Qualities of Transformational Learning in the High School Orchestra Classroom: A Heuristic Study

Linda F. Versprille
Concordia University - Portland

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Qualities of Transformational Learning in the High School Orchestra Classroom:

A Heuristic Study

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Transformational Leadership

Jillian Skelton, Ed.D. Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Judy Shoemaker, Ed.D. Content Specialist

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Concordia University–Portland

2019
Abstract

High school orchestra students demonstrate a high degree of comfort in the orchestra classroom by spending out-of-class time in the room. Climate inventories do not address the constituents’ particular to the experience of the orchestra student. This heuristic phenomenological study explored the identification and description of qualities of transformational learning in the high school orchestra classroom that contributes to a positive classroom learning environment. Six seasoned high school orchestra directors with a minimum of ten years of experience participated in semistructured interviews to recall events during their high school years or as a teacher. Each was able to provide anecdotal details and characteristics to support the existence of four qualities of transformational learning in the orchestra classroom: belonging, flow, attunement, and identity development/self-actualization. The participants suggested sixteen practicing components that contributed to the description of events surrounding the transformational qualities: appropriate literature, challenge, choice, the expectation of excellence, intentionality, leadership, long-term relationships, mindfulness, movement, purpose, responsibility, ritual and tradition, set-apartness, trust, vocation, and work. These constituents along with the four main transformational qualities bore some alignment corresponding to Maslow (1970a, 1970b), but implied a more active component as the performance of music requires the player to replicate the events in concert with others.

Keywords: transformational learning, belongingness, flow, attunement, self-actualization
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all who play and sing. We grow through delight.

That freedom,
When I am really fully playing,
I'm not thinking,
There is a shift there that happens
and it's really a bodily shift,
Frontal lobe,
the guard,
fluid.
There's an inner change,
Everything flowing,
That's when a shift can occur.
When I'm letting go of outcome,
Letting go.
My challenge is to not hesitate,
and take risks,
and do certain things,
Especially in my work.
Playing in this way,
with anything,
Strengthens the ability to move,
And flow,
and take risks,
and then inspire that in other people.
It's rhythm,
and rates,
and ebbs,
and flows,
and waves,
Magical sounds,
Communicating.

I've got to be in the moment.

I think it informs relationships.

I like those moments.¹

Acknowledgements

I deeply appreciate the support of my husband, Craig Versprille, who never hesitated when I decided to pursue my doctorate at the age of 60. My children, Kristen Balkham, Abe Versprille, and Pat Versprille, are my inspiration. They, with their spouses, Brad, Lindsey, and Lindsay, are responsible for giving me the joys of my life, my grandchildren: Reese, Sawyer, Ella, Kate, Brooks, and Sadler. This dissertation was not completed quickly because I never missed an opportunity to be their “NaNa.” To my chair, Dr. Jillian Skelton, thank you for being my cheerleader. I was blessed to have my committee, Dr. Judy Shoemaker, who introduced me to Benjamin Zander, and Dr. Suzette Zientara, who marched through Mezirow along with my cohort. And, many thanks to Dr. Jennifer Collins and Dr. Christine Spear, my cohort members who were with me every step of the way.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Teachers, like doctors, look at symptoms to make a diagnosis. Symptomatic of the high school orchestra student is their continual presence in the music room during off-class times. Before school, after school, and during lunch, young musicians will gather, indicating a degree of confidence in their surroundings. What occurs during class to facilitate this desire to extend the experience to non-instructional time?

Qualities of transformational learning may be present in the corporate environment of the orchestra classroom but are likely to receive insufficient description by the teenage student. Answers such as, “My friends are in my class,” “Orchestra is fun,” and “I like music” are possible teenage responses as to why they enjoy orchestra. However, these reactions may not be far off the mark. Mezirow (1991) spoke of transformation theory as “not so much what happens to people, but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment, and emotional well-being, and their performance” (p. xiii). The orchestra teacher, having experienced the instrumental music classroom as both student and educator benefits from the reflective experience of adulthood and can assign meaning and importance to friends, fun, and music as transformational learning experiences.

In education courses, the aspirant teacher learns the importance of creating a safe environment for the student. Maslow (1962, 1970a, 1970b) explained that basic human needs must be satisfied before the student desires to strive toward self-actualization. The yearning to pursue “growth-through-delight” is found blossoming in the high school musician as they begin the unarticulated journey of reaching for personal potential (Maslow, 1962, loc. 751). This growth is occurring in the rehearsal, in lessons, and in the practice room. The type of
environment that describes the fostering of self-actualization, however, is not defined in the literature that quantifies positive classroom learning environments.

How, then, may we describe the transformational learning taking place in the orchestral class that drives the student to crave that atmosphere, creating an intrinsic draw? The teenage student may experience many aspects of positive psychology as they begin the self-actualization process. Peak experience or flow, belonging, identity development, attunement, and ritual are conventional components of the orchestra classroom experience. These qualities are not cataloged in classroom environment inventories but are likely to be some of the very elements that open the door to transformational learning. This study seeks to explore the qualities that lend themselves to fostering transformational learning in the high school string orchestra classroom.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

Quantification of learning environments began with Moos (1979). However, the business of learning environment inventory development started to appear in the research literature as Fraser (1998) pioneered the journal, Learning Environments Research, which chronicled the use and development of classroom climate testing. Existant tools investigate the perceptions of teachers and students of the classroom environment using particular constructs within broad categories. Qualities measured include positive reinforcement, instructional presentation, goal setting, differentiated instruction, and formative assessment (Allodi, 2010; Fraser, 1998; Kohl, Recchia, & Steffgen, 2013; Morin, Marsh, Nagengast, & Scalas, 2014; Nelson, Demers, & Christ, 2014). These categories, while present in well-managed classrooms, do not represent the qualities of transformational learning. Differentiation in instruction, for example, rarely invokes the self-actualization process of growth through delight.
What qualities then, foster growth through delight, or learning that is transformational?

The consensus of thought espoused by writers on transformative learning is:

Teaching should no longer be thought an act of transferring knowledge from the teacher to student, or of merely informing students of what they will need to get by in the world. Rather, education should transform our relations to others, to ourselves, and to the world around us. (Yacek, 2017, p. 6)

Yacek (2017) conducted a literature review making extensive use of German-language literature. In combination with English language literature, Yacek further outlined four distinct schools of thought on transformative learning. The first encountered is social justice education and contains an element of conversion, such as religious conversion. The second, Yacek terms a transformation of overcoming as taught by Mezirow (1991). The third form is paradigms of discovery as initiated by Erickson (1985) in which persons grow into transformation as part of stages of growth (Yacek, 2017). The fourth example of transformational learning is that of initiation promoted by neo-Aristotellean philosophers, such as Strike (2005) (Yacek, 2017).

However, proponents of transformational education are seeking to encourage research to reach some common language in prevailing theory (Cranton, 2016). The dark side of most versions of transformational learning is they carry with them a risk of the student experiencing internal crisis on the pathway to transformation, bringing up ethical questions regarding transformational learning. This facet of transformative education again begs the question, how do we learn through delight?

Authors of positive psychology tomes, Csikszentmihalyi (2013), Hallowell (2011), Robinson (2011), and Seligman (2011), each touted enhanced connectivity, focus, and purpose as an extension of the self-actualization process. Belongingness, a concept introduced by Maslow
(1964, 1970a, 1970b) and given significance by Baumeister and Leary (1995) appeared in research by Parker (2016), and Rzonsa (2016) to emphasize the meaning of connection with others in ensemble experiences.

If the goal of learning is to become a person who has “full use of and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc.” (Maslow, 1970a, p. 150), as Maslow described self-actualizing people, this seems an excellent place to begin to discover what this looks like in a high school orchestra classroom. Maslow cautioned that self-actualization occurs with the benefit of acquiring age and maturity. Maslow refers to young adults who seem to have developed some characteristics of self-actualization as healthy. Therefore high school students who are in the process of developing the communicative facility may not be adequately positioned to describe their experiences to a researcher.

If the high school student has not gained the self-reflective capacity to identify the qualities of transformational learning, then who can recognize the occurrences of these events? Teachers who have experienced high school orchestra and had the benefit of reflective practice are in the best position to assign meaning to memories stemming from high school years as well as what happens daily in their music classrooms. Teachers with a minimum of 10 years of experience with high school students can look retrospectively at their students as multiple classes cycle through their programs.

**Statement of the Problem**

The literature regarding the evaluation of classroom climate or learning environment does not address the intrinsic draw of the music room. The long-term relationships between teachers and students merged, with the transformational benefits of learning and playing music, cannot be assessed with the use of existent climate measuring instruments. Preservice teacher education
admonishes future teachers to be cognizant of basic human needs found on the lower end of Maslow’s (1962, 1970a, 1970b) continuum. However, the characteristics of growth-through-delight which occurs at the higher end of the spectrum receive scarce recognition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this heuristic study was to identify the qualities of learning that affect classroom climate in the high school orchestra classroom. The intention was to interview five to seven high school orchestra teachers about their experiences with transformational learning in their orchestra classes. Teachers were asked to reminisce about encounters with characteristics of transformational learning across time as a student in addition to 10-plus years as a teacher. A researcher-created semistructured interview asked participants to recall occurrences of flow, creativity, personal and musical identity development, experiences with ritual and tradition, belongingness, connection, and attunement. The intent was to identify and describe qualities of transformational learning in the high school orchestra so that teachers may be cognizant of these events in their classroom environments.

Research Questions

The central research question of this study centers around the identification of qualities of transformational learning that are perceived to be present in the high school orchestra classroom. According to Moustakas (1990), the interviewing process in heuristic research is one in which the researcher is open to all facets of the participant's experience with the phenomena under study. These facets may include, but not is limited to examples, events, situations, people, thoughts, feelings, shifts in bodily presence or state, and time and space factors. The researcher created semistructured interview questions designed to simultaneously educate participants about
the qualities of transformational learning that they may have experienced or witnessed students experiencing while drawing rich and vivid descriptions.

Central RQ: How do the qualities of transformational learning impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ2: How do conditions of flow and creativity as described by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) affect climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ3: How does the development of identity (Eaton, 2013; Maslow, 1962; Ståhlhammar, 2006), both musical and personal, impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ4: How do musicological events (Morrison, 2001; Nettl, 1995), such as ritual and tradition, influence climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ5: How do belongingness and connection (Hallowell, 2011; Parker, 2016; Rzonsa, 2016; Seligman, 2011) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ6: How does attunement (Kossak, 2008) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ7: What other qualities impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the recognition that the climate of the orchestra classroom is not measurable using traditional learning environment instruments. An identification of the qualities of transformational learning that assist high school musicians as they grow toward self-actualization may help teachers recognize and foster those qualities in their classes (Cranton, 2016; Maslow, 1962, 1970a, 1970b; Mezirow, 1991; Schlitz, Vieten, and
Further studies may lead to the development of an instrument more appropriate to evaluate the climate of the high school orchestra class and implicate the environment in performing arts classes in general. The self-reflective teacher may use the glossary of qualities in the examination of the development of the self-actualized adult.

Definition of Terms

**Attunement.** A state of unification of body and mind within a communal experience: A kinesthetic and emotional sensing of others—knowing their rhythm, affect and experience by metaphorically being in their skin, and going beyond empathy to create a two-person experience of unbroken feeling connectedness by providing a reciprocal affect and/or resonating response. (Erskine, 1998, p. 236)

**Belongingness.** A state of belongingness occurs when two conditions are satisfied, according to Baumeister and Leary (1991). “First, there is a need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and, second, these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other’s welfare” (p. 497).

**Flow.** A state of total focus in which “people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). Also, described by Maslow as a peak experience (1962).

**Mindfulness.** Specific attention to consciousness:

Self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment…adopting a
particular orientation toward one’s experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance. (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232)

**Purpose.** Seen as distinct from the meaning of life. “A sense of core goals, direction in life, and enthusiasm regarding the future” (George & Park, 2013, p. 371).

**Self actualization.** A state of becoming in which a person experiences:
ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfillment of mission (or call, fate, destiny, or vocation), as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of the person’s own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person. (Maslow, 1962, loc. 411)

**Transformational learning.** The process by which an individual discovers “a need to acquire new perspectives in order to gain a more complete understanding of changing events and a higher degree of control over their lives” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 3).

**Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

Assumptions consist of the willingness of participants to openly and honestly share experiences regarding their experiences regarding years spent as a student and a teacher in a high school orchestral setting. Another assumption was interviews would sufficiently generate rich descriptions of the phenomena. A final assumption was that the heuristic method of research would allow the experiences of the researcher to both educate and stimulate the conversational tone of the interviews to reach topic saturation.

Delimitations include the geographic boundaries placed on the study for convenience. The selection of participants included teachers who have experienced a variety of geographic and cultural settings that lend perspectives to universality. The participants each had high school orchestral teaching experience for a minimum of 10 years.
Limitations of the study were time and geographic considerations related to the interview process. The researcher conducted three pilot interviews and six interviews in the heuristic process. The open-ended nature of the heuristic inquiry, must at some point end. The researcher must leave further study and codification of the phenomena to further research.

Summary

The current state of learning environment evaluation is suited to traditional classroom situations; however, it does not account for the types of transformational learning found in the high school orchestra class. Chapter 2 examines the literature summarizing characteristics evaluated with classroom climate assessment instruments and descriptions of qualities of transformative experience not considered in assessing an orchestra or other performing arts class. Chapter 3 describes the heuristic research approach and details the specific research methods and protocols of this study. Chapter 4 details the findings and results of this study. Chapter 5 seeks to ascribe meaning to the findings, implications for further research, and conclusion.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In high school, in addition to class time, the researcher found herself in the orchestra room before school, during lunch, and after school. As a high school orchestra teacher, the students in the researcher’s classes subscribe to the same practice. Why is the orchestra room a place of comfort for students enrolled in performance-based classes? How can teachers use this information to create a climate that welcomes students?

Two articles and a book spurred an interest to look for answers to this question. Allodi (2010) developed a classroom environment inventory that characterized some, but not all, of the factors that initially seem to draw students to feel comfortable in the music room. Adderly, Kennedy, and Berz (2003) addressed some musical reasons that students felt at home in the music classroom by asking students why they chose to study music and why they remain enrolled in classes when there are many demands on their time. Hallowell (2011) introduced a model for workplaces built on the premise that people who are happy at work are more creative and productive. Hallowell’s concept is that people who do what they like and are good at, are connected with others, incorporate play into work, focus while working, and are rewarded for their efforts experience a positive work environment.

Current trends in positive psychology also connect with factors about why students are drawn to socialize, practice, study, and hang out in the rooms of their music teachers. Many of these theories harken directly back to Maslow (1962, 1970a, 1970b). Happiness, or sense of well-being, as outlined by Seligman (2011), is indicated by positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment. Each of these qualities is integral to the routine functioning in the music room, while fulfilling many of the basic human needs detailed by Maslow. Specifically, engagement, which is described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 2004,
2013, 2014a, 2014b) as flow indicates a hyper-focused state in which one experiences time as suspended. Belongingness theory, introduced by Baumeister and Leary (1995) addressed the sense of community fostered in the music room. This researcher believes each of these aspects flourishes in the community of students that reside in high school music classrooms. The specific goal of this study is to identify those most qualities most applicable to the music student.

**Conceptual Framework**

The study of learning environments and the development of instruments to measure them has been a topic of interest for educators beginning in the 1990s (Fraser, 1998). These tools are useful as a source of data for reflective teacher practices (Aldridge, Fraser, Bell, & Dorman, 2012). Input from both educators and students measure perceived as well as preferred characteristics of the classroom climate. Characteristics studied typically include student cohesiveness, teacher support, involvement, personal relevance, task orientation, cooperation, equity, differentiation, young adult ethos, formative assessment, and clarity of evaluation criteria. However, none of these models serve to evaluate what occurs explicitly to build a music room environment. As early as 1981, Hylton was striving to identify dimensions in the high school choir such as achievement, spiritualistic, musical-artistic, communicative, psychological, and integrative. By 2001 however, Morrison had cited characteristics identifying musical cultures determined by ethnomusicologists such as identity, transmission, social dimension, practical and personal boundaries, organizational hierarchy, traditional song, performance practices, diaspora, and initiation. Stålhammar (2006) introduced the development of musical identity, viewing it as an extension of cultural identity that bears examination in combination with ethnomusicological studies.
More recent studies by Adderly et al. (2003) and Allodi (2010) led parallel investigations. Adderly et al. (2003) attempted through a series of interviews with the band, orchestra, and chorus students at one high school to codify characteristics that contribute to a sense of home in the music room. This study, based on the previous findings of Hylton (1981), Morrison (2001), Conway and Borst (2001), and Kennedy (2002) inquired to see what qualities contributed to retention in music performance classes. Allodi (2010) did a study to create a new learning environment inventory tool, Goals and Values in Schools (GAVIS), which contributed new dimensions to the analysis of classroom climate: creativity, stimulation, achievement, self-efficacy, safety, control, helpfulness, participation, responsibility, and influence. Allodi (2010) called for studies in other cultural contexts, the music classroom of the high school performing ensemble qualifies as a context in which to identify music-centric dimensions.

Theories of transformative learning seek to examine the way the adult, or nearly adult, come to make meaning in their lives. Building on Mezirow (1991), researchers seek to break down the processes the learner uses to discard old preconceptions and replace them with renewed views and values. The rational discourse of Mezirow’s constructivist approach now exists side-by-side with more humanistic extrarational experiences, and events that have applications in the arts (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b).

Positive psychology meets transformational learning at this juncture. Researchers began studies that explored separate humanistic events. The theory of belongingness, as outlined by Baumeister and Leary (1995), may have implications in the music room. Rzonsa (2016) conducted a narrative study describing the meaning that orchestra generated in himself and two other participants as laid out in Baumeister and Leary (1995). In this study, Rzonsa called for more direct research connecting belongingness theory to music organizations. Somers (1999)
developed a 140-item measure of belongingness, similar in format to classroom environment inventories. Identification of constructs particular to the music class for use by music educators that would incorporate environment and belongingness measures could result in reflective practices and improvement of learning environments.

Review of Research Literature

The research literature falls into several categories. First, the creation of classroom environment inventories provided a listing of characteristics of qualities found in positive classroom climates based on quantitative research. Second, studies that explored the environment found in music classrooms based on ethnomusicological precepts plus student and teacher responses to questionnaires and interviews. Third, the study of transformational learning. Fourth, the development of positive psychology theories and associated theories such as belongingness theory, sense of well-being, and flow. Fifth, the attainment of a musical and psychosocial identity. The task then is to discover common ground found in the confines of the high school performance ensemble classroom.

Inventories of classroom environment. An inventory of the classroom environment presents constructs believed to be relevant to contributing to a positive learning climate. Teachers and students participating in such a survey are asked to evaluate on a Likert scale how strongly each of the characteristics appears in the classroom (Maat, Adnan, Abdullah, Amad, & Puteh, 2015). Additionally, there exists research on instruments that also inquire as to what environmental characteristics students might prefer, comparing those characteristics with a perceived enviroment (Bell & Aldridge, 2014). The inventories of learning climates that received quantitative verification of validity are a reliable place to begin looking into the features of positive environments.
Starting with the Allodi (2010) study that provided a starting point in this research into classroom climate inventories research, citations pointed back to Fraser (1981, 1982, 1998) whose work was instrumental in the field of learning climate inventories that he pioneered the journal *Learning Environments Research* in 1998. He penned the lead-off article in that journal, which provided a status of the development of instruments thus far. Fraser (1981) stated, “The field of classroom environment is now firmly established through recent key publications including two books (Moos, 1979; Walberg, 1979)” (p. 3). These two authors, together with Fraser, provide the foundation for classroom environment study.

Fraser (1982) traced the earliest beginning of the field to Hemphill and Westie (1950), whose ideas served as the basis for an evaluation of Harvard Project Physics (Anderson & Walberg, 1968). The student evaluation of this project was deemed necessary both as a money-saving tactic and as a way to assess factors of the program that could not be readily discerned by classroom observations. The Classroom Climate Questionnaire was the first step toward developing the Learning Environment Inventory (LEI) prepared by Anderson and Walberg in 1974. This instrument and the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) by Trickett and Moos in 1973 were identified by Fraser (1982) as the most-used first inventories. Some of the scales measured dimensions such as cohesiveness, diversity, formality, speed, material environment, friction, goal direction, favoritism, difficulty, apathy, democracy, cliqueness, satisfaction, disorganization, and competitiveness.

A shift in instruction style from conventional classrooms to individualized instruction caused Fraser (1981) to lament the applicability of scales such as competition, formality, and difficulty. To adjust to new trends in education, Fraser introduced the Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire (ICEQ) in 1981. To differentiate individualized from traditional
instruction, Fraser added criteria such as Personalization, Participation, Independence, Investigation, and Differentiation. By 1998 and the introductory article in *Learning Environments Research* Fraser (1998) was able to categorize the scales in nine classroom environment inventories (see Table 1). Since that time, the field saw the development of multiple other instruments, but none that addresses the climate particular to the music performance.

Table 1

*Overview of Scales Contained in Nine Classroom Environment Instruments (Fraser, 1998)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Items per Scale</th>
<th>Relationship dimensions</th>
<th>Personal development dimensions</th>
<th>System maintenance and change dimensions</th>
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<td>Learning Environment Inventory (LEI)</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cohesiveness Friction</td>
<td>Speed Difficulty Competitiveness</td>
<td>Diversity Formality Material environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Favoritism Cliqueness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal direction Disorganization Democracy</td>
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<td>Classroom Environment Scale (CES)</td>
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<td>Involvement Affiliation</td>
<td>Task orientation Competition</td>
<td>Diversity Formality Material environment</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Personalization Participation</td>
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<td>My Class Inventory (MCI)</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>6-9</td>
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<td>Instrument</td>
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<td>Items per Scale</td>
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<td>Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI)</td>
<td>Secondary/Primary</td>
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<td>Helpful/friendly</td>
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<td>Science Laboratory Environment Inventory (SLEI)</td>
<td>Upper Secondary/Higher Education</td>
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<td>Student cohesiveness</td>
<td>Open-endedness</td>
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<td>Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (CLES)</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Personal relevance</td>
<td>Critical voice</td>
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<td>What Is Happening in This Classroom (WIHITC)</td>
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<td>Student cohesiveness</td>
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Allodi (2010), who wrote the original article that stimulated this research, added scales that included: Creativity, Stimulation, Achievement, Efficacy, Safety, Control, Helpfulness, Participation, Responsibility, and Influence. These scales relate to Moos (1979) schemes of relationship dimensions, personal development dimensions, and system maintenance and change dimensions. This inventory can provide valuable feedback to the teacher in a core subject classroom but is unlikely to explain the phenomena of the feeling of home that often exists in the music performance class.

