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THE EXPLORATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING LIFE OF TWO EXEMPLARY CHORAL TEACHERS: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

By

James David Borst

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Music

2002

ABSTRACT

THE EXPLORATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING LIFE OF TWO EXEMPLARY CHORAL MUSIC TEACHERS: A COMPARATIVE CASE-STUDY

By

James David Borst

The purpose of this study was to explore, determine, and describe choral teacher attributes as they relate to the process of choral learning in two exemplary high school choral programs. Qualitative research methods were used to investigate the actions of the teacher as perceived by the researcher and as viewed through the lens of students, parents, and administrators.

Two choral teachers and their high school choral programs of known repute in the state of Michigan participated in the study by being observed, interviewed, and portrayed with rich and thick description. Coding and categorization of field notes and interviews with teachers, students, administrators, and parents revealed five categorical themes: (a) personal professionalism, (b) class climate, (c) personal relationships, (d) discipline strategies, and (e) teaching strategies. Themes are described through two single case descriptions and cross-case analysis.

Results from cross-case analysis of emerging themes suggested that effective choral teaching is multi-dimensional, paralleling previous research on choral teacher attributes. Issues of validity and transferability are discussed, and implications for choral music teacher education and research are included.

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To My Parents

Joy Elizabeth Vandertill Borst

John William Borst

both teachers and lovers of music

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge my dissertation committee with sincere gratitude and fondness:

To Dr. Colleen Conway, chair
...for her interest in me as a researcher, her patience as I learned, her faith in me as a student, and her passion for teaching. Her scholarly advising and personal friendship was the driving force behind this study. This project was born the minute I enrolled in the first class she taught at Michigan State University.

To Dr. Albert LeBlanc
...for his never-ending professional scholarship and vast knowledge of empirical research.

To Dr. Jonathan Reed
...for his passion of the choral art, and his love of life and friendship, all themes that emerged in this study.

To Dr. Cynthia Taggart
...for her brilliant thinking and teaching abilities. I learned a life-time of knowledge from her.

I acknowledge my family with profound love:

To Benjamin and Abigail who prevailed in my absence and helped our family to function in a healthy manner all the way through.

To Joan, a respected scholar in her own right, who encouraged so patiently and positively through the entire process. Her friendship and love remain my pillars of strength. I could not have completed this degree without her.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The achievement of excellence in choral music education is a source of continuous scholarship. Many choral scholars have written about techniques and methods of choral teaching (Decker and Herford, 1973; Ehmann and Haasemann, 1981; Haasemann and Jordan, 1991; Heffernan, 1982; Jordan, 1996; Lamb, 1979; Phillips, 1992). However, only a few sources describe teacher's personal qualities (Rao, 1987; Pfautsch, 1973; Heffernan, 1982; Fowler, 1987). An imbalance exists between the scholarship recommending effective choral teacher behavior and research describing effective personal teacher qualities.

Some scholars of choral music have written about personal qualities of choral conductors in books and articles, explaining that choral teachers have much influence over the outcomes of singing. Rao (1987) writes about the characteristics needed for effective choral teaching. She quotes Bruner as describing a formula for excellent teaching: "Children will grow and develop if the teacher is intelligent; if the teacher respects the growing child; if the teacher is courteous enough to translate material into logical forms; and if the teacher challenges the child to advance, then it is possible to introduce him at any early age to the ideas and styles that in later life make an educated person" (p. 6). The author suggests that the potential for a child's development is directly related to the artistic capabilities of the teacher.

Pfautsch (1973) asserts that the success of any choir depends on the role the conductor assumes, "his self-image as a person, as a musician, and as a conductor, his attitude toward the group and its purpose, his personal relationship with the individual singers, and his approach to the rehearsal" (p. 70). He continues to say that while the conductor is the primary leader of the ensemble, it is the interaction of the conductor and

singer that determines "group morale, collective musical and technical discipline, and artistic refinement and growth" (p. 70). He concludes that this interaction affects the quality of the group and that many choral conductors have difficulty understanding exactly what conductor leadership involves (p. 71).

Heffernan (1982) writes about the personal quality of leadership for choral conductors and says "By the very nature of the occupation, a conductor must be a leader of people" (p. 15). This author further suggests that it is the combination of technical proficiency and personal factors that determines one's success or failure as a leader of choral ensembles. He states that "These items are fully as important as the music credentials; they all work together, and the absence of any one will eventually become painfully apparent" (p. 15). Swan (1987) agrees when describing a "personal equation" in which "thought and imagination and talent of conductor and singer are able to alter each aspect of group singing, including vocal and interpretive technique" (p. 122). Swan (1987) suggests:

> in these days when we are very much aware of the emphasis upon the individual man and woman, boy or girl -when the study of personality for two decades has been at the very center of psychological research -when the techniques of communication absorb the interest of the business, artistic and professional worlds -then there must be something here of value for our own leadership to ponder. Perhaps this is to be the next sphere of activity for the choral world (p. 122).

While these aforementioned authors address the personal issues of choral teaching, their writing is not research-based. Music education researchers have identified choral teacher attributes that help to define the art of effective teaching in the choral classroom. Studies concerning assessment of choral teacher behavior typically examine music

rehearsals. Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) suggest that there are two main goals of research in music rehearsals: (1) to identify and define observable behaviors of music teaching and learning, and (2) determine the function of those behaviors in producing excellence in music performance (p. 469). These researchers point out that there is an abundance of research literature that contributes to the identification and definition of observable behaviors, but there is less literature regarding how those behaviors function to produce better attentiveness, attitude, and performance (p. 469). Davis (1998) explains that while it seems high achievement in performance-oriented music classes is a natural result of effective teaching, many music teachers continue to find achieving excellence an intangible endeavor. Thus, there is a need for systematic investigation regarding the efficacy of teacher personality and its influence on choral curriculum delivery.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore, describe, and determine choral teacher attributes and actions as they relate to the ensemble learning process and performance achievement in two exemplary Michigan high school choral programs. The following research questions guided the inquiry: (a) Are there distinctive teacher personality traits in these exemplary teachers that appear to influence excellence in performance? (b) What personal teaching techniques, strategies, and other teacher actions are observed in these settings that help to attain excellence in performance (c) What are student perceptions of the exemplary teacher? and (d) What other factors are perceived by the researcher, parents, and administrators that influence excellent choral teaching and learning?

Theoretical Orientation and Personal Perspective

The lens through which I viewed this study included a personal conviction to discover for myself those personal qualities that enhance effective choral teaching. I desired to explore, describe, and interpret the choral teaching world as I view it, and then make

assertions from my reflections of effective choral teaching. Stake (1995) says that interpretation is the foremost characteristic of qualitative study and that findings are not so much "findings" but "assertions" made by the researcher. He says, "Given intense interaction of the researcher with persons in the field and elsewhere, given a constructivist orientation to knowledge, given the attention to participant intentionality and sense of self, however descriptive the report, the researcher ultimately comes to offer a personal view" (p. 42). Therefore, the interpretations and subsequent assertions I make regarding the phenomena I observed in the choral settings come from my own experience as a choral professional.

My world view as a professional vocal music teacher greatly influenced how I investigated my research questions. During 17 years of teaching vocal music, I encountered teaching situations that fostered personal growth and offered challenges for myself as a teacher. This included making mistakes in my daily teaching life and learning from those mistakes. It also included supervising several student teachers in my career, during which time I honed my own teaching skills and discovered what works and what does not. By trial and error teaching, my personal growth experiences molded what are now my professional perspectives as a vocal music educator. These perspectives assisted this investigation by enriching and fortifying the lens through which I looked at the research questions.

One of my professional perspectives for vocal music teaching includes being open-minded, that is, accepting students for who they are as individuals. Through my teaching experiences, my understanding of students' personal needs has increased as I have learned to see students as individual young persons. I observed my teacher actions from outside of myself and identified biases and discrepancies that prevented me from fully empathizing with the young music learner. I have grown to be considerate and responsive to my

students by attempting to place myself in their situations and participating in their paradigms of thinking. In the context of this research, I gained insight towards excellence in teaching and learning by getting close to each choral setting and observing the research participants in an open-minded manner. I participated first-hand in the choral classroom culture in each setting, and explored and discovered the essence of what goes on there. I attempted to do this by observing objectively and experiencing subjectively.

I have learned to tolerate change as a constant in education, and this has helped me to understand its expansive nature. I have developed a sense of progressiveness that invites change and innovation. I enjoy problems that I encounter, as they force me to find creative solutions. I value the process of change, because it cultivates my thinking about who I am as a teacher, to what extent I influence the people in my life, and how they influence me. Adapting to change is an ongoing journey and involves taking risks. My skills of looking at the world from a broad perspective that involves inevitable change aided how I looked at the school settings and interpreted the phenomena that I experienced there. While observing these professionals, I reflected on my own selfhood (Parker, 1998) as a teacher. I sensed a change within myself. I observed that what works for one educator in a specific setting may not work for educators in other settings. Fullan (1993) states that "productive change is the constant search for understanding, knowing there is no ultimate answer" (p. 20). I took steps to not obstruct the process of elucidating different prototypes of choral teaching with my own teaching paradigms.

Another professional perspective I developed through my teaching experience is moral purpose, or a teacher conscience, in which I am responsible for becoming intimately aware of my student's learning needs. I enjoy making a difference in the lives of my students, and my personal teaching style centers around my inner yearning for them to experience excellence. I have grown to fully understand the importance of educating people

to the best of my ability. Through this personal conviction, I have internalized the importance of the moral obligation educators must possess to impart knowledge to its fullest capacity. Fullan (1993) describes moral purpose as a teacher's ability to take responsibility for making a difference in student's lives far beyond the day-to-day routine of teaching. "It must be seen that one cannot make a difference at the interpersonal level unless the problem and solution are enlarged to encompass the conditions that surround teaching and the skills and actions that would be needed to make a difference" (p.11). I was motivated to investigate personal teacher qualities from a broad view, encompassing the conditions that promote great choral teaching. I desired to apply what I found to my own teaching and continue to learn how to make a difference in people's lives as an excellent teacher.

Through close interaction with my students and colleagues over time, I have developed my own theories about effective choral instruction. My theoretical framework emerged naturally from maturation and experience. I now possess specialized qualities that enhance my sensitivity towards the inner workings of vocal music instruction in the public schools. These qualities empower me to interpret the symbolic language of any given choral setting. This theoretical framework allowed me to give meaning to the information I collected and studied.

Qualitative methodology contains several traditional orientations from which knowledge is gained. This study initiated exploration and description of certain phenomena in the choral classroom through three of these orientations: phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and hermeneutics.

First, this investigation was oriented toward a phenomenological perspective. I approached the study with a keen awareness of what was happening at any given moment. I richly describe from my observation phenomena that are meaningful for those involved.

The purpose of this perspective is to articulate the sentient properties of reality in the settings, not to explain reality through empirical data that may be independent of human experience. This perspective fosters the discovery of the profound nature of experience and tells the story of what is. Bowman (1998) states that, through adherence to a phenomenological method of looking at the world, "people can be brought face to face with the innermost essences of things" (p.255). It is the essence of effective teaching and performance that I desired to explore.

The school settings of the two teachers were viewed from all angles of what it means to be a part of their specific reality. I depicted the essence of the teachers and their communities of singers in light of what happened, right then, in that time and in that space. This depiction emerged from a multi-sensory description that embodied reality as the participants know it. The claims I made about what is real and meaningful for them in their situation provide a source for understanding choral teacher attributes and build a solid foundation for gaining knowledge about effective teaching and learning practices in other choral classrooms.

Second, I approached this study from a symbolic interactionist perspective, in which the data was gathered from observing how persons interact with one another through common symbols found in the choral classroom. The symbolic interactionist researcher derives meaning of certain phenomena by capturing and elucidating the essence of that phenomena. Berg (1998) speaks of three common interactionist principles:

> First, all interactionists agree that human interactions form the central source of data. Second, there is a general consensus that participants' perspectives and their ability to take the roles of others (empathy) are key issues in any formulation of a theory of symbolic interaction. Third, interactionists agree with Thomas (Thomas & Swain, 1928) concerning "definitions of a situation": How inhabitants of a

> setting define their situation determines the nature and meaning of their actions as well as the setting itself. (p. 9)

The human-interaction data gathered from the school settings in which I worked were interpreted and subsequently analyzed from my perspective as an experienced vocal music teacher, and by my participation in the setting itself. I define the nature of situations based on my interactions with the inhabitants of the situation.

Third, meaning from this investigation was derived by engaging a hermeneutic perspective in which I interpreted data by constructing reality as I viewed it. My persona as a researcher heavily influenced the results of the study, because I looked for meaning from a certain standpoint and situational context. My personal perspective on what transpired in the classroom was enhanced by my role as a participant observer in which I experienced first hand what it is like to be a part of the classroom milieu. Patton (1991) states that "[H]ermeneutics asks, 'What are the conditions under which a human act took place or a product was produced that makes it possible to interpret meanings?" (p.84). My report of the data, analysis, results, implications for teaching, and recommendations for further study reflect that I am a high school vocal music teacher who works in similar school settings to those I studied.

CHAPTER TWO

Patton (1991) says "reviewing the literature can present a quandary in qualitative inquiry because it may bias the researcher's thinking and reduce openness to whatever emerges in the field. Thus, some of the literature review may not take place until after data collection" (p. 163). Some of the research-specific information regarding conclusions I made were added as I discovered them. I found that several authors of research-based articles resonated with my conclusive thinking, and accentuated the recommendations I suggest. Their research is included in chapter eight, where I attempt to define ideas about the findings of this study.

Literature Review

A review of music education research on choral music classroom activity suggests four main research strands: (1) teacher behaviors, (2) teaching techniques, (3) choral student perceptions, and (4) teaching style.

Teacher Behaviors

Yarbrough (1975) investigated the effect of magnitude of choral conductor behavior on performance, attentiveness, and attitude of students in mixed choruses. The study was designed as an initial effort to vary magnitude of teacher behavior in order to study the effect of these variations on student responses. Magnitude was described as a "conductor's ability to change behavior dramatically in all defined categories at precisely the right time during the rehearsal" (p. 144). The categories of behavior that were defined were body movement, voice volume, pitch, and speed, activity, eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions. The design of this experiment attempted to discover how these attributes influenced the choral student. Three of the groups received their lowest ratings under the low magnitude condition, off-task percentage was lower during the high magnitude condition, and student preferred the high magnitude conductor.

Caldwell (1980) conducted a study in which he determined the proportions of time given to selected musical elements and leadership behaviors during rehearsals of successful high school choral conductors. The study attempted to determine what rehearsal behaviors were exhibited by successful high school conductors, and if there were any consistencies among these conductors regarding the proportions of time devoted to each of these behaviors. Conducting and monitoring rehearsal trials, verbal behavior, non-musical activity, music instruction, illustration, evaluation, verbal behavior on specific musical ideas, and rehearsal trials were investigated in relationship to proportional distributions of rehearsal time. After videotaping fifteen successful choral conductors in two rehearsals, trained observers simultaneously watched and filled out an observation form designed for the study. The chi-square statistic revealed significant differences at the .05 level in the proportional distributions of the rehearsal time when observed conductors were compared as a group. Results showed that the observed choral conductors apportioned 65% of rehearsal time to rehearsal trials, and 35% of rehearsal time to verbal behavior, while 16% of verbal behavior was devoted to non-musical activity.

