliver to administrators and teachers, especially music teachers?
- To close, I'd like you to take a moment and think "If I had to choose a song/piece of music to represent me, like a theme song, what would it be any why?" Please, either share the title/artist or play it for us. [give them a moment to pull up a link, if time]

#### Next steps:

"Please look over transcripts of interview #2 and, especially, the narratives I constructed about you beginning music, self-discovery, and coming out. Does it paint an accurate picture? Please, let me know what I should change."

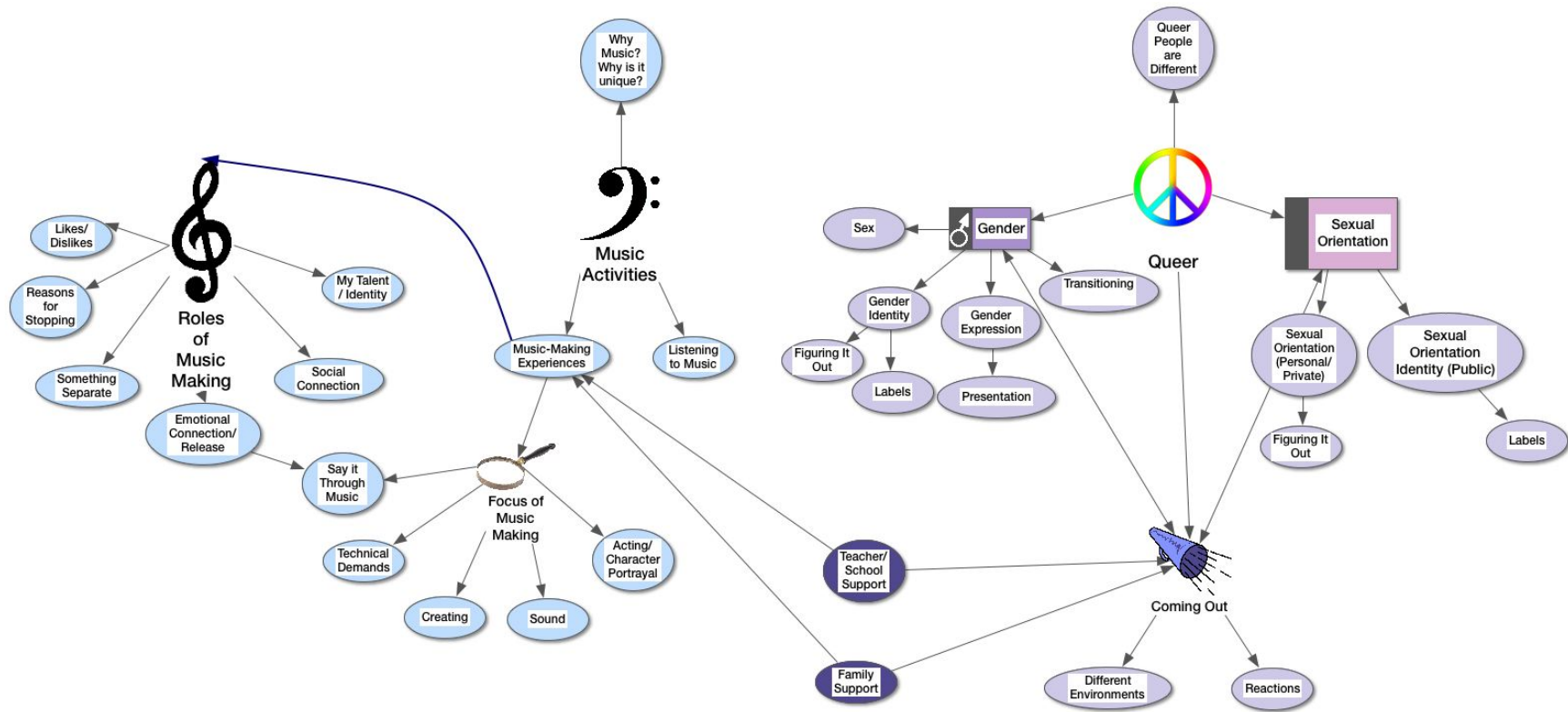
## Appendix H

### Initial Coding Structure



# Appendix I

## Final Coding Structure





## Appendix J Andres Mind Map

Andres

### Meanings of Music-Making

#### Something Separate

- ✓ M.M. = regular activity could count on -- something to look forward to.
- ✓ Escape from bullying (forget)
  - From home (parents not musicians)
  - From school