A more current investigation of learning environment research indicated through a Boolean search that topics of orchestra, music, and transformative or transformational learning had not been undertaken in the journal dedicated to that topic. As a demonstration of inapplicability to the orchestra classroom, one team targeted a 1993 instrument dedicated to differentiation, discovering
that methods such as seatwork and worksheets used in that decade are no longer considered best practice in today’s flipped classroom (Pereira, Tay, Maeda, & Gentry, 2019). Differentiation for the orchestra teacher still occurs while teaching four different instruments in the same classroom at the same time.

**Ethnomusicological precepts and student responses.** Ethnomusicology is described as a combination of the study of music and anthropology within the context of a culture or subculture (Nettl, 1995). One may gain a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the high school performing ensemble when viewed more as a culture than as a class. Morrison (2001) remarked:

By recognizing school music programs as real musical cultures, educators may better articulate the value of performance in students’ development, better understand the program qualities that students value, and better choose future directions for an ensemble program’s structure and content. (p. 24)

Nettl (1995) stated that “one significant way to comprehend a culture is to find dominant themes that exhibit themselves in a variety of cultural domains and behavior patterns” (p. 6). What themes lend themselves to viewing the performance ensemble as a culture? Morrison (2001) suggested identity, transmission, social dimension, practical and personal boundaries, organizational hierarchy, traditional song, performance practices, diaspora, and initiation as themes to investigate.

Due to these thematic suggestions, Adderly et al. (2003) interviewed 60 students in the chorus, band, and orchestra regarding their motivation to join a musical ensemble. Also questioned were the perceptions of the group by members and the school community, the meaning and value that members derived from their participation in music performance
organizations, and the social climate within the group. Adderly et al. (2003) stated that students varyingly viewed their particular performance unit as a “class like any other classroom, a home away from home, a club, a family, or something unlike anything else they had experienced at this particular school” (p. 203). The emphasis on the ethnomusicological dimensions of identity and social climate/aspect in the culture of the music ensemble lead to the investigation of transformative learning with an emphasis on positive psychology, belongingness theory, and development of musical and personal identity.

**Theories of transformational learning.** Transformative learning, or transformational learning in this study, is a relatively new field in learning, dating back only around 40 years. Cranton and Taylor (2012) summarized the writings of Mezirow, who took a constructivist point of view:

> We uncritically assimilate perspectives from our social world, community, and culture. Those perspectives include distortions, stereotypes, and prejudices. They guide our decision making and our actions until we encounter a situation that is not congruent with our expectation. At that point, we may reject the discrepant perspective or enter into a process that could lead to a transformed perspective. (p. 6)

**Rational meets extrarational.** In research on transformative learning, all roads lead back to Mezirow (1991). In the most basic model of transformational learning, each individual has a meaning perspective based on ideas encountered through cues, models, and language. Invalidated presuppositions are reflected upon by the learner and either confirmed or transformed. Learning occurs in three domains, the first being instrumental learning, an example being cause and effect. This researcher relates the term to the ways the learner begins to play their instrument, a finger placed on a particular string will result in a specific note. The second
domain of learning, according to Mezirow, is communicative, in which one understands what others mean and conveys meaning in return. Optimally, as taught by Mezirow, this takes place in the manner of rational discourse. The third way of learning is emancipatory, actively pursuing changes that need to be brought on by critical self-reflection. Reflection takes on three forms as well. Content reflection is the description of a problem, similar to fact-checking. In process reflection or problem-solving:

We reflect to find similarities and differences between what we are currently experiencing and prior learning—to identify principles, make generalizations, identify patterns of data, select appropriate ways of expressing our concepts, create metaphors for extending meaning beyond the data as given, and decide on next steps. (pp. 104-105)

Premise reflection presupposes the question of why we should care about the issue. Reflection of a premise might assess the “validity of norms, roles, codes, “common sense,” ideologies, language games, paradigms, philosophies, or theories that we have taken for granted” (p. 105). This capsule explanation of Mezirow’s early theory is a valid starting point to track changes and additions to the theory. In a testament to the validity of the process, Mezirow did evolve over the years, becoming more inclusive of additions to the precepts of transformative learning.

In 2005 at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, John M. Dirkz and Jack Mezirow participated in a pivotal conversation about the integration of theories. The dialogue between Mezirow and Dirkz at this conference was the first step in reconciling theories. This event signified the introduction of extrarational theory into the canon of conversation about transformational learning. Mezirow allowed that in addition to rational discourse, “Most of the process of learning occurs outside of awareness and may include emotional, intuitive, symbolic,
imaginistic, and/or contemplative modes of learning” (Dirkz, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006, p. 124). He also listed collective contexts of transformational learning identified at that conference:

- adult development, psychological and spiritual
- ideology
- psychotherapy
- religion
- health
- art
- higher and adult education and popular education
- family
- social action
- community
- social movements
- organizations
- disabilities
- mentoring
- conflict resolution
- race, gender, and class
- democratic citizenship
- intercultural contexts (p. 124)

Mezirow concluded this portion of his remarks by drawing the line at the importance of the rational aspects of transformational learning:
My take on this is that it is important to recognize and understand how learning is shaped outside awareness, but the essential dimension of any definition of transformative learning…must include explicit recognition of the foundational process, within awareness, involving critical assessment of epistemic assumptions. (p. 125)

Dirkz (2006) responded to Mezirow by confirming that his expansion on theory was consistent with the works of Mezirow (1991) while viewing transformative learning as soul work or inner work:

This view suggests a more integrated and holistic understanding of subjectivity, one that reflects the intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of our being in the world. This integrated view also seeks to account for the ways in which the social, cultural, and embodied as well as the deeply personal and transpersonal aspects of our being potentially play out in the process of transformative learning. (Dirkz, 2006, p. 125)

Dirkz (2006) put forth the idea of subjective exploration of the inner world, not only those parts of self that exist purely in the conscious world, as well as those parts of self that exist in foggy semiconsciousness. Dirkz described a sense of consciousness as that which “continuously nag me with questions about the meaning of my life, of the work that I do, of relationships. It calls into question my authenticity, my integrity, at times my very sense of who I think I am” (p. 127).

In contrast with the turbulence of the questioning sense of consciousness, Dirkz described an inner world that is:

A place of rest, peace, a kind of sacred sanctuary. At times, it conveys to me a visceral understanding of the beauty and mystery that is our being in the world, a depth of acknowledgment that sends chills through my shoulders and down my spine and raises bumps on the surface of my skin. (p. 127)
Art, music, drama, film, and poetry may reveal this world. Dirkz (2006) stated that this inner world integrates with what we experience outside through curricular and pedagogical experiences. Dirkz insisted, “This perspective on transformative learning directs us to both the process and the outcomes of learning, but it insists that we think of transformative learning as a kind of stance toward one’s being in the world” (p. 128). At this point, the learner is no longer working to fulfill a checklist, get a grade, or a certification. Dirkz reframed the meaning of transformative learning to include a holistic sense of the person. Contrasting Mezirow’s concept of epochal events that lead to transformation, Dirkz (2006) asked:

How might we begin to understand what is involved in developing a relationship with the self-in-the-world that begins to see this everyday world as an enchanted place, a place of wonder, mystery, and awe? It is the everydayness of our lives that provides the canvas on which we create, each moment of each day, the forms and structures of meaning that make up who we are and what it means to us to be in and of the world. This everyday world serves as a mirror that reflects back to us our deepest wishes, longings, desires, fears, hopes, dreams, and anxieties. These kinds of learning experiences result in less clear or dramatic consequences or consequences that may not be immediately apparent. Yet even the most seemingly mundane kinds of learning experiences can offer an opportunity to feel deeply engaged and drawn into powerful experiences that fully capture their intellectual and emotional attention. (p. 133)

Dirkz (2006) concluded his remarks to say that at times, the conversation about transformative learning is about the outcomes or consequences, and sometimes it is more about the process. However, it is difficult for the learner to know if he/she is in the midst of a transformative event, that it is only in retrospect that one realizes it was transformational.
In the meeting of theories, Mezirow (2006) affirmed Dirkz, “It is an excellent summary of an elusive but obviously significant dimension of transformative learning” (p. 133). Mezirow continued to clarify that the critical assessment of outcomes is what “saves transformative learning from becoming reduced to a faith, prejudice, vision, or desire” (p. 133). Mezirow (2006) concluded by stating that meaningful theories of transformative learning should contain both dimensions of learning by bringing the extrarational into the conscious for rational assessment.

Dirkz (2006) articulated the critical differences between theories summarizing Mezirow’s theory as occurring as the individual senses a disruption in their meaning perspective. Through a rational process of self-reflection and critical discourse, the individual either makes a change or confirms their perspective. However, Dirkz advocated, in addition to Mezirow’s theory, “an imaginal approach to connecting and developing a conscious relationship with emotionally charged aspects of experience that remain unconscious and unavailable to everyday awareness…an integration of mind and soul” (p. 137). This conversation between master theorists propels the researcher into the beginning of being able to identify the types of transformational learning that heuristic inquiry indicates exists.

**Second wave transformational learning.** Since the 2005 meeting of Mezirow and Dirkz, researchers have expanded that understanding to include more humanistic applications. Initially, pioneers in transformational learning discounted departures from Mezirow that did not contain critical discourse as the essential element. Gunnlaugson (2008), one of the first to acknowledge that the field was growing more diverse, termed the two schools of thought *first wave*, “literature attempts to build on, critique, or depart from Mezirow’s seminal account” (p. 124) and *second wave* which included newer expansions on theoretical perspectives viewed as more, “integrative, holistic, and integral” (p. 124).
While the second wave appears most applicable to this study, there exist cautions from those who were instrumental authors from the first wave of the transformative learning movement. Brookfield (2000) cautioned against the “misuse of the word transformation to refer to any instance in which reflection leads a deeper, more nuanced understanding of assumptions” (p. 139). In order to assure new research maintains utility and validity, Cranton and Taylor (2012) insisted that researchers ground themselves in the primary literature, “only through a thorough review of primary sources can scholars do research that both makes a significant contribution to the field and helps to continue an in-depth theoretical analysis of transformative learning” (p. 13). This researcher takes this caution to heart in order to make a logical connection between what happens in the orchestra classroom and transformational learning.

It is within the theories of extrarational and noetic experiences that the orchestra student experiences transformational learning. Cranton and Taylor (2012) made the distinction that transformational learning is not a series of instructional strategies, instead, “It is first and foremost about educating from a particular educational philosophy, with its own assumptions about the purpose of education, the role of the educator, and the nature of knowledge” (p. 15). It is with this in mind that it was necessary during the research and coding phase to differentiate between strategies or practicing components and events that foster transformational learning.

**Consciousness studies.** Transformative learning has increasingly taken on characteristics of consciousness studies. Wilber (2000) delineated the roles of consciousness as developmental lines:

The functions of consciousness include perceiving, desiring, willing, and acting. The structures of consciousness, some facets of which can be unconscious, include body,
mind, soul, and spirit. The states of consciousness include normal (e.g., waking, dreaming, sleeping) and altered (e.g., nonordinary, meditative). The modes of consciousness include aesthetic, moral, and scientific. The development of consciousness spans an entire spectrum from prepersonal to personal to transpersonal, subconscious to self-conscious to superconscious, id to ego to Spirit. The relational and behavioral aspects of consciousness refer to its mutual interaction with the objective, exterior world and the sociocultural world of shared values and perceptions. (loc. 212-220)

Wilber’s explanation from the viewpoint of integral psychology breaks down the roles that consciousness takes in the act of transformational learning.


- Level one involves pure physical interaction, level two involves perception through sensory data, and level three includes affects that function as conscious drives. In the fourth level he states that emotions are embodied. Reflective awareness or cognition is a fifth level of consciousness, and the sixth level is self-awareness, in which cognition can be operated on in the imagination. The seventh level refers to information about self-awareness, or the awareness of being aware, and the eighth level involves the universe as a whole or a transcendent consciousness.

Maslow also includes embodied awareness in his descriptions of peak experiences. According to Maslow, in this framework one may feel lifted out of oneself,
in the flow of things, self-fulfilled, engaged in optimal functioning, and filled with a sense of connectivity to self and the world. (pp. 57–58)

Maslow later gave full attention to the description of peak experience, or flow as Maslow referred to the “irreducible, intrinsic values of this reality” (1970b, p. 91). Qualities perceived in peak experience listed by Maslow could include truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, dichotomy-transcendence, aliveness, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion, justice, order, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness, and self-sufficiency. These descriptors in peak experiences are qualities that could lead to the emergence of the musician’s level of comfort found in the music room.

Beyond the concept of peak experience or flow, Sussman and Kossak (2011) also describe attunement or entrainment attained through the practice of playing music. Attunement is “most often talked about in the scientific literature in reference to resonant fields rhythmically synchronizing together, such as brain waves, circadian rhythms, lunar and solar cycles, breathing, circulation” which reinforces the musicians' concept of unification of mind, body, and spirit (p. 58). “We have found this helps free one from the mind mesh of continuous and random mental activity, with a shift from content to process leading to a sense of self-witnessing or the awareness of being aware” (p. 61). Students refer to this a getting away or putting the rest of the school day behind them, reinforcing student’s intrinsic draw to the comfort of the music room.

Slow attainment of transformational experience and practice. Tidwell (2012) made a point that not all transformational experiences are epochal. She delineated between those experiences which change core aspects of identity and those which slowly transpose us.

Integrated together over time, however, such moments that transpose our consciousness can often—even on a daily basis, if we seek out such changes in consciousness through
meditation or other active efforts at living more deeply—act as part of . . . the integrating circumstance(s) of the transformative learning process. (p. 22)

Musically speaking, the thing that musicians do on a daily basis is practice.

In the noetic tradition, Schlitz et al. (2007) carried out one of the most extensive studies achieved on consciousness and transformation.

Our single-minded focus was on the phenomenon of experiences people have, and practices they engage in, that stimulate and sustain a new worldview that may best be described as positive consciousness transformation on the phenomenon of experiences people have, and practices they engage in, that stimulate and sustain a new worldview that may best be described as positive consciousness transformation. (p. 9)

This study utilized hundreds of stories, focus groups, interviews, and over 900 surveys. The authors shared, “Transformation is something that you grow into. As your path deepens over time, a reciprocal interaction takes place between your inner subjective experiences of contemplation and self-inquiry and your more outward practices and actions” (p. 206).

Regarding practice, the elements shared by Schlitz et al. (2007) carry the same components as productive musical practice. “What we learned is that transformative practices include four essential elements: intention, attention, repetition, and guidance” (p. 93). The connection between practice for transformation and practice for musical performance carries many of the same outcomes:

As you become an active participant in the transformative process and your own evolution, the separation between your practice and the rest of your life begins to dissolve. You start to see your own transformative journey in the context of the transformation of your community, and of the world . . . . You may experience a greater
sense of belonging and a greater capacity for compassion. It is also possible that you will experience a call to service. And, more and more often you may have a sense of deep love—of the sacred, of the mystery and beauty that permeates even the simplest moments. (p. 207)

As the learner practices toward higher technical proficiency and more musical performance, they commit themselves to a practice that demands reflection. The byproducts may be the small transpositional learning experiences that lead to transformation.

**Indoctrination.** A recent addition to the body of knowledge came through Yacek’s (2017) doctoral dissertation that distill transformative learning into four paradigms: conversion, overcoming, discovery, and indoctrination. In the conversion paradigm, whether in the context of religion or social justice, the learner must come to believe that something is deeply wrong with the self or the world, must confront the “ideologies, emotional conditionings, prejudices and predispositions that perpetuate inequality and injustice” (p. 40). Since the learner feels profoundly changed, they resultantly feel that they must convert the world to their new way of thinking. The writings of Mezirow (1991) typified the overcoming paradigm focusing on personal liberation. The discovery paradigm shares a sense of “something gone awry in the development of the individual” with the overcoming paradigm (Yacek, 2017, p. 57). The discovery paradigm, however, believes the educator should foster normal and healthy growth in the learner. There are also parallels between the discovery paradigm and scientific inquiry.

The initiation paradigm is quite different. According to Yacek (2017), “the quality that sets the initiation paradigm apart from previous paradigms is the role that the concept of a *practice* plays in its proponents’ understanding of the educational process” (p. 73). Practice
involves the mastery of sophisticated skills. Whether the skill is golf, playing an instrument, or writing, access to the desired skill is unreachable without practice.

Master practitioners are simultaneously exemplars of the aesthetic dispositions and ethical worldviews that unlock the inner joy of their practice, as well as defenders of their practice from social conditions or technologies that would endanger this peculiar form of joy. (Yacek, 2017, p. 75)

As the word initiation implicates, the specific practice is a club. Through the enthusiasm of other practitioners, new practitioners receive initiation into the club (Strike, 2005). Yacek (2017) pointed out that educators frame their pedagogy with the initiation in mind creating fewer misunderstandings as to the intent. The string instrument teacher may say, “Please join the orchestra; you will learn how to play an instrument; you will need to practice. Practicing with friends is fun.” The intent of this invitation is clear, and the pedagogy is relational.

Additionally, Yacek (2017) stated that “the roles of ritual, tradition and rites of passage, which are quite salient in accounts of initiation processes outside the educational context, are perhaps not given as much attention as they might deserve from defenders of the initiation paradigm” (p. 79). Rite and tradition play into the development of musical communities, as previously stated in the literature review. This view of transformational learning deserves expanded attention from the community of music educators. The enthusiasm with which the educator draws the student to the practice of musicianship leads directly to the effects of positive psychology.

**Theories of positive psychology.** Positive psychology or studies of happiness or well-being frame much of life. Why not choose to be happy in any pursuit one undertakes? Seligman (2011) offered the dimensions of positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships,
and accomplishment that are signposts of well-being. We have already identified positive relationships as a critical factor in positive learning climates. Students in Adderly et al. (2003) defined the social environment as a significant reason for why they feel the music room is a home away from home. The necessity of belongingness, theorized by Baumeister and Leary (1995) must fulfill two functions. “First, there is a need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and, second, these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). In a dissertation, Somers (1999) provided a series of scales to measure belongingness. These scales also referred to the circumstances under which the participant experienced them: whether they were passive or active in initiating the values of connectedness or/and esteem, may these qualifications present in the music room? Rzonsa (2016) said yes in a narrative study of belongingness in the orchestra.

I have learned that musical groups are ideal settings in which to study sense of belonging due to the close-knit bonds that can so easily form and the intimate nature of performing alongside others who share an appreciation of music. (Rzonsa, 2016, p. 132)

Additionally, Rzonsa (2016) reflected on a feeling of responsibility to stay connected to the group, reflecting Morrison’s (2001) sense of diaspora when one was compelled to leave. The value of belongingness in the orchestra, according to Rzonsa (2016) was “a wealth of benefits stemming from the sense of belonging experienced by the participants, including joy, security, improved sound quality, and responsibility” (p. 140). Joy is another term to describe happiness or well-being.
“Twenty-three hundred years ago Aristotle concluded that, more than anything else, men and women seek happiness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 1). In his explanation of the acquisition or choice of happiness, Csikszentmihalyi stated:

We have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, masters of our own fate. On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like. (p. 1)

This optimal experience is directly related to experiencing engagement and meaning, which leads to accomplishment, espoused by Seligman (2011). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) termed this experience “flow” (p. 4). Artistry in music is difficult to achieve without a period of total commitment. Flow bears investigation as an essential dimension in the performance ensemble.

**Development of identity and musical identity.** Identity, like many other dimensions of this study, owes a debt of gratitude to Maslow (1962). Flow, as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), is viewed as an optimal experience. According to Maslow (1962), a person who is engaged in a peak experience feels most authentically themselves. Other studies have a different view of identity development. Rich and Schachter (2012) linked identity development in a high school with the degree that the teacher provides a role model and is a caring individual. Also, Rich and Schachter (2012) felt that the school environment should provide some opportunities for exploration other than strictly academic offerings. In this study of students enrolled in a public Jewish high school in Israel, the prospects for exploration could be construed as religious. The researcher would find applicability in offerings of performance ensemble experiences, as well as the other courses available in most American high schools.
Developing a musical identity, according to Stålhammar (2006), requires us to “investigate the unclear area where teaching and aesthetics meet” (p. 8). The commercial music industry, a student’s cultural background, and the instruction a student receives in various more formalized contexts all play in acquiring a musical identity. Stålhammar pointed out that for young people, there is a gap between their experiences with music and what they learn in school. “Whilst their own music is bound up with identity and lifestyle, that of the school is for the most part bound up with the subject Music” (p. 231). He encouraged teachers to become co-creators with students:

Knowledge and experience of both parties must be taken into account, which further implies that the main focus of music teaching will not be on music as an independent artifact but on people’s relation to music and experience of it. For young people music and identity go together. (Stålhammar, 2006, p. 232)

Ethnomusicology provided a glimpse into the culture that is created around music. The study of musical identity is many times so culturally specific that the breadth of that study requires research on it’s own terms and is experienced by the young musician in situations outside of the orchestra classroom. While alternative styles of orchestral music are growing in popularity within the teaching community and add much to the music classroom, the addition of those types of music are not included in this study.

**Summary of the literature.** A link between the philosophies of Maslow (1962) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) through the expansion of transformational learning theory in subsequent years provided an explanation of the development of belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity and musical identity as a byproduct of ensemble membership. The literature provided an insight into the roles that mindfulness, consciousness, and practice play into the development of
a self-aware individual. A connection was found in the second wave of transformational theory that was more inclusive of differing ways to learn as a practitioner of performing arts, specifically orchestral music.