Yarbrough and Price (1981) specifically studied eye contact and its effect on student attentiveness. Teacher eye contact was counted and recorded according to the following definitions: (a) groups: conductor looking at entire group or section for at least three continuous seconds; (b) individual: conductors looking at individual in group or accompanist for at least three continuous seconds; (c) music: conductors looking at music for at least three continuous seconds; and (d) other: conductor looking at something other than group, individuals, or music for the entire interval. Results showed that students were most on-task while learning from teachers with the most eye contact and most off-task with teachers with the least eye contact.

Madsen, Standley, and Cassidy (1989) experimented with teacher behavior by

training student teachers in enthusiasm (intensity) and then asking them to demonstrate what they had learned. Teacher intensity was defined as "sustained control of the student/teacher interaction with efficient, accurate presentation and correction of the subject matter combined with enthusiastic affect and pacing" p. 86). The intent in studying teacher intensity was to ascertain whether high and low contrast in teacher intensity could be quickly taught and then demonstrated. The student teachers watched themselves on video and rated themselves as being in low intensity mode or high intensity mode. The researchers also intended to ascertain whether people who were not trained in the concept of intensity could recognize the contrasts. Three control groups consisting of freshmen, seniors, and graduate students who were not officially trained in enthusiasm were asked to watch the same video tapes of the student teachers and rate the intensity level at given moments of time. Results of the study indicated that intensity as a concept could be operationally defined, easily taught to prospective student teachers, and ably demonstrated by music education majors.

Byo (1989) researched the recognition of intensity contrasts in choral conducting gestures in much the same manner as Madsen, Standley, and Cassidy (1989). Students were trained over a period of time in gesture intensity. In a final evaluative conducting performance, subjects who previously did not have conducting intensity training observed and rated the conductor. It appeared that regardless of musical experience, subjects were able to make reliable decisions related to intensity in conducting gesture (p. 162).

A recent study indicated that teaching and personal skills appear more important than music skills. Teachout (1997) compared the responses of preservice teacher and experienced teachers when asked, "What skills and behaviors are important to successful music teaching in the first three years of experience?" Random samples of both preservice and experienced teachers were given a list of teacher skills/behaviors and asked to rate the

level of importance of each item using a four-point Likert-type scale. Teachout (1997) developed the list from much of the previous research mentioned above. Analysis showed that seven skills and behaviors were commonly identified by both preservice and experienced teachers: "Be mature and have self-control," Be able to motivate students," "Possess strong leadership skills," "Involve student in the learning process," "Display confidence," "Be organized," and "Employ a positive approach." The author suggests that preservice teachers and experienced teachers generally agree on which skills and behaviors are considered to be most important to initial teaching success. Preservice and experienced teachers alike ranked musical skills significantly lower than personal skills and teaching skills when it came to what skills were needed in the first three years of teaching.

Teaching Technique and Strategy

Funk (1982) investigated the technique of metaphoric language to achieve aesthetic meaning in choral music teaching and learning. The purpose of his study was to observe the choral rehearsals of three well-known choral conductors in order to determine the extent of their use of verbal imagery in the rehearsal and to analyze the circumstances under which this language system was used. Transcripts of audio tape-recorded rehearsal sessions conducted by each of the subjects were analyzed to determine the rate and frequency of the use of figurative language. Each subject was interviewed to gain insight into his rehearsal philosophy as it is related to verbal imagery. The study revealed that (a) creative verbal imagery played an important role in the rehearsal techniques for the three subjects, (b) verbal imagery may work well in the choral rehearsal situation because it shares many common characteristics with music, (c) the style of music is not a limiting factor in relation to the use of verbal imagery, and (d) verbal imagery was used with many different kinds of rehearsal activities.

Cox (1989) examined rehearsal organizational structures used by successful high

school choral directors in Ohio. In this study, relationships between rehearsal structure and either teaching style or student attitude were investigated. The results indicated that one rehearsal organizational structure was used predominantly and that a positive attitude toward chorus surfaced among students of all directors regardless of rehearsal structure used. Student responses suggested that there were commonalities in perceived director's teaching style regardless of the specific type of director rehearsal organizational structure used. Enthusiasm for both the music itself and teaching appeared to be the easiest to perceive.

Other research suggests that superior instruction producing high student achievement includes the "direct instruction" approach to teaching (Yarbrough and Price, 1989). This investigation defined direct instruction as "(1) a pattern of instruction that begins with the teacher's presentation of the task, (2) followed by student interaction with task and the teacher, and (3) solidified by immediate praise or corrective feedback related to the task presented" (p. 180). The purpose of this study was to determine whether teachers were using this pattern of teaching in their classrooms. Experienced and novice teachers were observed to determine how time was spent on the sequence and whether they used the sequence correctly. Comparisons were made between the two types of teachers to analyze the potential for student achievement, attitude, and attentiveness. Results demonstrated that (a) time spent in presenting musical information and appropriate reinforcement was about one-fourth of total rehearsal time, (b) an almost equal amount of time was spent giving directions as compared to musical information, (c) almost half the rehearsal was devoted to performance, and (d) experienced teachers were highly disapproving of student response, whereas preparatory teachers were highly approving.

Price (1992) experimented with college students and their ability to learn the "direct instruction" approach. The students taught a five-minute pretest, two ten-minute practice-

teaching sessions, and a final five-minute posttest. After the five-minute teaching pretest, the professor provided feedback and instruction to the student about the direct approach to teaching. Each subsequent ten-minute practicum session was videotaped, allowing the student to evaluate his or her ability to teach sequentially. The five-minute posttest served as a final evaluation. Price (1992) found that students significantly increased their use of complete sequential patterns from the pretest time to the posttest time.

Student and Teacher Perceptions

Hylton (1981) investigated high school choir participants' views of the meaning of the high school choral singing experience. An instrument entitled the Choral Meaning Survey was developed for ascertaining these views. Hylton (1980) used a pre-pilot study to ask high school choral students an open-ended question regarding what about the choral experience was meaningful for them. From this study, categories were developed through factor analysis to be used in a study of four Pennsylvania senior high schools with 251 subjects participating. Results suggested that the meaning of choral singing was multidimensional for these students and included a sense of achievement while involved in choir.

In his investigation of elementary and secondary music students' motivation to achieve, Asmus (1986) cited reasons for success or failure in music; free responses from music students were classified according to a two-dimensional design model of attribution theory. This theory holds that beliefs students have about the causes for success and failure at a musical task will influence how the students approach the task in the future. "Teachers who encourage students with effort related attributions are more likely to have students who adopt the view that if they try hard and apply themselves, they can achieve in music" (Asmus, 1986, p. 268). Students attributed causes for success and failure in four major categories: ability, task difficulty, luck, and effort. Ability and task difficulty were

perceived by previous research as stable causes while luck and effort were perceived as unstable. Similarly, ability and effort were considered causes that came from within (internal) an individual, while task difficulty and luck were considered to be causes from the outside (external). The study suggested that 80 percent of the reasons cited for success or failure in music were internal in nature, a greater number of stable reasons were cited for success, while more external-unstable reasons were cited for failure.

Morgan (1992) examined student's perceptions of their teacher's behavior in a high school choral ensemble. Ethnographic research techniques were employed to study the cultural, educational, and musical complexities of this setting and the perspectives of its teacher and students. Direct observation was conducted in 50 rehearsals of the "Ridgeview Choir." Formal and informal interviews were completed with the teacher and students. Field notes and interview transcripts were coded and quantified to highlight basic and important dimensions of life in this ensemble. In rehearsing choral literature, his instructional comments were evenly divided between challenges of note learning, and refinement of choral tone, intonation, and interpretation. Classroom management was approached through rehearsal planning and pacing, and balanced the use of positive and negative reinforcement. The student perspective was organized around the social constructs of "work." Musical learning and positive musical values were more prominent than the social outcomes and rewards of participation. Students' perceptions closely paralleled this teacher's philosophies and rehearsal emphases both in musical categories and expectation for student behavior. The author concluded that music educators have tremendous power to affect student's musical values, self-perceptions, and perception of other students.

Taylor (1995) observed interpretations of teacher verbal praise by middle school choral students. The study investigated the effect familiarity with a teacher had on student interpretations of teacher verbal praise in seventh and eighth grade choral ensembles. A

stimulus tape was constructed of 16, 30-second videotaped clips containing verbal praise of four teachers. Teachers identified their intent in the use of praise in each example. Students responded to the tape by labeling the praise in each clip as deserved or as one of three types of instruction praise. Choirs who were familiar with their teacher recognized their teacher's intent for praise. The author concluded that students are keen observers of teacher praise. Findings suggest students discriminate between praise directed at the performance and praise used for instructional purposes.

Schmidt (1995) examined secondary school choral students' perceptions of teacher feedback behaviors. The author studied summer choral music camp participants who filled out a questionnaire. They provided information about their grade level, gender, and what they attributed to success and failure in vocal music. Subjects were asked to list the most important reason why some students succeed in vocal music and the most important reason why some students fail in vocal music. Subjects also listened to audiotapes of private teaching lessons and rated the teacher response with a 7-point semantic differential scale that used the following descriptions: good-bad, effective-ineffective, sincere-insincere, and appropriate-inappropriate. Results indicated that junior and senior high choral students are more likely to attribute success in choral music to internal rather than external reasons. Slightly higher frequencies were attributed to effort followed by ability.

Through the combined effort of explaining action research, motivational factors for student's involvement in chorus from middle to high school were investigated (Conway and Borst, 2001). While employing qualitative methods of investigation, I coded and categorized themes that emerged from formal student interviews, parent telephone interviews, focus group interviews and videotaping. Data analysis revealed seven categories that defined student motivation to participate in chorus from middle school to high school: (a) singing for learning's sake, (b) singing for self-expression, (c) singing for

social and group reasons, (d) singing for enjoyment, (e) singing for performance, (f) singing to be identified with the school program, and (g) singing for the music itself. The study showed that non-musical reasons for participating from middle to high school were stated most by parents and students.

Teaching Style

The following studies focus on the style of choral teaching in the primary and secondary level, and provide the impetus for my investigation. The studies include research designs that use qualitative methodology for gaining knowledge about the global aspects of the choral classroom. All of them contain some representation of the subject area I desired to explore.

Gumm (1993) identified teaching styles in secondary choral music by developing a self-report scale for teachers. He based this study on teachers' perceptions of their own teaching. Through common factor analysis, the author identified ten dimensions of choral music teaching style: (1) student independence, (2) teacher authority, (3) flexible classroom structure, (4) positive learning environment, (5) group efficiency, (6) nonverbal motivation, (7) aesthetic music performance, (8) sequential instruction, (9) group dynamics, and (10) music concept learning. Eleven choral music teaching styles were interpreted through analyzing the mean profiles of groups of choral music directors. The styles were labeled: (1) student-centered comprehensive musicianship oriented, (2) teacher-controlled comprehensive musicianship oriented, (3) student/subject matter interaction oriented, (4) task oriented, (5) music performance oriented, (6) cooperative learning oriented, (7) concept presentation oriented, (8) content oriented, (9) low teacher involvement oriented, (10) discovery oriented, and (11) non focused low-interaction oriented.

Davis (1998) identified choral teacher rehearsal behaviors and evaluated

performance achievement in relation to performance preparation. Eighty-three rehearsals and four final performances of two high schools' beginning and advanced choruses were videotaped to identify rehearsal behaviors and evaluate performance achievement. Rehearsals of selected choral literature were videotaped during regularly scheduled class times. Final rehearsals and performances at the district festival were videotaped for analysis of performance and teaching. The researcher implied that, as student competence increased, less verbalization from the teacher was needed for instruction. Davis (1998) also found that the rate of ensemble achievement seemed unique to the individual director. The author posits that researchers should continue asking what it is about the individualism of the teacher that influences performance outcomes. Her findings in this study suggest that further research is necessary to identify those unique aspects of the individual director that influence excellent choral performance.

Kerley (1995) examined the decision-making processes, the leadership styles and behaviors, and the musicality of two master choral music teachers. This multiple case study (2 teachers) explored the relationship of personal and professional qualities to success in teaching elementary-aged children's choirs. Qualitative data-collection procedures included audiotaped interviews, videotaped rehearsals, field notes based on rehearsal observations, and stimulated recall interviews. The author suggested that there are multi-dimensional approaches for successful teaching and and that an artistic component to quality instruction is inherent and can be developed only when present in the choir director. This study provides pertinent information that helped to design and report the current study. My inquiry is also a multiple case study, and explores the personal and professional qualities that lead to success in the classroom.

Szabo (1993) investigated the professional and personal activities during a typical week of ten high school choral music educators. The researcher used questionnaires,

journals, and self-reported descriptive methods to gain insight into the actions of the teachers. The study described the teachers as people who had very active professional and personal lives who enjoyed their work. Teachers began the class with warm-ups, used small choral compositions for study, and did not include sight-singing during a typical week's rehearsals. Even though this study relates to the design of my study, and I may replicate portions, it does not address the issue of excellence as a result of teacher actions.

King (1998) describes a ten-month naturalistic study of a teacher who has gained an international reputation as an exemplary educator in a single setting for more than 25 years. In this study, four themes emerged: (a) high level verbal and non-verbal language is essential to becoming an exemplary teacher, (b) routines and organization provide the framework for artistry in teaching, (c) humor is essential for exemplary teaching, and (d) a quality environment is conducive to quality teaching and learning. The band teacher was portrayed with rich and thick description using these four components as the benchmarks of excellent teaching for this situation. This article did not include a section on the method or procedure, but the analysis and results suggest the need for further naturalistic study to "gain in-depth analysis of the realm of exemplary teachers" (p. 70).

Conclusion

Each strand of music education research outlined above yields important conclusions for development of choral music education. However, the research does not attempt to describe the *process* of teaching and learning; it does not observe or describe the life and soul of the classroom. The research does not delve into dynamic properties of the classroom that portray how the teacher or the students make or feel about artistic decisions, how they inform one another about the qualities that are necessary to make excellent music, or how they attain inspiration to learn and grow intellectually and artistically. The studies under the heading *Teacher Behavior* raise issues related to the

efficacy of the teacher in the choral classroom. However, the purpose of these investigations is to analyze at the behavioral level of research only. More study evaluating choral music teacher characteristics is needed, describing the teacher actions that go beyond the behavioral level. Those studies under the heading *Teaching Technique and Strategy* provide information about the components of quality teaching that go beyond the behavioral level of investigation but are limited in scope and represent only possible dimensions within an even larger view of fine teaching. The strand of studies labeled *Student and Teacher Perceptions* look at specific ways that may lead to a broader view of the teaching-learning process, yet they do not explore how teacher actions relate to quality student achievement. Only the Morgan (1995) study hinted at student achievement by identifying student's perceptions of demanding and intensive work that produced a level of quality that surpassed the work of other high school choirs. Further description is needed to evaluate quality teaching as it relates to performance excellence. The research strand under the heading *Teaching Style* reflects the concept of information I desired to explore and explains the components that contribute to effective teaching and excellent performance. However, only three studies do so in a qualitative way.

The literature review suggests there are many components to the teaching-learning process in the music classroom, and more specifically, the choral music classroom. The available scientific literature systematically measures separate components of fine choral teaching, such as teaching behaviors, music student perceptions, teaching techniques and strategies, and teaching style. It appears that no single component is solely responsible for excellent instruction in the vocal music classroom, because the teaching-learning process is complex and multi-dimensional. Synthesized together, the content of these studies make a complex whole that makes describing effective choral teaching a nebulous endeavor. I found one published study that qualitatively investigates the teaching-learning events in the

choral classroom of known excellent teachers and their choral programs. This study appears inadequate for scholarly consideration, because it does not include a literature review, purpose statement, method of data collection, procedure, or conclusions.

