HIGH NOTES IN HARD TIMES: THE IMPACT OF ENSEMBLE PARTICIPATION ON THE

WELL-BEING OF 2SLGBTQ+ MUSICIANS

by

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ABSTRACT

High Notes in Hard Times: The Effect of Ensemble Participation on the Well-Being of
2SLGBTQ+ Musicians
Master of Social Work, 2020
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This study examines the impact of participation in music ensembles such as band and choir on the well-being of two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non-heterosexual and cisgender (2SLGBTQ+) identified musicians. 2SLGBTQ+ musicians with ensemble experience were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their experiences and perceived impacts of their participation. Conclusions were drawn from this data using constructivist grounded theory informed by queer anti-capitalism after responses were coded and grouped into themes for thematic analysis. This study propositions music ensemble as an informal queer space as well as differing effects as result of participation over different 2SLGBTQ+ demographics. This study concludes that music ensemble functions as a means to provide relief from capitalism as it is a place where queerness can be normalized instead of commodified.

DEDICATION

This Major Research Project is dedicated to the McMaster Marching Band and Concert Band Association of Ryerson/Ram Jams Pep Band for giving back the love I put in no matter which iteration of myself I was.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The arts are often thought of as a safe haven for queer people (Rumens & Broomfield, 2014). Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non-heterosexual and cisgender (2SLGBTQ+) people have often found refuge in expression through visual art, dance, drama, and music but the means of expression differs in each one. In this Major Research Project the ideas of queerness, anti-capitalism, and the arts will be joined to explore the experience of being a 2SLGBTQ+ ensemble musician and explain why 2SLGBTQ+ people find refuge in music ensembles.

Performing arts have offered an avenue for expression of queer identity through storytelling (Rumens & Broomfield, 2014) but how does that occur in an ensemble where there are no lines, often little visuals, and less individuality? In most music ensembles all members are dressed in the same uniforms. While solos occur I would argue they do not hold the same weight as having the starring role in a play or dance act. The rest of the ensemble offers the much needed texture which complement and enhance the solo. In most cases the solo is not the focus for an extended period of time so the ensemble is never simply the background. As opposed to focus shifting between individuals the goal is to take in the sum of the parts at once.

Even though individual expression is less common you are still likely to find plenty of 2SLGBTQ+ musicians happily participating in music ensembles. Many credit their participation for helping them through the coming out process, rough patches in their lives, or even saving them altogether. I myself am a bisexual non-binary tuba player who feels this way and have met many others who feel similarly. This can occur even if the 2SLGBTQ+ musicians were not open about their identities at the time of ensemble participation. This study explores why that is the case by asking 2SLGBTQ+ musicians with ensemble experience about their participation and

how they feel it affects their well-being. An online questionnaire has been chosen instead of interviews to allow closeted participants the opportunity to participate with their safety in mind and to allow for participants outside Toronto to partake. Findings are analyzed via thematic inquiry and conclusions will be drawn from those themes using constructivist grounded theory from a queer anti-capitalist perspective.

Music educators are aware queer students gravitate towards music classes so there is a small but increasing body of literature on what they can do to make their classrooms safer. Music ensemble is not limited to the classroom so I am choosing to focus on the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ musicians and what they get out of participation in general. In this way I take a broader look at where queer musicians find community and how they benefit from it even if it not specifically a queer community. Research studying 2SLGBTQ+ musicians both in the context of community and scholastic ensembles is rare so this provides unique insight into the allure of music ensemble performance for 2SLGBTQ+ people.

The implications of this are relevant to our sociopolitical climate to discuss where 2SLGBTQ+ people turn for refuge in a society that does not support them. 2SLGBTQ+ people are protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to marry and work like our cisgender and heterosexual counterparts but that does not stop attacks on our community and culture. Nor does it stop queer voices from being appropriated into the mainstream for capital gain when seen as profitable while denied resources when not.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Community Belonging, Queer Spaces, & Well-being

2SLGBTQ+ people have worse health outcomes than cisgender and heterosexual people (Balsam et al., 2013). This is attributed to minority stress which is the distress of living in and navigating a society built to oppress you. Meyer (1995) found internalized homophobia, expectation of rejection and discrimination (stigma), witnessing or being subjected to acts of discrimination (prejudice) all contribute to minority stress which negatively affects the mental health of homosexuals. This concept has been expanded over the years to cover the 2SLGBTQ+ community as a whole, not just homosexuals (Balsam et al., 2013). Anyone who is not considered the "norm" in terms of gender and sexuality will face minority stress in some form or another by existing in a cisheteropatriarchal society (Meyer, 2015).

Efforts taken to counter the effects of minority stress are what contribute to queer well-being in order to better health outcomes. Ryan et al. (2013) studied health outcomes for LGBT youth by interviewing them about their families and found family acceptance correlated with positive health outcomes and lower rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicidality. This is not surprising given that family is usually someone's first support system and provides introductory frameworks on how to see the world. Outside of family, queer positive peer groups and schools are extremely important to the well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ youth and can help increase overall well-being (Higa et al., 2014).

Individual and community resilience from 2SLGBTQ+ people as a whole are factors in coping with minority stress (Meyer, 2015). Resilience is the ability to successfully cope with minority stress and have positive health outcomes despite adversity (Meyer, 2015). Resilience is often thought of as a personal trait or something that an individual has but that is a reflection of a

society that prizes the individual over the collective (Meyer, 2015). Community resilience is how an individual's resilience is enhanced by others with their lived experiences. The tangible and intangible resources offered by collectives of 2SLGBTQ+ people of varying social locations offer support not found in everyday interactions.

Youth who identified as queer in the Ryan et al. (2013) study were more than twice as likely to attempt suicide and made attempts earlier in life than lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (Ryan et al. 2013). This suggests struggling to identify with a more close-knit community within the 2SLGBTQ+ community can contribute to minority stress as a minority within a minority. This is supported by research on bisexual individuals which shows bisexuals and other individuals who experience multi-gender attraction typically have worse health outcomes than heterosexual and homosexual people (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017). This has been attributed to bisexuals facing stigma from both heterosexuals and homosexuals, thus unable to reap the benefits of heterosexual privilege or the full support of the some spaces in 2SLGBTQ+ community (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017).

Literature points to community support in queer spaces being integral to queer well-being but what could be considered a queer space is not limited to Pride or non-profit organizations specifically dedicated to 2SLGBTQ+ causes. The idea that a space has to be formally queer to be queer is largely a Western conceptualization of what queer resistance is (Stella, 2013). Queerness exists out of a North American context and, as Stella (2013) pointed out in discussing 2SLGBTQ+ people in Russia, queer spaces can be informal in that they are anywhere queer people like to congregate, feel safe in, or enjoy.

Queerness in North America has become extremely corporatized and reduced to businesses changing their social media pictures for a month or offering rainbow coloured

products (Sears, 2005). In Western society, particularly North America, the concept of living as queer hinges on being "out" (Stella, 2013). Coming out is an emotionally challenging process on the individual undergoing it and there is no guarantee of safety on the other side. Visibility is not always empowering, it is not always possible for formal queer spaces to be available, and formal or visible queer spaces do not appeal to everyone. What one can find available nearly everywhere no matter how small the town is a high school band and choir. As long as there are some 2SLGBTQ+ members who enjoy their time there and are treated well then the ensemble quietly becomes an informal queer space.

Queering Music Education

Most research and writing on queer musicians has come from music education scholars and been published in music education journals but it is still a relatively new topic being explored. The overall findings can be summarized best as music classrooms can be incredibly freeing spaces for youth regardless of sexuality but particularly 2SLGBTQ+ youth. In his PhD dissertation, Christopher Marra (2019) asked high school music students to fill out surveys with questions pertaining to self-esteem and found that they rated self-esteem high in relation to their involvement in music ensembles. Participation was integral to them and their social groups so as a result these youth valued conformity within their social group (Marra, 2019). A master's thesis by de Coteau (2018) found music classes provided queer students with a sense of belonging they craved but the benefits are not maximized unless the school or teacher providing the programming are also affirming and supportive of queer identity.

Palkki & Caldwell (2018) asked queer university vocal music students to reflect on their experiences in high school choir to discuss their safety in those spaces, whether participation impacted their queer identity, and what recommendations they have for high school choir

teachers to create safe space for LGBTQ+ students in their classes. They found 22% of respondents experienced bullying in choir classes but a higher percentage experienced bullying outside of classes and 58% reported they had supportive teachers (Palkki & Caldwell, 2018). Palkki & Caldwell (2018) also found that experiences of cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual music students differed from their transgender peers. While LGB vocal students were looking for overall queer-positive support in the classroom trans students had more concrete recommendations around breaking the gender binary present in vocal music (Palkki & Caldwell, 2018)

Transgender specific experiences in music classes have been studied in depth by a few researchers. Nichols (2013) and Silveira (2019) carried out similar research through a series of in-depth narrative interviews focusing on one trans music student's journey. Nichols (2013) found that their participant found music to be her lifeline and sanctuary in an otherwise hostile world. The participant in Silveira (2019) focused more on his life outside of music class but also chose to discuss trans male specific issues in music education and how he wished to break down barriers for other trans students. Sullivan (2014) took a different approach and studied early childhood trans experiences by interviewing ten trans adults of varying backgrounds on their elementary school experiences. She found trans adults who had participated in music classes as young children found them to be places of safety where they could express themselves and enjoy using their bodies to create, even before they knew they were trans (Sullivan, 2014).