**Review of Methodological Issues**

The goal of this study is to identify elements in the high school musical ensemble classroom that enhance the community and create a home away from home. To accomplish this a phenomenological study was designed to identify common themes as reported by a small group of highly accomplished teachers of high school musical ensembles. Moustakas (1994), who compared transcendental phenomenology to empirical phenomenology, asserted that a fundamental difference is that in transcendental studies:

> the emphasis on intuition, imagination, and universal structures in obtaining a picture of the dynamics that underlay the experience, account for, and provide an understanding of how it is that particular perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and sensual awareness are evoked in consciousness with reference to a specific experience such as jealousy, anger or joy. (p. 22)

This approach is consistent with my desire to explore the whole person in the context of the high school music room. I also found this to be consistent with Yacek’s (2017) recommendation for studies about transformation:

> If our aim…is to understand the nature of transformative experience and its role in the educational process, we should begin, not by stating the anthropological structure of transformation, but by mapping the field of experience traced out by the idea. Instead of resolving the original question “What does it mean to undergo a transformation?” into
“What is a transformation?” we should ask the phenomenologically sensitive question:

“What is it like to experience a transformation?” (p. 19)

This emphasis on experience was a match for Moustakas's (1990) concept of heuristic phenomenology.

The methods and procedures outlined by Moustakas (1994) included discovering a topic and question “rooted in autobiographical meanings and values, as well as involving social meanings and significance” (p. 103). The question was the beginning point for the study, followed by a comprehensive study of the professional literature. The next step was to devise criteria for the selection of the subjects or coresearchers.

The South Carolina Music Educator’s Association (SCMEA), under the auspices of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), provided a pool from which to identify potential participants. Through this association, a small group of highly accomplished teachers was identified to serve as coresearchers. Coresearchers were informed of the intent of the study and received assurances of following all required procedures to conform to ethical guidelines.

Next, a set of questions were developed to guide the study. Personal interviews were conducted and recorded, with follow-up interviews as necessary. Interviews were transcribed and submitted to qualitative analysis software for recurrent themes. Then significant statements were taken and grouped into thematic clusters. Describing what happened, and how it happened, a complete analysis of data was sent to coresearchers for validation of data. The summary of the entire study according to Moustakas (1994) should include differentiating results from what was previously known, recommendations for future research, implications for personal and professional directions, and a summary which includes “professional and personal views and the
strengths and inspirations . . . derived” (p. 175). Creswell (2013) offered suggestions for the manuscript format for phenomenological research.

The professional literature on the topic of classroom environment utilizes different methodologies. Learning climate inventories employ student and teacher responses to questionnaires. These studies were accomplished by accumulating, validating, and analyzing quantitative data. These tools are useful for teacher action research such as that taken on by Aldridge et al. (2012). However, the instruments are intended for a generalized classroom setting and do not touch on many of the experiences of the high school musician. While some theories about classroom climate existed at the time of these questionnaire’s creation, there are currently no theories about the social atmosphere of the music room. To develop an instrument for a musical setting, identification of relevant dimensions should occur through a phenomenological study targeting these aspects. At this time, the researcher believes deriving this information from the top practitioners in the field who are more focused on students from multiple viewpoints would yield the best results.

More recently learning environment assessments have recognized that there are more points of reference than a simple list of characteristics that go into building a climate. Kohl et al. (2013) referenced four experiences that go into each person’s perception: an individual’s immediate understanding of life, the different settings an individual lives in, the community), and the culture, politics, and economics of a place, and contains all the previous levels. Additionally, Morin et al. (2014) determined that there was a need to evaluate whether school, classroom or teacher characteristics contribute to the prediction of students’ outcomes (e.g., achievement, self-concept, engagement, persistence). The factors of levels of influence are a factor of consideration in the study.
Synthesis of Research Findings

A survey of classroom environment inventories is a place to collect dimensions that contribute to a positive learning environment in a generalized classroom setting. Quantitative analysis by students and teachers of perceived and preferred classroom environments has received study since the late 1960’s (Aldridge et al., 2012; Allodi, 2010; Fraser, 1981, 1998; Fraser et al., 1982; Kohl et al., 2013; Moos, 1979; Morin et al., 2014; Walberg, 1979; Walberg et al., 1968). From these studies are found a glossary of positive classroom attributes. Many terms are significant aspects of the high school musical ensemble. However, dimensions such as differentiation and rules clarity do not begin to describe the transformational qualities that make the music room a place in which students feel comfortable, to the point of defining the environment like home or family.

Therefore it is essential to look at theories of transformational learning and positive psychology to hypothesize other factors that may be contributors to the music room climate not found in the general classroom. The theory of Maslow (1962, 1970a, 1970b) regarding the hierarchy of human needs form the basis of many of the aspects of positive psychology. Baumeister and Leary (1995) contended belongingness involved safety, care, and consistency in relationships. Students seek and find in the ensemble a fulfillment of Maslow’s second and third levels while experiencing belonging to friends, family, and community. Seligman’s signposts of happiness: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment find a place in Maslow’s third, fourth, and fifth levels. Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 2000, 2004, 2023, 2024a, 2014b) and Maslow (1962, 1970a, 1970b) share common ground in the apex experience of flow, which creates the sense of identity found in the self-actualization pinnacle of Maslow’s hierarchy.
It is not a simple task to identify the transformative experiences that take place in the music room. Positive psychology converges with the same concepts occurring under different banners. These are not the dimensions found in teacher evaluative checklists of classroom climate, yet is something seen in the music room, drawing students to feel at home. Shared experiences of accomplished teachers of music open the door for reflection by many teachers who seek to teach the entire young adult.

**Critique of Previous Research**

There is a significant gap in the literature regarding climate studies and survey instruments for the music classroom. Diverse studies are present in the prior literature, however music is not found among them. Peer-reviewed journals published the most significant percentage of sources used to date. A basic vocabulary has been in use in the environment evaluations of general classroom settings for 20 to 40 years. A review of quantitative studies sought verification of the validity of classroom environment inventories. Whenever possible, the first source of information in the literature was referenced regarding the development of classroom environment inventories.

Adderly et al. (2003) used references from authors writing from the perspective of various genres of performing ensembles. Due to intrinsic differences between vocal and instrumental practices, and also between wind and strings practices, the research limiting is to the realm of the string orchestra to focus the study. Rzonsa (2016) limited his narrative study to orchestral musicians. Due to the availability of strings teachers because of professional connections, this delineation was a good fit for this study. Additionaly, Adderly et al. (2003) used only 60 students, 20 each belonging to the band, chorus, and orchestra. These students were from a large, economically advantaged high school in the Northeastern United States. The
researcher does not know how these students are representative of the broader population. For this reason, the researcher used teachers as participants for the phenomenological research of transformational learning climates who represent a diverse demographic of accomplished teachers.

**Summary**

Since the late 1960s, researchers have tested classroom environment inventory instruments in the general education classes. These results, however, read similar to the terms on a teacher evaluation score sheet. The long-term relationship the student musician develops with the teacher and classmates throughout the four years of high school orchestra tends to foster a deeper level of comfort than that which is quantitatively measured.

Developments in transformational learning theory, positive psycholog, and surrounding theories such as belongingness theory, flow, attunement, and identity development have a connection to Maslow’s (1962) hierarchy of human needs as a means to approach self-actualization. This review of literature, which develops a unique relationship with these four aspects of positive psychology and Maslow’s theory bears further investigation leading to the question of which transformational dimensions in the classroom apply to the evaluation of the music room environment. The literature indicated there is not currently a vocabulary of dimensions that contribute to the transformational aspects of the learning climate in a high school orchestra classroom.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The high school orchestral student gravitates toward the music classroom. Treating the music room as a home-away-from-home, students will gather before school, during lunch, and after school. When queried, the high school student may attribute the draw to convenience, friends, or the music. An adult may offer more self-reflective answers, linking to the attainment of some higher levels of Maslow’s (1962) hierarchy, naming “self-actualization, self-realization, integration, psychological health, individuation, autonomy, creativity, [and] productivity” (loc. 2133). Each of these components relates to the reflective qualities necessary for transformative learning outlined by Mezirow (1991). During this process, the adult learner calls into question previously held suppositions to revise one’s worldview. Aspects of positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Hallowell, 2011; Rzonsa, 2016; Seligman, 2011) and participation in musical traditions and rituals (Morrison, 2001; Nettl, 1995) are proposed as factors that may foster these transformations.

Research Questions

The central research questions of this study focused on the identification of qualities of transformational learning that are perceived to be present in the high school orchestra classroom.

Central RQ: How do the qualities of transformational learning impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ2: How do conditions of flow and creativity as described by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) affect climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ3: How does the development of identity (Eaton, 2013; Maslow, 1962; Ståhlhammar, 2006), both musical and personal, impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?
RQ4: How do musicological events (Morrison, 2001; Nettl, 1995), such as ritual and tradition, influence climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ5: How do belongingness and connection (Hallowell, 2011; Parker, 2016; Rzonsa, 2016; Seligman, 2011) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ6: How does attunement (Kossak, 2008) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ7: What other qualities impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify aspects of transformational learning that determine a positive climate in the music classroom, specifically the orchestra class. Identification and evaluation of classroom environments have a long history of using inventories and measurements (Maat, Maslini, Abdullah, Ahmed, & Puthe, 2015; Morin et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2014; Smith, 2013). Establishment of the constructs of a learning environment that began with Moos (1979) eventually initiated the creation of the journal, *Learning Environments Research*, pioneered by Fraser (1998). Characteristic dimensions of classroom environment within these studies include categories such as those contained in the REACT scale: “positive reinforcement, instructional presentation, goal setting, differentiated instruction, formative feedback, and instructional enjoyment” (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 182). While these factors are relevant to the orchestra class as well, there is research that points to other qualities. The long-term commitment of students in a musical ensemble, as well as the content of the material studied, lend themselves to other areas of consideration.
Research Design

The design chosen for this study was a phenomenological, heuristic inquiry. “In heuristic methodology one seeks to obtain qualitative depictions that are at the heart and depth of a person’s experience—depictions of situations, events, conversations, relationships, feelings, thoughts, values, and beliefs” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 38). The way is which heuristic inquiry described by Moustakas (1990) differs from transcendental phenomenology, also described by Moustakas (1994), is that the experience of the researcher is considered part of the data. The decision to move toward heuristics rather than transcendental phenomenology is the use of the researcher’s experience and intuition with the subject. Rather than eliminating that which initially drew the investigator to the question as a source of data to maintain *epoche*, defined as complete detachment from the topic, the person completing the subject interacts with the participants drawing out further reflections.

Other types of qualitative studies did not meet the criteria of allowing the researcher also to function as a participant. According to Creswell (2013), a narrative study is intended to focus on the story of the individual. Rzonsa (2016) completed a narrative study of belongingness in an orchestra that included his reflections as well as those of two other participants. That study used aspects of heuristic study combined with the narrative format because of the inclusion of his data and intuition. An ethnographic study would not be appropriate even though the orchestra sometimes appears to be a distinct culture within the school, according to Morrison (2001). The ethnographic study would require the researcher to live as one with high school students, who are have not accrued enough life experience to reflect meaningfully on what characteristics that culture exemplifies. A case study focuses on description and analysis of cases, which would focus more on the qualities of events, while the study intends to discover the essence of experiences. Grounded theory, as described by Creswell (2013), may be appropriate for a follow-
up study after the elements of transformational learning in orchestra classes are proposed in this study. However, the roots of grounded theory are primarily sociological, and phenomenological inquiry focuses more on philosophy, psychology, and education which suits many aspects of transformational learning.

Heuristic inquiry lends itself particularly well to the study of various qualities of transformative experience. In ProQuest, a Boolean search for heuristic inquiry yielded 100 results. Many of the studies revealed in this quest referred to transformational relevant topics. One such in attunement, which combined relationships, understanding, give and take, the ability to deal with uncertain situations, and empathy, was studied by Lorimer (2007) using heuristic inquiry. A peak experience, a term first coined by Maslow (1962) was the topic of heuristic inquiry by Lavaysse (2002) and Walsh (2000). Unification of body, mind, and spirit, studied by Mell (2010) relates to Csikszentmihaly’s (2013) description of flow and creativity. Self-actualization, which Maslow used as the pinnacle of this hierarchical pyramid, received heuristic treatment (Dosso, 2004). The appearance of so many topics related to transformational learning upon a search of heuristics alone confirms that the manner of study is well suited to the problem.

There are six phases of heuristic inquiry detailed by Moustakas (1990). They include initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. Creative synthesis, traditionally portrayed by poetry, art, or any other creative expression, was excluded in this instance as the researcher felt that the explication would be conclusive on its merit. These steps are not exclusive of each other, and may not be linear as they are open to revisiting. During the gathering and analysis of data, the phases of this research took a natural progression as experienced by this researcher.
**Initial engagement.** This researcher’s personal experience and interest prompted the topic and development of questions. According to Moustakas (1990), the process of initial engagement is autobiographical. The researcher developed an interest in the topic by having lived and perceived the phenomena. This approach differed significantly from transcendental phenomenology as described by Moustakas (1994) in which one uses *epoche* or bracketing to separate consciously one’s perceptions of the phenomena explored. In this heuristic inquiry, intuition guided the formulation of the research question. As an investigator, the researcher was able to invest fully through personal experience in the direction of the study.

**Immersion.** The researcher devoted significant time looking for relationships with the question. In immersion, the researcher participated in self-dialogue and self-searching. Each thought or observation became a possible topic relating to the issue. The development of *a priori* themes represented by the initial research questions occurred during immersion. During this process, Moustakas (1990) emphasized the impact of intuition and hunches arising from the tacit domain during the immersion process. Each activity was open to implication for significance to the question. The pilot study took place during this period.

**Incubation.** Incubation is in stark contrast to immersion. Incubation is a period in which the researcher withdraws from active consideration of the question. Moustakas (1990) likened incubation to the growth of a seed, which unseen and nourished experiences a metamorphosis. In this study, the incubation period occurred after the completion of the pilot interviews. This time of retreat was spent teaching high school orchestra and observing high school orchestra students. Moustakas (1990) emphasized that by putting away the question, new inspiration may arise, similar to the situation in which one *sleeps on it*, awakening to the revelation of a new understanding.
**Illumination.** Illumination implies a breakthrough. Moustakas (1990) described new revelations that occur as patterns group into themes, corrected misunderstandings, or a previously undiscovered meaning might emerge, indicating illumination. In revisiting data numerous times, inspiration may take place as if one has seen that data for the first time. This researcher experienced a breakthrough with the realization that each of the themes needs to describe a state of being, or experience, rather than strategies that the teacher might utilize to encourage transformational learning in the student. Following illumination, the field study occurred after processing information gleaned from the pilot study.

**Explication.** At this point in data analysis, when patterns and themes reach cohesion, the inquirer was ready to put these ideas into a comprehensive whole. The beginning of the formal data analysis began here. As patterns emerged, refinement of central themes occurred through combing through transcripts. According to Moustakas (1990), full consciousness of all of the aspects of the phenomena is complete in explication.

**Target Population and Sampling Method**

Experienced teachers of orchestral music were the target population for this study. Criteria for selection for participation include a minimum of ten years of experience teaching in a string orchestra classroom. Additionally, these teachers were participants as high school students in a school-based group setting or strings class. This experience differs from those whose pre-collegiate experience may have included private instruction and participation in a youth orchestra to the exclusion of a school-based ensemble.

A definition of a youth orchestra would be a setting that occurs out of the school environment and draws students who attend various schools, are homeschooled, or attend schools that do not offer string instrument instruction. Adult subjects who have approached the high school musical experience from both sides of the high school director’s podium are in a
position to have benefited from reflection. Reflection will enable coresearchers to dig deeply into a personal experience both as a student musician and observer of the orchestral students of today. The roster of the orchestra divisions of South Carolina Music Educators Association (SCMEA), a local organization of the National Organization for Music Education (NAfME), provides a wealth of potential coresearchers for the study.

The convenience method of choosing coresearchers provides for the researcher to travel to complete interviews. An essential feature of the conversation in the heuristic inquiry is that more than one meeting may be required (Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Seligman, 2011; Yin, 2016). Moustakas (1990) recommended as many as 10–15 coresearchers. However, other heuristic studies that have application in this research and served as models of study involved five coresearchers (Walsh, 2000), six coresearchers (Lavaysse, 2002), and seven participants (Su, 2013).

In selecting the number of participants, it is necessary to refer to Seidman (2013), who stated that sufficiency and saturation are the criteria that let the researcher know when data collection is complete. This research study used six participants. Limitations of time and the expenses of travel limited the ability to expand to more participants. Sufficiency and saturation were reached, so increasing the number of participants was not necessary.

The Orchestra Division of the state music educators association has approximately 273 members who enter students for higher-level experiences such as region orchestra. It is not a matter of record how many of those have ten or more years of experience. The researcher made personal inquiries at state-level events to identify qualified participants. More individuals were identified than were required for the study, therefore six interviews were scheduled and given IRB consent forms. Additional participants from the state association pool would have been
available to include in the study if the initial scheduled interviews did not result in saturation of the topics.

**Instrumentation**

The instrumentation used was a researcher-created semistructured interview guide. Focusing on heuristic inquiry, Moustakas (1990) defined the goal of such a study as the “recreation of the lived experience; full and complete depictions of the experience from the frame of reference of the experiencing person” (p. 39). A researcher-created semistructured interview guide directed interviews to take the form of dialogue. “In dialogue, one is encouraged to permit ideas, thoughts, feelings, and images to unfold and be expressed naturally. One completes the quest when one has an opportunity to tell one’s story to a point of natural closing” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 39). In a qualitative study, Yin (2016) advocated setting boundaries for an interview but remaining open to allow the participant to venture outside of those guidelines to topics that may prove related upon reflection. The use of a researcher-created semistructured interview guide facilitated a degree of standardization within a conversational style interview. Patton (2015) suggested that this combination of approaches:

- offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated in the interview instrument’s development. (p. 441)

An interview in heuristic inquiry should aid the researcher in remaining open to phenomena not yet considered in the preliminary study.

**Data Collection**

In the data collection phase, it was ensured that participants were aware of the nature of the study and the amount of time involved will require. Moustakas (1990) recommended the
development of participant instructions. A contract with each coresearcher detailed “time commitments, place, confidentiality, informed consent, opportunities for feedback, permission to record, permission to use the material in a thesis, dissertation, and/or other publications, and verification of findings” (p. 46). Additional steps are essential to the nature of heuristic research:

Each person who participates should at some point be apprised of what the “experimenter” thinks he is doing and what he considers evidence of what. It is of equal importance to ask what the “subject” thinks is being done, and what he considers evidence of what. Since this can change during the course of the experiment, it is appropriate to ask “subjects” what their perception of the experimental design was at each important juncture in the experience. (Kelly, 1969, p. 56)

These steps helped focus the data collection process and facilitated the collaborative features of phenomenological, in this case, heuristic study.

Interviews were conducted in varying quiet places including a library, an outdoor café, a teacher workroom, and vacant classrooms. Participants were informed that the interview was anticipated to take around 90 minutes. Interviews were scheduled so that the participants did not have commitments following the appointment so that interviews might feel relaxed, allowing participants to reach topic saturation and a natural point of conclusion. Interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes in length. The conversations were recorded using a digital voice recorder.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The first step to data analysis was to have voice recordings transcribed. The online service, Transcribe Me! website (2019), was used to expedite the transcription process. When transcriptions were complete, they were sent to the participant for member checking. Each of the participants verified that the transcript was complete, accurate, and free from errors.
The method for data analysis in the study was reliant on thematic analysis in the heuristic style. According to Patton (2015), thematic analysis is vital in uncovering meaning in phenomenological data analysis. In the heuristic study, according to Moustakas (1990), the focusing process allows the researcher “to determine the core themes that constitute an experience, identify and assess connecting feelings and thoughts, and achieve cognitive knowledge” (p. 25). The inductive process takes place as a result of the thematic analysis. The heuristic inquiry, contrary to other methods of phenomenological study, is primarily concerned with the description and uncovering of the phenomena but does not seek to explain the why of the phenomena. Data analysis aims to emphasize the synthesis of data. “Whereas phenomenology permits the researcher to conclude with definitive descriptions of the structures of the experience, heuristics leads to depictions of essential meanings and portrayal of the intrigue and personal significance that imbue the search to know” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 38).

Coding the interview transcripts was accomplished with the use of NVivo (2018) qualitative data analysis software. Before analysis, I established five a priori nodes based on the research question: belongingness, flow, creativity, attunement, and identity. I also created a folder for new material that was discussed in the interviews. Mindfulness, instrumental learning, obstacles, and purpose were later added to the list of parent nodes from the new material folder. Seven other topics did not make the cut for relevance.

During the process of coding, it became apparent that teachers are interested in strategies. Intertwined with the phenomena present in the high school orchestra classroom that could be described as a feeling, sensation, or experience, were the ever-present strategy stories. The strategies and other related elements were coded as practicing components under the related parent mode or modes. Some tales fit under more than one parent node. This procedure lead to
the identification of 516 practicing components. Coding was refined through five to six times analyzing the raw data. The culmination of coding occurred in writing the narrative of participants’s experiences and connecting themes and practicing components.

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design**

Limitations of the study focus include time and physical constraints of the in-depth interview process. The heuristic inquiry, which is characterized by open-ended nature, must of necessity draw to a conclusion. At some point, the researcher must leave further study and codification of the phenomena to further research.

Delimitations include the geographic boundaries placed on the study for convenience. The selection of participants included others who have experienced a variety of geographic and cultural settings that will lend perspectives to universality. However, the scope of the studies did not allow for the great variety of demographics of all orchestra teachers. Additionally, the delimitation regarding participants attaining a minimum of ten years of experience in high school orchestra teaching excluded less experienced and younger teachers’ perspectives.

**Reliability and Validity**

Pilot testing included the sharing of the researcher-created semistructured interview guide with three specialists in the area of strings pedagogy, qualified by doctoral degrees. Sample interviews and subsequent responses from the strings specialists yielded feedback regarding the ability of the instrument to spur lively discourse on the topic of transformational learning in the orchestra class. Additionally, the conversations indicated that these early participants were eager to hear more about the study.