Grant and Norris (1998) conducted a survey of research in choral music education. Out of 155 studies surveyed between 1982 and 1995, only four of them employed qualitative methods of investigation. The authors showed that the majority of researchers used survey techniques, correlation studies, and quasi-experimental designs and that "a slight movement toward the inclusion of ethnographic and qualitative methods was evident" (p. 48). I conclude that my naturalistic investigation is timely, as most empirical studies fail to address my research topic and questions.

A qualitative investigation is essential to explore and subsequently describe an accurate portrayal of the educational fiber that constitutes excellence in choral teaching and to enhance the quantitative studies on teacher behavior and student response. Jordan (1989) asserts:

> while descriptive, philosophical, and experimental research in music education has yielded valuable conclusions for use in the development of curricula, the dynamic qualities of the effective teacher and their effects upon the classroom environment have not been recorded in an organized fashion for music educators. Teachers engaged in current methodologies do not study cases of particular pedagogues who have been successful in the classroom. The practical pedagogical wisdom of the ablest of teachers has not been recorded in any fashion. (p. 54)

The case study is important, as it focuses on the intellectual rather than behavioral level of inquiry. This kind of study is needed to document the "soul of the classroom experience" (Jordan, p. 58)

CHAPTER THREE

Method

The purpose of this study was to explore, determine, and describe choral teacher attributes and actions as they relate to the ensemble learning process and excellent performance achievement. Two high school choral teachers and their public school choral programs of known repute in the state of Michigan were observed, interviewed, and portrayed with rich and thick description. In this investigation, I observed these secondary choral classrooms with the intent of describing the observable factors that influenced these high-achieving choirs. Qualitative methods of data collection were employed in this investigation to gather information from a naturalistic point of view in which real-world situations were studied as they naturally unfolded. This investigation observed and identified phenomena in a natural setting. Patton (1990) discusses the naturalistic design for research as one that focuses on "capturing process, documenting variants, and exploring important individual differences in experience and outcomes" (p. 43). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define the naturalistic perspective as a *grounded theory* that

> is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge. (p.23)

The description was created through inductive reasoning, in which hypothetical thought developed into thematic description *after* the data was collected. I completely immersed myself in natural settings, gathering data that explored and discovered categories, dimensions, and interrelationships.

I chose to investigate the research questions through a qualitative design in which I

brought to the study a specialized personal insight for interpreting phenomena. This occurred as I was immersed in the natural setting of specific phenomena and described the phenomena in light of my background. I gave credence to the voice of the participant as a significant tool for gaining knowledge. The participants were used as integral components in the research procedure, and I became the instrument for obtaining data.

Selection Criteria

The Teachers

The choral teachers and their school programs were chosen in part because of their involvement in state level events, in which high achieving choirs from around the state are showcased. The Michigan Youth Arts Festival (MYAF) is held in the spring of each year. In order to participate in this event, choirs must receive a superior rating at state festival. The MYAF highlights up to twelve of the most outstanding choirs who not only receive a superior rating at state festival, but also are chosen by state level adjudicators who judge those choirs to be superior among all participating choirs. Both teachers qualified for this event several different years, as found in a master list of participants published by the Michigan School Vocal Music Association (MSVMA). One of the teachers previously achieved this honor nine times. In addition to MYAF involvement, the selected teachers and their choirs were elected by state judges as the state co-champion choirs in the same year. This prestigious award helped solidify my choice, because the interjudge agreement secured the credibility and trustworthiness of my decision.

In addition to program involvement, both teachers were awarded "Teacher of the Year" by their peers from around the state. This annual award involves a process in which choir teachers around the state nominate deserving choral professionals for this honor. A nomination committee from MSVMA compiles the master list and chooses two finalists. The general membership is then informed of the two choices and they cast their votes. One

of the teachers was honored in 1997, while the other was honored in 2002.

The primary participants for this study were purposively selected because of the rich information they provided for illumination of the research questions. Patton (1990) says that "Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose for the research, thus the term *purposeful* sampling" (p. 169). The teachers were studied in depth because of their stature as music educators in the state of Michigan.

Patton (1990) writes that there are several different strategies for purposefully selecting information-rich cases. One strategy is called *intensity sampling* (Patton, p. 171). An intensity sample consists of "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely" (p. 171). My interest in the two teachers is "intense" because of who they are as professional choral music educators and their ability to help answer my research questions. The teachers and their programs are similar to the one in which I work, providing a context through which my research is dependable.

The selected teachers in this study are Gary and Jean (pseudonyms). Gary teaches at East High School (pseudonym), located in a large suburban community outside the largest city in Michigan. The high school is classified as an "AA" size school, meaning it is considered by the state sports association to be large enough to compete at specific levels. At the time of this study, there was a total student enrollment of 1, 950, with 325 students enrolled in the choir program. Overall, the population of these choir students included 7% African-American, 9% Asian-American, 4% Chaldean, 3% Indian-American or Hispanic, and 77% Caucasian or European-American. The choirs actively participate in district and state festivals each year as well as concertize in a variety of venues. The choirs consistently receive superior ratings each year at both the district and state level. A major trip is taken each year with students from all levels. During the time in which I visited East High, the

freshmen choir members were planning to travel to Toronto, Canada, and the upperclassmen to Carnegie Hall in New York City to perform with Moses Hogan. One of Gary's choirs was chosen by adjudicators as outstanding choir from MSVMA state festival in 2000. Gary is in his 15th year of teaching both in the United States and Japan. He has taught at East High School for 11 years. Gary sits on the executive board for MSVMA and helps plan the annual summer conference on vocal and general music.

Jean teaches at West High School (pseudonym) in a resort city on the shores of one of the great lakes of Michigan. West High School is classified as an "AA" size school in the state of Michigan, with a total student population of 2,040 students. At the time of this study there were 210 students enrolled in the choir program at West High. Nearly 100% of the choral students were Caucasian, with European-American background. Jean is in her 23rd year of vocal music teaching, the past 20 in the West Area Public Schools. She has been adjunct professor of vocal music at two local colleges, and has been awarded numerous teaching awards. Her choirs consistently receive superior ratings at both the district and state choir festivals. The choirs are invited to perform throughout the state at conferences, clinics, and with local symphony orchestras. One of her choirs was chosen by adjudicators as the outstanding choir from MSVMA state festival in the year 2000. Jean has served MSVMA and ACDA in several capacities and leadership roles.

The Students

Other participants in this study were the students of the teachers. Student representatives from each choir in both schools volunteered to participate. I interviewed 22 individuals and 20 focus groups of two or more students.

The Principal

The building principal of each high school volunteered to participate in the study. The principal at East High School had supervised the choral teacher for 12 years, while the principal at West High School had supervised the choral teacher for 13 years. The building principals were interviewed because of the position they hold as chief administrator overseeing the implementation of instruction. It was agreed between the teachers and me that their principals would be the best administrator with whom to gain knowledge about my research questions.

The Parents

I contacted parents of some of the choral students throughout the week by telephone during the evening hours. I chose participating parents by asking students to volunteer them. A list of parent names and telephone numbers was made and given to me by the teacher. I arbitrarily chose parent names from the list and called them. A total of seven parents were successfully contacted from both sites.

Data

Procedure

The time frame for data collection was a total of four weeks from January 29, 2001 to February 26, 2001. I followed the same data collection procedures in each school: observation and interviews in the first week and data organization in the second week. Conducting choral classroom research at this time of year allowed the teacher to be observed under favorable conditions. It was at the beginning of second semester which meant that teachers had already established a solid relationship with students and secured a regular routine of instruction and learning. The stress of holiday programs were over, and teachers had not yet experienced exhaustion from the year's activities. Choral festivals were forth-coming, and choral teaching practice appeared to be a its optimum.

Participant Observation

I observed all choral activities occurring throughout five school days in each setting. I participated in the choir rehearsal along with the students and their teacher. I often interacted with individual students and in groups as they engaged in the daily classroom lessons. I participated in the class activities as a student so I could experience first hand what it is like to be an integral part of the class. I also watched the classroom action from the back of the room, and took notes on what I saw happening.

Teacher Interviews

I formally interviewed each teacher for up to two hours at their school. The interviews were audio taped for analysis. I used a General Electric cassette tape recorder, model number 3-5362A, to record the conversation. The interview included open-ended questions regarding perceptions of their own teaching behaviors, attributes, styles, strategies, and classroom management as it relates to quality performance (see appendix).

Student Interviews

Students were formally interviewed on an individual basis during class rehearsals for up to 10 minutes. Interviews took place at both schools in the choral library, away from the action of the class. The teacher chose student volunteers from a raise of hands during class. While others were being interviewed, a new student was chosen to wait their turn to be interviewed. Students could not interview without having returned a parental permission slip that I had sent two weeks prior to my arrival. The interviews were audio taped for analysis. The student interviews included open-ended questions regarding the personal significance of choir participation and perceptions of their teacher's behaviors, style, materials, and classroom environment as it relates to quality performance (see appendix).

Although students knew I was coming to observe their choral program, most did not know how I was to gain information about their teacher for a scholarly dissertation. Both teachers simply told their students I was coming and a permission slip was needed for participation. My questions were not sent to the site ahead of time.

Focus Group Interviews

At both schools, the eagerness of students to engage in the interviews resulted in an abundant number of participants. However, the excessive number of participants prevented me from individually talking to everyone who volunteered in the amount of time I scheduled at the school. Focus group interviews were implemented, in which two to five students engaged in conversation about their choral experiences at the same time. The interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes and were audio taped for analysis. This proved to be an important source of data, as some students felt more confident sharing in the presence of their peers, and thoughts that were expressed among the students were often confirmed by others in the conversation.

Informal Interactions

Informal interactions with teachers and students spontaneously occurred as the situation arose. Questioning the participants occurred during lunch, in the hallways, during instruction, before and after class, or any place or time I happened to meet them. I had opportunity at East High to talk informally with custodial and paraprofessional staff. Field notes were taken before, after, and during observations of specific class rehearsals. I consistently followed the teachers as they performed their daily duties and interviewed them as situations arose.

The "Freeze Game"

While observing the class activities at the first setting, there were moments when I noticed specific teacher actions that elicited student response in effective ways. I often pondered whether the students were aware of these teacher actions. To further involve all students as a source of data, I developed the "freeze game." The game was played by specific choirs at both school settings. Each student in a given choir was given lined paper and a pencil. During the action of the class, I yelled out "freeze" at strategic moments during which I sensed the teacher purposely or intuitively acted in such a way that student learning was enhanced. At the moment I yelled "freeze," the students were instructed to write out an answer to the following questions: (1) What teaching tool did your teacher just use to help you learn something?, or (2) What did you just learn? Written responses of the students were handed in for content analysis.

Interviews with Principals and Parents

Principals were interviewed in their offices before school in the morning. Upon my arrival at each school, I made an appointment to interview the principal for at least one hour. Parents were interviewed by telephone during evening hours. Principal interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. Field notes were taken as I talked to the parents.

Validity

Validity and reliability issues in this investigation are measured by my ability as a researcher to convince the reader that my view of what transpired is accurate. I present theoretical assumptions at the end of this document that are grounded in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), and that may be generalized to the extent that my expertise successfully transfers found knowledge from one context to another.

During the entire process, I ruminated about the design of the project as it related to the research questions. I questioned my purposes for asking them, and checked the appropriateness of the procedures I chose for addressing them. I consistently edited what I wrote to make certain that the information was clearly presented. During my documentation, I found myself asking whether I was being comprehensive or too narrow in the scope of the inquiry. I struggled with the themes I discovered, asking myself, "Am I developing something credible? Is this important for the profession? Is this significant for a wider population, or is this something that only pertains to me?" The answers to all these questions emerged naturally as I proceeded through the study, and I gradually understood my study to be a valid one.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to *dependability* as reliability of a qualitative investigation. When applying dependability to the current study, I asked myself, "If I were to replicate my study in the same context, but at a different time, would the results be the same? Is documentation of my study meticulous enough that an observable trail of how the results came about is clearly seen? Can I depend on my reporting as being consistent and accurate?" While checking my procedures and results several times in the course of analysis and preparation, I depended on the secure knowledge that I did everything possible to insure that the investigation truly investigated what it was supposed to investigate.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of a variety of perspectives for gathering data on a single phenomenon. Methodological triangulation entails the use of multiple data sources within a single method of investigation (Denzin, 1978). In this study, observation of the teachers and students, field notes, formal and informal interviews with teachers and students, formal and informal interviews with principals and parents, and observer participation

represent methodological triangulation. The combination of data sources strengthens the design of this study by providing "cross-data validity checks'" (Patton, p. 188). It is important to reveal all aspects of reality in the situations I studied so that the information I describe is credible to those who read it. Stake (1995) says "With multiple approaches within a single study, we are likely to illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences" (p. 114). The methods I chose for gathering data help clarify the information needed to answer the research questions.

Stake (1995) also states that using multiple resources takes much time, and the need for deliberate triangulation on only important data is crucial. "Importance depends on our intent to bring understanding about the case and the degree to which this statement helps to clarify the story or differentiate between conflicting meanings. If it is central to making 'the case,' then we will want to be extra sure that 'we have it right'" (p.112). The multiple methods of data collection in this study are all important and central to deriving meaning and describing the essence of effective choral teaching.

Member Checking

Stake (1995) explains that the process of "member checking" (p. 115) requires the research participant to examine "rough drafts of writing where the actions or words of the actor (teacher) are featured" (p. 115). The teacher may correct or provide alternate language to what could be misinterpreted by the researcher.The teachers in this study were called upon to check the transcriptions of their interviews and observations for accuracy and proper interpretation. Both Gary and Jean reported no changes, additions, or editing of any kind after reading their individual portions of data results.

Investigator Expertise

My expertise as a choral professional provides support for trustworthiness in this study because I am the instrument for data collection and the center of the analytic process (Patton, 1990). For this reason, I rely on my own knowledge as an experienced teacher who possesses a solid understanding of the choral music curriculum. I have taught vocal music in the high school for 10 years. Choirs under my tutelage have attained prominent status within the community I work, as well as the larger choral community at the state level. I bring to this study a specialized knowledge of choral music education in the public schools in Michigan, especially at the secondary level, because of my involvement and experiences with the Michigan School Vocal Music Association. I edit articles for the newsletter, travel throughout the state as guest clinician, and adjudicate district and state level festivals. My qualifications, experience, and personal perspective fortifies the credibility of my study.

Limitations (Investigator Bias)

Possible distortion of findings in this inquiry is something of which I am aware. One teacher in the study is more familiar to me than the other, both as a friend, and a professional colleague. I possess preconceived ideas of choral teaching, especially in the realm of teaching in a large high school with multiple choirs and various programming. It was my intent to be responsible in reporting the information by using my expertise objectively, accepting any change of thinking patterns unlike my own, and checking for any previous biases I may have.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

Patton (1990) suggests that the strategy for analysis of interviews includes case analysis and cross-case analysis, in which the personal profiles are spelled out and common answers from questioning different participants are grouped together. I developed a protocol of interview questions based on emerging discussion in the actual interviews and on previous research (Cox, 1989; Davis, 1998; Gumm, 1993; Hylton, 1981). Teachers were asked to discuss their personal teaching practices in relationship to quality instruction. Students were asked to describe their feelings about the choral class experience and its significance for them as individual singers and choir members. Parents were asked to describe the factors they felt contributed to excellence in their child's choral music education. Principals were asked to give their perspective on the choral program and the role the teacher played in its success.