Beyond elementary and high school, a master's thesis from Hennessy (2012) found that queer university music majors anticipated finding other queer students in university and having out professors and colleagues was both a blessing and a curse because it reinforced the homosexual music major stereotype but created community. Additionally, many post-secondary

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education students still participate in music even if they are not music majors. Carter (2013) researched gay Black men who participated in HBCU marching band and found they all expressed they were in the band for relief from larger societal pressures but worried about acceptance and rejection in and outside of the band because of their identities.

From a music educator perspective on safe spaces, Silveira & Goff (2016) surveyed elementary and high school music teachers on their attitudes towards trans people and trans students. They found overall positive attitudes towards trans people and students with female and liberal teachers being the most trans positive (Silveira & Goff, 2016). Paparo & Sweet (2014) took a different approach and studied queer educators on how they navigate their sexuality in their professional training. They interviewed one cis gay man and one cis lesbian woman in the process of becoming music teachers to find they both expressed frustration with balancing between honest about themselves and queer positive in the classroom with not being seen as inappropriate for a school setting (Paparo & Sweet, 2014). Paparo & Sweet (2014) concluded there are no easy answers to achieving this balance as it is highly contextual on school and geographic area.

Most of the literature on 2SLGBTQ+ issues in music education is fairly recent and more music educators have begun publishing practical tips to assist other music educators in making their classrooms 2SLGBTQ+ positive. Taylor (2018) cautions against avoiding queer topics in the classroom to foster an environment where students feel normalized or practice empathy to begin to unlearn prejudice. Southerland (2018) broke down the initialization LGBTQ+ for educators and offered practical tips on adjusting language as well as a list of queer musicians to consider learning about in class.

Gendered Performance & The Need for Queer Community Music Ensemble Culture

Music ensembles exist beyond classrooms in a wide variety of community settings. There is a thriving queer community music ensemble subculture in North America. It is more prevalent in the United States than Canada but still present in larger Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. These ensembles are created as safe spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ musicians with membership of ensembles primarily being 2SLGBTQ+ people though most queer ensembles allow allies as well. The Lesbian and Gay Band Association (LGBA) acts as a network to connect instrumental ensembles (Bitela, 2007) and the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA) connects vocal ensembles (Gordon, 1990). Both the LGBA and GALA are international associations but GALA has many more countries represented in its membership while LGBA ensembles are mostly in the United States.

There are many reasons why someone may choose to join a LGBA ensemble over another community ensemble that is not explicitly queer or queer-friendly in nature. Firstly, 2SLGBTQ+ musicians may want to seek an environment that is freer from cisheterosexism they could potentially face in other ensembles. This is particularly true for gay men who participate in choirs. It is a stereotype that male musicians are gay, particularly singers, and males are sometimes discouraged from participating to avoid being seen as homosexual (Harrison, 2007). Powell (2015) interviewed boys and men who participate in choir and found even adults in an all-male choir take steps to reaffirm their masculinity such as ridiculing a member of the choir who dances to the music. In this manner these men uphold cisheteropatriarchy. In a gay men's chorus it is far less likely a gay man would have to second guess their behaviour to not be seen as a stereotype or risk ridicule.

Choirs are also a particularly difficult environment for transgender people to navigate because voicing is gendered. Higher parts, or soprano and alto, are female parts because women tend to have higher voices while lower parts, like tenor and bass, are male parts because men usually have lower voices (Rastin, 2016). Voice is a key component in gender dysphoria for many transgender people and singing dysphoria is a serious issue for transgender musicians (Rastin, 2016). The gender binary is rigidly enforced through voicing, leaving transgender members to be misgendered and non-binary singers erased and invalidated. A queer choir is likely to remove these barriers by recognizing any gender can have any voice pitch and bring members together in a place to safely sing in an affirming environment.

Similar factors are present but more subtle in the instrumental ensemble world because parts are not explicitly created around the gender binary. There is a wide variety of instruments in a band, each with their own associated stereotypes which are often gendered. Smaller or softer instruments, like the flute and violin, are often thought of as female instruments (Hallam, Rogers & Creech, 2008). Larger or louder instruments, like the tuba and drums, are often thought of as male instruments (Hallam, Rogers & Creech, 2008). Men stay away from stereotypically female instruments for the same reasons they do not join choir; they are afraid of being perceived as homosexual (Harrison, 2007).

Women are often discouraged from playing instruments stereotyped as male, which includes the entire brass family and drums. Women who play these instruments draw a lot of attention and it often makes others uncomfortable (DeCoste, 2017). Much like gay men's choruses were created to free gay men from stereotyping, all gender-marginalized brass bands can provide women and non-binary brass players a place to be free from gender norms in music. These ensembles often have cisgender heterosexual women in them but creating a space for non-

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men to play stereotypically masculine instruments queers the gendered relationship many

musicians have with their instruments (DeCoste, 2017).

LGBA ensembles have the potential to free all instrumental musicians from negative

gender and sexuality stereotyping. With a motive of being accepting regardless of gender, race,

HIV status, and sexual orientation among other axes of oppression, these ensembles provide a

place where emancipatory learning can take place (Bitela, 2007). 2SLGBTQ+ members can

grow to accept themselves and learn in a space where they are normalized while the ensemble as

a whole functions to positively represent the 2SLGBTQ+ community through music; building

empathy from cisgender and heterosexual listeners or ally participants (Bitela, 2007). Many

ensembles also have a queer activism component, which is something members are not likely to

find in a non LGBA ensemble (Bitela, 2007).

Hudson and Egger (2014) sought to more clearly answer why 2SLGBTQ+ people choose

to participate in LGBA ensembles. They found members valued a sense of community and

potential for making friends as the top two most important social interactions resulting from

ensemble partition (Husdon & Egger, 2014). On a musical front, they enjoy that their individual

playing skill increases and enjoy the musical selections of their ensembles (Hudson & Egger).

LGBA ensembles often purposefully program music from 2SLGBTQ+ artists or songs that are

culturally important to the community and clearly that is a positive for members who may not get

to play repertoire important to them in non-LGBA ensembles (Bitela, 2007).

Most interestingly, participants in the Hudson & Egger (2014) study ranked performance

opportunity as the most important factor in deciding to join followed by musical excellence and

community. That seems odd at first but makes sense given so many 2SLGBTQ+ students find

refuge in their music rooms, where performances are a given and celebratory event and musical

excellence is something to strive for regardless of who you are outside class. 2SLGBTQ+ people eventually graduate high school but you do not stop being a musician simply because you are not getting graded for it. It would seem that 2SLGBTQ+ musicians are driven to join LGBA ensembles to participate in an environment where queerness is already normalized so they can focus on being a musician first and identity second.

Looking back to the bulk of literature on 2SLGBTQ+ musicians, it is either on youth and exclusive to a school setting or homogenizes the 2SLGBTQ+ community to study queer ensembles. Something extremely key to remember when considering queerness is that queerness is not homogeneous. Research on the 2SLGBTQ+ population as a whole has a tendency to look at all queer experience as equal but in reality cisgender homosexuals have different experiences from cisgender bisexuals and all both have different experiences from transgender people. Even within the transgender community there are differing experiences between trans men, trans women, and non-binary individuals.

A recurring issue in most of the literature on youth in music education was lack of class analysis. Entering university has significant barriers yet most studies interviewed university students, even when studying high school experiences. This coupled with the fact that low-income youth are underrepresented in high school music classes to begin with (Elpus & Abril, 2011) means the experiences of low-income musicians were erased. This is most troublesome in the Marra (2019) paper where he did not account for the social locations of his participants even though he surveyed music students at an expensive performing arts camp instead of a standard high school. The self-esteem ratings for youth who could afford to attend likely look very different from lower income youth who cannot afford private instruction or access to mental health assistance. To address these issues I will be collecting demographic data including age,

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race, gender and sexuality to disaggregate the data and analyze intra-community differences using a queer anti-capitalist framework.