Reliability in qualitative research is mainly dependent on the quality of the raw data acquired. Creswell (2013) emphasized getting a good quality recording and accurate transcription that allows for “pauses and overlaps” (p. 253). Use of a professional transcription
service allowed for accuracy that was reviewed while listening to the recordings upon receiving the transcriptions. Going back to the recordings in concert with the transcripts additionally helped maintain the spirit of the interviewee’s intent during conversation.

Validity, historically termed trustworthiness, is a term that Creswell (2013) finds more useful in other types of qualitative research than phenomenology such as grounded theory, case study and ethnography. One of the four philosophies that Patton (2015) advocates regarding validation with analytical triangulation is more closely aligned with Moustakas (1990) heuristics method of establishing validity. Patton (2015) writes that the researcher may use sources by, "checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method (consistency across interviewees)" (p. 661).

According to Moustakas (1990), the validity of heuristic inquiry is about meaning. Moustakas queried, “Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one’s own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience?” (p. 32). To answer this question, the researcher repeatedly returned to the raw data and sought verification from participants to assure reliability.

**Expected Findings**

Adults who have experienced the high school orchestra as both student and teacher will have benefited from the process of reflection. During their high school years, these teachers may have described the climate of the classroom as comfortable and where friends congregate. The researcher expects to find adults who know Mazlow’s (1962) hierarchy of needs are in a position to articulate the experiences of transformational learning they experienced as a student as well as
those they witness in their students. It is expected that the characteristics of transformational learning will be present in the reflections of the participants.

**Ethical Issues in the Study**

In accordance with the Concordia University IRB, the study did not involve individuals under the age of majority. Approval was not required for any other organizations. Therefore, no special permissions were required. The nature of the inquiry was not such that it would cause trauma or psychological damage to participants as the focus is on that of positive transformations. Coresearchers will be assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. All raw and transcribed data, as well as Concordia University IRB consent forms are held in a locked file cabinet in my office. All data will be shredded and burned after three years.

In heuristic inquiry the researcher’s position is one of co-participant. Moustakas (1990) described the process as “autobiographic . . . a way of self inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences” (p. 15). Participants were apprised of the researcher’s position prior to beginning the study. There were no payments or other types of rewards offered for participation in the study, eliminating possibility of conflicts of interest.

**Summary**

Identification of elements of transformational learning in a high school orchestra class was a good fit for heuristic phenomenological study. Dispensing with the bracketing necessary in traditional phenomenological methodology allowed an autobiographical element that informed participants and prompted recollections of related events during interviews. Interviews with adult music teachers who have experienced the orchestra class as both student and teacher were in a position due to reflectivity to realize the impact that these qualities had upon their perception of meaning in music class. The open-ended quality of heuristic inquiry left open the possible
discovery of other factors that influence a student’s growth. Five of the six stages of Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry were used in gathering and analyzing data: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication. The rich descriptions of the participants were a creative synthesis on their own merit. Chapter Four contains the musing of the participants regarding their own experiences as the student and observations of students as the teacher.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Classroom climate in general education classrooms is a study that received analysis with the use of inventories that appeared in journals beginning in the 1960s and flourishing to the present day (Allodi, 2010; Fraser, 1998; Kohl et al., 2013; Morin et al., 2014; Nelson et al., 2014). Music students experience an intrinsic draw to the music room that extends outside class time. What happens within class time to foster this sense of comfort? If transformation theory is “what happens to them [people] that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance”, then how do we then describe these events in the orchestra classroom (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiii)? A heuristic phenomenological method as described by Moustakas (1990) was employed to explore the experiences of seasoned high school orchestra directors regarding transformational learning in their own experience in high school and through their observations of current and past students.

The interview questions were designed to inform co-participants with aspects of transformational learning while encouraging reflection of transformational learning as it impacts the high school orchestra classroom.

Central RQ: How do the qualities of transformational learning impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ2: How do conditions of flow and creativity as described by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) affect climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ3: How does the development of identity (Eaton, 2013; Maslow, 1962; Ståhlhammar, 2006), both musical and personal, impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?
RQ4: How do musicological events (Morrison, 2001; Nettl, 1995), such as ritual and tradition, influence climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ5: How do belongingness and connection (Hallowell, 2011; Parker, 2016; Rzonsa, 2016; Seligman, 2011) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ6: How does attunement (Kossak, 2008) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ7: What other qualities impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

Chapter 4 opens with a description of the sample and an overview of the research methodology and analysis. The presentation of the data follows a summary of the findings. A synopsis of teacher responses tells the story from the participant’s point of view, a category at a time. These categories emerge into themes expressed in the rich words of the participant. The themes render a phenomenological essence of the transformational qualities existing in the orchestra classroom.

As the researcher, similar to the participants, the researcher grew up in a thriving high school orchestra climate and have spent over ten years in high school teaching. Natural curiosity following the study of transformational learning leads to an interest in the experiences of other teachers since the high school students themselves do not have the benefit of hindsight and reflectivity to view their experiences as transformational. Transformational learning, as taught by Mezirow (1991), is an adult learning process requiring communicative and processing abilities not yet attained by the rising adult. Moustakas (1990) heuristic method of phenomenological study was essential in that the researcher’s background and experiences to function as a point of reference in gathering and interpreting data.
The study required an educational aspect because the adult participants were not familiar with the terminology of transformational learning and the sharing process of conversation within a heuristic methodology assisted participants in drawing forth rich and descriptive remembrances. Experiences shared by the researcher without bracketing assisted as clarifications of the questions and served as a springboard for the sharing of transformational phenomena. In the heuristic methodology, “the self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Prompted by the questions, the interviews took on a conversational nature in the heuristic style. Participants were free to agree, disagree, and clarify their understanding of what took place, and takes place in orchestral classes.

The data collection process began with 60–90-minute audio-recorded interviews. All six participants verified that the transcript of their interview was an accurate representation. Transcripts entered into NVivo 12 (2018) were reviewed, and four key themes and 16 subthemes identified. Analysis of the themes and subthemes provided a description of transformational learning experienced in orchestra class as a student and teacher.

Pilot Study

The pilot study occurred during the period of illumination. This study consisted of three interviews of active teachers who taught high school orchestra for at least 10 years, each holding a doctorate in music or education. One is currently a university professor who supervises doctoral dissertations. Each affirmed the validity of the study and expressed an interest in the outcome. Pilot study participants received and verified transcript interviews to confirm accuracy.
Description of the Sample

The study used six participants. Participants were accessed through the membership rolls of the state music educators association. There were no dropouts or mitigating circumstances. Each was assigned a generic pseudonym. A short description of the pertinent demographics of the participants follows.

Aaron is a White non-Hispanic male. He has taught 12 years of high school orchestra. Aaron maintains a strong relationship with students in two feeder middle schools.

Barbara is a White non-Hispanic female. Barbara taught high school strings in another state for 10 years. Her perspective includes that of teaching emerging educators.

Carole is an African-American female. She taught high school strings students for 23 years. Carole’s perspective includes changes in education within the same district over decades.

Julia is a White non-Hispanic female. Over 30 years of experience in a large county qualify her to speak of experiences over a long period of years. Her years of experience have enabled her to see many demographic changes within her school.

Justin is a White non-Hispanic male. He has 27 years of experience in a high school. At the time of the interview, the school district had just determined to eliminate strings study from the county curriculum.

Susan is a White non-Hispanic female. She has 20 years of experience in teaching high school orchestra, and many more teaching elementary and middle school strings in large metropolitan districts.
Table 2 displays a breakdown of participants’ demographics.

Table 2

Breakdown of Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Under 40</th>
<th>Over 40</th>
<th>White-Non Hispanic</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>10–20 years of experience</th>
<th>20+ years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
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<td>Barbara</td>
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<td>Carole</td>
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Research Methodology and Analysis

This phenomenological study aimed to understand how students experience transformational learning in the orchestra classroom and how this influences the educational climate from the collective remembrances of experienced strings educators from both sides of the podium, student and teacher. Moussakas’ (1990) approach of heuristic methodology served to provide examples of teacher’s perspectives of the transformational learning experienced by themselves and their students.

By extension, participants involve themselves in the evolving heuristic process of knowing through questioning. “In the heuristic process, I am personally involved. I am searching for qualities, conditions, and relationships that underlie a fundamental question, issue, or concern” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). Within the heuristic interview, the participant becomes aware with the researcher that:

An unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness . . . I who see and
understand something, freshly, as if for the first time; I who come to know essential meanings inherent in my experience. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 12)

This method consisted in the collection and analysis of six in-depth interviews. An in-person semistructured interview took place with each participant. The central research question and six subquestions were presented to participants who responded in a conversational manner. The interview was deemed completed when both researcher and participant perceived there was nothing more to include at that time. Moustakas (1990) commended reaching a point of saturation. Interviews lasted between 47 and 90 minutes. Participants were emailed and verified transcripts through email response.

**Summary of the Findings**

Transcripts from 417 minutes of recorded interviews averaging 69.5 minutes in length yielded 93 single-spaced pages. When entered into Nvivo 12 (2018) for coding, the researcher created an 89 single-spaced page categorically organized document. Coding involved beginning with the suggested qualities present in the questions. As new topics emerged, new categories were added. The first four coded categories derived from the research questions about the qualities of positive climate effects of transformational learning found in the orchestra classroom were: belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development.

Sixteen additional subthemes further clarified the four themes: appropriate literature, challenge, choice, the expectation of excellence, intentionality, leadership, long-term relationships, mindfulness, movement, purpose, responsibility, ritual and tradition, set-apartness, trust, vocation, and work. The subthemes in some way further elucidate the main themes (see Table 3). Significant statements regarding the themes and subthemes were extracted and used to create thematic documents of statements from participants. The thematic statements are seminal
in making meaning about the shared experience of transformational learning in a secondary school performance ensemble.

Table 3

*Transformational Themes and Practicing Components*

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<th>Transformational Themes</th>
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<td>Belongingness</td>
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<td>• Choice</td>
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<td>o Choosing how to use class time</td>
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<td>• Appropriate literature</td>
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**Presentation of the Data and Results**

The thematic organization of data presents a framework in which the hierarchical nature of transformational learning experiences appears to occur. Each of the four themes appear in conjunction with related subthemes. It is interesting to note at this point that teachers are interested in strategies that provide a starting point for a description of experiences with
Transformational learning. In music, the player experiences all at once, never excluding an element: rhythm, melody, harmony, form, timbre. Likewise, the elements of transformational learning are cyclical and are not exclusionary of any element. Thus, while focusing on one aspect, invariably more elements are inherently linked. Separation of any of these elements is not possible as they are all interconnected.

Theme: belongingness. Belongingness is the theme upon which transformation in orchestra classroom builds. Belonging opens one to participate in all offered within the environment. It is one of four primary themes that draw students together. Each of the six participants offered evidence of belonging in their own high school experience and in the experience of the students they teach. Aaron eloquently stated the difference between belonging and not belonging:

[The] mentality and that mindset of everything—it's all correlated into one because one doesn't function without the other. And it's an overall goal. It's a bigger picture. It's everything coming together to create the best possible scenario for success because those things—I mean, how is somebody going to understand like you talked about, peak moments. How is that going to happen if you don't feel like you belong to something? I can't tell you—like when I was a teenager, and I worked at Winn-Dixie, I didn't ever hit a peak because it was like, “This sucks. This is a grocery store. I don't belong to this.” I used to sit on the cereal aisle and eat granola bars while I stocked cereal, literally.

Can a student sit in an orchestra classroom for 90 minutes daily and not feel belongingness? Of course, but the draw to inclusion excludes isolationism as a daily practice. Belongingness, like many of the best things in life, is a choice. Students may choose not to belong. Later, discussion of the subthemes will cover the strategies or invitations to belongingness. Aaron continues:
But if you don't feel like you belong or if your mindset's not right, then there's no way you can ever reach your peak. And there's really no way you can ever get in any kind of rhythm, in any kind of flow. I just don't think—it never transforms. It just doesn't. And that's me in math class or at the grocery store because if I'd have felt that with the grocery store, I'd be running my own grocery store today, but never had that connection with it. Because if your head's not in the right place, your heart's never going to be there, so. And that's what it's about, having heart. Realizing you do matter and you belong to something better, bigger and better.

Susan vividly remembered her high school orchestra experience. She related that there are connections that still exist today. According to Susan:

I never really realized it until later. But the kids in my high school were very, very creative. We didn't have special schools for the arts, or a special school for auto mechanics. Everything was all within one school. And we, as a group of orchestra students, we got to be really close and very good friends. And we tuned in on each other, even though as a teenager you think nobody else is doing the same thing you are, and you're the only one going through this, or “Nobody else is as bad off as I am,” or something like that [laughter]—“has as much drama,” yeah, yeah, yeah—all that. But when I can sit in an orchestra—when I sat in the orchestra, and I could see Adrian McDonald over there leading the first violin section. And then, there were friends that had basically stayed lifetime friends, especially with Facebook and stuff like that. The orchestra, we rule. Yeah.
The researcher asked Susan, “Here's a chicken or the egg question. Do you think belongingness fosters flow or attunement? Or do you think flow or attunement fosters belongingness?” After a moment of silent reflection, Susan answered:

That's a very good question. Okay. So there was this one guy I was not in-tune with. And we picked on each other all the time. But he still belonged. So I think the belonging probably might come first. I'm not going to say 100% certain about that. But it seems to me like there were people that I didn't necessarily feel that connected with. But I always felt that they belonged in the orchestra.

Justin recalled an elaborate recruiting plot that demonstrated belongingness in the orchestra. His students desired to entice more people to join the orchestra than the band. The students planned to show up for the concert dressed in their most elegant dress attire and outdid the band who showed up in jeans and t-shirts at the first school. For the second day of recruiting, getting wind that the band decided to do likewise, students changed the plan on their own to wear concert black and white. The change happened on their own time without consulting Justin, who was let in at the last minute to wear black and white performance attire. Justin finished the story by stating:

That's how much into it they were, that they were going to be better than the band. Dang it if they didn't do it. It was all their own doing. If that's not a sense of belonging and connectedness—not only to the institution but to each other. I mean, they're calling each other's homes. They're making sure it happens [laughter].

Teachers added subthemes that they felt contributed to the development of belongingness in the orchestra room. These are things that differ from core classes in which a teacher gets to know a student for a semester. The subthemes contribute to the comfort that allows
transformational experiences to flourish in a string orchestra as opposed to core subject area classes and many electives.

**Subtheme: long-term relationship.** Many high school orchestra directors are itinerant, traveling within the day from middle school to high school. Double or even triple school assignments allows teachers to get to know their students, teaching them each day for seven years. Parents and teachers are on a first-name basis, and communications are frequent. When a program grows or has already grown, to the point where a full-time teacher is warranted at the high school, the time of relationship may be four years. This daily interface is still substantially more than most teachers get with a core group of individuals. Justin is a teacher who taught both middle and high school for many years described the nature of the long-term relationship:

> every day for 7 years, take away summers and breaks. But we get to know them. And we know their parents. And we know their families. And we've talked to the brother and the sister…And we can also pull that card like, “I know you better than that. You are capable of a lot more than this. And you are going to be a lot more than this [laughter].”

> And the other teachers can't say that because they never knew them before, so yeah. Yeah. I've had that conversation more than once with kids. [Sometimes] I'll have a wonderful relationship with a kid, and then I find out, in all his other classes, he's a hellion. No one could stand the kid. And I'm the only one the kid doesn't misbehave in it for. And they're like, “Well, what are you doing?” And I'm like, “Nothing. I'm giving him a noisemaker, I guess. I don't know.” And he's just like all my other kids. Wild.

Carole teaches in the same district where she grew up. A vibrant African-American teacher who grew up in a predominantly African-American high school orchestra program, Carole talks about the depth of long-term relationships:
Here are some things that don't happen with Ms. C’s kids. I don't have teenage pregnancy. I don't have my children fighting; when they first come to me, I might have a kid that has a suspension, but after we have that talk, I don't expect to see one of my kids involved in a fight. I don't expect to see one of my children coming to me, either having fathered [laughter] a child or carrying a child. And, I'm nosy, and I do talk to them about their little personal lives and telling them I know who they're dating. I might have a conversation with them, “Hey, I saw her, kind of, hanging out with this guy. I just want to let you know some things. You might want to check that out.” I really do stay involved, but I said, I don't have that on here because that's not what we promote in here. I said, “You should be able to exercise some self-control and responsibility, and whatever else.” I'm not going to turn you away if that happens, but we're going to have a talk about it.

Perhaps the most poignant remembrance of long-term relationships was offered by Carole remembering her experiences after high school and telling of her desire to continue those type of relationships within her former school as a teacher:

And it wasn't until I went to a college in Spartanburg, and went out on the field. And almost every orchestra classroom that I walked in, it was, “You play the violin?” ”Yeah, [laughter].” And I was offered a job in Spartanburg, but I said, “I didn't want to be the only. I wanted to come back to my community and carry on what we had.” I had a lifelong friendship with our orchestra teacher. And hanging out in the orchestra classroom, and having quartet practice, and doing little gigs with our quartet from high school. We would visit with him during college. And then once I got out, and I was teaching, he was my colleague; he was my mentor. But still, my best friend and I would
spend time with him and his family. And I do have that relationship with my kids now. So even so, my first high schoolers that graduated from [school], we still get together every December. And sometimes all we can do is go out to eat, but sometimes we do dinner and movie, because of the end of the school year, I would always, “Okay. I'm going to see Shrek on Friday at 5 o'clock, and if you want to come and see Shrek with me, I would have alumni that would come to the movies with me.” So I still have that relationship with them. I'm working on that. That was the hard thing about transferring from [my old school to my new school], I have to spend so much time going to [school] and trying to start new traditions with them.

The type of relationships developed by Carole and the other teachers interviewed do not happen overnight. Students need to be able to trust that their teacher will be there for them, evidenced by a long-term commitment to the program.

**Subtheme: trust.** Some teachers take specific steps to work on trust from the earliest stages. Aaron teaches only at the high school but he takes time to get to know students early:

At the beginning of the year, I have a one-on-one interview with every kid in the program. And one of my goals this year is to meet every sixth grader because one of the things is I want to make sure every sixth grader knows who I am, my face, my name, so that they can—if I'm at a concert and the other directors are busy, they're like, “Mr. A. can you tune me?” “Sure. Yeah. No problem.” They need to know they can trust me and everything like that. And that's paid off a lot because that's my determined goal is to make sure every sixth grader knows my name and that I know every single kid that's in this program which, as the program has gotten bigger, it does take more time, but it's time that needs to be taken. Just because it makes that much of a difference because if they
know you, you know them—and like I tell them, I'm like, “You don't let strangers into your house.” I say, “That's my house. I'm not going to let you in if I don't know you. If I don't trust you, I'm definitely not going to let you in.”

Aaron is making an effort to create the 7-year relationship that itinerant teachers of middle and high school develop. Conversely, the two middle school teachers that feed into Aaron’s high school invest in maintaining the relationship with students that have moved on. On the day of the interview with Aaron, the researcher was able to observe an after-school volunteer group of middle school and high school students. All three teachers had a hand in the experience. Trust and belongingness abound in these students because of the effort made by the teachers to foster these qualities.

Barbara stated that she learned with more experience that relationships built on honesty help trust to grow. Barbara remembered:

But as I got older, honestly some days I would just say, “You know what? I'm having a really bad day.” And I couldn't do that when I first started teaching, but I feel like they know you, you know them. Sometimes they're having a bad day too, and I definitely had kids that are like, “I just need to sit in your office, is that okay?” And it is—

Barbara also spoke about the times when the trust was reciprocated. Students came to realize her humanness as she talked about the challenges of being an introvert on the podium:

I'm not the sage on the stage…and so for me I'm a fairly introverted person, I would get home and just be completely depleted…And so I think some of them figured it out, but like that, I don't know that I verbally was able to always communicate to them. “Like I can't give you—I have nothing left.” So they kind of had to rise to the occasion sometimes, and sometimes they did. I had students that would give the cheerleading
speech right before the concerts sometimes, you know, and they'd be like, “We can do this!” So sometimes they come up with the best ideas. So being open to them being teachers and helping others learn, I think is important too. And again it gives them their identity, and it gives them their place to feel welcome.

The instrument used for coding, NVivo 12 (2018), quantified trust as an issue that took up 15.4% of Justin’s interview. Justin learned the week of the interview of the elimination of orchestra as a course offering in his district for the next school year. The introspection that he offered touched several sides of trust.

I can't tell you how many kids show up in my office. And [I’ve] been mentors for kids plenty…because [I] see them throughout their whole teenage years. So they don't have anything, really, they can be embarrassed about with you because you've already seen some of the most embarrassing stuff they've ever told.

Justin told stories of times he felt he had failed in the trust given to him. A girl who had relied on him each year of high school to change her schedule to make sure she included orchestra was not included by him her senior year. She expressed disappointment that she did not participate in the class. Another girl attempted suicide in the restroom. When asked by Mr. J. why she did not come to see him, she replied that she tried, but he had already left to go to the other school.

Justin, a reflective teacher, understands that these events were not his fault, but feels empathetically toward his students.

Subtheme: expectation of excellence. The expectation of excellence in itself may not be different from what would find in any subject area classroom. However, the public perception and pride derived from that expectation in the orchestra or performing arts classroom call
students to externalize the expectation. Carole learned this in her days under the tutelage of a master teacher in her high school experience:

I attended and graduated from the high school where I teach now. And we were never told that it was something different, and it does play into race. We were never told that playing the violin, or playing with an orchestra was something that only one particular race of people did. It was just something we did, and we had pride in that. And it was, “Okay. How many kids are we going to have on the van this year to go to All-State? How many superiors are we going to have at Solo and Ensemble? Let's work hard and make sure that we do well at concert festivals.”

Carole carries on the expectation of excellence in her students today. She channels her much smaller program into solo and ensemble assessments where students may shine on their own merits. She told the story of a student who worked exceptionally hard one year to achieve a superior rating, but rested on his previous laurels the next year and did not put in the same amount of work, earning a much lower rating. That student learned that work is tied to expectations.