Patton (1990) states that "The culminating activities of qualitative inquiry are analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings" (p. 371). The culmination of these procedures depend on the skill of the observer as an interpretive analyst, and it is the obligation of the qualitative researcher to present the procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible. I synthesized and analyzed the collected information from the classroom in a succinct and efficient manner to ensure that I properly communicated the essence of what I found according to my perspective. The intent of this document is to report the observed situations in such a way that the audience to whom I write understands my perspective to the fullest extent possible. Eisner (1978) states:

> what is equally as important as perceiving the qualities that constitute classroom life is the ability to convey these quality to others. For this to occur the methods used must be artistically critical. The education critic must be able to create,

> render, portray, and disclose in such a way that the reader will be able to empathetically participate in the events described. The language of the critic using qualitative methods capitalizes on the role of emotion in knowing. Far from the ideal of emotional neutrality so often aspired to in the social science, the education critic exploits the potential of language to further human understanding. The language she or he uses is expressive so that the kind of understanding the reader can secure is one that reaches into the deeper level of meaning children secure from school experience. To convey such meaning, the artistic use of language is a necessity. (p. 161)

The clarity of purpose in this study is enhanced by my analyzing with great care what transpired in the school settings.

Data Source Organization

While visiting each school, I organized the data with file folders. Each file folder contained notes and audio tapes that were labeled by data collection source. The file folders were labeled field notes, teacher interview, individual interviews, focus group interviews, principal interview, parent phone calls, and "the freeze game." In addition, I housed each school's data in colored-coded folders so that the information remained separate. Yellow folders designated East High School, and red folders designated West High School. All materials were stored in a small plastic filing box that stayed with me at all times. Table 1 summarizes the amount of data sources in each setting.

Table 1:

NUMBER OF DATA SOURCES

Data Source	East School	West School
Individual Student Interviews	11	11
Focus Group Interviews	11	9
Formal Teacher Interview	1	1
Principal Interview	1	1
Parent Conversations	7	7
Freeze Game	1	1
Field Notes	5 days	5 days

Upon completion of each school visit, I calculated the amount of time I spent in the school and the amount of minutes I spent for each data collection procedure. It is difficult to calculate the total amount of time spent informally interviewing various individuals, or the amount of time I was in an observation mode throughout the week. When I was not interviewing, I watched classroom activities, intensely examined the teacher's behaviors, roamed around freely in the room, or participated with the students as a "member" of the choir. The amount of minutes spent on interviewing was calculated by total amount of audio tape used. Each audio tape has a total recording capacity of 60 minutes. The amount of time spent with parents on the phone was self-monitored. Table 2 shows the results of compiling this information.

Table 2:
TIME SPENT IN EACH SCHOOL SETTING

Category of Data	East School	West School
Student Interviews	120 minutes	105 minutes
Focus Groups	60 minutes	60 minutes
Teacher Interview	60 minutes	45 minutes
Principal Interview	30 minutes	30 minutes
Parent Phone Conversation	40 minutes	50 minutes
Freeze Game	30 minutes	30 minutes
Total Data Collection Time	5.7 hours	5.3 hours
Total Time in Schools	30 hours	35 hours

Data were collected in both sites within 15 working days. I decided early in the planning stages to separate the visits by one full week. This open window of time helped me to organize data from the first school and reflect on my experiences there. This time also allowed me to have personal refreshment, in which I cleared my thoughts and mentally prepared for my second visit.

After data collection from both schools was complete, I began the process of transcribing the audio tapes. Privately hired transcribers created a word processing file for each audio tape. This procedure took a total of three weeks to complete. After all the transcriptions were word-processed on floppy disk, I checked the quality of the data and made sure that it was all accounted for, after which I made hard copies of all transcribed tapes. I cataloged the hard copies according to data source categories in each school and organized the information in a three-ring binder. I made four copies of each transcription, one master copy for safekeeping, and three copies for different types of analysis. The tapes and floppy discs were stored in vinyl pouches, clearly labeled to match the cataloged hard copy labels.

Data Source Analysis - Coding and Categorizing

Observation Data

Patton (1990) suggests that observation data be described chronologically, over time, and that key events be placed in order of importance. He also suggests that data be organized according to description of various places, individuals or groups, and important processes and issues. All the field notes from observing both schools were placed together according to date and time. I first analyzed data from East High School; then I analyzed data from West High School. Subsequent writing on emerging themes from the field notes were also included. This method of organization provided me with a systematic tool for referring to the original research questions.

I decided to begin analysis of data with my field notes, because they contained the strongest and richest information regarding what I desired to portray. While studying my field notes, I began writing thick description about what I had seen, felt, and heard at each school. This activity helped me to relive what I experienced at each setting, and reminded me of the images I encountered. As I wrote, I focused on depicting the sentient properties of the settings to the extent that most readers could easily imagine what I experienced, and actually place themselves in the portrayal. I also logged reflective thoughts about the relationship of my experience to my original research questions. Here I began to formulate themes about the effectiveness of the teachers. Cross-case analysis of field notes from each setting allowed me to synthesize my ideas about the essence of what took place in the choral classrooms. The qualities for which I was searching began to emerge, and ideas for future research developed during this process.

Field note data were analyzed through content analysis. The content of field notes included thick description of the school setting, as well as direct quotes of the teachers and description of interactions between the students and the teachers. For analysis of thick description, Berg (1998) suggests counting words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, and semantics. I constructed a running list of thematic patterns by counting and categorizing what I had written about teacher traits, mannerisms, speech patterns, and physical actions I observed. These characteristics were coded and categorized according to similarities that consistently became evident from the notes. The development of categories were grounded in the data, and were derived from found patterns that arose.

Emerging categories were grouped together by color-coding. Anytime the data suggested the concept of *teaching strategy*, I underlined the concept in orange. The development of *student-teacher relationship* emerged as a prominent category several times throughout the process of grouping. I underlined these groups in red. *Class climate* was

underlined in yellow, *personal professionalism* was underlined in blue, and *discipline strategy* was underlined in green. Final categories were solidified by deleting and adding, as coded responses were reviewed. Sometimes during the process of creating categories, multiple colors were used to underline same words, phrases, or concepts because those items fit into two or more categories. Final decisions concerning categories in which items were placed were made after the coding was completed. Five main categories emerged as a result of this process: (a) personal professionalism, (b) class climate, (c) relationships with students, (d) discipline strategies, and (e) teaching strategies.

Interview Data

I read and reread my entire data-source catalog several times after field notes had been color-coded and a narrative based on the coding was complete. An important step during analysis was my listening to the tapes while I read the interviews. This provided me a phenomenological way in which to immerse myself into the context of my investigation, and enabled me to hear the nuance of expression in the voices. This enhanced the procedure through which I analyzed the data, because it allowed me to confirm the categories I grouped from the field notes. Hearing the voice of the participant resonated with my own voice as a choral music researcher and subsequently refined the lens through which I viewed all data.

I discovered that the themes from the teacher interviews resonated with the themes from the field notes. At this time it became evident that content analysis of the transcribed audio tapes of teacher interviews could use the same color-coding process I used in the field notes. I sorted, grouped and classified salient patterns of events and commentary from the teachers and matched them with categorical themes that emerged from the field notes. After I was satisfied with this systematic development of categories, I began to transform the categories into subsequent narrative forms. These forms gradually evolved into

ruminative narration that addressed the original investigative questions. I first wrote a narrative based on field note data, then blended the coded results from the interviews into this overall description.

The student, principal, and parent interviews were analyzed by connecting refrains and patterns found in the transcriptions with those of the field notes and teacher interviews. Themes found in the field notes and teachers' interviews provided the framework in which I analyzed all other interview data. I used the color-codes from the field notes to search for similar themes in the interview data. I decided at this time to present all data from two separate points of view: that of the adults, and that of the students. The result of this process is presented in chapters five and six.

Freeze Game

While the freeze game provided insight regarding the perceived thoughts of students, analysis of notes taken during this data collection procedure did not yield relevant results. Only one choir in each setting played the game, and the spontaneous atmosphere in which it was played produced weak outcomes. However, the game provided new concepts for a possible research tool, through which knowledge regarding student understanding of teacher actions could be gained. The use of the freeze game for research is discussed in the recommendations for research section of this paper.

Presentation of Data

All data (field notes, transcribed interviews, and freeze game notes) from this investigation represent an abstract replica of the reality I experienced in the school settings. The multi-sensory reality, perceived through reviewing the data, form mental models in which graphic imagery is etched in my mind. From this I formulated the results and present

the analysis according to the two separate sites I visited. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) explains that the researcher becomes a portraitist in the process of presenting results:

> The development of emergent themes reflects the portraitist's first efforts to bring interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order to the collection of data. This is an iterative *and* generative process; the themes emerge from the data and they give the data shape and form. The portraitist draws out the refrains and patterns and creates a thematic framework for the construction of the narrative. She gathers, organizes, and scrutinizes the data, searching for convergent threads, illuminating metaphors, and overarching symbols, and often constructing a coherence out of themes that the actors might experience as unrelated or incoherent. This is a disciplined, empirical process -of description, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis -and an aesthetic process of narrative development. (p. 185)

The author suggests the term "sensory-data" to describe raw data and subsequent themes that emerge from analysis. Sensory-data provides vicarious experience for the reader, and illumines the purpose of the study.

In chapters five and six, I outline the descriptive data from East High School and West High School respectively. First, in each chapter, I describe the school setting, so the reader can easily imagine the scenario in which the teachers live and work. The description enables the reader to "drive to the school" as I did and take-in the surroundings of the school community.

Second, I present the narrative I constructed from my field notes. By way of introduction to the thinking process of the teachers, the narrative begins with a written philosophy of high school choral music education by both Gary and Jean. After their philosophies, the narrative is written according to the categorical themes that emerged from analysis. The five themes that emerged from analysis are: (a) personal professionalism, (b)

classroom climate, (c) relationships with students, (d) discipline strategies, and (e) teaching strategies. Excerpts from the formal interview of each teacher, parents, and administrators are interpolated within the narrative, providing additional insight.

Third, I include excerpts from the student interviews that are powerful anecdotes I feel enhance the understanding of the teaching-life of each educator. Interview data from the individual students are presented in small patterns and refrains that weave together the convergent themes. Interview data from the focus group interviews are presented in longer portions. Some conversations from both the individual interviews and focus interviews are presented in their entirety to immerse the reader into the narrative whole of the portrayal.

CHAPTER FIVE

Case Study One

East High School

East High School was built in 1969 on a large plot of land located off a major county road that runs from a large inner-city to the suburb of East. The surrounding environs to the south, east, and west of the school contain housing developments constructed in the the 1970s, with retail strip-malls, gas stations, car sales, and light industrial warehouses and factories in close proximity. To the north of the school are country fields and small lakes surrounded by year-round homes.

East High School is a one-story, flat-roofed, brown brick complex. Narrow classroom windows in white trim are placed every 15 feet along the outside facade. The building appears rectangular and massive, and sprawls over an estimated 15 acres. The main entrance in front of the building is not obvious, except for the school's sign, an understated brick marquee that displays pertinent school information with small, black lettering. Large parking lots that hold hundreds of cars are located on each side of the school, with easy access to several identical entrances on all sides of the building. Slender and tall modern-sculpted vapor lights are strategically placed around the outside of the school. The auditorium, cafeteria, and sports facilities are located in the rear of the building. These facilities have various entrances with landscaped, cemented walks leading to them from the side parking lot.

The school feels rectangular inside, formed by a large maze of long, brown bricked hallways, and lined with rust-colored steel lockers. Dark-stained, thick-wood classroom doorways are found in between the lockers. The flooring is white terrazzo tile and the white ceiling hangs rather low. The halls are spartan, with a only few student-made posters hanging on the walls announcing the Sweetheart Dance and advertising various clubs. A

multi-level library is placed in the middle of the school and can be viewed through large panes of glass from three hallways. Besides stacks of books, the room holds several study tables accompanied by dark stained modern chairs with olive-green vinyl seat pads. A newer computer center with over 50 PCs is located a couple steps up from the main floor of the library in the corner.

The performing arts section of the school is located in the back of the school complex and looks like it was built more recently than the rest of the school. The walls are constructed of cream-colored cinder block, the ceilings are higher, and the classroom doors are steel. The vocal music room is located in this area. It is a modest sized rehearsal hall with a low ceiling and a tiered floor holding more than 60 black plastic posture chairs lined neatly in rows. The walls and tile floor are white. There are large wooden storage closets and music holders on each side of the seating area. The students face the front of the room, where there is a chalk board, an overhead screen, two television sets piped-down from the ceiling, a large wooden cabinet with stereo equipment, filing cabinets, and tables with baskets of papers and learning materials on them. An overhead projector sits in the middle of the front area, ready to be used as needed. The entire wall space in the room is completely covered with collages, group pictures, award plaques, and certificates from a host of competitions, festivals, and trips. More than 20 brass trophies sit atop the closets. Because there is no more space to hang things on the walls, a few plaques are propped up here and there. A baby grand piano faces the students along-side a state-of-the-art electric computer piano.

The vocal music office is located off the vocal music room in a corner. The windows of the office are filled with student announcements and other papers depicting slogans and cartoons. The office holds two desks, some shelving, and an electric computer piano. Piles of various projects, mail, and memos are neatly stacked in many different

spots, including the floor. The office is darkly lit with two green glass-shaded librarian lamps glowing softly on the teacher's desks. Two computers display scenes of New York City on the screen saver, and there is a faint sound of choral music coming from somewhere. There are shelves filled with choral methods books and class materials. Other shelves hold Disney characters that the teacher collects, along with other small paraphernalia that look like student gifts. The walls display framed posters of Broadway musicals and an Austrian flag. In one corner, over 100 compact discs of professional vocal music recordings are neatly stored in several columns.

The choir program at East High School consists of the following:

1st hour	9th Grade Men Advanced Women's Ensemble (10,11,12)
2nd hour	Chamber Choir (mixed 11,12)
3rd hour	A Capella (mixed, 11,12)
4th hour	Western Singers (mixed, 11,12)
5th hour	Concert Choir (mixed, 10)
6th hour	9th Grade Women
7th hour	Serenade Singers (women 10,11,12) meets Monday afternoons
8th hour	Troubadours (men 10,11,12) meets Monday evenings

Teaching Personality Through the Lens of the Adults

Gary is a stocky fellow, with thick, black, curly hair. He wears wire-frame glasses that cover large, dark-brown eyes; his face is round and clean-shaven. He wears all black clothing everyday. Gary is polite and gentlemanly, and is somewhat shy upon first meeting him. However, it is obvious that he loves to talk, because much of his working time is spent in conversation with students and staff. He is soft spoken, articulate, and stares intensely at one's eyes as he listens. He smiles easily when he is able to stop and chat; otherwise, he moves around constantly as if he is on a mission or is in the middle of something that needs immediate attention.

Philosophy of Teaching

Gary's personally written philosophy of secondary choral education is:

1. ... a chance to give students a time to create, to enjoy beauty, to express themselves from their deepest part of their inner being, something they rarely do outside of music class.
2. ...a chance to learn another side of world history. As we sing through the years, I love it when they discover that people were just like them, with the same emotions and passions and faith that they have.
3. ...a chance to encourage the gifted to pursue their skills and talents.
4. ...a chance to encourage the struggling student, the one that everyone else wants to dump; this could be the area in which they shine.
5. ...a chance to let students get beyond themselves and their surroundings...to know that the world is bigger than just them and their neighborhood.

Personal Professionalism

Gary is a hard worker and appears to enjoy his occupation. He allows his students a lot of time as they talk to him about their needs, concerns, or daily experiences. Before and after class, as students are entering and exiting, Gary is in constant motion, walking around the room and his office attending to various duties.