The recurring theme of the literature seems to be the idea of a collective space. Individually, 2SLGBTQ+ youth are at risk of suffering from bullying but in music ensembles run by a supportive teacher they are part of a community where they are normalized and valued. A sole gay man in choir could feel the pressures of the cisheteropatriarchy but in a choir of gay men he may not. 2SLGBTQ+ people as a whole are subjected to minority stress via systemic oppression but as part of a collective we have better chances of overcoming. It seems the collective can come in many forms from attending a trans support group to playing tuba in a marching band. Returning to the question of why so many 2SLGBTQ+ musicians would choose to participate in an activity where individual expression is more limited than other art forms the answer becomes apparent; the joy is in being normalized as part of a collective where you can share experiences with others without identity as a barrier.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is done on a queer anti-capitalist framework. There are many ways to express the queer community such as simply saying queer to mean anyone who is not cisgender and heterosexual or using an initialization like LGBT. My preferred initialization is 2SLGBTQ+ meaning two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non-heterosexual and cisgender identities. The term two-spirit was coined in 1988 at the first Native American Gay and Lesbian Movement conference to replace an older, more offensive term for Indigenous people who did not define their gender and sexuality by Western terms (Baskin, 2016).

The term has different meanings to different people and not all non-cisgender or non-heterosexual Indigenous people use the term (Baskin, 2016). As a white settler researcher on colonized land I choose to use 2SLGBTQ+ as the initialization because I feel it is important to recognize Western concepts of gender and sexuality were violently imposed on Indigenous peoples through colonization. Indigenous participants may identify outside of LGBTQ+ terminology and are part of the queer community solely by being outside of the Western concept of gender and sexuality, not necessarily because two-spirit people view themselves as queer. Using 2SLGBTQ+ presents two-spirit as an option so Indigenous participants who identify with that terminology can participate without wondering if it will be recognized by the researcher.

Chatterton (2010) sought to answer what it means to be anti-capitalist through interviewing anti-capitalists and found it means lots of different things to different people but overall being anti-capitalist is to exist and create space in spite of capitalism. I see this being much like the 2SLGBTQ+ community where we create spaces for ourselves to peacefully exist in spite of heterosexism and cissexism. Unfortunately, capitalism is so insidious that not even queer activism is safe from its grasp. Pride has gone from protest to profitable event while

legislation of equal rights has resulted in complacency now that queer people are "free" to participate in society like anyone else (Sears, 2005).

While many queer people are happy to have the chance to live "normally" with a job, spouse, mortgage payments, and children there are just as many if not more that society will allow to fall through the cracks or forcefully push into poverty. Capitalism benefits 2SLGBTQ+ people who would have been likely to benefit well from capitalism anyway, which is to say the least marginalized within our community (Sears, 2005). Middle to upper class white able-bodied homosexual couples often live comfortable lives in gentrified neighbourhoods while racialized, trans, and disabled community members suffer at the hands of systemic racism, cissexism, and ableism (Sears, 2005).

Sears (2005) pointed out victory of achieving full citizenship of the state as queer people has lead to many now trusting the state that left us for dead during the AIDS crisis and used the police to beat us in the streets for resisting our oppression. Even just a few short years ago the Toronto police ignored the pleas of the Toronto queer community to investigate several missing persons, resulting in eight known murders from a serial killer (Joaquin et al., 2019). The truth is we are only offered full citizenship in return for full participation in capitalism. As queer spaces and events have become commodified the queer lifestyle has become most accessible to those who can afford it (Sears, 2005). This is also reflected in the common portrayal of queerness as looking a certain way; usually thin, white, with carefully maintained hair, and wearing fashionable clothing (Sears, 2005).

Sears (2005) summed up queer anti-capitalism as the rejection of commodification of our community for capital gain, recognition that assimilation into capitalism is not liberation, and rejection of capitalism is what will give true freedom to the community as a whole instead of

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only those able to afford it. This can take many forms but the key factor that must occur is remobilization centred on the needs of our most marginalized: our disabled, trans, Black, Indigenous, people of colour, and working class members (Sears, 2005). This requires queer identity to be politicized so the movement is centred on shared queer identity and rejection of the capitalist state instead of seeking safety in it (Sears, 2005).

I see this as applicable for my research because of the way arts are viewed in a capitalist society. In order to be taken seriously and have adequate resources for creation arts are forced to be profitable which means they must be marketable and who decides marketability is those with power. In music this manifests as only being taught Western styles of music, notation, and composers in school (Hess, 2018). In Canada and the United States growing up to play a Vivaldi violin concerto in a symphony is an accomplishment but playing a sitar in a classical Indian music ensemble is niche no matter how skilled you are. If queer spaces should reject commodification by capitalism and music ensembles are informal queer spaces then music ensembles should also reject commodification by capitalism.

Rejection of capitalism is something that should be of importance to musicians and music educators. We perpetually plan fundraisers, apply to grant after grant, seek out paid gigs, and beg for donations to make ends meet for our ensembles. This is to avoid having our members pay large amounts out of pocket, which is not doable for everyone. The erosion of well-funded music programs in public schools will continue to add to the already steep financial barriers associated with it. Accessing higher education in music as an instrumentalist is fraught with barriers because it is contingent on owning an instrument and having access to good music programs in high school or private lessons. Instruments and lessons are incredibly expensive and good music programs are usually only found in higher income neighbourhoods.

These barriers prevent low income people from accessing higher education in music so if they want to play they often turn to community ensembles that may have instruments available. The issue then becomes whether they have the time to devote to independent practice, ensemble rehearsal, and performances and fundraisers on top of having to work so many minimum wage hours a week to make ends meet. If membership or uniform fees apply that is another barrier even if an instrument is covered but instruments are so expensive it still could be more cost-effective for the musician to pay hundreds in fees over thousands on an instrument.

Queer anti-capitalism requires the mobilization of the community around the needs of our most vulnerable combined with politicization of our identity to recognize the state does not truly provide us with safety. These concepts can also be applied to the arts and specifically music. Most ensemble directors and music educators are always so busy trying to find the next source of funding that few consider working to ensure all of us are adequately funded. This is not anyone's fault in particular, this is how capitalism exhausts us and leaves little time or energy after a forty hour work week for pursuits such as unionizing.

I think we as musicians should politicize our identity as artists and recognize our power to create can be used to uphold the state and be held hostage by it or challenge it. Politicizing this identity can build solidarity between the ensemble director in a high income neighbourhood school who does not have to worry about funding because there are lots of donations and the ensemble director at a community centre in a low income neighbourhood who has to pay out of pocket to ensure there is enough sheet music printed. Queer people and musicians both do not have a choice to live in a society where we are limited but we do have a choice to resist it for the benefit of our greater communities and we should.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

Constructivist Grounded Theory

This study uses constructivist grounded theory. Grounded theory was first proposed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) with the idea to generate theory from data as opposed to using data to test theory. This use of inductive as opposed to deductive reasoning was meant to assist sociologists in determining theories that could be useful to them from their research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constructivist grounded theory uses the same inductive reasoning and methodology proposed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) but takes the researcher's position and context in which the research occurred into consideration (Charmaz, 2011). All research environments, researchers, and participants have been shaped by socio-political circumstances, history, or lived experiences. Constructivist grounded theory accounts for this to be a reflexive in its process and counter positivist notions of general applicability by presenting a potential truth instead of the absolute truth (Charmaz, 2011).

Sensitivity to context incorporates concepts such as equity and power into the research to consider what constructs are present, how they affect the research, and how they could be accounted for to draw accurate conclusions more set on dismantling oppression than upholding oppressive ideology (Charmaz, 2011). This is particularly useful for social work research because we must be cognizant of our social locations as researchers and the context of our research for it to be effective. Social work research that upholds systemically oppressive constructs such as colonialism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and cissexism is oppressive by nature and thus against the goals of what social work is and strives for.

Social justice research is critical by nature in that it is normally goal-driven to advocate for a cause or marginalized group of people (Charmaz, 2011). This goal stems from the values of

the field but also the researcher(s) conducting the research. Each researcher comes with a personal set of lived experiences and social location that has informed their values and ultimately shapes how they conduct their research (Charmaz, 2011). Research on the 2SLGBTQ+ population carried out by a cisgender and heterosexual researcher could potentially look very different than research carried out by a 2SLGBTQ+ researcher. Even if the researcher is 2SLGBTQ+, the community is not a monolith and their experiences as a marginalized person are likely extremely different from other 2SLGTBQ+ people (Sears, 2005).

I am a bisexual non-binary ensemble musician researching 2SLGBTQ+ ensemble musicians. I am researching a community I am deeply entrenched in and constructivist grounded theory gives me the freedom to do so without risking supposed biases or homogenizing the queer experience. Constructivist grounded theory gives me the space to discuss my personal involvement and feelings on 2SLGBTQ+ and ensemble music matters to present the truth as I interpret it, one version of the truth, as opposed to creating pressure to present a one-size-fits-all theory.

Data Collection

I planned to collect data from fifty to one hundred 2SLGBTQ+ musicians with ensemble experience via an online questionnaire. My study population is 2SLGBTQ+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non-cisgender and non-heterosexual identified people) over the age of eighteen who are participating or have previous participated in a music performance ensemble. Music ensembles include but are not limited to concert band, marching band, orchestra, symphony, drum corps, indoor percussion, indoor winds, or any sort of choir or vocal ensemble. The questionnaire is a Google Form format and with four sections; the consent

form, verification of meeting the inclusion criteria, optional demographic information, and the data collection questions.