#### ~~Interacted @~~

#### Social Connection

- ✓ Music school + HS ensembles provide social circle.
- ✓ Musical connection w/other musicians → electrifying, esp. in chamber music

#### My Talent/Identity

- I'm a music major → social circle
  - ↳ More self-conscious after deciding to be a music major
- My great grandparents were violinists
- My parents weren't -- I'm the legacy
- "I'm a band kid" - safety in belonging?
- ✓ Seeks respect from those in community he respects

#### Likes/Dislikes

- Likes performing / Dislikes practicing
- Likes when music is easy enough to manipulate, musically
  - ↳ Experiment w/color, time

### Focus of Music-Making

- Technique while practicing
  - ↳ No room (mentally) to focus on anything else.
- Technique: if too difficult, causes anxiety during performance \* Lack of Control?
- Channel Characters-Acting (performance)
- I'm a vessel for my teacher's ideas
  - \* No wonder hates practicing -- all tech, no music
- Sound (performance)

### Music Making Experiences

- Violin lessons (+group class)
- Youth orchestra
- Allstate
- Outreach
- Chamber Groups

### Coming Out

- Not a singular act
- ✓ No longer need to
- Discovered by Mom
  - ↳ through Myspace
  - ↳ Mom sent to conversion therapy and private religious school
- Didn't go back in closet
- Didn't apologize for sexori.
- Told dad: accepted
- Mom blames father; sinner by nature

#### Reactions

- Bullying
  - ↳ before out, for being effeminate
  - ↳ by Mom + pastor
  - ↳ step dad - told friends to shun him
- Accepted
  - ↳ in H.S. (PWA)
    - ↳ part of culture
  - ↳ in college
    - ↳ not an issue
  - ↳ by Dad

### Sexual Orientation

#### Sexual Orientation

- Attraction: considers sexuality to be fluid (not him)
- Figuring it Out:
  - Around 7th grade
  - Not a clear moment
- Others knew first
- In denial for a while
  - ↳ b/c of dad?

- ✓ Internet
  - ↳ Myspace: a place to explore and express self

#### Sexual Ori. Identity

- Labels: Gay
- Secure w/sex. orientation
- No longer needs to come out: a relief?
  - ↳ People assume he's gay
- Advocate
  - ↳ leader of HS GSA
  - ✓ On board of college GSA - <sup>Doesn't do many social activities, only mus.</sup>
  - ↳ Scholarship recipient + spokesperson for LGBTQ youth group
  - Believes it's a choice of <sup>car</sup> <sup>strip</sup> <sup>live</sup> <sup>out</sup> <sup>things</sup>
    - ↳ ? Gives sense of antic

way to experiencing emotion



# Appendix K

## Emily Mind Map

Emily

### Meanings of Music-Making

#### Emotional Connection/Release

- Stress release - cathartic emotional release
- Fulfilling
- Love
- Can relax self w/ playing.
  - ↳ No other way to do so.
  - ↳ Easier w/ an instrument than listening or singing (? a tool?) (opposite)
- Music associated with event
  - ↳ Anti-gay marriage rally.

#### Social Connection

- Most friends in H.S. were in music
  - ↳ Now, in college, turns to rugby team (not in ensemble)
- Loves people teachers involve to
- Likes being section leader

#### My Talent/Identity

- Important to remain "good" section leader
- Sense of pride from solo performances
- Playing tpt + making Allstate band gave confidence, sense of self, feel like has a place, has a purpose (? ability → membership)

#### Likes/Dislikes

- Likes playing; more complicated music (layers); producing good sounds; strong sounds; didn't want to audition for drum major, making music w/others; being section leader

#### Reasons for Stopping

- To have time to explore other interests
  - ↳ Thinking of joining MMB next year

### Focus of M.M.

#### Say it through M.M.

- Keeps Google Doc of thoughts, phrases, poetry
  - ↳ turns into music when near guitar (? guitar = vehicle / tool of expression)
  - ↳ helps recall earlier feelings
  - ↳ helps work through feelings

#### Creating

- Writes + plays music/poetry set to music
- music-making feels more personal when creating
- M.M. gives sense of autonomy when compared with sports (\* ? more related to soul?)