> Interviewer: Do you go in and out of a "teaching mode?" Do you turn something "on" when you're in a "teaching mode"? When you're buzzing around the room and I'm watching every second of what you do, I ask myself, "What's he thinking about right now?" The children are always by you, talking with you. And then it kind of clears...what are you thinking about?
>
> Gary: I'm always trying to think about what is next. That's my personality. Today, Kevin was telling me about wanting to play football, basketball, and baseball, but he still wants to be in Troubadours and music theory. And while he was telling me this, he was kind of rambling, and I was thinking about what I needed to do...you know...someplace else. So I thought, "Okay, Gary. Focus on Kevin. Kevin's wanting to talk to you right now; this means a lot to Kevin."

Gary appears to be virtuous and conscientious as a person and a teacher. His passion for people is evident when he interacts with his students. He is a kind man. When asked whether choral music or people drive this passion, he replied that he thought it was a combination of both. But if he had to say one or the other, he'd probably say people.

> I think this has been developed from my childhood, my parents. My parents always had people coming over through the church that I grew up in. People from overseas, from other cultures coming into our home. We had missionaries from other cultures come in. I kind of grew up with that, and I think their values have just really affected my thinking. I think, in some ways, there are my spiritual beliefs that affect me because...um...deep down inside, even though I don't love everybody, and there are kids that I love more than others, I gotta realize that this

> kid (who I don't like so much), maybe I'm gonna be the only teacher that's gonna get through to her. This may be the only thing that will keep them in high school. Because of that, I think that the musicianship, or the passion of music is fun when I get that through to the kids. And it truly excites me when they are truly passionate about the music.

Gary's principal concurred with the idea that it is important to be a "people person" in order to be an effective choral teacher. I asked the principal to tell me through his lens as an administrator the factors that he felt were important to the East High choral department.

> Administrator: I have seen a lot of vocal teachers come and go, and I really think that there are two issues going on here. One is that you have to be a good teacher in the eyes of the kids to attract them to the program and keep them there. On top of that you have to walk the talk when you get there and create choral groups that kids know are good; that get to have recognition and do things that maybe another choral department doesn't do. So somehow we have to have some pride on two playing fields. One is, you have to be with it, fun, enjoyable, and a popular teacher in many ways. By in large, kids have to like you as a choral teacher. It's not just a good feeder program that develops this program, because I 've seen choral teachers that couldn't get kids to sing -period. I think the people who have those characteristics, that attract those kids are those who have a good sense of humor.

The principal continued to focus on the teacher as the center of program development. He added: "I really think it is personality; that's the part I look at in teacher interviews. I can coach skills; I can teach people to do almost anything, but I can't teach personality, and you can't give a personality transplant to those who don't have one."

Gary handles the busy activities of managing a high-powered choral program with ease. He works hard, but he doesn't talk about it. It was a mystery to me how he kept track of all the activities. They simply happened. I wrote,

> Teacher handles many different tasks all at one time. He does this with steady, quiet strength and finesse. Many details are taken care of outside the school day.

Gary offers many opportunities for his students, including solo and ensemble events, out of state trips, and specialty choirs that rehearse outside of the school day. The details encountered while implementing these activities are immense. Handing out forms and flyers, collection of materials, announcing events, answering student questions, and

answering the phone were actions I observed Gary perform within minutes of one another. Students talk to him constantly before and after class or during lunch. He appeared to have time for all of them, even though other demands were emergent at the time. Gary juggles these demands with an air of confidence. I sensed no stress or negative reaction to any of the daily business that ate up his time. He appears to enjoy all the action.

> Interviewer: You seem to not have stress, even though there are a ton of things that you are doing all at once. You just came off Solo and Ensemble, so there's going to be festival and State ahead. I know you're planning a trip. What allows you to be so calm and controlled about all those arrows firing at you constantly?
>
> Gary: Well, I'm glad it appears that I'm calm.
>
> I: It really does. I know what you're going through, 'cause I go through the very same things that you're doing. I'm wondering how you remain calm. Do you have a secret about that?
>
> G: Taking deep cleansing breaths, from Lamaze training. I really feel that's good.
>
> I: Do you agree with me? That you don't have stress? Or don't you show it?
>
> G: Um...I don't show it. I will go back to the fact there have been many years in my teaching career where the words "working out" did not exist in my vocabulary. And us...so to me, it really helps to sweat.
>
> I: You must do a lot at home, or during the hours I don't see you. 'Cause you keep coming up with *stuff* I notice. There was a new poster on the door today, and a Solo and Ensemble computer read-out of grades. You know things sort of appear, and I wonder, when are you planning all this?
>
> G: Well, you know, my wife even said, "Hon, I think for Jim to really get behind the scenes, he needs to come over here, and kind of live with us for a day." I would say, and I almost feel guilty about saying this, but there has never been, I can't remember the last time I went home and did nothing for school. Um..I..I..just have no idea when that was. Sometimes on Saturday, you know, I will put it on my calendar that this is gonna be whatever. And I gave my wife her Christmas present this year that at least once a month we will go out on an an extended evening, and specifically not go to a movie, but dinner, and talk, talk, talk, talk. Last night I was working on rooming assignments for New York. And probably I would be a much better leader if I would delegate. Right now, two trips are on my shoulders. I know these kids are paying a lot of money, and I want them to come off well, and I know how that can happen, so, I'm doing it all. Regarding the solo and ensemble grades, I want people to know about the kids, so Monday I sent out e-mails to the administration, the superintendents, to every teacher in the building, to every music teacher K-12, (because I wanted to say thank you -it started with them). I will have to admit that I am probably a workaholic in that sense. I can't just be a choir teacher, there are too many details that I care about.

Gary is involved in district and state level activities besides teaching everyday. He is an adjudicator and board member of the state professional organization. This involvement often takes him out of town during evenings and weekends. The week I was at his school, he had just worked on Saturday with his students at solo and ensemble. The next two Saturdays were spent adjudicating in other parts of the state. The three weeks surrounding my visit, Gary was working six days a week. He spent the seventh day with his family. However, a couple of hours on Sunday was used for preparing the week ahead, by answering e-mails and creating a flyer to go home to the students.

> Interviewer: What percent of your outside life do you spend thinking about your job and school stuff?
>
> Gary: What percent? (laugh) A lot. I *dream* about the program.
>
> I: You mean in your dreams when you sleep?
>
> G: Yes, when I'm sleeping. I dream about my school kids constantly; my school kids constantly are part of my family life in my dreams. I've always involved my own children and my wife in the musical, so to me, that's time where they can get to know each other. My family always goes on my trips with me. When I'm talking at every meal we eat together, we're talking about some aspect of my choir program or some students. I spend a lot of time outside. I have to force myself to stop doing that. We have a time Sunday at 5 o'clock 'til 8:30 we call our family time. I have made myself a promise that 5 o'clock on Sunday night, no matter what is due the next day, I've got to be done and that's good for me.

Classroom Climate

The vocal music room is interesting to visit because of all the pictures, plaques, trophies, and collages surrounding the entire room. An inviting warmth radiates from the atmosphere, especially as one transfers into the room from the cold and stark feeling of the outside hallway.

> Interviewer: When you walk through the doors of your music room, what thoughts run through your mind?
>
> Gary: I love to have pictures on the wall. I have lots of pictures of students doing things. And when I run out of room on the walls, I will probably start taking plaques off the walls and put more pictures up in their place. 'Cause they just bring back so many special fond memories. And some of them are rehearsals, or trips,

> or things like that. Not in a festival situation, but...us...things that go beyond just learning a song. So that runs through my head...Sometimes I will go after school, after everybody's gone home. I'll go sit in the back row of the choir room, and just sit there and look at it from some basic perspective: What do I see, and what do I overlook because I'm always around it. It could be things like a new coat of paint, or a stack of boxes that I stuck there during the musical, and they are still there...I try to think, "Okay, what is the next change?"

While Gary's teaching personality is relaxed, he maintains a powerful presence in the classroom. His calm demeanor compliments his strong presence in the classroom, as he gives directives and provides feedback for choral behavior. In the active mode of teaching, he stands in one place most of the time, or is seated at the piano facing the choir. As he instructs, listening is easy because his speech has the feeling of story telling, and his manner of speaking is soothing and somewhat mesmerizing. He appears trustworthy as a teacher; we believe what he says to be true. His talking is natural and unforced. His persona is not contrived or phony. He is who he is, and we feel safe with his consistent, personable nature.

Gary talks one-on-one with students before class as the other choir members automatically retrieve their music folders and find their assigned seats. The students are bubbly and talkative. Their behavior is not overly boisterous or rude. When the official time of the lesson begins, Gary says in a strong voice, "Could you be quiet, please?" Almost at once the student talking subsides and attention is on the teacher. I notice most eyes focus on Gary when he speaks. The students appear to hang on every word he says throughout the duration of a class. The room is pleasantly quiet. There is a feeling of politeness in the room and students appear ready to do the routine of the day. My field notes state,

> There is a sense of happiness in here...Students appear friendly and content...They seem comfortable and confident...They appear to take singing class seriously...There is a sense of wholesomeness in here... I never hear whining or complaining.

The polite feeling within the classroom was discussed in the formal interview with Gary.

While talking to him about this aspect of teaching, I became more aware of the influence of Gary's personality on classroom climate.

> Interviewer: There's something I'm sensing that I cannot put my finger on. I'm not sure if it's the school or classroom, but it's something special. My hunch is that it's something special in your classroom. I've taken time to walk around the school during passing time so that I can feel the tone of the school. It feels very much like mine. I would describe the passing time as quite hectic and amazingly busy, end even intense. As I observe students talking and even eavesdrop as I'm walking, I see cliques of kids. Their talking is intense, it's...us, driven. But when you come in here, there is a definite calming effect. I sense lightness. I'm wondering if you contribute to that with your style of teaching. Or is it because these kids are mostly middle class and have really good upbringing, or values, such that it allows them to be polite naturally?
>
> Gary: Well, I guess it's encouraging to hear you say that. Because there are sometimes that I'm thinking, okay, Gary, your choirs are getting Ones at State, but, us, they're not passing the "let's be a human being stage." Um, but you're right, now that you say that, walking down the hall is...this morning I walked to the office. The conversations that I was overhearing, us... you're right, it's problem driven, and it's intense....
>
> I: ...It's vulgar, at times, too...
>
> G: ...Yeah, very, very much so. And I know that these kids are thrown into that. There have been a few times where I was walking down the hall and all of a sudden, one my boys or my girls were in an intense conversation and, all of a sudden, we had eye contact. And they give me that ashamed look. Um...and I almost feel bad...like...oh...I'm stepping into their world. On the other hand, they know my world, and I wanna know more about their world. It is interesting, as far as the class of the school; we go all the way from lower, middle class, all the way up beyond upper crust. We have kids who live in trailers and apartment buildings. And I have at least two kids right now who have been kicked out of their apartments by their mother because the boyfriend doesn't like them, and that kind of stuff. And then I've got kids who live in $900,000, you know, million dollar homes.
>
> I:...Yup...
>
> G: So it's always interesting to come into the same classroom and sit next to each other and have to learn to work with each other. I think it's something that I'm very concerned about.

Gary begins each hour with announcements shown on the overhead for all to see. It appears that this is business as usual. Announcements are consistently presented at the beginning of every class, every day. Most students look at the overhead while he speaks, others appear listless, but the atmosphere remains very quiet. When students respond to

Gary's questions or when they are unclear about things, Gary listens intently and focuses his eyes on the student. There is a feeling of seriousness in the room, yet it is not intense or uncomfortable. As the time of setting-up "shop" draws to a close, Gary transfers smoothly to warming up the choir: "Stand, please," he says. They do, and singing fills the room. This appears to be routine.

> Interviewer: It seems to me that the whole machine, the whole system is really well-oiled.
>
> Gary: To me, that's a big time goal. I tell them this very clearly at the beginning of the year -that my goal is they will be in a routine. On the other hand, I look forward to breaking your rut. I want to yank you out of that rut. But, at the same time, here is our routine. There is something safe in a routine. There's something about when you walk through the door and put your bags down, and your emotional feelings down that you know exactly what' s going to happen in here. But, there's going to be surprises waiting around the corner. That's enough of a safety factor they really thrive on. At the same time, I think they enjoy the little extra things.
>
> I: Is that just you, or is that something you've developed, or did somebody teach you...that element of fun, and surprise, and exhilaration within that routine?
>
> G: Well, if anything, Jim, I've learned, and maybe been taught, that routine is important. I'm more of the type who says "Let's do surprises all the time."

Relationship With Students

I notice from the start of my observation that Gary's eye contact with others is powerfully strong. He really listens while others talk to him. One has the feeling that nothing else matters at the moment of discussion, and a caring response will always be given. This consistent attitude of caring through Gary's eyes does not change while he interacts with students. One day in class, Gary openly talked about the death of a parent of one of the choir students. Regarding teacher-student relationships Gary said to me, "When Joey's mother died two week's ago, us...I used that...and probably went way overboard...but I used that to talk about how when we see a need, we could gossip about it...but how else could we meet the need? I'm very sensitive with my background, my Christian beliefs; I'm very sensitive to my Jewish students, my Muslim students, and my

Asian students. And luckily I know about those all. But at the same time...I guess my values I would consider Judeo-Christian values, which can cross over all lines." Students feel comfortable approaching him and chatting about anything, including personal problems or daily life experiences. Often three or four students line up, patiently waiting their turn to speak with Gary. I sense this reliable personality trait is the glue that binds the classroom community together.

Gary's teaching personality adapts to the characteristics of different age levels and choir types. With the older students in the advanced choirs, he tends to be more serious as well as humorous. He becomes more self-depricating. The younger students are treated with nurturing respect, in which the security of Gary's kind but firm attitude prevails. He knows his student's abilities and this shift of teacher disposition from choir to choir is subtle and sophisticated. Within his consistency as a person, he is able to use his teaching style effectively with all age groups.

> Principal: Good choral teachers like Gary do not necessarily get on the kid's level, but they definitely understand where those kids are in that particular age group. They have empathy for their growing-up problems. They listen and show that choir isn't the end-all; it's a part of the whole growing-up process. They work around all of those growing-up problems and still produce good choral groups. They produce an environment where kids feel like it's fun, they're learning, and they get accolades for performing in front of audiences.

I asked Gary what he is thinking right at the beginning of any given class. "As you're standing there while the ladies and gentlemen are being seated, can you come up with some things that you're thinking about at that time? Can you think beyond the attendance, and asking them to be quiet? Is there something else spinning inside of your head?"

> Gary: For the ninth graders, specifically, I can say this to you: I want each day to put a new hook into their heart, and life, and I want to dig the hook that's already in there a bit deeper. So, that by the end of their freshmen year, I know that they're mine, and that they're going to be with us for the next couple of years. And that they are stinkin' proud that they are part of the choir, and they realize that they will be able to continue growing up to be a young man in the choir.

I: What specific things about you do you think you do to enhance what you just told me:

G: I talk to them about my own personal life. I talk to them about my children and my wife. All the time I'm doing that. I feel that's a mission in my life, because they come from so many broken homes. And I love to be able to tell them about my wife and how tomorrow night I'm taking her out to a really fine restaurant, and we're going to get all dressed up. It has nothing to do with song, but sometimes I will try and figure out something that will relate to my life and will help in the musical part. Once a week, I talk to the guys about something at my gym because they can relate to that; they like the masculine aspect of that. I was talking the other day about some guy at the gym, and he was trying to lift a lot of weight. And he had way too much weight on the bars. He was just smashing and banging weights around. And so, for whatever reason, I was talking about what they were doing with a song. To me, it's just something a little bit more; that all of sudden their music teacher is a human being, and he's a man, and he's in choir.