I chose to collect age, race, sexuality, and gender as demographic information to aid in disaggregating the data for analysis. Having demographic information readily available would allow me to take into account which perspectives, and how many, are present. The questionnaire is anonymous so closeted people have the chance to participate. Closeted participants are often silenced by studies on the 2SLGBTQ+ population because there is a great deal of risk involved with revealing your identity to a researcher, especially one who may not be a community member. The inclusion criteria are rather broad and the amount of participants is higher than a typical MRP in this program. This is because an important feature of constructivist grounded theory is to seek multiple perspectives (Charmaz, 2017).

To assist in contextualizing all participant perspectives I allowed participants to self-describe all demographic data instead of having pre-constructed check-boxes so participants can describe their identity in their own terms instead of having to ascribe to what I as the researcher constructed in terms of gender, race, and sexuality, which are constructs themselves with a lot of historical and contextual meaning. This has the added benefit of eliminating the need for an "other" box to select if you do not fit into one of the check boxes. Having to select an "other" box when your identity is not considered mainstream enough to be an option can be an alienating experience. Constructivist grounded theory places value in analyzing language used (Charmaz, 2017) so it allows more depth into each participant's identity to have them self-describe.

My rationale behind my questions was to try to get a broad spectrum of information so I would have a large amount to work with during analysis. I wanted to know which types of ensembles participants have participated in and how they came to participate because research

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literature has shown differences between the highly gendered nature of choirs and the more loosely gendered nature of instrumental ensembles. Question two asked how participation impacted them as a 2SLGBTQ+ person but question 3 allowed them to speak to general benefit because literature has also been inconclusive over whether music is beneficial in general or specifically to 2SLGBTQ+ people. Question four was to allow voice to those who no longer participate because music ensembles come with many barriers such as cost and accessibility so this allowed some class analysis to take place, unlike most music education literature on this topic. Lastly, I asked if participants had anything else they wished to tell me because I am sensitive to how they may conceptualize what is important differently than me and I wanted to give the opportunity to express anything else that could be enlightening despite not fitting into a box I constructed, much like how I collected demographic information.

My research was entirely online and thus my recruitment was also entirely online via social media. As a 2SLGBTQ+ ensemble musician I already had access to many online spaces where we congregate as well as connections to other community members I am friends or acquainted with. I made postings to relevant Facebook groups and on my personal social media with a blurb about my research, a direct link to the questionnaire, and a graphic with basic information (Appendix A). Starting with my social contacts lead to a sort of snowball sampling effect where participants who know me shared the postings with their friends who filled it out and forwarded to their friends to extend the questionnaire beyond my social circle. This had two major benefits: one being my questionnaire was shared with people who I would not have had access to and who likely have different perspectives than me and the other being maximized outreach.

It is extremely likely that people I know or are friends with filled out the questionnaire as they would have been the first to see it. I mitigated having that impact my analysis by including "please protect anonymity by not commenting if you participated or tagging friends in the comments" as part of the blurb accompanying the link and graphic when recruiting. This way those who chose to participate would not disclose to me that they did or accidentally out others who could participate. Regardless, I feel eliminating people you may know from a study to eliminate bias is not productive in all cases because no researcher is truly free of bias and to not acknowledge that is a positivist falsehood. I see my closeness with my community of study as a benefit over a hindrance or source of bias because in constructivist grounded theory the researcher and researched are bonded (Charmaz, 2017). I am able to acknowledge my closeness with the community to critique how my experiences and views may impact my research while using my visibility to draw participants with the security that the researcher will have more understanding as a community member.

Data Analysis

When data collection was completed it was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was easy to apply to this data because all responses were already completely written thus eliminating the need for transcription and potential room for error. Every response underwent a coding process where short summary statements were written about the response questions then the statements were grouped together to reveal themes. Thematic analysis is a fairly standard procedure to be used with grounded theory. It is rather time consuming and sometimes draws attention from researchers for being too subjective because themes are ultimately constructed by me as the researcher (Chapman et al., 2015). I feel this was balanced out by my use of constructivist grounded theory over another type because there was no

presumption that I was attempting objectivity and hard fact. I was informed by my data and formulations from my data were informed by me.

Statement coding was done by numbering responses and splitting them by question into a spreadsheet. Each coded piece of information was turned into a tag so I could sort responses to compare between demographic groups and compare between perceived 2SLGBTQ+ well-being and overall well-being. Coded statements were first sorted to see which words and phrases came up most often to establish overall commonly mentioned positive and negatives of participation. After a baseline was established the results were sorted one demographic group at a time to compare between groups. For example, replies from cisgender participants were hidden to cluster and tally the most common tags for transgender participants and vice versa. This process was repeated between white and racialized participants and between different groupings of sexualities such as single gender attracted (gays and lesbians) and multi-gender attracted (bisexuals and pansexuals). Lastly, code tags for all demographics were clustered into themes I constructed as the researcher based on similarity and tone of the response.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

Demographic Differences and General Findings

A total of ninety eight participants filled out the questionnaire to completion and submit

for participation. All participants filled out demographic information to some degree which

assisted with contextualizing their responses and sorting responses by factors such as gender,

race, and sexuality to compare across identities. The age range of the participants is 18 to 63

however the median age of participation is 23 and the mode is 20. 65 participants are white and

33 are racialized. Most racialized participants identified themselves as Asian or Southeast Asian.

49 participants identified themselves as cisgender, 39 identified themselves as

transgender, and 10 did not specify whether they are cisgender or transgender. Cisgender

participants were mostly female and transgender participants mostly identified as simply non-

binary or other more specified non-binary identities such as genderfluid, trans masc, or

demifemale. A wide variety of sexualities was represented with most participants identifying as

bisexual but participants identifying as gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, and on the asexuality

spectrum participated as well as one heterosexual and two people who are questioning. Please

note the heterosexual identifying person is transgender and thus meets the study criteria. For a

full breakdown of participant demographic information please see APPENDIX A.

Participants disclosed past and/or present membership in a wide variety of ensemble

types. The top five in order are concert band, marching band/ pep band, choir, jazz band/stage

band, and drum corps/SoundSport. Nearly all participants participated in multiple types of

ensemble. This is not unusual given how most high school music programming is structured and

given that many participants are currently working on or have completed music degrees. Not all

participants disclosed why they chose to participate in music ensembles but commonly disclosed

reasons were to be with friends or make new friends as well as reasons related to family such as family encouragement, family tradition, and family pressure. Many participants also disclosed they simply had a passion for music or thought it looked like a fun thing to do. Most participants started music ensemble participation through school but some also started in community groups such as independent ensembles like drum corps or through church.

Regarding the impact of participation as a 2SLGBTQ+ person 56 participants disclosed purely positive impacts, 24 disclosed both positive and negative impacts, 4 disclosed purely negative impacts, and 14 disclosed neither positive or negative effects. This contrasts from the responses for whether participants feel they overall benefit from participation. 96 participants disclosed they feel they benefit from participation in music ensemble and 2 said participation was neither a benefit nor detriment. No participants felt participation in music ensemble was a detriment overall meaning even participants who felt it negatively affected them as a 2SLGBTQ+ person felt the positives were enough to negate the negatives.

The top 5 positive impacts on 2SLGBTQ+ well-being are introduction to other 2SLGBTQ+ people, self-expression, safe space, acceptance, and making friends. Negative impacts disclosed were far more individualized with most only being mentioned once. The most commonly mentioned negative impacts are gender-based harassment, gendered voicing, heteronormative environment, and transphobic staff. Both trans and cis participants had more participants report purely positive impacts than mixed, negative, or neutral impacts but trans participants were more likely to report mixed or negative impacts. All four participants who disclosed participation having a purely negative impact on their well-being as a 2SLGBTQ+ person are transgender.

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Lesbian and gay participants mostly reported purely positive impact on their well-being while bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer, and questioning participants were more likely to have mixed impacts or negative impacts. This is likely due to demographics as most transgender participants in this study identify as something other than homosexual and their negative experiences were more tied to their transgender identity than sexuality. Many negatives impacts to 2SLGBTQ+ well-being were tied to the gendered nature of choir and vocal ensembles, which is in line with other studies on transgender participation in vocal music such as Palkki & Caldwell (2018). This further reinforces why studies cannot view the 2SLGBTQ+ community as a monolith and must provide opportunity to provide specific demographic information for data disaggregation.

Regarding well-being as a 2SLGBTQ+ person racialized participants were more likely to report solely positive experiences while white participants were more likely to report mixed experiences. White participants and racialized participants both mentioned introduction to other 2SLGBTQ+ people as a benefit the most but while white participants had the same top five benefits as the aggregated data racialized participants did not include safe space in their most frequently mentioned benefits. Racialized participants shared acceptance and making friends as important benefits but also mentioned support, coping with mental health, and sexuality not being a barrier the same amount of times.