#### Sound

- Bold, big / strong, supportive (\* ? sense of community?)

### Music Making Experiences

### Coming Out

- Let news seep out at school
  - ↳ Didn't deny questions
- Told friends first (not told parents in note)
  - ↳ Considers self lucky
  - ↳ Parents have come around
- Not out to extended family
  - ↳ Gdpa has dementia
  - ↳ Mom's side is Roman Catholic
    - ↳ Doesn't want to put mom in bad sit.
    - ↳ Cousin is gay + not accepted by his parents

#### Reactions

- School: Homecoming queen, Class president, role model for younger students
  - hate tweets from other parents
- Extended family:

### Sexual Orientation

#### Figuring it Out

- Early adolescence: thought others were faking it (i.e. attraction, excitement)
- Clues (didn't notice)
  - ↳ In retro, clues seem clear.
  - ↳ Eased into thinking about it
  - ↳ Media -- gay icons -- others?
  - ↳ M.S. = Eating disorder from stress
  - 11th gr.

#### Attraction

- Sexual is dif. from romantic.
- Likes women
- Occasional, fleeting sexual attraction. to men -- wouldn't want relationship.

### Sexual Ori Identity

#### Labels

- Not straight; bi; gay, but not 100%

#### Living "Out"

- Currently out, but hesitant with strangers --
  - ↳ doesn't want to be judged by sex ID.
  - ↳ wants to minimize distance between ID + internal feelings

#### Living Out, Cont.

- Speaks out in class as "a gay woman"
- Advocate
  - Sold t-shirts for gay marriage
  - Protest in H.S. Aud.

## Appendix L

### Katie Mind Map

#### Meanings of M.M.

##### Something Separate

- Play to forget everything else (escapes)
- Play to cure boredom or procrastinate
  - ↳ Better to play new music

##### Emotional Connection/Release

- Play to destress
  - ↳ Sad music; calm music
  - ↳ Technically easy music (focus on emotion + musicality)
  - ↳ Better to play familiar music
  - ↳ Programmatic music - easier to connect musically (e.g. the day the clowns died)

##### Social Connection

- Connects dif. ages + generations (e.g. Community orch).
- Drum Core
  - ↳ Sense of brotherhood + family.
  - ↳ Must rely on others for performance to be successful.

##### My Talent/Identity

- Pride in being the best
  - ↳ Beating siblings
  - ↳ Best in beginner band
  - ↳ can sightread well
- Others need her skills
  - ↳ fill in for handbell choir
  - ↳ where needed in sections

##### Likes/Dislikes

- Likes challenging music
  - ↳ something that shows her, and others, her abilities.
- Teachers that high expectations and believe in her, (?Midchild-overlooked?)
- Likes harmonies, dif. colors, blending sound in w/group sound
- Good music = technically challenging and emotional connection; familiar pieces (e.g. film music); programmatic music

#### Focus of M.M.

- The group:
  - ↳ Blending; matching style, step, sound, etc.
- Conveying emotion.
- To destress; have fun; procrastinate
  - (? self + group focused -- not as much about audiences?)

#### M.M. Experiences

- Piano lessons + competitions
- Tpt lessons
- Chime camp
- Handbell choir
- Community orch
- DCI
- School band + marching band
- Director of marching band
- Arrange music + mixes for piano

- Likes to feel needed
- Dislikes disapproval (e.g. 1st band show)
- Full group bye-in/getting into music.

#### Katie

#### Coming Out

- Self aware senior year of HS.
- Came out to 2 best friends in H.S., no one else.
  - ↳ One was also gay and came out at the same time.
- Wasn't out in H.S.
  - ↳ ~~came~~ Felt Volleyball team was Christian + conservative and would freak out in locker room if they knew.
- Came out to parents
  - ↳ age 21; in Germany; same time as brother's
  - ↳ Considers lucky for their reaction.
- Not out to extended family
  - ↳ They'd freak out
  - ↳ Racist bigot (olpa)
  - ↳ Why stress him out? (olpa)
- Doesn't feel need to come out in college → people assume gay.
- Parents didn't
  - ↳ Talked when home
  - ↳ Overshadowed by brother's news?
  - ↳ "As long as you're happy" (Mom)