Aaron speaks to his students about the way an audience perceives a performance:

Well, I'd tell my kids, it's like, “I’m on you a lot, but you have to remember—" And I use examples, it's like, “When you guys go to a concert, what's the first thing you notice, something good or something bad?” If the oboe is out of tune when the ensemble is tuning, you go, “That oboe is out of tune. Get it in tune.” Or if the strings are out of tune, you're like, “Oh, violins, come on.” You don't go, “Oh, man, they almost sound perfect.” I said, “Ours is a business of perfection.” And I tell the kids, “Unfortunately, music is probably one of the most personal things you can ever do, but I treat my ensembles like a business.”
And I said, “And what we're selling is music. And if it's not good, nobody's going to buy our product, bottom line, end of story.” And I said, “Our business is based upon perfection. It's based upon something that is virtually impossible to attain.” I said, “So why would you put all of your personal feelings on something that's nearly impossible to obtain?” I said, “That doesn't mean you can't have a personal connection with music,” I said, “but as a member of the ensemble, you're a member of this business, and it's important. It has to be treated like a business because, otherwise, you're not going to be successful.”

Aaron further articulates the importance of teaching students to strive for something more, something just beyond reach:

That almost brings to mind for me—another little segue is the pursuit of that excellence, which in my mind has a lot to do with mindfulness and teaching the kids how to seek perfection, how to identify perfection, how to evaluate where they stand in relation to it. And I've found over the years that—like you were saying about the math paper, or the English paper, or whatever, “It's a C. Cool.” And I've noticed being in education classes with some teachers, they raise their hand, and the first thing they say is, “What do I need to do to get an A?” And they're not going to do one iota further. On the other hand, us and surgeons—no one wants a C-level surgeon, and no one wants to pay money to go to a C-level concert. And the difference is that we're constrained by time, and time runs out, and we have to lay it out there. But then unlike those other things where you take that paper and you throw it in the trash, we pull it back and we continue to try and—yeah, we use it as an example. I can't think of any time where I actually wrote an essay, and then when I was writing the next essay, pulled that prior essay up and was like, “What did I do wrong here? What can I improve?” because I was just like, “Yeah,
whatever.” But music, it's like we build off of our mistakes. We learn from our mistakes. Like before we were performing at the conference our pre-run that Tuesday—it was bad. And we got in class the next day, and you'd think, “Okay, well, they're going to go back and practice.” No, we discussed that the entire class period because the kids understood what they did wrong. They understood why they weren't prepared. And they understood what they needed to do to be ready, which that's still something I'm working on is getting them ready prior to the concert, which I’ve got—I'd probably say 70% of my kids are usually ready about two weeks out now. But you still got some that are kind of just sucking wind to the end. It's like limping across the finish line. It’s like, “Come on, man. You're holding the group back.”

Aaron did a masterful job of summing up the corporate expectation of excellence that puts the responsibility for success on each student.

Susan reinforced the expectation of excellence similarly to Aaron articulating the ways in which musical performance classes differ from other classes:

Yeah. Well, everything is teaching kids that, “Okay, there is a specific right answer. And the teacher wants this. And you're not going to get a good grade unless the teacher gets this.” So I tell the kids in all my classes these days, “The best thing I can hope is that you learn to think for yourself. I give you, let's say, I want you to research da-da. And I want you do put together a presentation on da-da.” Okay. “Does it have to be a PowerPoint?” “No [laughter].” “Do you want slides? How long does it need to be?” I'm like, “You research it. You make sure you put your references there. And teach me something. I want to learn something.” The kids, there's so many that are not comfortable with that. And then the ones that—when they get used to it then they go, “Oh, I don't have to do
too much.” Where is that inner ethic? That inner ethic. I don't know. It's tough. It's tough in the primary schools and secondary schools. Because basically, what I think you're trying to do is instill them with an ethic. You don't do “just enough.” You need to exit your comfort zone and get out there. And really do something else.

Orchestra teaches students that the task is not complete until you have done everything you can to exhaust all possibilities for improvement in the time you have allotted. This is the musician’s responsibility.

**Subtheme: responsibility.** The teachers interviewed brought up responsibility in several contexts, a shared sense of ownership for the care of the room, mentoring younger students, and the responsibility to do their best from every place in the ensemble. Responsibility and the product resulting from responsibility appears as an outward reflection of the student’s sense of belonging.

*Care of the room.* Aaron used 17.2% of his interview, as determined by NVivo 12 (2018), on the topic of responsibility. As the interview progressed, we watched students end an after school rehearsal by placing chairs and stands in a readied position for the next day of rehearsal. Aaron commented as we watched students work:

A perfect example, though. I mean, he knows those are band stands, they go back in the band room. He doesn't just leave them there every day. And they'll put their chairs back up. See. So, I mean, perfect example, they know what they're supposed to do without me having to tell them, and it's taken time, but they have the pride, and they understand that there's more to what they're doing than just coming in and playing music. They get it. My all-state violinist, she made region. Good kids. So, perfect example. That's poetry in motion right there.
Mentoring. Barbara and Carole both spoke about mentoring opportunities as an informal practice. Carole gives an option to help the younger students:

So with my juniors and seniors—and it's not an official thing—I do push a freshman towards them, and I try to match them by instruments, or by temperament. And now that I'm at the middle school, I do have my two juniors, and they come over to middle school because there's a cellist that I could match them up and then the violinist is going to match them up.

Barbara’s opportunity for mentoring comes through an annual event where students from upper and lower orchestras may choose to form small ensembles and play together:

A lot of times the ensembles were not the highest group—like they actually intermingled because they were friends and so a lot of times it ended up being like this mentoring thing where a younger player would be playing with an older kid. And so they were actually teaching them. And yeah, so I think for a lot of them it actually helped them be more confident in their playing.

Aaron’s multi-level after-school orchestra discussed earlier provides ample time for students to model upper-level rehearsal and performance behaviors, and to form relationships with budding young musicians.

Leading from any chair. Orchestral musicians are often seated in an order that represents ability, musicianship, auditions, or other measurement criteria. The principle player usually is seated closest to the conductor. The teachers interviewed were interested in developing the ability to lead from any chair, a concept voiced by Zander and Zander (2000). Aaron elaborated:

Well, I tell my kids, I'm like, “You want a chair? I'll get you a chair. There's a black chair in there. Does it have a number on it? That's it.” Like, “Oh, what chair am I?” Or
the parent will come up and say, “Ah, why is my kid the fourth chair?” I'm like, “There's no numbers on any chairs. I don't understand what you're talking about”. I said, “I can show you the chairs. There's no numbers. They're all black. They all have four legs and a back. Granted, some of them tilt a little bit [laughter], but they're all the same”. I said, “Where your kid is sitting should not determine how he plays, or she plays his or her music because if the back row is weak, it's not going to matter what the front row is doing”. I put a lot of emphasis on the back row. My best players are often on the back row. Our all-state violinist in there, I mean, he's in the next-to-the-last row. And he spent time in the back row. My concertmaster from this year, last year, she was in the very back. I said, “You have to be able to lead from anywhere in the ensemble”. Yeah. My section leader for the seconds, she was in the very back row her 10th grade year and she's been section leader her 11th and 12th grade year. And vice versa, I had a section leader—I have my viola section leader this year who is—she's a good kid, she's just had a tough year is the nicest way I can put that—I've moved her back because she's not doing her job. It’s not a punishment, it's just I can't have an empty chair up there for 20 days out of 45. I can't do that.

Barbara talked about her thought behind seat placement to bring out the strengths of each player:

I [was] teaching them not to just be in their little bubble. I used to say, “Pop the bubble” because it required them to work with their stand partners and I rotated seats a lot and so that promoted—they knew who was the best. They all knew all those things like they're not dumb children, but I would make sure that I spread it out evenly across the section. And sometimes the harder workers I would put up front because I knew they were
working hard. Not just because they were the better players. And I think they had to learn how to listen across the orchestra, whether it was the tuba player or the bass player or what am I listening for? Who am I actually playing with? Not just the person next to me. And I think that created a sense of mindfulness where they had to really focus and be able to hear outside of themselves.

This practice fosters belongingness, leadership, a shared sense of responsibility, and also a sense of attunement discussed later. Each of these themes and subthemes is not exclusive of each other.

**Subtheme: choice.** Choice is what sets any elective course such as orchestra from other required courses. Students do not come through the door into the classroom if they do not choose to be there. Students have to decide which parts of their academic lives are most important, and how they will spend their out of school hours. Once they choose to be present, students make more choices about how they will use the time in class.

**Choosing to be present.** Barbara recalls the students in her lower-level orchestra who were not there to become music majors:

Yeah, they really wanted to be there because—I saw them every day and they were the kids that weren't necessarily going to be the musicians. They were the engineers and the biologists and the, you know, lots of different types of students. And they were invested in lots of different activities, and so probably their favorite part of the day was that 15 minutes because the rest of their day was full of other menial tasks that they didn't necessarily want to be a part of. But they always were so excited to be there with their friends, and we just had a good time playing in terms of wanting to learn the music.
They were always excited about what the new pieces were and what are we going to learn, and it was not stressful. It was the “This was my de-stress class”.

Barbara continued the conversation citing many reasons why students make choices toward music, even to the point of over-committing themselves:

They just want to do it. I remember my former—the high school band director that I worked with. He didn't get that. He only wanted his students to do one thing. And I remember trying to have that conversation—but he just didn't get it. He didn't understand, and he was like, “Well, it's stressing them out to do band and the music and symphony and theory, and then they're in the guitar ensemble too.” He's like, “They should only do one thing.” And I'm like, “But they're musicians, they're not just a clarinet player like they want to do everything because they like it.” And I get that sometimes can overwhelm them and they start failing their classes because they did too much, and that's a conversation you have to have with high school kids. Like, “Oh, maybe you shouldn't have done the musical, like you're going to fail calculus now. So we have to figure that out, time management.” But they want to do it because they like it, so why are you saying you shouldn't do it? We didn't always agree on everything.

Aaron informs students of their choices in the building of schedules:

You have the choice. Everything is a choice. Everything you do is a choice. Like I had a kid today that came and said—he showed me his schedule. It's got IB on it which is fine. He said, “But one of the IB classes will overlap with the honors orchestra.” I said, “Well, then, you got to choose.” I said, “You can be in the chamber group, no problems. You'll still be playing your cello every day. The literature won't be as challenging, but if you want to be a part of the ensemble, that's fine. If not, that's okay. I'm not going to hold it
against you. But you got to make a choice.” They have to choose. They have to choose to allow it. And they have to allow it to be an opportunity for them to reset, refocus, revitalize, re-energize. But if they don't allow that, if they come through the door and they don't have that mindset, then they're not going to be happy about the end result. They're not going to feel like they belong.

Choosing how to use class time. Aaron was more than willing to inform students of their about the use of class time choices:

When the kids come through the door, I tell them, it's like, “Leave everything else you have for the day out because if you're having a bad day, it can always get better. If you're having a good day, it can always get worse, but it's a choice that you make.” And people say, “Oh, well, I did bad on this test, and it ruined my day.” I'm like, “No, no. You didn't prepare for that test. You made a choice not to study. You made a choice to take the test, and then you made a choice to let it ruin your day.” Or I was talking with a kid and an administrator, who's not even one of my kids, but her older friend was once one of my students who graduated and is kind of like her second mom, might as well be because her parents are crap. But she comes to me if there's an issue. So we went and talked to the administrator yesterday, and she was saying, “Oh, this teacher can't teach. This teacher does this. This teacher-” I'm like, “What are you talking about?” I said, “How much do you actually take the initiative and try to learn on your own?” “Well, [inaudible].” “Exactly. It's a choice. Everything you do is a choice.” It was funny. There's always something about it. The kids, when they come through the door, it's 90 minutes where they can focus on something other than what's going the rest of the day.
And a lot of the kids—it's an outlet. It is an outlet. It does make them happy to be in there even on the tough days.

Aaron further discussed the choice to be an active participant when in rehearsal.

I'm always excited to go, to get in front of the ensemble. I think because that's really the only time of the day—and it's really the only time I take stuff seriously because, generally, I'm a big goofball. I don't take stuff serious. Stuff rolls off my shoulders. It does not frustrate me. I don't get stressed easily. But like I tell the kids, I say, “If I'm off that podium, we can chat about stuff. I get on that podium, it's go time. It's business.”

And they understand that. I mean, I still have some of the younger kids—none of the older kids because they know because they've known, and even the kids in the honors on the top ensemble, the younger kids, they know they're never going to sit there and ask me if we have to play today because the answer I give is, “You don't have to do anything you don't want to do, that's the beauty of being an American. However, there are consequences to every action.” I said, “You are free to not play any day you don't want to play, but every day you don't play, that's five points off your demonstration grade.” I said, “But it is your choice. So you go right ahead.” I don't argue with them. I don't say, “Oh, you can do it.” I say, “Okay. Go right ahead. It's on you.” And most of the kids realize that when it affects their grade, all of a sudden it's not so bad. And then after a while, it just becomes second nature; you come through the door, you know what you're going to be doing. And any time somebody says something about not wanting to do it, they're reminded that this is a free country.
This element of belongingness is a precursor to flow and attunement, evidenced by intentionality, mindfulness, and set-apartness. It is also a reminder that while they are in that classroom doing that activity, they are set apart from the rest of the school day.

**Subtheme: tradition and ritual.** This subtheme differs from the other in that it offers a pathway to transformational learning, but is not a transformative quality in itself. Initially, this was the basis of one of the research questions. It was still included in interviews, but it quickly became apparent that we were discussing strategies that contribute to a student’s sense of belongingness. Ritual and traditional are included here because they are intrinsic contributors to the student’s sense of belongingness. Student orchestras develop a culture around these types of events, and they strengthen the stories that contribute to the building of that culture.

**Tradition.** Five of the directors interviewed contributed traditions that they felt added to the sense of belongingness experienced by their students. Most of these were the types of events that a student would not experience within most classes. Barbara started out with a special day for students and the community:

I did the Got Music Day thing. So it was a fundraiser, but we would go to like 12 different venues in the community, and they would sign up as duets, trios, quartets, it could be violin viola, it could be a string quartet, it could be anything. We did grocery stores. We did post offices, and we did malls, we did restaurants, we did coffee shops. We did all kinds of—just in the community. Sometimes it was outside, sometimes it was inside. It was around the holiday season so they would do carols. And the kids really did it—well, they started doing it because it was part of a fundraiser, but then I made it a service project because the school was pushing service projects. So I was like, “Okay. Well, sure, we can add that as a service project.” And it really helped a lot of them
become independent players and start playing music with people that they—like outside of school. And then so and so ensemble or whatever, it was like they were playing other music and they might, you know, then join a band or start something with a singer. And that definitely permitted them I think for future stuff too, because I have the one group or the group of kids now at UVA that has started their own concert series. And they're not music majors. They're engineers and math majors, so they're still following through with that because they just love playing.

Barbara had other traditions to contribute, as well:

In terms of traditions, we did a senior solo competition every year. So that was a big tradition, and the seniors were really, like, they had—boys got bow ties, the girls got corsages in every group. So that was a tradition. The spring trip was a tradition. They loved going on trips together. Like I said we made international dinners, we always did a beginning of the year kind of thing where we get together and play basketball or do something—like we'd always do something at the beginning of the year too. I had a really big booster organization, so a lot of the parents organized a lot of that stuff, like the food stuff and the ice cream stuff. So I had parents that would help me do that, which was good. And I think traditions of, you know, uniformity of attire is a big deal.

Carole found her tradition in solo and ensemble festival because of her uncertain instrumentation and smaller class size by annual participation. Carole lit up as she talked about her student’s experience:

With them doing solos and duets, I think that that has really helped my high school program for them to kind of get their weight up. And I need to practice. If I don't practice this—I can't cram [laughter] for Solo and Ensemble. You can't fake it for a
trying musician that’s going to be listening to you. So I think that that really helps our program, and they have been able to focus and plan out, “Yes, I have to get ready for Spring Concert, but I'm also working on my Solo and Ensemble. Ms. C, I've been staying after school on Tuesday because we want to practice our duet. And can you just listen to us practice?” That's been really good for the program, Solo and Ensemble.

Aaron prefers to give students an experience around which to build common stories that freshmen, as well as seniors, can share each year:

A perfect example is when we go on trips, and we start with the same movie every single trip we go: Kicking and Screaming, the Will Ferrell movie. It's just, ah, so funny. But we'll watch that movie the first trip we go on every year. We always watch it. Always bring it; it's the first thing we watch. And the kids never got it until this year that the seniors who have seen it four years, they might start to complain, but they need to realize that one of the things we talk about is the younger kids are going to do what the older kids do. And every time we go on a trip, there's somebody who hasn't seen that movie, somebody who hasn't shared that experience. And, I mean, it's a movie, but the concept is still the same. Use a lot of concepts, and we talk about concepts, but the kids have to understand there's more of a purpose to them than just what they're doing on a day-to-day basis. They have to understand that what they do affects what comes after.

Trips are a tradition that brings students together. Other teachers spoke about trips of past years and challenges that they experience currently in continuing to provide a travel experience for their students.
Julia has always made travel an integral part of her program. In addition to the usual travel involved in taking students to concert performance assessment and solo and ensemble festivals, Julia talks about trips she has taken her students with her students:

We used to do trips every four years. I went to Europe for 12 years. And we took little mini-trips like New York City, but we played the whole time. Since 9/11, it's been a pain to move our orchestra with instruments and playing somewhere. So, we haven't done any trips in the last four years. Broken shoulder and a burned foot two of those years kind of messed it up. The last trip was Disney World, so they want to go somewhere. So I've got to figure out something. We've done Hawaii twice, Europe three times—maybe Hawaii three times and Europe three times. And that's a big pull for some of them, but I was talking to the principal yesterday—the cost is just crazy. You're looking at $6,000 to spend two weeks in Europe, but it's the flying. And just the ground in Hawaii was $1,800.00. That didn't include the thousand-something for flight.

Julia teaches in a district that is more affluent than most in the state. Still, the costs involved in providing a significant travel experience are daunting. Changes in the way Americans experience air travel today have limited travel options as well.

Justin took students on trips on a regular basis, but the trauma of the ending of the strings program in his district colored his perspective on tradition:

You were talking about things we're looking forward to every year like the Carowinds trip. If we don't do that, I'll have a mutiny on my hands. Solo Ensemble, believe it or not, they like that better than concert festivals. Although this year, I did not do the concert festival because I'm the only orchestra teacher in the district left. And the other schools, they just don't have the numbers, really, for a good concert or festival performance at the
middle schools really. At the high school, it turns out I had fine numbers. I didn't know that at the time, but when it was time to sign up back in January, I only had like 12 kids signed up for the second semester. And that ballooned into 28. And it's since dropped back down to 23 because we simply didn't fit in the room. And some of my freshmen ran away panicked. And so, yeah. But yeah, it was quite something. So we could have done it. And they were very unhappy that we didn't go do it. But I looked at them and said, “What? You guys are the ones who, every year, complain about this trip. You don't want to go to Mr. Gatti's. You don't want to get dressed up in your tuxes and gowns. You just don't want to do it.” You know what? “Yeah, Mr. J, that's what we say because we're teenagers. But we still want to do it [laughter].” I'm like, “Well, okay. How am I supposed to know? I only hear the complaints from you guys.” So they were gutted. So they were very unhappy that we did not go. And I didn't tell the middle schoolers. They didn't realize until the event was over that we didn't go. So yeah. And when they asked, I'm like, “The middle schools don't have an orchestra teacher. There aren't enough of you to do it.” I said, “You'll all be doing Solo Ensemble Festival.”

The student’s disappointment tells of their attachment to the traditions Justin established.

However, Justin also reminisced about travel in a former district in happier times:

Yeah. Like in [my old] district though, the touring group we took to Europe and stuff, now that happened frequently. Chamonix, I'll never forget that concert. We did so well with that. And it was just—it was good. And the audience was like, “Do it again [laughter].” We were like, “We're exhausted [laughter]. We can't do it again.” That's something, but yeah. No, I was—Yeah, Chamonix was great. Really was. It's like an Americana concert we'll do. And the kids danced the Charleston. We've got jazz. I mean,
we throw the whole thing at it. And those kids were just-, the kids were not expecting the audience members to get up and dance with them. See? You know? And [laughter] watching octogenarian Frenchmen attempting to do the Charleston [laughter] is just absolutely awesome. So there's little old men just trying to move their heads fast enough and keep the feet going. And it's just really funny. So yeah, the kids had a ball with that.

*R ritual* Many teachers engage in practices that are regular, sometimes daily rituals. The choral director at my own high school ends class, meetings, rehearsals, and concerts by declaring these words from Aristotle, “We are what we repeatedly do!” Students enthusiastically answer, “Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit!” The teachers interviewed engaged in ritual by using an expected order of tune-ups, warm-ups, and exercises in class before beginning to work on repertoire. Susan talked about how ritual grew over years of teaching:

But as I grew and realized what was going on, and I actually got kids with more ability, and able to do more stuff, I found out the importance of being able to stretch out. Because I have ended up with the musician's injury. I have bone spurs from the viola. And I've got arthritis in the thumbs from not doing things well. So I came to realize the importance of being able to stretch out, to get into a physical mode for playing. An athlete is not going to just start running. You've got to warm the muscles up. And there are all kinds of exercises to warm the muscles up. So I feel that it's important to stress to the kids' musician's injuries. Because if you do it wrong long enough, you're going to hurt yourself. That pain is really your body telling you, “Something's not right. Let's do it another way.” So those are the beginnings of my classroom. I wouldn't necessarily warm-up every day. But I'd try to remind them to. And that's what you do when you're
sitting there waiting for everybody to get focused. And then we tune. And then we go, “Okay.”

Julia tried to differentiate ritual from superstition in her choice of warm-up music for competitive events, “I don't know whether it's a ritual or it's just I'm so superstitious. I always do O, Sacred Head for warm-up during concert season. And that's been 20 years playing the same warm-up piece.” Another ritual that Julia spoke of is a minute of silence:

One thing I did do with them last year, and I haven't done it this year, and maybe why they're squirrelier is I used to do—we'd come in, and we'd practice one minute of silence. How to sit still and be quiet for one little minute. And then we went to tuning and scales, and blah, blah, blah. And that was part of our—, and it just popped in there. And one day, something went—we had this, this, and this fire drill or something. So we came in and sat down, and I just said, “Okay, whatever scale.” And the first chair said, “Oh, wait a minute. We didn't do our one minute of silence.” I say, “We're going to skip that today.” She said, “No we're not.” She says, “We aren't going to skip it because that is the only one minute of total silence and stillness I have. We're not skipping it.” She said, “Get in your seats and shut up.”