Racialized participants not mentioning safe space among their top benefits could be telling about ensembles being accepting of gender and sexuality differences but still not being a safe space for anyone who is not white. No participants disclosed racist harassment or discrimination but this study also did not ask about it plus participants are less likely to be comfortable disclosing their experiences on such matters to a white researcher. Many Western

countries push a homonationalist narrative that you are "free" to "safely" be 2SLGBTQ+ in Western countries but not in other places (Murray, 2014). The erasing of gender and sexual diversity across cultures to only define what is outside being cisgender and heterosexual by Western terms presents cultural identity and queer identity as incompatible. That is reflected in one participant's response that "…being more sure of my Indian background complicated things for me down the line, because being LGBTQ+ was a 'white person thing.'"

White students are overrepresented in high school music ensembles while Black and Latino students are underrepresented, particularly in instrumental music ensembles (Elpus & Abril, 2019). This is reflected by the demographics of racialized participants in this study. Music education resources in schools are a result of the socioeconomic makeup of their surrounding areas (Elpus & Abril, 2019). This often leaves schools with large populations of Black and Latino students with less resources meaning they are more likely to run vocal programming because instruments require funding for purchase and maintenance. Less Black and Latino people becoming involved in music through school results in less Black and Latino musicians becoming involved in community ensembles.

There is much to be said about how race, class, and music education are inextricable. Further disaggregation of data and specific studies like the work of Carter (2013) on Black gay men in HBCU marching bands should occur. Carter (2013) discusses the cultural significance of marching bands in HBCU institutions so it is possible the aggregation of instrumental music ensembles is the issue. It could be possible that Black musicians are better represented in marching bands as opposed to concert bands and symphony orchestras because marching band is more likely to be culturally and financially accessible when marching bands are more likely to let you borrow an instrument. There is also much to be said about what effects the additive

whitewashing of music ensembles and the queer community has on racialized 2SLGBTQ+ youth but unfortunately this study did not ask the right questions to address that.

Finding Others and Ourselves

The 2SLGBTQ+ benefit most often mentioned across all divisions no matter which demographic was being analyzed was how ensemble participation introduced them to other 2SLGBTQ+ people and therefore facilitated a 2SLGBTQ+ community. Many participants prized the queer community they were able to access through their ensembles as something they would not have accessed without participation and many credited exposure to other 2SLGBTQ+ people, the presence of 2SLGBTQ+ role models, and allies for assisting them with self-acceptance, the coming out process, discovering their identity, building their identity, learning about sexuality and learning about gender.

The 2SLGBTQ+ community is not a monolith yet the experience of exposure and introduction to other 2SLGBTQ+ people through music ensemble and that being integral to well-being was stressed among participants who disclosed positive or mixed experiences regardless of demographic. Performing arts are associated with queerness (Rumens & broomfield, 2014) which is reflected in some responses such as "I think it [music ensemble] was often a safe place to be 'different' to put it simply. I always found the arts to be an accepting place to be oneself and I usually did not find being bisexual to be a problem." That same participant described their experience as "comfy."

Many 2SLGBTQ+ people join and fall in love with music ensemble as a child before realizing their identity or are closeted but still benefit from the feeling of acceptance or safety. Music ensemble could normalize queerness for participants without them realizing it. The propensity music ensembles have for attracting 2SLGBTQ+ people means it is likely someone

will meet, interact, and collaborate with them in a meaningful way. This can either assist cisgender and heterosexual people with becoming allies or assist 2SLGBTQ+ people with learning about the identities of others to find one that resonates with them or gain the confidence to come out knowing they will not be alone.

The upkeep of music ensembles as informal queer spaces seems to be self-sustaining. The narratives of participants in their twenties and in their sixties were far apart in time but not in meaning. These narratives are one of growth and becoming which musicians know to be true as you gain musical skills but musical narratives and queer narratives parallel each other. Chess (2016) applied queer narrative theory to video games and pointed out how narratives are often expected to mirror heterosexual sex to be considered good in that there is buildup, a single climax, then resolution. We see this reflected in many forms of art like literature, theater, and films (Chess, 2016). Music does not have a plot. If every piece of music was a build, singular climax, and resolution then music would be a lot less interesting. In music there could be many climaxes, none at all, or some parts could have climaxes while others do not. Chess (2016) pointed out that without revolving around a singular climax "pleasures can be in multiple and indefinite" (p. 89). A piece is produced from layers of sound from the various instruments but they are also each playing a small piece in their own right, all parts giving and receiving cues from other parts.

Visual art does not have a plot but the expected creative process is to begin a piece of art and work on it until completion, or what could be called the climax, then present the art as resolution. In a music ensemble there is no real linear process to preparing a piece. Pieces are taken apart and studied down to every last bit of notation to try and capture the composer's intent while still being open to the interpretation of the ensemble. You could work on the beginning last

or solely focus rehearsal on two bars somewhere in the middle to get them just right. This is not

to say that queer narratives are not present in other forms of art but that music ensemble in

particular naturally provides a conducive environment for it.

Some may interpret a large performance and potential break after as the climax but the

truth is there is no real resolution for musicians. Once an ensemble is established it operates in a

yearly cycle rehearsing music and performing at various points in time until it folds. Lengths of

time without rehearsals do not so much conclude a project as provide a break with expected

continuation after. Unlike a concrete product like a book, film, or painting a performance is a

fleeting moment in time which ultimately becomes an experience to the ensemble members.

Pieces played will continue to evolve as various musicians and ensembles revisit them and the

musicians will continue rehearsals.

Musical narratives and queer narratives parallel each other in this lack of climax.

Learning an instrument and realizing your identity are both uncomfortable processes but ones

with potential. Eventually you become proficient enough on your instrument to gain the

confidence to play for others and eventually you become confident in your identity to step out of

the closet. Both entering the intermediate stage of instrument proficiency and stepping out of the

closet are beginnings to the rest of your life chapters where you continue to grow as a musician

and/or learn to navigate the world as a 2SLGBTQ+ person. Musicians will always practice and

find new pieces to improve on in pursuit of perfection which cannot truly be attained by human

beings while 2SLGBTQ+ people will always have to assess their situations and make choices in

a world not built to be compatible for them.

Musicians and 2SLGBTQ+ people perpetually occupy the queer middle space that Chess

(2016) discusses. Being an ensemble musician and being a 2SLGBTQ+ person are both a

narrative of becoming which is highly individualized but fit into a broader community which informs them as they inform it. The multitudes of experiences, as individuals or group and rehearsal or protest, are what matter and are treasured. An ensemble is a group of differing parts coming together to create and the 2SLGBTQ+ community is a group of differing identities clustered and bound together seeking liberation. Victories such as protection under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and marriage equality were important landmarks but the fight against oppression is never truly over and neither is preparation for the next concert. At the end of the day is it our collective experiences, individually and as a community for better or for worse, which we value while perpetually seeking liberation.

This is not to reduce the experience of being a 2SLGBTQ+ person or suggest musical and 2SLGBTQ+ identity are equal. Being a musician is not something you can be oppressed for. I think the parallel between becoming a musician and becoming queer is something that can create understanding on the presence of 2SLGBTQ+ people in music ensembles and why the process of discovery and learning is appealing, particularly in a group setting where you can encourage and be encouraged by others on progress. To be in ensemble is to exist in a space that works with your identity instead of working against it or around it.

Gendered Ensembles

Each ensemble type whether vocal, instrumental, or both has its own subculture which often includes its own set of gender dynamics. Historically, women were encouraged to learn music to be seen as desirable but were only allowed access to instruments that were smaller and softer in sound as well as vocal training (Sergeant & Himonides, 2019). Women who deviated from these selections were seen as scandalous and forced to adopt inconvenient posturing when playing larger instruments so as to not have their knees open (Sergeant & Himonides, 2019).

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These attitudes of what is and is not appropriate for a woman to play created a deep gender divide still present in music today with singing labelled as female for historically being appropriate for women and instruments ranging from masculine to feminine (Abeles, 2009). Studies have shown children learn gender associations of instruments from young which affects their instrument choice (Wrape et al., 2016).

Gendered dynamics and gender-based harassment were mentioned by participants who had experience with choir, brass ensembles, percussion ensembles, and drum corps. Choir is gendered in two ways which presents multiple challenges to 2SLGBTQ+ participants. The first is participation in choir is associated with femininity therefore men who participate are thought of as less masculine and implied to be gay (Harrison, 2007). Heterosexual men are often deterred because they do not want to be perceived as gay but the choice to participate or not is much more complicated for men who actually are queer and may risk their safety by participating.