#### Reactions

- College campus very open + queer

#### Sexual Orientation

##### Figuring it Out

- Ask who she was taking to prom
  - ↳ prompted self-questioning.
  - ↳ Started thinking of people could only think of girls.
  - ↳ Went stag?
- Didn't know about "gay"
  - ↳ Mentioned negatively in sex ed.
  - ↳ Movie: Philadelphia
- Searched Internet
  - ↳ "Oh, gay -- it's a thing!"
  - ↳ DCI gay members - eye attraction → likes gay men
- Sexual desire/attraction + sex. ori. not a big part of identity.
- Doesn't care much for sex
- Experimented w/men
  - ↳ could be bi, prefers women

#### Sexual Orientation Identity

##### Labels

- Bi (in the past?)
- Lesbian (currently)
- Demi-sexual
  - ↳ Needs romantic before sexually interested

##### Living Out

- Belongs to campus QSA
  - ↳ Doesn't attend many events
- Doesn't feel part of queer community
  - ↳ gay friends, no lesbians
- Doesn't deny sex ori when questioned
  - ↳ "I like girls"



## Appendix M

### Matt Mind Map

#### Meanings of M.M.

##### Emotional Connection / Release

- Writing music (for self) is like a long therapy session; painful, but good in the end (e.g. Doll).

##### Social Connection

- Bandmates like family.
- Likes connecting with ~~people~~ <sup>other people</sup> through performing (✓)
  - (? FB band page?)
- Connected with diff. ages + abilities in jazz band.
- As relationships grow, so does the music.
- Common bands connect people (e.g. MCR)
  - ↳ Themes, personal struggles, discussion topics.

##### My Talent / Identity

- Need music, painting, activism to feel whole
  - ↳ An essential part of self.
- Certain bands became identity, provided community.

##### Likes / Dislikes

- Likes performing; talking to / connecting w/ people; strings; dissonance (? tension / release); theatrics
- Knowing music (e.g. jazz)

##### Reasons for Stopping

- To find queer community
- Teacher didn't understand him
- Didn't want to leave supportive environment (i.e. Community) to go make music.

#### Focus of M.M.

##### Say it through music

- Say ~~what~~ what you can't say to others through music

##### Acting / Character Portrayal

- Likes theatrics; costumes
  - (? Does it say something, his look?)
  - (? a different world -- an escape)

#### Music Activities

##### Listening

- Turned to bands when upset and feeling alone
  - ↳ "Only David Bowie got me"
- Connect w/ idea of group / band and what they represent
  - ↳ Even if type of music is not his thing.
  - (? Meaning more important?)

##### M.M. Experiences

- Guitar, Piano, Voice lessons
- School orchestra - violin
- Jazz band
- Song writing

#### Matt

#### Sexual Orientation

- Still confused about orientation
  - ↳ I like pretty people.
  - ↳ Falls in love with ideas, e.g. idea of people or relationship.
  - ↳ Attracted to confidence + talent.
  - ↳ Has dated more women than men.
- Sexual attraction is dif. from romance
  - ↳ doesn't want romance.
  - ↳ No time. Concerned for future.
  - ↳ Sex not connected to feelings.

#### Sexual Orientation Identity

- Doesn't talk about, or label, sexuality much, but doesn't hide actions.
  - ↳ Agents at school tell him to choose a gender to date.
- Pan sexual

#### Gender Expression

- Identifies as a Man
- Uses he, him, his pronouns
- Identifies as trans man to close friends, only

#### Transitioning

- Began hormone treatments in M.S. (Testosterone).
- Top surgery at 18?

#### Thoughts on being queer

- Queer people are different.
- Forced to question self and reflect more deeply.
  - ↳ Art <sup>(music)</sup> helps express
- Certain situations (high + lows) are more significant b/c queer

#### Gender Identity

##### Figuring it Out

- Idea of gender + gender roles was fluid - (anime)
- Encouraged mom to use gender neutral pronouns.
- Physical changes + social "norms" brought on questioning.
  - ↳ He felt fake
  - ↳ Told Mom
- Saw counselor
- Joined queer teen group

##### Coming Out + Reactions

- Told mom he felt male. <sup>age</sup> it
  - ↳ < Struggled, at first, to switch to gender pronouns >
  - ↳ < Took him to counselor >
  - ↳ < Supported hormone therapy >

- Asked teachers to use male pronouns (+ name change?)
  - ↳ < Teachers didn't really understand why he struggled w/ school + missed often >
  - ↳ < Assumed b/c of race, home life, + SES >
  - ↳ < He didn't talk to gay teachers; Afraid they wouldn't understand >
- < Students didn't understand + made verbal insults >
  - ↳ < Matt turned to music >

Very Alone

to find a community

## Appendix N

### Sam Mind Map

#### Meanings of M.M.

##### Something Separate

- Looked forward to choir + orch, even on bad days in school
- ↳ Something to look forward to and have goals in.