While discussing other specific ways of "hooking" his students, Gary said:

To me hooking kids is to sell them on the idea that they can keep their masculinity and still sing. They can still be a football player and sing. I love to tell stories about my older kids to my freshmen. And I milk it when I have it; I milk it. For the last three years, I have had the captains of the football team in my upper level choir. And to talk about the story about how Randy and Jim sit next to each other, and sing tenor together, and how Randy is Mr. Macho, and of course, all the boys know who Randy is. And they don't know Jim at all, because he's more what they would consider, you know, a geek. But Randy and Jim have realized that there's a place for each other in their lives. To me that's just really exciting. That's why I want to share that stuff with my freshmen kids; for them to be kind of thinking, "Oh, there's hope for me, and I want to be like Randy; even though I'm more like Jim, maybe I'm going to be accepted, you know..."

As a participant observer, I felt Gary's caring disposition and the comfortable presence of class community. During one choir in which I sang, Gary opened the lesson by asking several students who were acting in the school play "Arsenic and Old Lace" to talk about the theater program at East High, and share their experiences. As I look around the room, most students listen politely, an expectation modeled by Gary. He planned on attending the play and offered his own personal feelings about the production, after which he asked for questions, and facilitated some discussion.

Interviewer: What life experiences molded your decision to become a teacher?

Gary: Having relational kinds of experiences growing up. Elementary, middle school, high school; none of those choir directors were particularly fabulous. But they really were wonderful at relationships, us...band as well as choir. And I thought to myself, "I would like to do this because, number one, I get to work with

music (which I had already discovered I enjoyed)." But all along, I kept running into a music teacher who liked me and cared about me. And several of them seemed to care about me as person, and not just me as a student.

One day, the school implemented a Class Fair, during which Gary demonstrated a computer piano with Kareoke capabilities. The piano is to be used as part of a theory class offered next school year. In Chamber Choir later that day, a student asked Gary if the choir could please try it out. Group agreement followed, with many nagging comments spontaneously flying around the room. After much reluctance, Gary caved in to the persistent requests. We all stood up and joined in singing "Joy To The World" by the popular group Three Dog Night. When we completed the performance, which included free body movement and raucous vocal technique by some singers, we applauded ourselves. Much laughter and carrying-on followed our performance. This poignant moment of group dynamic exemplifies the atmosphere that prevails in the East High School vocal music room.

Gary builds relationships with his students by being open about himself as a human being. Sense of humor and story-telling play a major role in this openness. He shared with one choir the story about two men choir members who were out together the previous afternoon selling the choir fund-raiser discount cards door to door. They happened to be in Gary's neighborhood and spotted him in the driveway of his home as he was returning from school. The students stopped to talk, and told him about a song they sang when they presented the card to their customers. After they sang it for Gary, he joined in and sang it with them, right there in the driveway.

Gary's self-depricating demeanor is another way in which positive student-teacher relationships are fostered. On another day, while warming up a choir, Gary was talking in a boisterous manner when saliva accidentally spit out of his mouth. As students reacted with disgust, he said, "Excuse me. That was *quite* a fricative." Several audible giggles followed. We all began singing with huge smiles on our faces, while our singing became

noticeably more vibrant. On another day, Gary was talking fast, and using dense grammar. None of us could quite take it all in. Our lack of response must have been obvious to him. He said, "Did you make sense of that? I felt like I was babbling." Some of us shook our heads up and down that he was. He acted like he didn't notice our response, and grinned.

> Interviewer: What personality traits do you perceive you possess that empower your teaching?
>
> Gary: Um, (sigh), warm, us...caring, fair, us... stupid, no stupid's not one (laughs). Um... humor that doesn't come out when I'm *trying* to be funny...us...but I think deep down inside, I know it's coming out, so I let it. Sometimes, I'm sticking my foot in my mouth, and deep down inside, I could stop it, or I could have stopped it -but I realize, "Might as well let them see that you're real," or, "Let's laugh over something." Um...us...uh...honest...us...high expectations -is that a quality?
>
> I: Okay... (pause)...I'm waiting for more, because I'm matching every single one of these with what your students said, verbatim. Especially "fair". You're able to be their friend; a lot of them said that you were able to... us...know when to get down to business, but you knew when to have fun. You knew when to be their friend, and when to be their teacher. That has come up several times.
>
> G: Well, you know, that's something that I've been really conscious of. Because I hopefully continue to set the notch higher and higher for them. To try...personally, my goal is always to be two notches higher than they ever think that they can reach. Um...but at the same time to be able to be their friend, and I guess, watching our fellow cohorts around the state...us....I think a handful of folks who set the notches high and then I can also think of some who try their best to be pals. I guess that's my goal, to see if I can do both of those things. Which means, I'm never gonna be as good as a pal as that teacher who just wants to be the pal. And I probably will never have the same kind of fine choral groups as the person who is only that task-master who...excellence -let's not do anything but choral music.

The phone interviews with parents revealed several thematic commonalities regarding Gary's relationships with his students. One parent stated that her daughter would do anything for Gary. She said, "He doesn't talk down to the kids, and he treats them as young adults. He has lots of enthusiasm and he commands excellence. He's always proud of the kids and treats them like a parent that showcases his own kids." One parent added that Gary is not authoritarian at all, and that he listens to the kids and gives them responsibility. He encourages them all the time.

Several parents described a mutual respect between the students and Gary. One

said, "He puts a lot into the program, and the kids give back to him." Another said, "He really knows what the kids are capable of. He believes in them, so they believe in him."

Discipline Strategies

Behavior among students never gets out of hand in this classroom.There seems to be an invisible behavior-line that students inherently know not to cross. I noted,

> Camaraderie is so evident in this room. I think Gary fosters this by smiling a lot and ignoring typical immature high school behavior that has potential to get out of hand. He allows kids to be kids. There are moments when kids do immature things: kicking a chair, snapping gum, or moving around inappropriately. Gary seems either unaware of these events or chooses not to address them. The events do not seem to bother him. Nothing ever seems to get out of control.

Gary's calm demeanor is reflected in the calmness of student behavior. His active teaching is steady and flows naturally. He interrupts his speaking with brief silence when something, or someone, distracts the flow of activity. I wrote,

> After a brief pause, Gary keeps going despite interruptive comments and talking in the class. I think he is endearing to his students somehow through this: the students are allowed to be natural and behave age-appropriate.

Gary is flexible with the different personalities of the students. He treats all students in the same stable manner. I never observed Gary raise his voice, or get outwardly angry and frustrated. When a student's negative behavior needed to be addressed in class, Gary invariably turned the negative behavior into a positive learning moment. I wrote,

> Discipline is always done graciously. He confronts the issue, then immediately follows up with a smile, or he makes a comment that transforms the negativity into positiveness.

Gary's interview gives further insight towards this issue:

> Interviewer: There is sense of control in here; there is the feeling that things are going to be controlled. A routine. They fall right into the routine.
>
> Gary: Mmhmm.
>
> I: I mean, you speak loudly to get their attention, but you don't yell at them. You seem happy-go-lucky.

G: Well, I always tell them in the fall, us, and you might see me do this, 'cause I do this probably once or twice a month, where I will just stop and I will say to them, "We need to practice our 'stop-talking' again." 'Cause that's what I say is, "stop talking." Now, I say it in a booming voice, but you're right, I don't yell. And, I always explain to them in the fall that I have wonderful friends in the state of Michigan; I've got a friend who smashes her elbows on the piano to get the attention of the class. And she does it all the time (laughs). And, us, I've got a friend who yells. My own high school teacher threw erasers if he wanted to get your attention. And so, you know, there are all those different things; but I say, because of my personality, us, I'm not a yeller; I'm not going to yell at them; I would rather them be gone than to have me come down to that level. You'll hear about the "look". I guess, overtime, I've developed a "look." I've asked some of my seniors just this year in the fall, "Would you please describe the 'look'?" And I said, "Is it angry? Is it a nasty look?; I'm not even sure what I'm doing or when I'm doing it." And they told me, no, it's not nasty, it's scary in that I change from a kind, happy guy to, all of a sudden, total solemnness.

I: Mmhmm.

G: And they said it's enough to realize something's wrong. He means business here. And so that's something I never tried to manufacture, but I guess it just came, and maybe it's my way of not wanting to yell.

One young man in the back row appeared off-task and disinterested in the activities of the day. He wore a hooded sweatshirt and had pulled the hood over his head. He slouched in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest. The student stood up for warm-ups with the others, but remained inactive. While the class was singing, Gary gently asked the student to take off the hood. The student did so reluctantly. Gary then waited a moment while observing the student. Through the singing, he said, "John probably is having a bad hair-day." Not all students heard the remark, but John did. He grinned sheepishly. "You need your ears to listen!" Gary smiled; some other students smiled. John appeared rather disheveled, and by the look on his face, he was not very happy.

Interviewer: You don't seem to have any discipline problems; there are no disruptions. How do you think this happens?

Gary: I guess I feel like I *do* have discipline problems. When a student talks without raising his hand or interrupts me quite often, I will try to catch that kid afterward. Today after A Capella, I saw John and I said, "Hey John, us, uh today was not quite, uh, as great a day as Friday was. Friday you were very considerate and courteous and today you just had rude moment. So, you know, watch it."

I: It's a private thing?

G. Yes.

I: Uh, he [John] comes from a really horrible, uh, family background and I learned in his freshman year, and he's now a junior, that if I confront him in class, he gets really aggressive and he will respond so much differently. Now I did confront him in class today and say to him "Take the hood off," and he did that. Now, his freshman year we had to work through that kind of thing with him.

I: You added a little something too; you said, us, "You need your ears to listen," or something like that.

G: Yes.

I: That sort of softened the blow?

G: Yea, uh-huh, and I even added one more thing and that is, "That's okay if you have a bad hair day." Um, because I could tell, he normally mousses his hair, so I could tell that's why he was doing it. He probably got up late, or came to school late. Or, who knows if he stayed at home last night? Um, and so I stuck that in there, just because I know with him, us, you gotta take it on the light side.

Teaching Strategies

Gary is a talented man. He appears to be an accomplished pianist, and he has a very pleasant singing voice. His posture at the piano is like a Broadway musical accompanist who plays freely in various styles and key signatures. In the warm-up time, students perform neck massages and karate-chops on each other depending on the style of music Gary plays. This is routine and the students appear to enjoy this physical interaction. While the students perform vocalises, Gary plays the piano and speaks at the same time. With confidence he demands improvement on posture and vowels. Students quickly respond to his commands, after which he smiles and says, "Thank you!"

The choir classes at East High are very organized. The lessons are fluid. Each activity meshes with one another, creating a classroom tapestry that is difficult to define. Students appear to follow Gary's thought patterns at any given moment in the action of learning. I asked, "Are you the kind of teacher who does lesson plans as an emerging kind of thing, or do you have this all figured out on paper somewhere?" He responded:

> I have been an on-the-paper kind of guy...I would say my first three years, I would write out my warm-ups, I would write out that we're going to work on the last half of this, and we're gonna work on the middle half of this, and sight-reading is page 15, a,b, and c. Um...so it's been years since I've done it now. I feel like I do a pretty good job at pacing. I guess I let things emerge and happen. And for the most part this comes from practice. I know what it takes to get the job done. I'm not anal about my Palm Pilot, but on the other hand, it's helpful. I would do timeliness, but, again, it's been years since I've done that. I'm pretty much on schedule. There's sometimes when it's, like, oops, we forgot to do this.

Gary uses audio-visual devices in his classroom. There are two large television monitors hanging from the ceiling that are connected to a central video cassette player. He often will play video tapes of previous performances and then facilitate a discussion with the students on its strengths and weaknesses. Gary also plays compact disc recordings of professional choirs singing repertoire that East High School is studying.

Gary expects much from his students by placing responsibility for learning on the pupil. He asks many questions during the course of teaching and learning. Some questions are rhetorical in nature, but most evoke critical thinking. "What is the role of the diphthong here?", "Did you see anything in the video that could be improved?" and "Are you happy with that sound?" When Gary confronts poor singing, the students get involved by discussing strategies that might rectify the situation. While singing Morten Lauridsen's "O Magnum," Gary asked his Chamber Choir students to conduct in space as if they were the director of the choir. As students conducted, Gary called out directions, "A little higher, there, Jennifer. Bigger gesture, please, Tony." Then, "Some of you have a wonderful sounding choir!" Gary asks for student feedback, "This is the first time we've gone through this, isn't it?" or "Did we do this last time?" One day, the principal interrupted the class on the public address system with important announcements about a schedule change. Gary takes the time to punctuate the announcements with his own comments and says "Let's see what we can learn from this..."

There is a sense of pride in the choral program. At the time of my visit, students were signing up for classes for next year. I heard students talking about the characteristics

of each choir, and discussing who would be in what choir. At one point in the week, Gary talks candidly with the students about negative comments that were made about one choir, the East Singers, that was formed specifically for the sheer pleasure of singing. The choir does not participate in festival competition, and its purpose is to study the lighter classics and Broadway music. Apparently some mockery occurred regarding the make-up of this class when it was formed. "Everybody thought that East Singers would be the choir that *sucked*," he said, but this year's group has proved that to be wrong." Students obviously identify themselves with the choir program; it is an important component to East High School. On another day, Gary talks proudly to his 9th grade men. After watching a video tape of their singing at solo and ensemble, he remarked, "You did what East High School guys normally do not do. You sang with better tone." On another day, Gary spoke highly of East High School choir accomplishments. "The last time we sang at the ACDA conference, Capella Choir sang this piece."

Gary uses metaphor and simile as a teaching strategy. While explaining the MSVMA adjudication scoring procedure to his 9th grade men's choir, he says, "This is like golf; the object is to get the *least* amount of points." The boys listen intently. Later during warm-ups, Gary talks about one choir member, Nate, whose solo adjudicator explained he had discovered an Ab-Master at a garage sale. The tool was used to exercise the abdominal muscles. After describing how to use the device, Gary encouraged the men to think about the Ab-Master while managing their breath.

On another day, Gary speaks of singing the ends of phrases, suggesting the singer feel as if the phrase endings were space ships gradually making a landing. He instructs all students to hold one hand in the air and gradually "land" it on the other as the phrase ended. He continues, "The climax of the phrase, then, is like the the shape of a tornado. This tornado has funnel clouds that build and build, and get wider and wider." The next day,

Gary encourages his singers to place British tea cups to their lips and delicately sip in the air.

Gary is very encouraging while teaching. His coaching is always positive and spoken with an eloquent flair. I sense this allows the students to feel safe with Gary, and motivates them to work for him. He says, "I'm so excited when someone makes a mistake." This is followed by encouraging instruction to change choral behavior. The students indeed change their choral behavior according to his directive. They become confident in their singing. They continue their focus on Gary, "I'm really encouraged by eyes today," he says. "You're singing with intensity. Shannon, even more. Ben, you used to never sing with your eyes. Now you do it consistently." As a result of this comment, the students clap their hands for Ben.

Teaching Personality Through the Lens of the Students

Individual Interviews

Results from student interview data could not be categorized as succinctly as could the results of the teacher, parent, and principal interviews. Students spoke in global terms, often talking about several emerging themes in one sentence or paragraph. At East High School, individual students mentioned Gary immediately during the interviews, especially when talking about why the choir experience was meaningful to them. The themes of personal professionalism, class climate, and teaching strategies subtly emerged in the interview data. The content of student's discussions merely suggested them. Students were not able to identify specific teaching strategies in the interview process. However, they were able to identify teaching strategies through the "freeze game." Those data were not included in the analysis. The most powerful data concurring with previous emerging themes are included below, and are supported with raw data from student interviews.