Most participants participated in many different types of ensembles so not all spoke specifically on their choir experiences but all cisgender gay men who participated in choir said they positively benefit from participation in ensembles as a 2SLGBTQ+ person and overall. The men who detailed their choir experiences were two men in their 60s. One discussed how he has participated in choir his entire life in church, school, and joined a men's choir to become connected with his local queer community. To him, participation was how he practiced self-acceptance in the face of homophobia. The other participant discussed how he sang in choir until age sixteen when he quit due to shame because "…real men in the 1970's didn't sing…" Decades later he had lost his sense of community and that drove him to join a church choir. He says the church choir is welcoming even though he is out and it is one of the few places where he

can be himself. He says the choir saved his life and it was a mistake to quit doing something he loved.

The second way choir is gendered is through parts. On average, women have higher voices and men have lower voices which has defined how voicing is structured. Additionally single gender choirs are extremely common and sometimes the only options offered in schools. Both complicate choir for transgender and non-binary individuals which was reflected in participant responses. Transgender men often made note of how gendered voicing was a source of dysphoria and how even if they enjoyed singing it was difficult if they felt their voice sounded too high. Some discussed how transitioning complicated participation because their vocal range dropping as a result of taking testosterone made them self-conscious or feel as if they were not as good as they were before they transitioned. Unfortunately no trans women or trans femme participants spoke on their experiences in choir but taking estrogen does not affect voice and presents a different set of vocal music challenges.

Non-binary participants had a much more varied response. Some discussed how they loved choir because they were able to meet other 2SLGBTQ+ people but others found it an alienating experience because the binary was strictly upheld. Some participants also commented on the content of the repertoire being problematic or harmful for them because it is always heteronormative love songs while one mentioned participation likely drove them deeper into the closet because it was a religious choir. This is an interesting contrast from the cisgender gay man who found church choir to be welcoming because he could be out. The defining factor overall for the impact of choir was individual choir management. Choir comes with a lot of gendered baggage so it is a double edged sword. Participants who engaged in 2SLGBTQ+ choirs, choirs that have high 2SLGBTQ+ membership, or welcoming churches spoke positively of their

experiences but other ensembles upheld the Western gender binary which negatively impacted participants. Despite troubles, most participants disclosed they still felt they benefit overall for other reasons even if their gender identity complicated it.

The counterpart to choir as a feminine ensemble is brass ensembles, percussion ensembles, and drum corps as male ensembles. Brass and percussion instruments are heavily gendered as male instruments (Wrape et al., 2016). Women and by extension other marginalized genders who play brass and percussion are often sexually harassed by section members and alienated from gender-marginalized people who play instruments gendered as female or more neutral, which are normally woodwind instruments and higher strings like the violin and viola (Wrape et al., 2016). Brass ensembles, percussion ensembles, and drum corps do not have woodwinds or strings as part of their instrumentation. Gender-marginalized brass and percussion musicians have increased in numbers over the years but are still a rarity and must fight for the same recognition and respect from their cisgender male colleagues.

All instances of gender-based harassment without transphobia were disclosed by women and non-binary brass and percussion musicians. One cisgender female and bisexual percussionist said she experienced inappropriate comments regarding her sexuality from men which she feels is due to being a bisexual woman in particular and another said she experienced more difficulty for being a girl than being bisexual. A cisgender lesbian percussionist and trombonist in her fifties discussed how she always felt held back by sexism in her school ensembles because she played masculine instruments. She reflected on wanting to challenge gender norms but that bringing anxiety and discomfort around her sexual orientation. A non-binary trombone player discussed how they were driven to leaving their brass ensemble altogether because the cisgender

men they regularly dealt with created a toxic environment which took a toll on their mental health.

The two percussionists did not detail how they handled gender-based harassment but the two trombonists found freedom in joining street bands with specific anti-oppression mandates. The cisgender female trombonist joined an activist street band with a specific queer and anti-racist mandate. This ensemble had many 2SLGBTQ+ members she was able to connect with and regarding her involvement she said "This band was the first group setting where I brought my whole self to the circle, and there was complete, enthusiastic encouragement of my identity and orientation." The non-binary trombonist stopped playing trombone despite being a music major and focused on other ensembles until they found an all gender-marginalized brass ensemble to play with. It was a healing experience for them and they stated their ensemble "...will always be my chosen family: they brought me back to music after years of being traumatized."

The experiences of gender-marginalized trombonists parallels the experiences of transgender people and cisgender gay men in choirs. The experience has potential to be liberating or oppressive. The difference in experience is in the mandate of the ensemble or the presence of 2SLGBTQ+ people in the ensemble to carve that space out for themselves; the purposeful decision to create an ensemble that is formally a queer space or the creation of an informal queer space by the ensemble members themselves.

Mental Health and Self-Care

Many participants explicitly disclosed struggling with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression and mentioned or discussed how participating in music ensemble helped them cope. Other participants discussed mental health and well-being but in a more general way and focused on how participation is part of self-care for them. These participants were more

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likely to say ensemble participation helped them cope with stress or was a needed break from other life demands such as work and school. Five participants disclosed they felt they were at risk of dying by suicide without ensemble involvement and participation saved their lives.

Some participants conceptualized mental health and self-care benefits as part of their well-being as a 2SLGBTQ+ person but others saw it as separate and part of their overall well-being. One cisgender female biromantic asexual participant expressed she was not public about her identity at the time of her ensemble participation so she does not feel it impacted her identity but also stated "I feel my healthiest mentally when I am participating in something greater than myself but am still able to feel my individual contributions to the group." This sentiment was shared by several others who were not out while participating but still felt ensemble alleviated their stress or helped them cope with mental health issues.

How participants conceptualized mental-health and self-care could have something to do with their individual circumstances surrounding acceptance of their gender and/or sexuality. Participants who were conflicted or troubled about their identity found ensemble to be a welcome reprieve and often discussed mental health as part of their 2SLGBTQ+ well-being, as exemplified by statements such as "I did not come to a realization or acceptance of my sexuality until I [was] in college and while I was figuring it out, life was really chaotic and turbulent…I could go to rehearsal and forget about all of my problems." This is supported by the participants who disclosed they were at risk of dying by suicide often using the word escape to describe their ensemble involvement such as "…band was an escape from me. I had an abusive household and the main thing that kept me afloat was being involved in school."

One participant noted she did not feel participation was important to her well-being as a 2SLGBTQ+ person living in California, a generally more socially progressive state, but she felt

it mattered when she moved to Alabama, a generally more socially conservative state. Participants from more socially progressive areas, accepting families, or those who easily came to accept themselves may not see mental health as related to their 2SLGBTQ+ identity. I do not think it is so simple to separate the two only based on personal experience when 2SLGBTQ+ people still face systemic oppression overall.

Participants who disclosed information along this theme were more likely to be bisexual, pansexual, queer, or asexual but experience multi-gender romantic attraction. They were also more likely to be transgender or non-binary than cisgender. Applying minority stress this is unsurprising. People who experience multi-gender attraction and trans people are more likely to experience mental health difficulty from minority stress as a result of not fully feeling as if they fit into the cisgender and heterosexual population or what is considered mainstream queer community spaces (Balsam et al., 2013).

This bisexual participant did not speak to her mental health or self-care in any way but expressed frustration with being perceived as heterosexual because of her partner's gender. She stated "I'm not straight enough but I'm also not queer enough so I tend to lack a community to be with. The ensemble I was a part of at the end of my time in music allowed me to celebrate who I was and didn't make me feel like I wasn't enough. I just belonged because I was me and I was committed to the ensemble. I now constantly seek that type of community." A trans femme participant shared they found playing music to be therapeutic but they were deterred from finding a new ensemble to join stating "I've stayed away from even looking for ensembles to play in because I feel invisible in any public space and around cis people I don't know." Their concern is not with cisgender AND heterosexual people, it is with cisgender people meaning that cisgender gays and lesbians could still be a threat to well-being even in a queer space.

The 2SLGBTQ+ community is vast and multifaceted so it should not be a surprise that members will conceptualize their well-being differently and even be treated differently in 2SLGBTQ+ spaces depending on the setting and their identity. Not all 2SLGBTQ+ spaces or organizations are equitable. A more informally queer space that is focused on other activities instead of solely identity may be more accessible to those who are uncomfortable accessing formally queer spaces or services when they need support.

Ensemble as Spiritual Ritual

Mentioning church or religion was not uncommon. Many mentioned participation in church ensembles, one discussed their discomfort with religion as queer person, and one detailed their negative experience in Catholic school. Something striking about many responses was the tone of reverence used. I think participation in music ensembles can fill the same spiritual niche religious services fill by creating the sort of egalitarian space most places of worship try and many fail to provide. Clinebell (1992) defined spirituality as an individual's experience of their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to that which they consider significant or sacred. Additionally Clinebell (1992) stated spirituality can be "regular performance of actions and activities undertaken for the purpose of inducing spiritual experiences and cultivating spiritual development" (p. 3). This differs from organized religion in that a higher power is not necessary for belief and there is no structure or right way to be spiritual.