Tradition and ritual are strategies that foster types of transformational events in student’s perception of the world and their place it in. The stories of the participants were rich and descriptive. One could visualize students storing memories and building a sense of belongingness as the teachers related these traditions and rituals.

Theme: flow. Flow as a term was unfamiliar to participants initially, but the teachers quickly recognized the experience of flow from total focus in performance situations. Each of the
teachers was able to relate to the concept of losing track of time by being entirely in the moment. Barbara captured how difficult it is to name those moments as they happen in the class setting:

I think those moments in class, you know, you can't necessarily capture that all the time and different day have different things. And every group has those moments, you know, you might have been working on something for weeks and then all of a sudden they get it, and you're like, “Ohhh.” You know, so you have those moments and then the opposite can happen too where they have it and then all of sudden it’s like, “What's going on?”

The experience of flow is elusive with students slipping out of flow easier than they slip into it as expressed by Barbara. Students may first experience it as they watch television, read, or play video games. The difference in orchestra class may be that it is one of the first times that it appears as a result of a student’s own work.

Justin stated that he notices flow occurring in both middle school and high school classes:

I've certainly had it in both the middle school and high school at some points. Middle school happens more and more often, especially with the eighth graders I mentioned. Although the sixth graders too. We'd get on a roll, and the bell will ring, and they all freak out. Because they've only got two minutes to get to the next class. And yeah, that'll happen a lot with them. Seventh graders, unfortunately, not so much. So seventh graders are still seventh graders. It's not happening right in front of their nose. They don't have any clue about what's going on, so don't really want to [laughter]. It's not them. The high school, when I get new music, that's usually when the juices start flowing. Yeah, we'll work on it, and they'll get into it. Then the announcements will start, and the kids will freak out. That's usually what happens to me most often.
Aaron recalled a change in attitude and behavior in himself through performing music in high school:

But I'd say just once I started performing, the atmosphere was different. I enjoyed what I was doing versus sitting in math class, sitting in an English class because I hated it. I goofed off, got in trouble, a lot of things. The only places I was really focused, and the best kid in the class was in my music classes. Because if your head's not in the right place, your heart's never going to be there, so. And that's what it's about, having heart. Realizing you do matter and you belong to something better, bigger and better.

Aaron pointed to identity development as well as flow in his comment about focus or flow. Again, the qualities of transformational learning do not appear in isolation of one another.

Julia remembered back to her own high school experiences in the orchestra:

We had really good music. I had a really good teacher. And she instilled in us high quality so that we would work. And our orchestra was medium-sized in high school, and we were like a family. So you were there with friends, and you were making music. And when we got to the point of not hunting for notes and figuring out what technique was, we actually could make music; the class would be over. We'd be so caught up in the actual music-making. Now, there's times when I listen to music, and I lose the day. Like a Saturday, I have a list of things that I want to do, but I'm listening to music, studying a score to teach, or just listening to some music. And the next I know, it's past noon.

Making music with friends. Belongingness can foster flow by releasing the peer pressure felt by so many teenagers, letting them feel free to move on to the next task at hand. I asked Julia if there were any physical sensations associated with flow in her mind. She answered:
I get goosebumps. Listening or if I play something really well and I'm playing a whole tune, and even conducting with the kids, as I've gotten older, I have less and less of those high moments. So when I get the goosebump moment, I know I'm at some kind of a pinnacle.

I also asked Julia if she could tell when her students were experiencing flow. To this, she replied:

I think so by their body language, by their relaxed moving, and then, they've got the space. And I may say something, and they don't even hear it. It's not even on their viewfinder because they are into what they're doing, and listening, playing.

The researcher then asked Julia, “What kind of things do they say when that moment's over?”

She smiled and went into her animated description:

A lot of times, it's just, “Wow. I beasted that.” I said, “Yes, you did.” And when we've done a really good concert or been at concert festival—and regardless of what the judge says because we've had some scores come back, and they just kind of went, “Really? You missed this and that and the other.” And then I've had times when they just floated off the stage. And they went through sight-reading and didn't know they did sight-reading. It was just like—and you just see the way they carried themselves, and a lot of it is body language, and kind of like you can see their little auras shining around them. I know that sounds kind of crazy, but—And it's just a spiritual thing. And I look at music as prayer, too, and that quiet time. And if I'm just fiddling around, fiddling around, I can have a moment. And I just think it's a God thing, a spiritual thing where I get as close to him as I can accidentally. But with the kids, usually they'll take ownership if they've done something, “Did you hear that?” “We did it. We got it. It was blah, blah, blah.”
Susan’s description of the feeling of flow elaborated on the sensations Julia described:
Wow. I've never been asked to describe that feeling [laughter]. Okay. For me it's a sense of wonderment. It's a sense of discovery of something that not everybody necessarily has discovered, even though people do. Like last night I was over at a friend's house watching Dunkirk. And towards the end when they were all getting saved and everything, the music was just beautiful. And I realized that it was on a theme by Elgar. It was Nimrod. Yeah. And I got little goosebumps. I'm like, “Oh my God.” Because I love that. It's so beautiful. How do you describe that feeling? I don't know. It's an excitement. It's an “all is well with the world” kind of feeling [laughter]. If that makes any sense.

Susan was also asked about identifying the experience of flow as it happens with her students. She described moments when she thought she could tell flow had impacted a student:
When that child smiling as he picks up his book bag and walks out, you know that something really good has happened in that classroom. Whether it was your fault or somebody else's fault, I don't know. And also, when you see them, take it further and go into their own careers, and their own teachings, and keeping up with them through social media has just been the best. Because you really get to keep up with people. Whereas you and I grew up, we didn't have that. No.

Susan brought up the topic here of responsibility for facilitating an environment where flow can happen. Although she jokingly referred to who was at fault for occurrences of flow in class, the participants had firm thoughts on contributors to flow.

**Subtheme: challenge.** Challenge is perhaps one of the most significant factors leading to flow as emphasized by Csikszentmihalyi (2004) in a TED (Technology, Entertainment, and
Design) Talk. A challenge that is too low will produce boredom, while a challenge that is too high will produce anxiety. A task with sufficient challenge will produce flow. Participants pointed out the importance of challenging students without over-extending them. Aaron related a point in his own development as a musician when he actively sought out challenge and differentiated that from what he found in other classes:

I would go in the director's music catalog and flip through music and look at stuff I couldn't play and pull it out and try to play it. That was just something I enjoyed doing because I was like, “Yeah, I like the challenge of it, and the fact that every day was something different.” You could get better every week versus sitting in a math class doing one chapter for two weeks because that just killed me. I just couldn't stand it. But that's really where it started. And then once I got into the high school and got established as somebody who was a potential leader—and it's just one of those things that has always been entertaining for me.

Subtheme: appropriate literature. One of the essential sources an orchestra teacher uses is the music they program for their students to play. Skills, the other axis on the depiction of flow are addressed purposefully through the selection of this music. Susan found that when she moved to the high school needed to address the challenge:

When I first got to [school], I was playing too easy music because I never taught that level before. So I was going with my good old standbys. And they were like, “This is too easy.” And so then I went overboard and pulled out the Elgar Serenade. It was like, “Okay. Let's see what you can do with this [laughter].” But they wanted to be challenged. They didn't want it to be too easy. They never made it to the Brahms Sextet level, which, personally, was a disappointment for me because I loved playing that piece.
As Susan gained experience working with high school students, she learned to let her students lead in literature choices:

Well, there was one year at the school—it was towards the end of my career—where I had two orchestras. I had the symphony orchestra. And then I had the chamber orchestra, which I call "chamber" but it was just strings. And the strings kids were talking about how “We're not as good as the symphony kids.” And I'm like, “That's not right. You're not necessarily that level, but-” and they were just like, “Well, we want to play something that's really difficult.” So I said, “Fine.” And I pulled out the Tchaikovsky. The first movement of the serenade. And we worked on that all year long [laughter]. But they did. They ended up playing it. They actually got to. And the concertmistress of that orchestra, who is now a music teacher herself, got to her college and told her orchestra teacher, “We just played Tchaikovsky [laughter].” And he was like, “No, you did not. Nobody in high school plays the Tchaikovsky.” And she said, “Well, we did [laughter].” So it gave them a level to be proud of, too. Not just necessarily playing arrangements. But they could actually play a piece of music that was written by a composer and intended for it to be exactly that way. And I found through [that school] that that was really important—to be playing original stuff, not arrangements that—the composer did this for a reason. And yeah, we're going to have to work at it, So anyway, we played Beethoven. We played Brahms. I just picked music I loved. And I would listen to NPR in the summer. I'd go, “Oh, I like that one. Let's play that one.” Literature is important. It really is. Listening as a judge—I judged sight-reading for you guys, and then I went to Columbia and judged theirs. And there's some really great stuff being written for the younger orchestras now that wasn't there when I was coming out. But there's great
literature being written. And it's important to be able to find things that the violas enjoy. Because if you leave the violas to their own—to a lot of people's arrangements, then they're just either going, “Chunk, chunk, chunk, chunk,” or long whole note. So I would also kind of look at the viola part and the second violin part. It's like, “What is really good here.” Because there's not much worse than a whiny viola player [laughter].

Susan, while talking about the choice of appropriate literature, also brought up the topic of the work that it takes to balance challenge and skill, the formula that brings on flow.

**Subtheme: work.** Work also provides the pathway to attunement. Flow may happen as a result of happy serendipity in the beginning, but it is work that sustains flow. It is work that leads to a more intentional state of being. Again, one quality of transformational learning does not appear in isolation of the others. Aaron spoke of student’s realization that the very things that create their sense of belonging and flow perpetuated by work:

I think for all the kids it is an enjoyable time, but like I tell them, the thrills come from our trips. They come from those moments after we get our superior ratings. They come from the moments where the superintendent says, “Hey, I want you guys to play here.” Those are the things that we think about. They come from when we go play at the hospital, and you see—we go play at the special needs banquet for the community, and they see people that have nothing being happy with what they're doing. That's when they see the joy in the activity. It's not always coming through the door every day, sitting down, and playing the same stuff over and over and over again. It's the other opportunities outside of the classroom that make them happy. But that does translate to being in the classroom, as well, because if they weren't in the classroom, they'd never have the opportunities out of the classroom. And they understand that. And those are the
kids that—like right now the quartet, they're just sitting there talking about stuff, glancing, looking at me, thinking, “Oh, it's not time to go yet [laughter].”

Barbara related student’s awakening to their need to work to rise to their own expectation of excellence. While working to turn in audio-recorded assessments, students would tell Barbara:

I know they're practicing because a lot of them would freak out about listening to their recording, “I've got to do it again.” You know, and then the same thing with playing tests and stuff like that. They were like, “I know I got an A, but I didn't feel good about it, can I play it again?” I'm just like, “You got an A! But okay, sure.” You know? So for me, it was more about, you know, them wanting to do it. And so the practice blocks I think were more successful, that way. Just in terms of it doesn't matter the minutes, it’s about the investment of learning—But that's part of learning too, in terms of the empowerment was you have to turn things in on time.

There are life lessons in work. Flow within work brings on the possibility of Maslow’s “growth-through delight” (1962, loc. 751).

Susan emphasized the choice we make to learn. Her students would tell her: "We don't like this piece. It's not fun.” She would respond with, “Okay, so all right. Let's make it fun for everybody.” She went on to say,

It's hard to get them to understand that it's not how many notes you get to play; it's how well you play the notes that you have. That's a whole other issue. Whole other issue. Susan went on to talk about the focus that students learn to bring on through work. The teacher is sharing the processes they have learned to facilitate flow:
Intensity. Energy. You have to understand the energy of the piece. And the fact when I realized that the kids need to understand that every note that you play is either coming from somewhere or going somewhere. And every note has value. Where's it coming from? Or where's it going? And if you can analyze that the kids are like, “What? She's crazy [laughter].” It's, like, what if you have a bunch of open Ds? Okay, well, that D came from that D, came from that D, which is going to that F-sharp. So that was important, especially with the build of the energy kind of thing. But then there was the issue of soft being slow and loud being fast [laughter]. One day, it was with my chamber group, and I guess I was tired of conducting. And then just kept slowing it down when it got slow. And so I said, “All right. Y'all need to listen to this. It's really important.” And for ten solid minutes, I said, “Soft is not slow. Loud is not fast. Soft is not slow. Loud is not fast [laughter].” Ten minutes. They were all like—but it got the point across.

When students begin to understand where the music is going, they are open to reaching a higher level of musicianship.

**Theme: attunement.** Watching the performance of music is intrinsically more gratifying because the audience is allowed into the world of attunement that the musician experiences. One becomes alert to the body language and other non-verbal communications the musician uses to stay in synchronization with the others in the ensemble. Attunement is described as a state of unification of body and mind within a communal experience. “A kinesthetic and emotional sensing of others—knowing their rhythm, affect and experience by metaphorically being in their skin, and going beyond empathy to create a two-person experience of unbroken feeling connectedness by providing a reciprocal affect and/or resonating response” (Erskine, 1998, p.
At
tunement is the next transformational quality that the young musician learns to
experience as a result of belongingness and flow.

Susan described the oneness experienced by stand partners that leads to attunement
across the orchestra:

Yeah. I've come to realize that when you have a stand partner, you all the sudden
become of one-mind. And when your stand partner makes a mistake, then you're going
to make that mistake too, without even thinking about it a lot of the time. You kind of
just get in tune with each other. And reading the same music your energy is focused on
the same place. And you kind of become the same. And that also happens within the
section, hopefully, if everybody's there [laughter]. And I guess you would hope that that
would happen with the whole entire orchestra. I believe that if you reach a certain level
of proficiency it's not so much a chore anymore. It's that you get to play with better
people. And you get to play better music. And you get to experience that inner joy when
the viola note, and the second violin note, and the first violin note, and the cello note all
resonate together. And there's that, “Oh, yeah [laughter]. That is really nice there.” I'm
not sure I could have been a wind player. Especially not a brass player because strings—
I don't know. Strings, I vibrate with them very well, too. If you have enough moments
like that I think that is going to keep you interested in doing it.

When the resonance Susan talked about comes together, it can first be detected in a unison of
movement in the musicians.

**Subtheme: movement.** Movement as evidence of musicianship was introduced in my
early graduate years at the University of South Carolina in the 1980s. Camp (1981, 1992) wrote
that one could play as musically as prodigies do naturally by grouping rhythms in ever-
increasing architectonic levels. Zander (2008) artfully demonstrated the concept that he called “one-buttock playing” in a TED Talk.

Julia talked about the beauty and impact of movement during playing:

I don't know if I can pin it to a certain point. Now for me, I'm going to move something when I play. Obviously, your bow has to move, but something in—and no, I'm not tapping my foot because we were told your brain is not in your foot. So some other body part is going to move. I want the chair dance. And I've talked to the orchestra about chair dancing. I said, “Y'all sit there like you're made out of concrete, and you're a statue.” And I said, “Music comes from in here.” I said, “It's not written on the page.” I said, “It comes from in here, and you need to let it come out and let your body move with it. Not to the point of distraction, but when your hand goes over here, move that other side in the opposite direction and with the beat.” And I said, “If there's not a conductor, how do you know what the tempo is?” And this was them, “You'll watch the first chair.” I say, “What if you're the fourth stand back, third stand back? How do you see the first chair? Well, you don't.” I said, “So everybody has to be a conductor. Everybody has to be the first chair. Everybody has to move.” And I said, “You have to move. Either your head needs to bob-” I said—I think it was Carol Murray that said, “It's not music until your hair moves,” the very first time I met her. She said, “It's not real music until your hair moves.” And I said, “You don't have to move all over everywhere and be a distraction, but you need to feel it. The audience needs to see the phrases. They need to see the soft. They need to see the loud.” I said, “And that's one of the reasons I like going to orchestra concerts because I like something to look at, not just listen to…But you can see our soft, and you can see our loud by our bow moving.” And I talk to them about the movement.
And moving as a group. So I don't know if it's something they innately learn. If they play enough and they get into it, and they've got the skills to be able to do it, or it's—and it may just be, some of it is by experience, and the other part is by being inspired. I was looking for that word earlier, and I couldn't think of it. So somewhere earlier you can put inspired in there when I was bumbling around. To move and then, like I said to you earlier, to me, music is prayer. And I know we can't talk about that at school. And I've been on a mission—see, listen to me. God goes, “All right. Here goes Julia again.”

As Julia expressed, there is a beauty and majesty in the like movement of musicians playing together, all of one mind, body, and soul.

**Subtheme: mindfulness.** To go from flow to attunement, it takes a certain degree of mindfulness. Bishop et al. (2004) described mindfulness as:

Self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment . . . adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance. (p. 232)

Students in orchestra learn to bring on this higher level transformational quality with their own will and desire. Aaron spoke of the process:

I mean, it's all just one—jokingly, you say, “It's the big circle of life, man.” It really is. But it's consistency. One of the things that—before anybody was in there and before every concert, I do this, the three Cs: control, confidence, consistency. Those are our three Cs. And then that's what the kids will do. They'll go, “Three Cs.” And that's one thing that is always, always what we do. And that's behind everything we do. Those are the three main things that we focus on in everything we do. Just like they know before
we start any performance, I'm going to get on that podium and I'm going to look at every single kid, and their eye contact tells me that they're ready. And that likewise, if we're rehearsing and I tell them they need to do this, they need to do that, they need to move, and they don't do it—cut it off, address the issue.

Addressing the preparation of state-of-mind works in Aaron’s orchestras. Do other classes monitor mindfulness, a quality of transformational learning that surpasses engagement in intensity? This researcher believes that many non-elective courses carry on without a requirement for mindfulness.

Julia discussed mindfulness within her own life, and that which she shares with her students:

I've been on a mission to find, to come in and find the second half of my life. Get rid of the ego, get rid of the “This is what you see because I need to survive,” especially in this orchestra world. But to find who I really am in Christ. And music is one way that I've found—and I've tried to do the silent meditation where there's nothing going on, and I find that if I put some chants or quiet Asian style—something that doesn't make my brain think of 1 E & A, 2 E & A, whatever I want to conduct. Just something that's just Gregorian chant in the background, I can control this a little better. So one thing I did do with them last year, and I haven't done it this year, and maybe why they're squirrelier is I used to do—we'd come in, and we'd practice one minute of silence. How to sit still and be quiet for one little minute. And then we went to tuning and scales, and blah, blah, blah. And that was part of our—, and it just popped in there. So then we'd get there, and they would be quiet. And I really didn't know if it was doing anything, but it got them
quiet enough that I could get them tuned the way I wanted them tuned without having to raise my voice.

Susan touched on the topic of being mindful by saying:

Music is so fleeting. It's like, Joni Mitchell said, “Nobody ever asked van Gogh to paint A Starry Night again, man.” Because art is the process, it's not the product, really. It's the process that you go through to get the product. So as a performer, as a musical performer, you're always in the process.

The researcher commented back to Susan, “You know that temporal aspect? In talking to other people, the performing arts—the process is so important to the whole learning thing. And that's where mindfulness gets in. Because if you take your mind off of it, it's gone.” She nodded and replied, “You lose it. That’s a hard thing to teach too.” What she is saying is that one must always be mindful of the process, in rehearsal, in performance. How do we teach that?

Julia also wondered if mindfulness is teachable:

I think when you're in the flow, you're also quiet in here. You're quiet in your head even though you've got sounds and all going on. And I think, to me, that's what mindfulness is. Quieting this brain of ours that wants to run 24/7 and becoming in touch with your soul, with your being, or the divine one, or the oneness, or—and I don't know if that's teachable.

Expanding on her thought, she continued:

And if it can be—if you have good, quality literature that you're teaching your children, and it's—it's a spiritual thing. It really is. And it's a healing. Playing in orchestra, playing the music is healing. I've had—a little one came in, and she was all AP classes. And she goes, “I'm getting ready to throw up my liver. I'm so stressed out.” And I say, “Well,
number one first. You can't throw your liver up because it's not connected that way.”

And I said, “Second, go get your fiddle. We're going to play. So you'll be okay in a minute or two.” And that's why I hate that our classes are only 40 minutes.

Julia hit on one of the keys to mindfulness, being fully present in the moment, “It's wholeness as being in the present. Not looking back at the past, and we have nothing to do with the future because—it's being in the present. Right now.” She tied mindfulness to the writings of a favorite author:

And mindfulness is—I don't want to say a buzzword, but it's a thing that they've been talking about lately, at least in the various places I've been looking for literature to read. Richard Rohr was saying the other—he's a Catholic priest, a Franciscan monk. And he's out in New Mexico of course. And he was saying meditation—there was a list of different kinds of meditations. Mantras, blah, blah, blah. And one of them was mindfulness while washing the dishes. So you can just wash the dishes without obsessing in the brain, just shutting the brain down and being quiet. And they do do that over there. I think that's what—and then sometimes, their little eyeballs get glazed over, and they really are somewhere else. And that's usually when I get, “I just beasted that.” And I just go, “Okay, fine. That's what I want you to do. Get more people to beast it.”

**Subtheme: intentionality.** It seems that intentionality is the pathway to many of the qualities of transformational learning raised by the participants in this study. After the experience that may spontaneously occur, how is it recreated at will?

Barbara spoke about encouraging students to think before they begin to play:

In terms of think before you do it, I was talking about how kids don't start pieces at the proper time. So really it's important to talk to them about strategies of making sure that
they think about the rhythm or they think about the counting, and they're watching you, and they're actually using their brain.

The researcher remarked to Barbara that we can tell by their eyes, their alert expressions, and their anticipation as expressed by bodies poised to play. She talked about the process involved in lengthening the time they can remain that ready:

I think in terms of 100% of the time that's hard. And so that's something that you have to keep encouraging them. So they'll be good for 20 measures, and then it's like—but this piece requires you to play 80 measures. So we have to keep thinking, you know, we can't zone out. And that's hard for them. And I remember talking about okay, you're 15. You keep focus for 15 minutes. So, like, we can do this. But, you know, their other teachers don't necessarily require that of them to think all the time, like they don't have to do that in other situations all the time.