Relationships With Students

A prevalent personality trait that Gary's students discussed was that of his skills in building relationships. I began the individual interviews by asking general questions about the student's singing experience and their personal convictions behind participating in choir. "Mr. C." consistently came up among students as a factor contributing to a meaningful learning experience. Students were very open about this. It did not take long in each interview to get at the core of the issue: Mr. C. is the choral program.

The following raw data represent a variety of findings, using conversations that are both long and short.

Student interview #1. (male)
Interviewer: What choir do you sing in?

Student #1: 9th grade men's choir.

I: What is it about the choir here that you like?

S1: It's because...it's Mr.C....he has such...he's named so good and everything.

I: Yeah? Why is that?

S1: Because Mr. C. is such a great teacher. He teaches...like...really good.

I: How does he do that?

S1: By...uh...I don't know...he knows...he understands the children; understands the people he's teaching.

I:...okay...

S1: I couldn't say that he's a mean teacher, 'cause he's not a mean teacher.

I:...mm-hmm...

S1: And so that's why he gets more people to like him...I mean...if you're a cool teacher and you're never mean to kids, then you get a lotta more kids liking you. It's easier to ask kids to do stuff, and it's easier to talk to kids, just talk to them, and tell them stuff.

I: Is there anything else that you notice about him?

S1: Well, he doesn't act like a teacher that much. He acts just like he...he relates to us. He comes in... just acts like a kid. He like, hangs out. We just have fun in the class. Every single day is fun. I mean we learn it too, but it's fun. It's a fun way of

learning.

Student interview #2. (male)

Interviewer: ...so what I ask all students is, what makes a good choir program?

Student #2: You definitely have to have a good teacher. He needs to know how to get through to the students basically; how to connect with the them, and know...us...know basically where they're coming from, and why....why they want to be in choir and why some of them just do nothing.

I: So if Mr. C. retired tomorrow and they hired Mr. Borst...

S2: I don't know who that is.

I: That's me!

S2: Oh...sorry.

I: Let's say your principal hired me instead. What would you tell him I needed to be like?

S2: You need to be understanding.

Student interview #3. (female)

Interviewer: ...so, sounds to me like there's a lot of fun activities that he does. What about his personality? How does he help to develop a sense of community in the choir.

S3: Well, he's a really honest guy.

I: In what way?

S3: Well, he basically tells us straight up how it is. He's like a mentor to me in a way.

I: Okay. *Mentor* is great. Why is he a mentor to you?

S3: I've always looked up to him.

I: Why?

S3: I don't know. I just... like the first day of choir that I came in here...I mean...I knew I was going to be in choir 'cause I've been in choir since third grade and I... ...he just...the way he approached it...and I don't even remember how he did it.

I:...Okay....but try...

S3: It's just like, he kind of got us to laugh. I know he did that 'cause he does that every year. And...I dunno...he just kinda breaks the ice real well. Over time it's just like we've kinda got, like, this relationship. It's...it's kinda cool.

Student interview #9. (male)

Student 9:...I'm very athletic...I play football, basketball, baseball.

Interviewer: Wow! You play all three sports?

S9: Yeah.

I: Can you mention any similarities or differences between those experiences and your choir experience?

S9: Um...well...like in a big choir like this...I mean it takes teamwork. Everybody's gotta pull their part and sing.

I: ..Teamwork...are there any other similarities?

S9: Building relationships with people.

I: And why is that important, do you think?

S9: Well, you gotta be able to trust...like on a court...you gotta be able to trust them, and know that they're gonna be there to do what they have to do.

I: What do I have to be like in order to be an effective teacher?

S9: You hafta build your relationship.

I: How do I do that?

S9: I guess find stuff they like.

I: And stuff you like would be what?

S9: Like different music activities.

I: Stuff you do in class?

S9: Yeah...or you could go outside the classroom, and build relationships through sports and stuff.

I: Yeah...?

S9: You end up talking about that and stuff.

I: Stuff that has nothing to do with choir?

S9: Exactly.

I: So how does a good choir teacher do that?

S9: I'm not sure. Some teachers are approachable in a way that you can just talk to

them about what you need.

Student interview #10. (male)

Interviewer: Tell me about that respect. Why do you think there is respect for Mr. C.?

Student 10: Well...Mr.C....he will listen to you.

I: How do you think he gets respect besides listening to you? Can you think of other reason that kids respect him? How does he do that?

S10: He understands some of the things about us.

I: Like what?

S10: Like, if we're having a bad day or something, he understands that we're having a bad day so, so he'll ask you to still try, but he's not going to be, like, forcing you to.

I: So if we had to come up with a term that describes your teacher, it would go like this: Mr. C. is....

S10: Caring.

Student interview #11. (female)

Student 11: Well, you would have to be able to make the class fun. You would have to be able to pick good music. You would have to be able to put the effort into the program and try to make...you know...make it the best it can be. You have to keep the class moving and you are going to have to be able to want to know the students and, want to get to know them because being a student isn't fun if your teacher doesn't like you.

Interviewer: And again, how does he show that he likes you?

S11: Like...he talks to you...and like...even if you don't even know the guy, he'll be nice to you and talk to you and want to know what's happening.

Discipline Strategies

Choir students in East High School who spoke of discipline issues in the class appear to appreciate Gary as a fair disciplinarian. Discipline problems rarely came up during individual interviews. They acknowledged that it was needed, but they did not address specific strategies. Some statements were made regarding Gary's ability to balance a firm but kind approach to addressing negative student behaviors. Most students talked

about it in a very matter-of-fact way. "Why isn't there any discipline problems?" I asked a 9th grade boy. He answered, "Because usually when kids misbehave, its for a teacher that we don't usually like, and they get on our nerves. Mr. C. doesn't get on our nerves. I mean, why would you misbehave and be rude to somebody that's so nice to you?"

Student interview #10. (female)

Interviewer: Can you make a list, or say some things that specifically make this an excellent program?

S10: ...Ummm...well, I think the director will not stand for less than you can give them, and he will have standards, and he will hold you to them And I think that is really important because I know for me it keeps me from slacking off. And it keeps other people from slacking off, too. For me it's really not a problem because I'm really into it and I'm really serious about it. But for other people, they know that it will get passed on; like next year they won't be in such a great choir or the one that they want if they goof around this year. Like there are these steps in everything, and we know the steps, and so we know the standards that he is holding us to.

I: Your director has high expectations is what I heard you just say. Do you think that there are traits, attributes, or characteristics that contribute to having high standards?

S10: Well, I think directors need to be able just discipline you, not necessarily like way to the grind stone or anything, but not let you just goof around. But they also have to be understanding about it, too, 'cause you know high school is hard enough when you have all these teachers getting on your back. Choir at least is fun, but you know it at least should be something where it can be really dedicated and serious.

Student interview #8. (female)

Interviewer: If someday I teach music teachers how to teach, describe to me, so that I can tell my choir students, what a teacher needs to know to make choir meaningful for you.

S8: To make sure that everyone sits down and focuses. And to make sure that you do stuff, 'cause some people do have a small attention span. They can't...like...lecture and lecture. So I think teachers ...like...the first few days should actually put down their foot and say "Okay, I'm the teacher, you need to listen to me."

Focus Group Interviews

Focus interviews included two to five choir students at the same time. During the course of the focus group interviews, students spoke freely about their feelings regarding the choir experience in their school. As in the individual interviews, several emerging

themes were represented in the same interview; class climate, teacher relationship, and discipline strategies all came up during interview conversation. Large portions of group discussion data are presented below.

Focus group #1. (females)

Student 1: I feel as if Mr. C., through his years here, worked hard and diligently to make our program known. Whenever I did the musicals at our school and whenever we have rehearsal, he says "We got this from New York...and here is this from New York; this is to make us feel like big shots. It is the little things that he says; that's the gift he has. To make us feel like...here we are...we have so many things to balance between school, friends, and homework, student council and choir. We've got a lot on our plate right now and it is just very confusing...the whole nine yards...when I walk into this room, it is, like, a total different mind set comes over me. This is a feeling that you don't get when you walk into your math class... you don't get when you walk into your history class.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Student 2: It's a relief.

S1: Yeah, it's a very relaxing choir because we get a lot of stuff done but yet he is not yelling at us all hour to be quiet. He says it cleverly. I'll never forget how Mr. C. tells people to be quiet. He pinpoints the problem instead of blaming the whole class.

S2: He will nail you.

S1: Yeah, you'll feel embarrassed, but it's worth it.

S2: He won't put you out and insult you, but it will be, like, a funny comment. It will make you laugh at yourself, but you will also realize that I did this wrong...I can't do this again. But, also I'll find because this is third hour in the morning...I also agree with my friend on the whole respect and gift thing. You will wake up and be so tired by Friday. We have AP English, AP psychology, AP etc., and we just want to go. You don't want to be here 3rd hour or 6th hour. Choir is that hour where you know you're on the same level, you're going to give respect and get respect and relax. A lot of times it is that one hour that gets you through the day while Mr. C. is teaching.

S1: Definitely. We both have had other music teachers. It is the difference between what makes a good music teacher...a good teacher in general, and he's got it.

I: You mean, he's a good teacher...he just happens to teach music. (pause)
If Mr. C. decides to retire this afternoon at three o'clock...

S2: Oh my gosh, we would fall apart, this program would fall apart.

I: Well, let's say that your principal comes to me and says, "Mr. Borst, we would like you to take over this program."

S1: It would still fall apart.

I: (laughs) What I need to know so that it doesn't fall apart is, what must continue in order for this program to continue?

S2: The teachers with the high seniority of our high school will pull the whole attitude thing: "I am a teacher...some of you may be 18, and some of you may be seniors, but I have the authority over you...you have no minds but my own...do what I say, think what I think." Mr. C. lets us go on with choir and portray through music what we feel inside of us as a group and separately. He doesn't pull that whole teacher thing. You can't do that because everyone has their own song in their heads and set in their hearts.

I: So let's think of what she is talking, about and put it in one or two word phrases.

S2: I have a little phrase: "Keep kids in choir." A lot of times the reason kids join choir, and it is sad to say, is because friends are in it. Mr. C.... it's so amazing...if you look at our choir all the guys sing in the choir, the football players are in the choir. It's very important that you keep these kids in the choir and keep them happy. It's like a business, it is. You give the kids what they want and you get back what you want.

I: Let's think of one or two more terms. What kind of qualities do you want me to have as a teacher?

S1: Respect issue is a big thing.

I: That you want me to respect you?

S2: Yeah. To not treat us like children. That is the biggest thing that everybody likes about Mr. C., he doesn't treat us like children. He treats us on a level that if you are willing to learn, he will teach you.

Focus group #5. (males and females)

Interviewer: Let's talk about your teacher here a little more. Besides those technical things, what other qualities are happening in the classroom to make it excellent?

S2: It's fun in that he lets us know each other. Mr. C. never yells, never once has he yelled.

S1: He'll get this little bit of a stern look, "Excuse me, sit down, and stop talking."

S3: I admire him so much because I would lose my patience and he always seems to just keep a calm head.

S1: I think his love for the music; he transfers it to us. If he loves a song, by the end of the time we are going to learn it we are going to love it just as much as he does.

I: Now, how does he do that?

S2: Makes us push.

I: He pushes you?

S3: Not in a bad way, but in a good way.

S2: He makes us strive to be better.

S1: He encourages us.

S2: He gives helpful criticism, and he has the rest of the class do it, too.

S3: He'll tell us, "Okay, you can't do that note," so he'll have kids stay after, and he'll sign kids up for vocal lessons.

S1: He signed me up for vocal lessons for my solo.

S3 He'll have groups stay after to learn the stuff. When we were freshmen we all did this group thing and he stayed after three times a week to help get this stuff done, and we ended up doing great when we ended up performing.

I. He takes time to help...

S1: Yeah, he is always there.

S3: I have his e-mail address. I could e-mail him if I have questions.

S2: He doesn't make himself as a teacher/tyrant. He makes himself as a teacher/friend. I know for a fact that if I had a problem I could come to Mr. C. and he would help me out, and it is my first year here. I am just getting to know him.

S1: I think that since we trust him, like liking him, that we start to believe what he tells us. If he tells us certain stuff about the music, we are going to believe it, because we know him and we love the guy because he is more of our friend than he is one of our teachers. Since we have fun while we're here, it's not like, "Oh, we have choir class and I don't want to be here." I look forward to third hour everyday.

I: Okay, we are going to end by imagining that Mr. C. comes in tomorrow morning and says, "I am retiring and I am not coming back after Friday."

S2: I'd drop out of choir.

S3: Me too.

I: Don't drop out of choir because your principal comes to me and says, "Mr. Borst, why don't you take over?" so Mr. C. takes off and you have me as a teacher. Tell me one thing that you want me to know that must continue to keep this going, this excellent *thing* that you have been talking about.

S1: Relationships, experience. Experiences and the trip.

S2: The fun level. Just before we came in here, Mr. C. cracks jokes. He said, "I have multiple goose bumps all over my body," and then he realized he was on camera, too. He is just a funny guy. He cracks jokes and he is not all up-tight.

S3: Keep the fun, enjoyment.

S2: If you are not going to strive for perfection, I do not want to be in.

Focus group #11. (females)

Interviewer: I am here to try to figure out what it is that makes choir meaningful to you. The first question is: what is it about choir that makes it meaningful for you?

S1: It is something I want to do. I enjoy it, so the choir experience is meaningful because I enjoy it. Things that you don't enjoy are not fun.

I: can you tell me why you enjoy it?

S1: Singing is very expressive, it allows you to express yourself. Singing is the universal language, music is the universal language.

S2: It is like a family, so even if you are an unpopular kid at school, you have some place to go where everything is really cool, and no one really cares, and the trips are awesome.

I: What is it about that family feeling? How is that achieved in choir?

S2: You get really close.

S3: People from all different groups in school get together to make cool music.

S1: You are all going for the same goal, really; so you are all working together which brings you closer. You are all working towards the same goal, so we all get a feeling of family because we do a lot of stuff together.

I: So...there is a definite feeling of family in this program....why do you think that is important?

S1: If you don't like someone, or you're uncomfortable with them , or not comfortable with expressing yourself.

S3: It feels like something you could use later in life, because you can always use your ways to resolve things with people, or the ways to work well with people. You can use it in the workplace or in college, in other things like that. In choir it brings you together and gives you a different experience.

S2: And also, you never want to do anything to harm your family so you are always trying your hardest to achieve the goal. You don't want to be the one to mess up, so you work as hard as you can.

I: Say again how you think that the family thing is achieved?

S1: Mr. C. motivates us to work hard, and you motivate each other even within our sections. If someone is off-key or not hitting the right note, someone will be... like.. "Hey you're off-key...here's the right note."

I: Let's go back to Mr. C. and talk about him. How does he get you to feel like a family?

S2: He doesn't allow people to feel better than another person, and if you think you are all that, he will knock you down.

S3: He makes it so we are all equal.

I: How does he do that?

S3: If someone is on a high horse because they think they are the bomb, he will knock them off. Some people that try-out for solos and think they are so great, and if they are cocky he won't let them have it because of the fact they are cocky. He can take heat to that; he notices that.

S2: He knows if one person may have worked a little harder. My freshman year I came in here and I knew a lot about music and key signatures, and I hated choir at first because it seemed like everyone was so slow. He talked to me after class and told me that it was different and you have to realize that, and he basically took me off of my "high horse" because I thought I knew everything. He opened my eyes to what I didn't know at all, which was how to sing in a choir. He takes your qualities and builds on those, and shows you that there are other way to do things.