Johnson (2000) conceptualized gay spirituality, which can be extended to overall queer or 2SLGBTQ+ spirituality, as spirituality informed by the specific experience of being an outsider. Johnson (2000) proposed that 2SLGBTQ+ people are more capable of understanding the true meaning of religion as a message of love and acceptance because we view society with a

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different set of expectations and assumptions from a "critical distance." 2SLGBTQ+ people are often alienated from religion or places of worship because each religion, sect, and even individual place of worship has their own concept of what is and is not acceptable regarding sexuality and gender identity. People who are alienated from such a widespread setting of community, connection, fulfilment, and meaning are likely to seek other avenues for it if they feel they benefit from such a setting. Music ensembles are an extremely available avenue seeing as how some type of ensemble is usually available through every public school.

Not all 2SLGBTQ+ people identify as spiritual or are as critical of society when they are able to benefit from capitalism, such as white able cisgender gay men, but this yearning for acceptance and connection to something greater is reflected in nearly two thirds of responses. Participants often stressed the importance of being part of a collective by using words like belonging, community, connection, home, and family as well as phrases such as "part of a team" and "part of something bigger." These responses were not discussing 2SLGBTQ+ community or connections to other 2SLGBTQ+ people but a sense of meaning, love, purpose, and fulfilment from participating in ensemble in general.

Responses ranged from simple to extremely poetic and profound. One participant described being in band as being "part of a woven piece of art." A very explicitly spiritual response read "I believe that playing music together has a special, intangible, and ineffable magic that connects a person with themselves, with others, with the past and present, and with the universe." The reverence of responses was sometimes accompanied by phrases such as "no judgement" or something about sexuality or gender identity "not matter[ing]." Like with responses in the mental health theme, some participants categorized their identity not being a barrier as a benefit to their 2SLGBTQ+ well-being while others conceptualized it as participation

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not affecting their well-being as a 2SLGBTQ+ person because if it was not a barrier for them in the first place then it was irrelevant. Personally I do not think it is irrelevant because we live in a systemically oppressive society so an environment where sexuality and gender identity are not a barrier in any way is special, particularly a large social environment.

This sense of spirituality was as much represented in responses where participants discussed their self-expression. Self-expression was the second most mentioned benefit brought up when asked whether participants benefit as a 2SLGBTQ+ person and commonly mentioned in overall benefits. Words along the same line commonly used were creativity, outlet or emotional outlet, and emotional release even though performers in music ensembles are not often the ones who wrote the piece and everyone in their section would be performing the same or similar parts. Only one participant listed lack of individuality in ensemble as a negative because she found choir "…a very stifling experience. Rigid, uniforms, no individuality." All other times uniforms were discussed was when transgender participants discussed how they were either affirming or a source of dysphoria depending on their ensemble's policy. Ensembles where everyone is allowed to choose their own uniform style or everyone wears the same thing were found to be affirming while ensembles that forced gendered uniforms by birth gender were a source of dysphoria.

Returning to Clinebell's (1992) description of spirituality including "regular performance of actions and activities undertaken for the purpose of inducing spiritual experiences and cultivating spiritual development" the duality of collective activity through rehearsals and individual expression within that collective but making up one body is reminiscent of religious services to me. The ritual of coming together at regular intervals in constant pursuit of perfection that likely will not be attained, the social aspect of coming to put work in but also enjoy doing the work together, and the bonds of recognition between ensemble members within and between

ensembles are all parallels to how I personally conceive of church from an Eastern Orthodox background. Being a musician is as much about time at rehearsal with your ensemble as it is a lifestyle. Outside of rehearsals ensemble musicians put hours into individual practice and often organize social gatherings with their ensemble members.

Hartje-Döll (2013) wrote on the imagined community of Evangelical churches through the genre of praise and worship music. The sharing of the same pieces among different churches creates a sense that you are connected to others at those churches even if you do not know them (Hartje-Döll, 2013). Few ensembles have original pieces only they perform. Pieces are often passed around ensembles and part of the excitement is hearing how others interpreted a piece. Ensemble musicians often have vast social networks with other ensemble musicians with recognition and respect between ensembles. I would say it is analogous to how members of different churches see each other. On participant stated "They [ensembles] just feed my soul. It's so hard to describe." They shared a story about a time they were stuck in a blizzard while they were away from home and local ensembles they have no affiliation with offered them a place to stay. They shared "I'm connected to so many people across the world and I know that basically wherever I end up (in the states especially) I have a person somewhere close by I can call on."

Judging from the variety in responses ensemble participation is transformative in so many ways that I think all these experiences have the additive effect of combining into something akin to divinity. This is a bizarre and unexpected finding but I know I have felt the same in my experience. One participant shared "Coming from a broken home, I remember the first time that I felt genuinely happy. It was a surreal feeling and I didn't know how to process what real joy felt like and I just ended up sobbing. I still tear up thinking about it because it was just an otherwise insignificant evening at ensemble rehearsal in 2016 that we were working on the opener and I

had looked up at the sky and everything just clicked. I was exactly where I was meant to be." I know there is something so profound about their experience I struggle to find a label other than holy.

The unique space music ensembles create is capable of meeting many different needs for 2SLGBTQ+ people. With such an eclectic group of benefits and meanings drawn from ensemble participation it is difficult to parse out what the theoretical takeaway is but there is a central theme. Ensembles create a space seemingly removed from society to potentially provide a reprieve from heterosexism, cissexism, and sexism to provide a space that instead fosters personal growth, collaboration, and connection. The common thread is ensembles provide a space to meet needs that are very difficult to meet living under capitalism therefore ultimately function as a reprieve from capitalism itself.

CHAPTER 6. IMPLICATIONS

The concept of music ensembles functioning as a reprieve from capitalism for 2SLGBTQ+ people is most easily illustrated with drum corps because it is the most extreme example. I had a conversation with Ryan Springler, a gay musician and one of two visual caption heads at The Academy Drum & Bugle Corps, regarding the unique space drum corps and other ensembles create. Touring with a drum corps is essentially living in a "commune on wheels" for three months. Drum corps provides food with a team of cooks, shelter by sleeping on the floor of high schools, transportation by travelling in coach buses together, and basic medical care by having athletic trainers on staff (R. Springler, personal communication, May 18, 2020). It is hard work with twelve hour days but Ryan pointed out "[There is] way less alienation, not just from other people but your labour" (R. Springler, personal communication, May 18, 2020). You see and hear what you and others put into the show and living environment. Everyone has a task and everyone completes that task and in turn is cared for.

Ryan posits that "drum corps is a taste of non-capitalist living" (R. Springler, personal communication, May 18, 2020) in that it is a truly communal environment. You eat, shower, work, and sleep with others which is very contrary to the segmented lives we live under capitalism. The environment drum corps creates allows us to willfully create a space where we are normalized which manifests in how we do our work to create a supportive environment for members. Ryan prides himself on setting an example by unabashedly being his queer self in an activity known for being very patriarchal (R. Springler, personal communication, May 18, 2020). Where cishet male instructors may yell and punch a binder to communicate Ryan is more known for constructive approaches and being an example of a different kind of masculinity where you do not need to use force and power over others to effectively educate.

Drum corps creates a space outside mainstream society which you exclusively live in for three months. In this space you can reflect on your life and society in a way you may not be able to engage in during the offseason when you are burdened with managing things drum corps provides. Similarly, when you return to society you notice how the labour you put in no longer amounts to what you receive. This concept translates to other music ensembles but in a more subtle way. If drum corps is fast-acting relief then other ensembles are prolonged release. When rehearsals are a few hours a week they function as a reprieve as opposed to an all-out escape for three months, the "break" from life demands that many participants referenced.

Interpreting this from a queer anti-capitalist perspective an environment free from the burdens of capitalism is also likely to be freeing from cisheterosexism. 2SLGBTQ+ people are enemies of cisheterosexism because how we conceptualize and form relationships with others and ourselves is not conducive to the strategic way capitalist society is designed to encourage maximum consumption. In ensemble our identities cannot be commodified nor do we have to present as a particular kind of 2SLGBTQ+ person to be awarded full personhood and access to resources. Sears (2005) pointed out how creation of space where we cannot be commodified but do not have to fear being out either is integral to liberation because capitalism will always limit us in one of those ways. We created this for ourselves over time in music ensembles and continue to create this for ourselves by living authentically in a space about communal creation over individual consumption. Not all ensembles are capable of this because some, like military ensembles, are run in very cisheternormative environments but I think the inherent queerness of ensembles provides such an environment that after one 2SLGBTQ+ person becomes emboldened to be open others will follow and it becomes a self-sustaining cycle for that ensembles.