Aaron, as mentioned earlier, teaches consistency through the three C’s. Consistency and intentionality have much in common. One must be consistent to master intentionality where one brings the qualities of transformational learning together.

**Subtheme: set-apartness.** Set apartness seems to have qualities in common with belongingness, but also with attunement. It is a deeper communion with those in the same space at the same time, as a result of the qualities of attunement. Julia talked about the sense of being set apart in the micro-world of the orchestra:

I don't have to even talk religion, call it meditation, or anything else. We're practicing how to be still and silent because there are times when you need to be still and silent, i.e., concert festival, concert performance assessment. You may have to sit there a couple of minutes and not move around while the judge is figuring out what they're
writing down. And you need to be able to do that without the teacher glaring at you because they're watching. Like I said, we can't pontificate off the podium, but if they come and talk to me about it—because I do silent meditation with the 3- and 6-year-olds at church. Whatever their age, it's three minutes of being quiet. And that sometimes is a challenge just to get them to sit still because they're in an environment where they're hopping around and going all the time. One of the reasons for playing orchestra is you get to move. So that might be why some of them stay in there because they get to do something. And it used to be at third block, which I consider the middle of the day because it was around lunchtime, noon. And they've moved it up on us. And a lot of those high fliers go, “This is the class where I can come and detox. I can come and do music and get everything away. I had a bad first and second block, and I can come to orchestra, and I can start playing music now. I've had a bad day.” Well, let's get playing.

Movement, mindfulness, intentionality, and set-apartness all contribute to attunement. These experiences in the orchestra class over four years in high school allow the student to do some self-discovery in the set-apart world that exists behind the doors to the classroom.

**Theme: identity development/self actualization.** Students develop facets of identity in the orchestra. Not just to become professional musicians. Any music teacher would articulate that the reason they teach music is to unlock the whole person in each student. Barbara talked about following her students after high school:

They're successful, and they're doing wonderful things. I think that I mean that's the only reason like to be on Facebook. I'm not really a fan. Like it's cool to see, you know that they're doing well or see them at some point. I saw a kid last summer out and about, and we just chatted like, and he was dating a girl in the orchestra that I'd never thought he
would be dating. So now they have a love connection, so to me, that's interesting, like the whole, where do they go from there? You know you give them all the tools, and you give them these experiences that aren't just musical experiences and then where do they go with that? So I think that's why you teach, I think that's the joy we get out of that.

That moment, it's not just about getting eighth notes right.

A reflective teacher, Barbara continued her thought:

It is important, it is really important to play those eighth notes together but teamwork, but there's a lot more too. And I think if I were teaching a different— I mean I do think of myself— that was a question that I dealt with, was like, do you see yourself as a teacher or a music teacher? And there were different answers. And I think for me, I definitely see myself as a teacher because I'm teaching more than just music. But if it were another subject, I don't think I would enjoy it as much, but yeah. Because they want to be there, if not, they quit.

Aaron felt that he really discovered himself in music class:

But I'd say just once I started performing; the atmosphere was different. I enjoyed what I was doing versus sitting in math class, sitting in English class because I hated it. I goofed off, got in trouble, a lot of things. The only places I was really focused, and the best kid in the class was in my music classes.

Julia believes in the intangible learning students receive as a result of classes that provide transformational learning so much that she would lengthen the school day for all students in her school if she could:

I honestly think if we did more music, if everybody had to do music and art—they had two mandatory, music, and art, and PE—I guess that's three—I'm just going to lengthen
that school day—I think we'd be better off. I think our children would come in and be able to settle. And even with these piano kids, it's a time when they're quiet. They aren't interacting with everybody else. They are sitting there doing whatever it is. And as frustrating as two-octave scales can be because your hands aren't doing the same thing at the same time, it is a quiet time that—and I think that's where the movement comes in, too. They kind of lose this because they've had enough—they're past the woodshed, the sectionals, the practice. They know the literature. They know what they're doing. And then, it just blossoms. And you can hear it a lot of times. It just opens up. And those are my goosebumps—as a conductor.

Julia talked about the top academic students in each class being members of the orchestra, something I have found in my classes as well. I asked Julia about identity development in her students, whether she felt that orchestra appealed to them because they were that kind of person, or that orchestra enhanced their understanding of what it took to be that kind of person or both? She replied:

I think it's probably some of both. We're talking about fifth graders, and the way we used to recruit, we had a—the orchestra—, and we had a full orchestra. And we'd play in the cafeteria on the floor, and all the little fourth graders would sit on the floor in front of us. And then, we'd have an audience participation piece. And then, the wind players would come out and stand up in front—or in the middle of them because I like to freak out the teachers that want them to sit still. Music isn't a sitting still deal. If your hair isn't moving, it's not music. And so the kids would come out, and of course, the winds were behind us. And so I had to drag them out in the front, and they would play their instrument, “This is the flute, blah, blah, blah. And this is the violin.” And we'd talk
about the numbers, “You see a lot of string players. It takes that many of them to balance with just one or two flute players. For our band to be on the field, they have to have lots of winds.” And I've had several older students come back, graduates come back and say, “I got in the orchestra because I was sitting on the floor, and that cello player was right there. And that was it.” And they were top players, too. So I think it's—somewhere I'm sure someone's done a study, where different personalities migrate to different instruments.

In addition to attracting and retaining until high school students who may have a stronger work ethic than other students, teachers identified qualities that they felt they could see developing in their students. Leadership, sense of vocation, and purpose are the three aspects of identity development that were mentioned the most by the participants. These are qualities that will serve students well as they transition into adult life.

**Subtheme: leadership.** Earlier, we looked at leading from any chair as a facet of responsibility. Taking leadership as a role is evidenced as students learn to take up that mantle as part of their persona. Aaron spoke about moving from the personal responsibility aspect of leadership to developing the skills necessary to become a leader:

And it makes a lot of my kids frustrated when somebody’s not doing their job. I mean, I have kids on a daily to weekly basis coming and saying, “Hey. So-and-so's not practicing.” And if it's a section leader, I'm like, “Did you mention it to anybody? Did you talk to the kid about it?” If my section leaders come in and say, “Oh, so-and-so, I don't think they’re practicing.” I'm like, “Have you talked to them about it?” “No.” “Okay, well, this is a conversation we're not having yet. You've got to do that.”

Leadership is a big thing we stress in ensemble. I don't do chair placements, I do section
leaders and concertmaster, and they're the only people that have assigned chairs.

Everybody else I pair. Like good—strong, weak, strong, weak, strong, weak.

Continuing on the topic of developing leadership within stand partnership, Aaron said:

Yeah. And with the upperclassmen, it's on them. The first semester I will never fuss or get on to a ninth grader, but their stand partner who will be an upperclassman will get it because—And then after a while, that freshman's like, “I got to do everything right. Otherwise, they're going to give-” because nobody wants that on their conscience. And some people say, “Well, that's kind of tough.” I'm like, “Yeah, but if you're training a dog and somebody, your son or daughter, fails to take the dog out, the dog has an accident, most people are going to fuss at the dog instead of the person that failed to take the dog out.” I said, “That's backwards.” I said, “You can't fuss at somebody who doesn't understand what they're doing.” I said, “You just can't do it.” Plus, you fuss at a puppy, anyway, you need to be slapped, but that's beside the point [laughter].

Aaron is skilled at relating to his students, addressing serious topics in ways that they will understand.

**Subtheme: vocation.** As stated before, it is not the expectation of the orchestra teacher for every student or any student to go into music as their vocation. In orchestra, some do discover a vocation or avocation. Susan remembers a specific student:

I've got a kid who we admitted into [school] back before the district got all involved in our audition process and decided that—anyway. And we let him in because we could see a little something in his eyes. And we knew where he was going to be going to school would just absolutely kill that. So we got him into [school]. And he got an experience on the podium. And he just blossomed. He blossomed. He's now living in London and
conducting the Halle Orchestra. And I mean, he's just doing fabulous things. And it's all because I got out of his way. I stepped aside. And I keep telling him, “I was glad you did because it was growing so much, the program, that I needed another conductor assistant.” And he was just able to step right in. So just because they're playing an instrument which they love to do, true, doesn't mean that's what is going to be their passion. They can find so many other passions from that.

Susan also talked about the importance of not standing in the way of a student as they are developing personal identity and vocation:

As a teacher, and as a private instrument teacher—viola—there have been so many teachers that have told kids, “You can't do this.” I don't understand. And some of our best teachers that we know today have told kids, “You can't do this. This is not your level. You're not good at this. Don't do this.” I had one kid I was teaching privately. And he was taking viola lessons from a symphony member, okay? And it came to me. And I started teaching him. And it was like—yeah, he did things a little differently. Didn't necessarily hold the instrument just like everybody else did. But he played in tune. And he had a good tone. And he was like, “Well, my old teacher told me I couldn't do it.” I'm like, “How dare you tell another human being they can't do something?”

Susan continued by reflecting on the student’s outcome:

That's just so wrong. And that kid ended up—after going to [school] for a year—he ended up at [school] where he graduated with the viola. And then went on to [university] in viola performance. So who was this teacher to tell that kid that they couldn't do that? Just because you don't see it? How dare somebody think that they know that much? And throughout everything, I realized no one holds a corner on the truth in music. No one.
You may think you know everything. But you don't. I may think I know everything. But I don't.

Remembering another student who ended up following a path that Susan did not anticipate, she related this story:

And it brings to mind a student, okay, who was always in the second violin section. And he never made region. I think he made it his senior year or something like that. But he had kind of a clunky hold. And I mean, he was in tune but wasn't the greatest tone or anything. And he did the best he could with what he had. And his senior year he got in trouble a lot with smoking pot and all that stuff. So a lot of people kind of wrote him off. And I just always wanted for the experience to be a good one no matter what I was teaching. Whether it was elementary school music, or orchestra, or whatever, to make it a good experience. And this kid got out of high school, and his best friend is writing songs. And they're traveling everywhere. He's the fiddle player for her band. Who knew [laughter]? This kid would actually be out there doing it for a living. If you had looked at him in my classroom you'd be going, like, “There's no way. He's going to end up taking over his dad's construction company or something like that.” But no, he is out there and playing. I looked at a picture of him. And they're getting some actually really good notice out there.

Each of the participants related in some way the events late lead them to their own sense of vocation. Aaron shared the story of feeling that music was where he was challenged. Carole followed in the footsteps of her legendary teacher. Julia loved to fiddle and got caught up in the classical side of her passion by default. Justin played in an orchestra that gave him many playing opportunities in a variety of exciting settings. Barbara had many opportunities for solos in high
school and learned to play other instruments to fill out the ensemble. The music Barbara played was not appropriate for the level of the group, so Barbara came into her sense of vocation wanting to do things differently than her high school director. Susan recalled the chain of events that lead to her becoming an orchestra teacher:

I come from a long line of preachers and teachers. And I believe that teaching is a calling just like preaching is. And I believe also that there's certain things that you're born with in your genes that have been passed down from family members and family members. So the teaching thing, I think, has been kind of passed down to me. I really had no clue what I was doing. The only reason I got into teaching—I swore I wasn't going to do it—I wanted to know a little bit about all the different instruments in college. So the only way to do that was to get an education degree because you'd take a bassoon class or whatever. And I swore I was never going to teach. And then I went and did my student teaching. And they gave me a doggone job teaching the kids I did my student teaching with. So it's like, “Whoa. Okay. Sure, I'll take the paycheck. I'll go get my own apartment. Sure, [laughter].” So I've never made it a point to be anything in my life. I believe that your life is a river. And as long as you stay within the banks of your river you're doing fine. Sometimes you have to decide to go left, or sometimes you have to go right. You have to traverse the rapids, and the rocks, and all that kind of stuff. But as long as you're in your river and flowing you're doing great. And it's taken me places I never, ever would have expected in my life. Just flow [laughter]. Go here. Go there. I don't know why. I don't know why. I mean, it's led me to this moment, sitting here talking with you. If one thing had been different, everything would have been different. And that's how I get crazy with the children. I go off on a tangent like that.
Vocation is many times a surprise. In heuristic research, the researcher is privileged to share experiences to contribute to the data. My story started with joining my high school orchestra as a pianist but ending as a cellist. I spent all of my spare time in the orchestra room, learning to play any instrument on which I could lay my hands. Admiring my high school orchestra director, I chose to attend the same music school from which she graduated. Twenty-five years after my undergraduate degree was awarded, I took an elementary school job in general music and strings, which ultimately led to teaching high school orchestra. Like Susan stated, “If one thing had been different, everything would have been different.” Many years later I feel the transformational learning I experienced in my high school classroom contributed to this research and to my sense of call.

Subtheme: purpose. Purpose has a part in identity development as students learn that all of their actions and words having meaning. Students learn that they have choices about the impact those actions and words have on themselves and others. Aaron is matter-of-fact in articulating this to his students:

I'm very big on the mentality of what the kids are doing. They need to know why they're staying here after school. They need to know why they're sitting in there working as a quartet. They need to know why they have to put the stands up. They need to know why all our chairs are supposed to be in a certain order. They need to know why their lockers are supposed to be locked. They need to know why they're coming through the door of my classroom every day. That's a big thing that I've really instilled in a lot of these kids is purpose, their sense of purpose, why they are here. And getting all of them to feel like they are a valuable part of the ensemble. It's challenging at times, but it's worked out. And I kid with younger teachers, and I said, “It's a game of survivor like the game on
TV.” I said, “It's not about being better, or smarter, or faster, it's about outlasting people that might not have the same feelings that you have,” I said, “because one thing about kids and parents—they're going to be gone in a few years.” And so you kind of learn to play the game a little bit with certain people because you realize, “Eh, he'll be gone in two years anyway, so no worries. Yeah. Enjoy your time here.”

Susan talked about purpose in this way:

It is a sense of belonging. And a sense of purpose because you're there for a purpose. And everybody, I guess, has different levels of purpose at different times in their lives. But with the conductor there and the teacher there, our purposes all tend to meld together at some point in time. We're there. We're there to make music. We're there to be the best we can be. We're there to listen as much as we can. Whether or not we did that every day—I mean, I always thought that high school was stupid [laughter]. And everything was stupid.

The researcher remarked to Susan, “Just teaching these kids that whatever they do they have to go out and do it with purpose. To go out and do it all the way. And like you were talking about, not being afraid of making the mistakes.” Susan finished her thought, “Exactly. And that's a hard thing to teach these kids because that is so against our nature as human beings. We are so afraid of putting ourselves out there and being different, and making a mistake in front of other people.” The researcher said, “It's a risk.” Susan replied, “It is a risk.” I added, “And vulnerability.” Susan summed it up, “And vulnerable. God, I don't know about you, but I hate being vulnerable [laughter].”

Purpose, risk vulnerability, and putting ourselves on the line helps students to reflect deeply about who they are. All vocations require some degree of risk. Being a member of a
group where students are responsible for one another to put their best foot forward at all times helps students evaluate aspects that make up their essential constitution.

**Obstacles.** Just as Maslow (1962) stated that obstacles of basic needs such as needing food, sleep, or safety might prevent a student from learning, or from attaining higher levels of cognizance, the orchestra director has a different type of need that might need to be satisfied before recognizing transformational learning in their students. Justin, at the time of the interview, had just learned that he would need to find another job for the following year since the district canceled strings education in the county in which he had taught for many years. Carole was battling scheduling conflicts with the demands of teaching in an International Baccalaureate school. Both Justin and Carole were very conversant in the memories of themselves as orchestra students and were able to identify ways in which they experienced belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development in their perceptions. Belongingness was easy for each to talk about as they spoke of their students. Carole and Justin both spoke of ways in which rituals enriched belongingness in their students. Each had built productive relationships with students and their families throughout the years. It seemed that a feeling of loss pervaded their reflections; however when it came to conversations that involved playing in concert with others and the perceptions of transformative experience.

**Summary**

In this heuristic phenomenological study, six interviews gathered accounts of qualities of transformational learning as experienced both as orchestra student and teacher making up the raw data. The researcher read texts of the interviews to garner a sense for the whole. Later all interviews were separated into themes based on the a priori questions and documents based on themes and subthemes were created.
Four themes received the most conversation: belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development. Sixteen subthemes appeared to add illumination to the central themes: appropriate literature, challenge, choice, the expectation of excellence, intentionality, leadership, long-term relationships, mindfulness, movement, purpose, responsibility, ritual and tradition, set-apartness, trust, vocation, and work. The subthemes each appeared as a contributor to the central themes. Belongingness was further amplified by choice, the expectation of excellence, long-term relationships, responsibility, ritual and traditions, and trust. Flow was found to be aided by challenge, appropriate literature, and work. Attunement was related to attributes of movement, mindfulness, intentionality, and set-apartness. Identity development contained facets of leadership, vocation, and purpose. The results of this study revealed that while participants were unfamiliar with the terminology describing qualities of transformational learning, all felt that they had personally experienced these phenomena in their development and were able to define instances of these events in their classes anecdotaly.

Unexpected results included obstacles that were inferred by the researcher to be present as blocks to summarizing a student’s transformational learning experience. These blocks occurred in participants with unsettled job situations. The other unexpected finding was that creativity, in conjunction with flow, did not come up. In the context of the standard performing orchestral ensemble capsuled into a 45-90 minute class time, this conclusion makes sense. Creating, or improvisation and composition, proportionally receive less time in class than performing, responding, and connecting, the other major categories in the National Standards for Music Education (NAfME, 2014).
Chapter 5 discusses the meaning of the results. A summary and discussion of the results are correlated with the literature. Limitations of the study are followed by the implications of the study’s results. Implications for further research and a summary conclude the chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this heuristic phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of high school orchestra teachers to describe perceived qualities of transformational learning as related to climate in the orchestra classroom. Transformational learning and developmental psychology theories were used to code the responses of participants regarding qualities of transformational learning that were and are present in their experiences as both orchestra students and teachers. Participants in the study shared indelible memories that led to personal growth in themselves and in their students in ways that are not usually used to measure classroom climate in a required course environment. This study was important because it links qualities that make the high school orchestra classroom a comfortable place for students to congregate with transformational learning that leads to the types of personal development that many students are unable to articulate until long after the high school years have passed. The reflective memories of the participants have the potential to lead to a different type of classroom environment evaluation that clues the emerging adult to the types of experiences that foster self-actualization. This chapter presents a summary of the results; a discussion of the results in relation to the literature; limitations of the study; implications of the results for practice, policy, and theory; recommendations for further research; and a conclusion.

Summary of the Results

Based on the results of the study the researcher was able to identify qualities of transformational learning that affect climate perceptions in the orchestra classroom through the recalled experiences of experienced string orchestra teachers as both student and teacher. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) heuristic phenomenology was used by “disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosure from others—a response to the tacit dimension within oneself
sparks a similar call from others” (p. 50). Using heuristic inquiry allowed the researcher to act as co-participant to assist teachers in pulling from experiences with several 4-year cycles of teaching students as well as recalling the essences of transformational learning from their personal student experience.

In this heuristic phenomenological study, the researcher recruited and interviewed six experienced music educators who serve in public school secondary orchestral music settings in South Carolina. Each of the educator's years of experience range from 10 years in the classroom to well over 30 years of dedicated service. The questions used in the interviews acted to stimulate responses from the participants and to elicit the identification of additional qualities of transformational learning. Clarification of the central research question appeared in subsequent research questions suggested by the body of literature on transformational learning:

Central RQ: How do the qualities of transformational learning impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ2: How do conditions of flow and creativity as described by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) affect climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ3: How does the development of identity (Eaton, 2013; Maslow, 1962; Ståhlhammar, 2006), both musical and personal, impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ4: How do musicological events (Morrison, 2001; Nettl, 1995), such as ritual and tradition, influence climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ5: How do belongingness and connection (Hallowell, 2011; Parker, 2016: Rzonsa, 2016; Seligman, 2011) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?
RQ6: How does attunement (Kossak, 2008) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

RQ7: What other qualities impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom?

Based on the essence of the lived experience of these orchestral music educators, the researcher has begun to fill in gaps in the literature and potentially assist other music educators in recognizing qualities of positive classroom climate as transformational learning.

The framework of this research contains the marriage of two different theories, identification of constituents of classroom climate in an orchestra classroom, and detection of transformational learning in the same setting. This juncture paints a chicken or the egg quandary.

Scenario 1: Students congregate in the orchestra room because of music, friends, and fun, thus opening themselves to transformational learning experiences in the orchestra class. Scenario 2: Students experiencing transformational learning in the orchestra class find themselves open to gathering in the orchestra room building appreciation of music, friends, and fun. It is not within the scope of this research to answer the question of which came first, but rather to use climate as a contextual clue for identification of transformational learning in the orchestra class.

An exploration of classroom climate assessment bore no results in the arts field. Adderly et al. (2003) opened the door to this field by recognizing the importance of social climate in musical ensembles with a study that investigates the motivation of high school music students to treat the classroom as a home away from home. Adderly et al., cited in 11 peer-reviewed journals and 33 dissertations, prompted literature that focuses on ensemble retention rather than identification of qualities of classroom climate. Fraser (1998) compiled a listing of instruments designed to evaluate classroom climate primarily based on the work of Moos (1979) which
categorized investigations into three dimensions based on relationships, personal growth, and systems maintenance. Subsets of these dimensions, such as teacher support, task orientation, and differentiation, all teacher-supplied elements, did not translate into the transformational experience. Recent research bemoans these instruments for not addressing a more mature student population and for focus on individual results rather than the corporate result, calling for a different type of evaluation of climates. “In doing so, it is hoped that the field will become refined over time to focus on the psychosocial constructs that are more likely to strongly affect, and not just predict, student learning outcomes” (Alansari & Rubie-Davies, 2019, p. 19). This research may be a predictor that others are seeking evaluation tools that will examine psychosocial phenomena such as transformational learning about student-perceived growth.

An exploration of transformative learning uncovered three types of literature. First, transformational learning, as described by Yacek (2017) encompassing conversion, overcoming, discovery, and initiation. Second, are writings of the positive psychologists, Csikszentmihalyi, Hollowell, Robinson, and Seligman. Third, are the discoveries of a single trait in a musical context; most notably those of musician-scholars. The researcher found no instance of a composite of these ideas.