##### Emotional Connection/Release

- Lyrics can determine feelings <sup>(opposite)</sup>
  - ↳ Can identify w/ theme of song.
- Feeling dependent on audience
  - ↳ a beautiful song can move them + they can move w/ the song
  - ↳ Audience becomes part of performance
- Music is about expressing what's inside you. → "they hear your heart."

##### Social Connection

- Connects family -- have singing uncommon.
- Connects w/ audience ✓
- Connects ensemble ✓
  - ↳ Work well together
  - ↳ ? Doesn't (have to) socialize outside of choir.

##### My Talent/Identity

- From a musical, singing family
- I'm more of a singer
- Chose cello (not violin) to be dif.
  - ↳ Never going to get 1st chair.
  - ↳ Not as talented as singing.
- Thinking of going into music.

##### Likes/Dislikes

- That they can sing anywhere
- Being known for being good in community (the choir).

##### Acting

- Challenging, show-offy sections.
- Playing real music, not arrangements.
- Entertaining the audience (? takes focus from self?)
- Being part of something special, small new unions

#### Focus of M.M.

##### Say it through music

- Doesn't intentionally try to express gender or sexuality; it just happens b/c of their strong sense of self.
- Their emotions comes through the words.
- Sing to girlfriend, even if she's absent.

##### Acting/Character Portrayal

- Say feelings through a character.
- Singing vs acting: singing = pouring yourself into it

##### Technical Demands

- With cello and piano, they're more focused on technical demands than with singing.
- In an ensemble, focus is on making something beautiful as a group.

#### M.M. Experiences

- Piano lessons
- School choir + orchestra
- Honor choir
- Cello lessons (only briefly -- too stressful)
- Voice lessons

- That they can perform + sight-read well.
- Being able to learn quickly + can just play + relax (with Kulele)
- Sounding professional.

#### Sam

#### Sexual Orientation

##### Figuring it Out

- Didn't really feel attraction to anyone
  - ↳ Thought peers were faking
- (Girl) friend asked them out (2<sup>nd</sup> gr)
  - ↳ Acquiesced (sp?)
  - ↳ Girlfriend introduced to websites.
- Explored to help identify feelings
  - ↳ Addressed sex. ori. before realizing gender was an option.
- Relationship w/ girlfriend confirmed interest in girls.

##### Sexual Orientation Identity

- Doesn't think the labels accurately describe.
- Asexual - sexually
- Likes girls - romantically

#### Gender Identity, Cont.

##### Coming Out

- Told parents (w/ therapist) when sure of name + gender.

##### Presentation

- Doesn't like to think about presentation.
- Affects clothing and bathroom decisions.
  - ↳ Likes skirts, sometimes. Short hair.
  - ↳ "I just want to wear what I want."

#### Gender Identity

##### Figuring it Out

- Physical Changes = Scary!
  - ↳ Breasts; period
  - ↳ Dysphoria
- Thought about how wanted to feel; changed depending on-day or circumstance (E.g. Do I want to bind? Wear a dress?)
- Social normative activities added layer of confusion: "If I don't want to do 'girl' things, I must be a 'boy'"
  - ↳ Must I do "boy" things.
- Easier to say what they're not
- Internet helpful to give a label to feelings.
  - ↳ More free + direct online.
- Felt less female + progressed to not feeling a gender.
- Legally changed name.
- Progressed to asking friend + family to use "they, their, the pronouns".
  - ↳ Labels + pronouns change depending on people + situation.
- Use "gay" over "agender" most times → doesn't want to educate + explain
  - ↳ Easier to explain sex or than gender.
- Refers to self as agender.
- Thinks of having top surgery in the future.
- Thinks will ask + enforce people's use of pronouns in college.

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