Social worker scholars have described arts-based approaches as achieving similar results. Moffatt (2019) described how our affect, or unconscious thoughts and feelings, are dominated by oppressive structures we exist within such as capitalism. We carry our affect into everything we do and when we recognize the effects of affect it becomes emotion (Moffatt, 2019). Emotions are complex and sometimes difficult to describe with words so several social work scholars have suggested using arts-based approaches to better express emotions without the limitation of "proper" language (Moffatt, 2019). Lefevre (2004) suggested music is a good way for children to express emotions because children may not have the language or cognitive ability to fully describe their emotions through words. Moffatt (2019) pointed how Foucault's idea of self-care, ascesis, is social as opposed to an individual act and holding space in a room to co-construct the self and others in relation to each other can be art. Both these ideas combined form the basis of what solace 2SLGBTQ+ people find in music ensembles.

Many participants recall being introduced to music ensemble through school and that being the place they felt safe even before fully conceptualizing their 2SLGBTQ+ identity. 2SLGBTQ+ children often do not have the language to express their gender and sexuality because these terms are considered adult subject material. Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia can be difficult subjects for a child to navigate and children come into school with an affect informed by the cisheterosexist society they live in. Music class offers a means of expression for the individual on their instrument or with voice while simultaneously offering ascesis through the co-creation of music. Music ensemble is about the co-construction of music in relation to everyone else in the ensemble, a diverse unity in sound to create a singular piece where the self-care of practicing is actually a community benefit for the ensemble.

Relating back to ways transformative narratives of queerness and becoming a musician parallel each other and considering how young people are often introduced to music ensembles during adolescence it is simple to conclude that music ensemble can assist youth in expressing and processing emotions around queerness even if they do not realize it. Benefits of music ensemble participation do not stop after coming out and accepting oneself because these transformative narratives dictate that becoming is an ever evolving process that continues into adulthood for both 2SLGBTQ+ people and musicians. Ensemble continues to be the means of expression and ascesis for the complexity of navigating capitalism as a queer person.

There seems to be a tendency for social workers who are not musicians to have a one dimensional view of arts-based programming where visual art is given priority. I suspect that is in part because music is perceived as difficult to non-musicians but also because music programming is perceived as expensive. It is true that glue sticks and construction paper are cheaper than instruments but Lefevre (2004) outlined several potential methods of using music in social work, some of which are extremely affordable. Singing, writing simple songs, and creating playlists of songs around a certain feeling or subject matter are all excellent cost-effective ways to engage a client in musical expression.

We also should not let our conceptions of arts-based programming and what is or is not therapeutic be confined by capitalism and fight for the funding to increase musical engagement. Sears (2005) points out how 2SLGBTQ+ people must politicize their identities to continue pushing for liberation for all. Music educators have recognized a similar concept. They know their programming is confined by politics and have pushed back by enthusiastically participating in campaigns such as Red for Ed and strikes. There are very few people advocating for music programming outside of schools. A major barrier to accessing music programming for adults

which participants voiced is not being in school anymore limits access to music, instruments, and a guaranteed ensemble. The erosion of funding for social programming and erosion of arts funding cannot be seen as separate struggles. They are both being deprived of resources because neither of them serve capitalism. To think that 2SLGBTQ+ people are only harmed when 2SLGBTQ+ project funding is cut is to ignore the spaces we have claimed for ourselves and what we have decided is beneficial to us. If 2SLGBTQ+ people and musicians are fighting for these spaces then social workers engaging on a community level should fight for these spaces too.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The reasons 2SLGBTQ+ people join or stay in music ensemble and the benefits they reap are as diverse as the community itself. The themes presented in this study are merely a few common threads that weave through multiple people to create an image of us and our place in music ensembles, the arts, and society. Literature on 2SLGBTQ+ issues in music education has continuously emerged in the past few years but this conclusion should be taken as the end of the beginning because there is still much work to do. Disaggregating data by 2SLGBTQ+ identity in this study yielded differing results depending on identity which proves more specific study populations or disaggregation by demographic should be used in the future. This will enable data collection on identities that make up a sizable portion of the community yet are studied less, like multi-gender attracted and non-binary people, for a more accurate view on 2SLGBTQ+ musical experiences.

Collecting more robust demographic information also allows for disaggregation by factors other than 2SLGBTQ+ identity to study the intersections of 2SLGBTQ+ identities and other identities. I did not ask for personal or family income level at the time of participation so while I analyzed data on a queer anti-capitalist framework my class analysis of participants was broad. Some disclosed cost as a participation barrier but not having a question specifically on income was limiting. This study touched on differences between white and racialized participants but did not ask any race related questions I so was unable to fully analyze the responses from any sort of race-based angle for meaningful conclusions so that is an area ripe for future study.

A couple of participants brought up disability in regards to how it impacted their choice of ensemble and affected their participation. I anticipated mental health disclosures and

discussion but did not think physical disability would be brought up. In retrospect, that was an oversight on my part. Had more people brought it up I likely would have identified it as a theme but there probably were more people who would have spoken on this had I asked the right questions. There seems to be a gap in literature on the intersection between 2SLGBTQ+ identity and disability in music so this is an area that should be explored in the future, particularly with regards to how disability shapes the means of music-making and community involvement for disabled 2SLGBTQ+ musicians.

One participants shared "A lot of doing stuff with other queer folks is explicitly about being queer, which isn't necessarily what I want all the time." Social workers often refer their 2SLGBTQ+ clients to 2SLGBTQ+ services but these services are almost always formally queer spaces which do not always meet everyone's needs depending on their circumstances, could put them at risk if they are closeted, and are not always available in many locations. While participation in music ensembles did not have a purely positive effect on 2SLGBTQ+ well-being for all participants ninety six participants still said participation was a benefit to their overall well-being and none said it was overall detrimental.

Transgressions against 2SLGBTQ+ people are more than being called a slur on the street. When we have been suppressed and oppressed as a community it makes sense for our healing to also be as a community in spaces we are free to be our most authentic selves even if they are unconventional. Our existence is defined by more than suffering. Our collective sound is collective coping, love, support, and maybe closer to God than many of us thought we could get. In the words of one final participant "Being 2SLGBTQ+ does not feel safe anywhere sometimes, but at the very least, I found a little bit of safety sleeping on a gym floor with my drum corps buddies."

Race	Number of Participants
White	63
Asian	6
SE Asian	6
Hispanic	5
Mixed race or biracial	3
White (Ashkenazi Jewish)	2
White/SE Asian	2
White/Latino	2
Indigenous	1
White/Hispanic	1
White/Black	2
Chicano	1
Filipino	1
Mixed Latino	1
SE Asian/Asian	1
Middle Eastern	1
TOTAL	98

Gender	Number of Participants
cis female	31
cis man	16
non-binary	13
unspecified female	8
trans man	7
demifemale	2
trans masc	3
trans femme	2
genderfluid	2
agender	2
genderqueer	3
questioning	2
unspecified cis	2
unspecified male	2
unspecified trans	1
trans woman	1
trans masc genderfluid	1
TOTAL	98

Cisgender	49
Transgender	39
Unspecified	10

Sexuality	Number of participants
bisexual	33
gay	18
pansexual	13
queer	11
lesbian	9
questioning bisexual	3
asexual	3
asexual homoromantic	3
asexual biromantic	2
asexual panromantic	1
heterosexual	1
grey-asexual panromantic	1
TOTAL	98

	Age
Mean	25.7
Median	23
Mode	20
Range	18-63

1. What sort of music performance ensembles have you participated or are you participating in (e.g. concert band, marching band, choir, etc.) and how did you become involved in them? Why did you choose to participate?

2. How do you feel your participation in music performance ensembles impacted your well-being as a 2SLGBTQ+ person? Please describe.

3. Do you feel participation in music performance ensembles benefit you? Please describe.

4. Do you still participate in any music performance ensembles? Why or why not?

5. Is there any other information relevant to the study you would like to share that you did not get a chance to in the other questions?

Hello! I am a Master's of Social Work student at Ryerson University seeking musicians who identify as two-spirit, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other non cisgender and heterosexual identities (2SLGBTQ+) for a research study on the well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ musicians in performance ensembles. Performance ensembles include but are not limited to concert band, marching band, indoor percussion, indoor winds, symphony, orchestra, and any sort of choir. Participation is completely voluntary and anonymous, all that is required is you fill out a questionnaire about your experiences. Please protect anonymity by not commenting if you participated or tagging friends in the comments. For more information including the questionnaire please follow this link: [link to questionnaire]

If you are
- 18+ years old
- A member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- Currently participating in or have participated in a music performance ensemble such as concert band, marching band, or any type of choir

You qualify to participate in an **online research questionnaire** on the impact of ensemble participation on the well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ musicians

High Notes in Hard Times: the Impact of Ensemble Participation on the Well-Being of 2SLGBTQ+ Musicians is **recruiting minimum 50, maximum 100 participants** for this study

For more information please **contact the primary researcher** at **miranda.clayton@ryerson.ca**

Ryerson University This study has been reviewed and approved by the Ryerson REB (REB 2020-065)

APPENDIX D

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Miranda Clayton

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **13 December, 2019**

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