The present study extended the limited amount of previous research by seeking to gather these ideas in one research by compiling the essence of experience shared by the participants of this study. The researcher discovered four main themes: belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development, which constitute deeply personal transformational learning experiences in the course of the study. Sixteen subthemes or practicing components elucidated the main themes as skills developed as a result of the transformational element or strategies that the participant believes precipitates transformational learning.
Discussion of the Results

The results of this study indicated that while participants were unfamiliar with the concept of transformational learning, they were quite familiar with the individual constituents represented in the interview questions. Participants were able to provide detailed descriptions of personal experiences both as a student and as a teacher, as well as observations to their students. The results supported the premise that insight on transformative learning events requires the maturity of reflective processing. However, the participants could relate to having had these experiences in their high school orchestra. The participants were able to separate four distinct qualities of transformational learning from those strategies or events that facilitated those experiences, as well as providing new inspiration to the topic. Interestingly, the order questions of the questioned posed did not correspond to a resultant hierarchy that emerged.

Central RQ: How do the qualities of transformational learning impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? Participants were best able to respond to the central research question after responding to the six subqueries dealing with individual qualities of transformations learning. The overall responses indicated that something special happens when a group of students comes together to make music. The climate becomes palpable when artistry occurs, spiritual and other-worldly were two descriptive terms. The most poignant response at the close of an interview was with Julia when I asked, “So do you think there is anything about this transformational learning thing that happens in orchestra?” She replied with this piece of evidence: “Yeah. Oh, I do. Because of their happy bodies when they walk out of there . . . and there's something in there that goes on neurologically.”

RQ2: How do conditions of flow and creativity as described by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) affect climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? Creativity did not come up
during the interviews. The researcher felt this was because of the limited time most orchestra directors face in terms of teaching technique, theory, history, and literature. Composition and improvisation are more individualized and less about the corporate orchestra experience, thus lending themselves less to the climate of the orchestra class.

Flow, however, was covered in detail along with descriptors of personal and class incidents, as well as discussion of facets of flow. Participants used terms such as wonderment, feeling goosebumps, and loss of sense of time in their recollections of experiencing flow. While speaking of student flow, participants recounted times when the orchestra members were surprised by the ringing of the class change bell or stated they did not even remember going into the sightreading room after an exceptional concert performance assessment event. Teachers were generous in offering practice components they felt lead to flow.

Challenge, choosing developmentally appropriate literature, and emphasizing the importance of work were critical to achieving flow from the teacher's point of view. Aaron remembered a time when he sought out an extra challenge in high school by going through his director's files and selecting difficult music to practice. Most felt that the music selected must contain some elements that the students needed to strive to complete. Boring, easy music did not stimulate flow. The player needed to work to reach the demands of the chosen music. Directors also felt that the students most likely experienced flow before being an orchestra member through watching television, social media, and video games. However, participants felt that flow in the orchestra was likely the first time students experienced it out of an event of their creation.

RQ3: How does the development of identity (Eaton, 2013; Maslow, 1962; Ståhlhammar, 2006), both musical and personal, impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? Identity, and later, self-actualization, as shared by the participants, comes as a result
of realizations through the orchestra experience of what is vital to the student. Each player must decide how hard they are capable of or willing to work. Also, they must determine if it is essential to accomplish that work with that specific group of individuals. These decisions impact choices the students will make as they later pursue vocations and avocations.

Musical identity, other than that of being a string instrument musician, did not come into play during the interviews. Perhaps this was because of the homogeneous make-up of the class, and the onus placed upon the teachers to introduce students to the wide variety of string genres. Julia did mention fiddling within the context of her interview, but no other participant focused upon the development of a musicological identity.

The practicing components the teachers discussed regarding identity development were leadership, vocation, and purpose. The orchestra is a prime place to determine if there is an interest in developing leadership skills. Some students are interested in conducting, leading sectional rehearsals, or planning social events. Many are interested in being a non-leading participant. The orchestra teachers participating in this study universally felt that they teach human beings, not music, or how to play a stringed instrument. These experienced educators are surprised when a student chooses to pursue music and follow student's accomplishments into adulthood, whatever their chosen aspirations comprise. Orchestra is also a prime place to examine purpose, or why. Why are things a specific way? Susan summed up purpose, “We're there. We're there to make music. We're there to be the best we can be.” The emerging adults are busy defining their future directions by weighing the possibilities, the whys.

RQ4: How do musicological events (Morrison, 2001; Nettl, 1995), such as ritual and tradition, influence climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? Events such as tradition and ritual are strategies and motivators rather than qualities of transformational
learning. Many times tradition and ritual are recruiting tools turning into retention tools. Later in life, they are the stuff that makes indelible memories. Tradition may take the form of an annual trip that students look forward to and tell stories about all year. A particular piece of music may close out the last concert of the year, watching the same movie on the bus to concert festival every year, picking chamber music to play all over town during the holiday season, or any treasured event that bears repeating may make up a tradition. A ritual may be as simple as beginning the class the same way each day to signify readiness to learn. The chorus teacher at the researcher’s school ends each rehearsal with a responsorial Aristotle quotation, the teacher starts, “We are are what we repeatedly do,” the students respond, “Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.” A ritual may occur with more regularity than a tradition, but signals a call to attention of some sort. Both tradition and ritual may precipitate or be a part of transformational learning but are a strategy rather than the essence of the experience.

RQ5: How do belongingness and connection (Hallowell, 2011; Parker, 2016; Rzonsa, 2016; Seligman, 2011) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? Belongingness is the constituent that appeared in concert with every other quality brought up by the participants. Aaron quickly seized upon the fact that other transformational qualities such as flow and attunement do not occur without belongingness due to the foundation required to put oneself out there to become vulnerable and accept risk. This basis that the orchestra builds is the primary difference between the performing ensemble and other curricular subjects.

The practicing components in belonging are the building blocks that lead the student to select orchestra and remain enrolled throughout high school. The extended term of longtime relationships between teacher and students, and students with other students, ranging from four to seven years is outside of the norm of other classes. Building trust within these relationships is
integral to the growth of belongingness. Also unique to the performing ensemble is the component of the expectation for excellence. The continuous striving for a better product corporately builds a bond that does not regularly exist in mainstream core classes. Responsibility to one's ensemble grows as students learn to care for the room, mentor incoming members, and to lead from any chair. Students demonstrate choice as they choose to be present physically and to use class time well.

RQ6: How does attunement (Kossak, 2008) impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? The moment when belongingness and flow collide with an intensification of awareness of rhythm, body, and mind is to be attuned. The exhilaration of performance in attunement is like no other. Julia recalls her students walking out of a performance exclaiming, “We beasted that!” The researcher will never forget a performance in which the entire ensemble was moving as one with the director before the first note was even played and maintained the attunement with palpable, breathless tension. To know that one is capable of such is genuinely transformational.

Participants added practicing components of movement, mindfulness, intentionality, and set-apartness to the quality of attunement. In music, the body betrays where the mind strays. If the orchestra is not moving as one, they are not thinking, feeling, and interpreting as one. In orchestra, the bow is the ultimate visual gauge of mental unification that wind players do not share as a commonality. However, moving as one is a physical indicator of attunement. Mindfulness and intentionality both imply the ability to bring about a philosophical, psychological experience. Both flow and attunement may be brought about through mindfulness and intentionality, although flow is an individual experience whereas attunement is a corporate
one. Set-apartness differentiates itself from belongingness as it carries an expectation of unity of experience. Kossak (2008) wrote in a dissertation about attunement amongst jazz musicians:

That freedom,
When I am really fully playing,
I'm not thinking,
There is a shift there that happens
and it's really a bodily shift,
Frontal lobe,
the guard,
fluid.
There's an inner change,
Everything flowing,
That's when a shift can occur.
When I'm letting go of outcome,
Letting go.
My challenge is to not hesitate,
and take risks,
and do certain things,
Especially in my work.
Playing in this way,
with anything,
Strengthens the ability to move,
And flow,
and take risks,
and then inspire that in other people.
It's rhythm,
and rates,
and ebbs,
and flows,
and waves,
Magical sounds,
Communicating.

I've got to be in the moment.

I think it informs relationships.

I like those moments.²

RQ7: What other qualities impact climate perceptions in the high school orchestra classroom? The participants were able to assist the researcher in differentiating between the four

² (see Footnote 1)
main qualities of transformational learning and contributed the sixteen subthemes or practicing components in that belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development/self-actualization are the essences of the experiences. The subthemes describe anecdotally what the essences look like and clarify their existence. Although the research questions took a prescribed order consistent with the IRB (Internal Review Board), the data hierarchically arranged itself.

![Hierarchy of qualities of transformational learning](image)

*Figure 1. Hierarchy of qualities of transformational learning.*

**Practical Implications**

Conversations with the participants as well as other orchestra teachers and other teachers of performance-based art indicate their familiarity with the essence of these experiences.

Optimization of the classroom climate through recognition of these has not been a consideration.

Consideration of the qualities as being indicative of transformational learning seems to be a next-step opportunity for teachers.
Obstacles

Obstacles to any of these transformational events, qualities, or experiences were not brought up specifically by any of the participants. Two individuals who were experiencing work transitions during the time of the interviews were able to recall the essences clearly from their days in the high school orchestra. However, each was not able to offer recollections past belongingness in their current situations. Their position caused the researcher to consider a hierarchy even though many times the other four participants recalled any of the other qualities as occurring in concert with another.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The focus of this study was to identify the qualities of transformational learning that are present in the high school orchestra classroom. This question arose from the observation that many orchestra students feel more comfortable in the orchestra room than in other classrooms in the school. A study of classroom environment evaluation tools indicated that none of the characteristics named in these instruments other than the potential for forming relationships seemed to reflect the music-specific events that contribute to student growth (Fraser, 1998). A continuation of a study based on Adderly et al. (2003) seemed more related to this researcher’s personal experience as a high school orchestra musician. While the Adderly et al.’s study focused primarily on the social domain of student experience, it noted that students are “intellectually, psychologically, emotionally, socially, and musically nurtured by membership in performing ensembles” (p. 204). It is the intellectual, psychological, emotional, and musical aspects of the class experience in the high school ensemble that is the foci of this study.

The emerging educator learns of Maslow’s (1962, 1970) hierarchy of needs and realizes that the fulfillment of basic physiological and safety requirements is essential to a student’s
ability to open themselves to learn. What then? In many core-subject classrooms, the answers to how to meet learners needs exist in the annuls of developing positive classroom environment as an aid to facilitate learning as evidenced by the scores of evaluation tools such as Allodi (2010) using criteria such as: creativity, stimulation, achievement, efficacy, safety, control, helpfulness, participation, responsibility, and influence.

The literature supports the individual characteristics of transformational learning in the music classroom detailed in this study. Rzonsa (2016) and Parker (2016) each described the single phenomena of belongingness in musical ensembles. Studies of flow in the music classroom are the topic of studies by Custodero (2002, 2005), and Roche (2018). The phenomena of attunement in music received study by D’Ausilio et al. (2012), Kossack (2008), Laresen (2016), and Roholt (2014). Identity development and self-actualization in the orchestra are topics explored by Eaton (2013) and Lewis (2016). These four qualities of transformational learning in music do not appear in concert in the literature. This study contributes to the research because it contains rich and descriptives discussions of the participant's recollections of these events.

Transformational learning as a theory began before it was named such. Maslow (1970a) asked, “How do people learn to be wise, mature, kind, to have good taste, to be inventive, to have good character, to be able to fit themselves into a new situation, to know the beautiful and the genuine, i.e., intrinsic rather than extrinsic learning” (p. 281)? Both Maslow and Mezirow (1991) posited that life-changing events such as falling in love, death, pain, or success are the types of events that bring on the insight that one may call transformational. Maslow was already using the term positive in conjunction with psychology. As positive psychology began to grow as a topic with additions to the literature by Czentmihalyi (1990, 2004, 2013, 2014a, 2014b), Hollowell (2011), Seligman (2011), and others; Maslow (1970b) had already added two
categories cognitive needs and aesthetic needs, to his hierarchy that contribute to the concept of learning by delight. Maslow (1979a) is quick to point out that his stages are not exclusive of one another. One may experience a flux between them or simultaneous occurrences.

![Hierarchy of needs](image)

*Figure 2. Hierarchy of needs.*

The addition of cognitive needs and aesthetic needs made a more direct correlation possible between Maslow’s (1979a) hierarchy and those identified by this study. Figure 2 shows the basic needs outlined by Maslow. Table 4 however, includes the practicing components of both Maslow’s theory and those qualities identified as transformational learning in the orchestra classroom. The subthemes or practicing components alignment in both configurations.
Table 4

A Comparison of the Hierarchies of Needs versus Transformational Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practicing Component</th>
<th>Needs-Based Themes (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b)</th>
<th>Transformational Themes</th>
<th>Practicing Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Air</td>
<td>Physiological Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Food</td>
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<td>• Drink</td>
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<td>• Shelter</td>
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<td>• Warmth</td>
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<td>• Sleep</td>
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<td>• Protection</td>
<td>Safety Needs</td>
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<td>• Security</td>
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<td>• Order</td>
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<td>• Law</td>
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<td>• Limits</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stability</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Family</td>
<td>Belongingness and Love</td>
<td>Belongingness and Love</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Affection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Achievement</td>
<td>Esteem Needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Status</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Long-term relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expectation of excellence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Responsibility</td>
<td>o Mentoring</td>
<td>o Leading from any chair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Leading</td>
<td>o Choosing to be present</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Choosing how to use class time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tradition and ritual</td>
<td>o Tradition</td>
<td>o Ritual</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practicing Component</th>
<th>Needs-Based Themes (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b)</th>
<th>Transformational Themes</th>
<th>Practicing Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge</td>
<td>Cognitive Needs</td>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>• Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Appropriate literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Self-awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Work</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Movement</td>
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<td>• Mindfulness</td>
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<td>• Intentionality</td>
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<td>• Set-apartness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Beauty</td>
<td>Aesthetic Needs</td>
<td>Attunement</td>
<td>• Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Balance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Appropriate literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Form</td>
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<td>• Work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Set-apartness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personal growth</td>
<td>Self-actualization</td>
<td>Identity Development/ self-actualization</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
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<td>• Self-fulfillment</td>
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<td>• Vocation</td>
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<td>• Purpose</td>
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</table>

The findings in this study indicate that one may also experience belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development/self-actualization similarly, in any combination. What then differentiates Maslow’s fulfillment of needs from qualities of transformational learning? The four qualities shared by participants of this study describe experiences that recur in the orchestra classroom. Earlier, the researcher shared descriptions involving intense physical and psychological reactions shared by the participants. They were pleasurable, memorable, and the person who experiences the qualities of transformational learning desires to repeat them and to share them with others. This desire may account for the draw to the location and company that share those experiences.
The results relate to the community of practice by creating a new awareness of what happens when people play music together. Musicians that this researcher casually speaks to understand and have experienced these events, however, may not have articulated how the events and associated feelings manifest. Awareness of these qualities helps the teacher provide an atmosphere in which the making of music transcends all other expectations. A framework of belonging, flow, attunement, and self-actualization provides a roadmap where the student exists in a climate that is enveloped by the music.

The results relate to the community of scholars by providing a connection between single phenomena that other researchers have explored. Early writings on the topic of transformational learning warn of disruptions that may be the catalyst for transformational learning to occur. Precipitants such as death, loss of a relationship, or failure in an endeavor do not seem to be the only way to achieve personal growth. Positive experiences in this study appear to carry an impetus toward personal growth as well.

Limitations

The outcomes of this heuristic phenomenological study were limited to several factors. First, the phenomenological nature of this study limits the generalization of the study beyond the context in which the study was performed but allowed for the transferability of the findings. Second, because the researcher served as a full-time teacher during the data collection period, limitations included a confined geographic area. Participants were all teachers in South Carolina high schools and may have some regional predisposition. To reduce the effect of idiomatic results, participants were of varied genders, ages, and races. A study conducted with an increased geographic range would be of value to determine if the results of this study were geographically limited.
Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

Heuristic phenomenological methods revealed that all participants had similar experiences both as students, then later as teachers. One of the critical components of transformational learning is the communicative aspect in which sharing clarifies and codifies an experience, ascribing meaning to it (Mezirow, 1991). The collective experiences musicians have but do not commonly speak about are those discovered in this study. Intentional inclusion of these facets of transformational learning in the standard pedagogy of high school string music could enhance the corporate experience of orchestra students contributing to a positive classroom climate. Questioning as a practice is a way to check student experience. It is a way to draw attention to phenomena such as flow and attunement. Based on the experience of participants recognition of flow and attunement came when the communitative aspect of transformational learning as outlined by Mezirow (1991) was practiced. Questions such as: “What did you feel when you played that passage?”; “Was it a physical sensation?”; and “Did you sense others around you during this time?” can bring clarification to the transformational learner. Celebration of these qualities of transformational learning puts a name to the experience for further replication.

Implications of the results for policy. In-service professional development on the qualities of transformational learning in the orchestra classroom is a way for teachers to develop a vocabulary to describe and inform others of the phenomena that naturally takes place a one experiences artistry through playing. Learning through delight is a topic many teachers and students would welcome in their classroom experiences. While there is no way to force these phenomena, these in-service presentations would call attention to them as they occur.
Implications of the results for theory. While belonging was an understandable beginning for a study of why high school orchestra students chose to spend their time in the orchestra room, it was not the intention of this study to find parallels to Maslow’s (1970a) hierarchy of needs. However, when many of the practicing components began to appear in coding an alignment began to take shape. The peculiarly musical aspects that are present in the results differ from those of Maslow in that there is a degree of intentionality to replicate these experiences to create artistry in performance. While one may experience flow while working on a complicated mathematical problem, it is not the job of the mathematician to replicate that experience in order to calculate the answer accurately. It is not ever the goal of the mathematician to solve the problem with others using precisely the same steps at precisely the same time while coordinating even the flourishes of the pencil to complete the task. However, ensemble members must experience flow and attunement while drawing on internal resources to pull these resources forward. This experience is the point at which Maslow’s hierarchy becomes somewhat passive while the musician actively practices the results of transformational learning. Upon further research, the theory behind this study may be transferrable to all performing arts, or other temporal pursuits.

Recommendations for Further Research

Following are the recommendations for further research:

- The research should be replicated within an expanded geographic area.
- The research should be replicated using other types of performing groups: dance, drama, band, or choir.
- The research should be replicated using professional artists.
• The research should be replicated in other learning environments to determine if the temporal quality of the pursuit is necessary to experience these types of transformational learning experiences.

• Subsequent studies should be quantitative to determine in which groups this type of learning is found.

• The research should be replicated with students to determine an age factor involved in this type of transformational learning.

• Learning climate inventories using constituents of transformational learning in a high school orchestra classroom should be developed and tested.

Conclusion

The purpose of this heuristic phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of high school orchestra directors, both during their high school years and teaching years, regarding qualities of transformational learning and how they contribute to the climate of the orchestra classroom. Participants entered the study unsure of the definition of transformative learning, but detailed in their recollections stories and anecdotes relating to each of the subsections of questioning: belongingness, flow, attunement, and identity development/self-actualization. Although in the past, they had not articulated the feelings engendered by these experiences, at the end of interviews, they each realized that this was how musicians learn and participate in transformation. In the heuristic style, interviews took a conversational tone and ended when they had drawn to a natural conclusion. Each regaled this researcher with stories of the past and present, sharing events they felt helped them arrive at the four qualities of transformational learning. These added to the practicing components that contributed to the transformational event.
Although this researcher arrived at a structure that lent itself to Maslow (1970) in verbiage, there was a marked difference in the passivity of the Maslow hierarchy versus active component of the transformational qualities in the high school orchestra classroom. At the beginning of this study, the researcher conjectured that high school students would answer the question about why they chose to hang out in the orchestra room by listing, “friends, fun, and music.” After completion of this study, the researcher believes that the real answer is, “I belong here, and when I play music with these people, it is magical. I like who I am when we do this together.”
References


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Appendix A: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.
Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Linda Foy Versprille

Digital Signature

Linda Foy Versprille

Name (Typed)

10/3/19

Date
Appendix B: Permission to Reprint

Hi Linda: Thanks so much for contacting me. And yes please feel free to use whatever you need from my dissertation research. I think this email can suffice for permission. I’ll look forward to reading your work once it is on ProQuest.

Best,
Mitchell

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From: Linda Versprille <Verspril@bcdschools.net>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 3:26 PM
To: Kossak, Mitchell <mkossak@lesley.edu>
Subject: permission for use of your material in my dissertation

Dr. Kossak,
I am writing for permission to use an excerpt of your poetry (creative synthesis) from your dissertation. My work is titled: Qualities of Transformational Learning in the High School Orchestra Classroom: A Heuristic Study. In my work I set up a framework of four qualities, belongingness, flow, attunement, and self-actualization that students may experience (but may not yet be able to articulate) that leads to transformational learning experiences.

I used the following excerpt both in the dedication to those who play and sing, and learn through delight.

1
That freedom,
When I am really fully playing,
I’m not thinking,
There is a shift there that happens
and it’s really a bodily shift,
Frontal lobe,
the guard,
fluid.
There’s an inner change,
Everything flowing,
That’s when a shift can occur.
When I’m letting go of outcome,
Letting go.
My challenge is to not hesitate,
and take risks,
and do certain things,
Especially in my work.
Playing in this way,
with anything,
Strengthens the ability to move,
And flow,
and take risks,
and then inspire that in other people.
It’s rhythm,
and rates,
and ebbs,
and flows,
and waves,
Magical sounds,
Communicating.

I’ve got to be in the moment.

I think it informs relationships.

I like those moments.

(Kossak, 2008 p. 124)

I additionally use the excerpt in the section that addresses attunement. I am ready to submit to ProQuest, and the director of the program at Concordia University-Portland felt that due to the extensive and creative nature of your work, that I should obtain your permission.

Is there a form that is normally used for this, or is a letter from you sufficient? Please advise me if I have your permission, or if you would like to place any restrictions on the use of your work.

Dr. Linda Versprille, Ed.D., NBCT