S3: As far as choir goes, he took me and helped me with sight-reading and tones, and he brought in a lot of different kinds of music, because some of us are just used to singing one type of music. When you get into the choir program with such a wide range of music, you get used to singing in different languages or different styles of music; that opens you up and broadens your horizons.

I: So if Mr. C. were to retire tonight and I was appointed to take his place, what qualities would you say I need to have to be your new teacher?

S3: Dedicated, trustworthy, and you have to be fair.

I: Could you explain that?

S3: You have to get to know us, because Mr. C. takes extra time to get to know us.

I: How does he do that?

S3: As far as....he'll ask us about stuff; even with honor points, he'll ask...

I: What are honor points?

S3: It is what we get for different things we do.

S1: If you go to concerts, you get points.

I: Is this like extra credit?

S1: No.

S2: It is more to make us work and make it more like a team.

I: So I need to be doing things that are going to help the students be prideful...what else?

S3: You have to build a sense of family. Mr. C. is not just a teacher to most of us. He will get really close to some individuals in the choir. He will talk to them outside of class. Some students live by him; they are his neighbors. He'll talk to you in the hallway and makes it become more like a family.

I: Anything else?

S3: He sets up relationships so that if we need help, he'll go to us one on one. We can always ask him for help, and we go to him one on one.

S1: He doesn't get at you...like... "Why don't you know this?; you should know this!"

S3: He never alienates you.

S2: You don't have to save face in front of Mr. C. because he makes mistakes. On a daily basis his voice will crack or something. He is not the perfect "Oh, I do no wrong" type of person. He laughs at himself, and he is pretty willing to admit when he makes a mistake. I think my sophomore year he conducted us wrong on a song, and he was just...like, "Oh, oops." He is not afraid to admit that.

S3: He always tells us to be bold when we mess up. He is like... "If you are going to mess up, just be bold!"

S2: That way he fixes it, or helps us.

Summary

Through the lens of a choral teacher, I observed, described, and identified five categorical themes that represent effective choral teaching. In the process of investigation, the emerging themes from the interview data at East High mirror the five themes I found from analysis of field notes. This connection appears to be more than a serendipitous event. Gary's personality traits are consistently identified as positive influences in the choral music education process in his classroom. The phenomenological description of him is

what determines effective teaching in this situation.

The voice of the students at East High School indicate a strong liking for their teacher. They respect Gary because he respects them and treats them like special human beings. Gary's personality is attractive to students because he is able to identify with pubescent thinking. He identifies with his students through humor, strictness, love, generosity, listening skills, and empathy. He empowers his students to take on the responsibility of choral music learning by treating them like adults. The cycle of interpersonal relationships is the basis on which Gary builds his success as a professional choral music teacher.

CHAPTER SIX

Case Study Two

West High School

West High School is located four miles south of a small resort town, just off the main highway that leads into the city-proper. The building is tucked away from the street, with winding roads leading to a sylvan setting among deciduous trees that are indigenous to the area. Built in 1995, the school rises two stories high, with brick facades of multiple colors, copper-colored aluminum windows, and designer light fixtures that illuminate the school's architectural features in the dark. There is a large electronic marquee on the sidewalk leading to the main entrance with large red-letter words "Welcome To West High School" scanning across a black screen.

The main entrance to the building is a fat, dome-topped silo made of brick and large windows. To the left of the main entrance, massive tan and brown brick facades form the classrooms and administrative offices. The music rooms, auditorium, and athletic facilities are located on the right side of the main entrance. As one enters the main doors, attention is immediately drawn to a pendulum, hanging with a steel rope from the middle of the 100 foot dome. It unceasingly swings over a circular floor clock. To the left, a skinny corridor leads to core classrooms that are clustered into two-story square pods. This long concourse is 100 feet tall with an open, vaulted ceiling of blue-painted steel girders that meet in the middle to form arches. Administrative offices are located off of this concourse. Balconies with stylized railings of painted steel and natural oak overlook the hall from the second story pods. The school library is located at the end of this hall. A sheathe of glass at the far end displays the outside scenery of pines and beech wood trees.

A school store on the other side of the entrance dome displays school attire and other souvenirs in the window. Red neon writing lights the store window with "The Buc

Stop." A wide corridor leads beyond the store to a restaurant-like cafeteria, an 800 seat state-of-the-art auditorium, music rooms, two gymnasiums, and Olympic-size indoor pools. The interior colors of the school are soft whites and golden hues. All doors are made of blonde-stained oak, with steel, handicapped-accessible door latches. There is much specialty lighting and wooden architectural detail throughout the building.

The choral music room is situated to the right of the main entrance, across from the cafeteria, and adjacent to the auditorium. The room is hidden among a maze of hallways leading to other music rooms. The rehearsal room is modest in size with white walls and multi-colored commercial carpeting. About 70 black posture chairs are lined in four rows facing the front of the room, where there is a black, nine foot grand piano. The front wall has a large white marker board on it. One side of the room has laminated cabinets hung over a sink and a counter holding baskets of choral octavos. The other side of the room has an open storage area housing a black stereo cabinet on wheels. Placards and banners with sayings and famous quotes of encouragement are on every wall. Certificates from many years of festival participation hang in neat rows near the ceiling, while pictures of choir trips and plaques of special events hang elsewhere. In the back of the room, the choir office door and surrounding wall space display several taped-up newspaper clippings of the choirs' activities and various notes of acknowledgement and letters of congratulations.

The choir office is located in the back of the vocal music room, where a work station is set-up in a corner using two walls. There is a counter, cabinets, and a small area of shelving. Wallet-size school pictures of students are taped to the cabinet doors. Other posters with motivational phrases and educational quips are on the wall. Some old posters and piles of papers sit on the floor. The shelving holds choral music texts and three-ring binders of various colors.

The choir program at West High School consists of the following:

1st hour	Chorale (mixed, 9, 10)
2nd hour	Girls Choir (9)
3rd hour	
4th hour	Choral Ensemble (mixed, 11,12)
5th hour	Concert Choir (girls, 11,12)
6th hour	Chamber Chorale (mixed, 11,12)

Teaching Personality Through the Lens of the Adults

Jean is a middle aged woman with wavy silver hair that falls gently over the sides of her neck. She sports thin, oval wire-frame glasses that she pushes up every so often. Her round face glows with an ubiquitous grin that remains even in serious moments. Her ruddy cheeks are complimented with small dimples, and when she says "hello," a shimmering beam of friendliness sparkles from her blue-green, squinted eyes. Jean is bubbly when she converses, and her infectious smile invites others to be the same. She speaks with confidence and warmth, and is quick to give a loving pat on the arm or a shoulder-hug as she talks. She is a good listener when others speak, but does not hesitate to remark on what is being said during phases of the conversation. It is obvious that she likes to talk about many subjects. If she doesn't know much about the present topic of conversation, she asks questions until she's satisfied in knowing about the topic. Jean loves life, and she loves to talk about life. She loves to talk. She is insightful, and delights in learning new things.

Philosophy of Teaching

Jean's personally written philosophy of secondary choral music education is:

> ...I believe music has the power to change lives. Therefore, it is my duty to ensure that my choir students:
> -become literate in the language of music.
> -learn proper vocal production and how to use his and her voice to the fullest potential.
> -prepare for life by understanding and utilizing skills, such as cooperative

learning, critical and creative thinking, self-assessment, goal setting.
-be able to problem solve, and be self-disciplined.
-understand the tremendous impact music does have, can, and will have in their lives.

Personal Professionalism

Jean loves her job and career. She built the choral program at West High School by working long hours, committing herself to many school and civic obligations, and dedicating time to her students. Jean reflected on the beginning years of building the choral program, and expressed a personal professional growth that evolved over time.

> Well, I have to tell you that in my twenty three years of teaching, I've changed my focus. My focus used to be the music; that was my primary goal. It was to make beautiful music; to be able to sing choir music; sing music of the masters. The music took precedence. Somewhere in there I lost sight of the child. About ten years ago or so, half way through my teaching career, I realized that I didn't feel successful, and I mean the kids knew they were getting straight I's at festival. But they weren't singing with passion, they were technicians. We would go from festival to festival and the judges would say the same thing: "How can you sing so beautifully without expressing anything on your face?" And after hearing that twelve bizillion times, I took a look at them myself.
>
> And for the first ten years the whole concept of making art an important concept for West Schools was very important to me. I wanted to be liked, I wanted *the* program, I wanted everybody to say what a terrific program I had, and to say how it's doing wonderful things for kids. And I thought that the way to do that...again, was to make beautiful music. I remember sitting on the stage with a colleague of mine in the old high school who was just complaining and complaining about if only this person would like my program , it would be much better, and only if only the superintendent would support my program...and just being very negative. I sort of saw myself mirrored in that person's eyes, and I realized that this was not the person that I wanted to be. After talking with this person, I left and went somewhere, and I sat down and cried. I have always been a positive, optimistic, proactive, sort of Polly Anna, you know, my whole life. And I saw myself turning into something I didn't like. I really took a look at my professional life; my personal life...my *personal* life. I had people that were really negative around me, sort of pessimistic. I had an accompanist at the time that was really pessimistic and very negative, and sort of unethical. And I was just being led along this path. So I told my self to stop it; get rid of the accompanist, get rid of the negative friends, get rid of the feeling that everyone's out to get me. So what if people don't support my program? If the kids like it, the parents like it, and I like it, that's all that matters. I started a shift in my teaching from these notes on the page being most important, to the child as the most important.

When Jean was first hired at West High 20 years ago, the program had two choirs,

enrolling around 25 students. Presently, there are 5 choirs, enrolling over 300 students. The high school appears to be her second home. During peak performance seasons, the school becomes her first home. During the formative years in the program's development, Jean lead the state professional organization as president, gave sessions at state conferences, adjudicated festivals, performed in a community choir, and pursued many opportunities for her students to perform in public, including with the regional symphony orchestra. She said,

> I mean...when Maria calls me from the Shoreline Symphony Orchestra and asks that we sing with the orchestra, well...oh, my gosh, how can you say no? Or when my other colleague calls and says how would you like to perform in Grand Hall? I mean...when you get to have fifteen minutes on the program with just you, why wouldn't you want to do that? It's just that when you have a good choral program, all these opportunities come about. You know, when my professor calls from New York saying "Come on! Carnegie Hall...we could do a concert together...!" So there has to be a way. I'll be honest with you: I need help...I'm the sort of person where I believe nothing is impossible. I always say, "I can do that, or I can do this," and then it keeps piling, and piling, and piling until it just makes me crazy.

Jean begins her day at the school around 7:15a.m., and often does not leave until late afternoon. During the weeks the annual all-school musical rehearses, it is not uncommon for Jean to work 12 hour days.

> Jean: Last night, it was a quarter to nine at play practice. I just turned to the director and said, "I'm going home." And he said, "OK." I wanted to go home because my husband and daughter were at the Daddy-Daughter dance and I wanted to be home to greet them. I thought that it went until 8:30. But they were home and tucked into bed and reading books, and my daughter said "Mom!" and she just jumped out of bed and came and grabbed me, and then they had to show me the square dance that they learned and everything. Then after she went to bed, my husband and I were sitting there on the couch and he was telling me "As we were coming home, and turning the corner to our street, Hannah was just chanting, "I hope Mommy's home! I hope Mommy's home." I was in tears. I said to my husband that this is ridiculous. I'm gone every night of the week Monday through Thursday. Five o'clock we have only an hour together. It's horrible, I mean it's *horrible*.
>
> Interviewer: You have an understanding spouse...
>
> J: I could not do the job without him. I couldn't do it.
>
> I:...not just because he helps with activities, but because he understands...because this is what you *have* to do to keep this thing going...
>
> J: Exactly...exactly. He is the cook in our house. He cleans, and if he has to, he

> does the grocery shopping. You know, he does all of that. We had a house cleaner and then she quit, so he asked all the people at work about possible cleaners and he called them all up. I wish it were different. This is like the tail wagging the dog here. And it comes back to that feeling of "the kids deserve this."
> Sunday mornings are spent at the school preparing for the week ahead.

I asked Jean's principal to explore why he thought West High had such a great choral program. He responded, "We have, as you know, a dedicated, passionate instructor that works tirelessly. She is working all hours, twelve to fourteen hours a day. She spends a lot of time fund-raising. She spends a lot of time going around to various organizations and taking different choirs to perform so that people know how talented these kids are. So she is out there in the community and she does a great job at building the program."

The Monday morning I arrived at West High, choir shirts had been neatly placed on all the chairs, ready for the students to get them. The forthcoming Saturday morning, the Choral Ensemble would sing for a pancake breakfast at the local grocery store.

> Interviewer: What percentage of time do you think about your job outside of school? One hundred percent? Ninety percent? ...Why are you grinning?
>
> Jean: It's probably one hundred percent. And I'm grinning because I wish it weren't . But you know, that's not necessarily a bad thing. I still have a life...sort of. You know, *everything* is centered around your job. It's like Saturday, we have the pancake breakfast, and it's fund raiser for my choir parents. So, Saturday, my husband, daughter, and I get up and go eat pancakes. They have a little day care fun-room there and she just loves that so...it's OK to do that. It just seems like, though, that our whole life is centered around my job.
>
> I: Saturdays included...I mean you've worked probably the last three or four Saturdays.
>
> J: Oh yes...and Sundays, I go in the mornings to get my paperwork done.

The intense time commitment that is needed to run the program does not hinder Jean's ability to press onward. She remains calm and business-like throughout the working day. Even though she has limited time to get her duties completed, she offers her time to others. She does this often as she stops her work to listen to students and colleagues. She is constantly sought after for various school and teacher duties. Though time is lost from all the activity, she remains friendly and sociable. Regardless of a host of impending teacher

duties, including reading and responding to e-mails, phone calls, and paper work, Jean gave me a 50 minute tour of the entire school complex. We stopped at various classrooms and chatted with several colleagues. We strolled through the sports area, then listened to the band rehearse in the auditorium. Jean talked the entire time about her school and the teacher-life she leads within the school walls. As a result of her work with the school's block-schedule committee, Jean took it upon herself to write a 20 page document, outlining recent research on the effects of block scheduling on performance classes. She advocates singing in many different arenas. She once put a group of teachers together to form a choir, who were featured in the newspaper of the state teacher association.

> Interviewer: So tell me...give me a list of attributes. I want you to really brag about yourself.
>
> Jean: Oh lord...
>
> I: Just like I've asked your kids, "If Mrs. L. retires today and your school hires a new teacher, what characteristics must the new teacher have"?
> Who are you, Jean?
>
> J: Well this is not prioritized, this is just how it's coming out...
> Positiveness....a sense of humor...I think...let's see, what's the word? Warmth. Sincerity, honesty.
>
> You know, somewhere in there, of course, has to be the knowledge gained...the knowledge that I have of *how* to teach them. I think one of the things that I find special about myself, and I don't know where this came from, is the ability to just make things happen. I don't know how you will put that into words. I am also a follow-through person. You have people that can just give you ideas, but they can't follow-through. Well...I can do it all. I feel that in my professional career.....there have been no failures. I don't know how to explain that. But it's like whenever I've said "Let's try this," it's always been successful. But I think that's attributed to my own abilities to surround myself with really good people. If I want to get something done, I pull in the best people for the job.

A parent spoke of Jean's personal professionalism as having two components One, she is diligent in choir cultivation. There is a middle school program in place, and an organizational structure that develops a system of levels. Jean also makes sure that the community knows this. She does a lot of public relations in the community. It has visibility

from the bottom up. Two, Jean is pedagogically sound in her teaching. She is a competent trainer in theory and solfege. The students have great self esteem because of their training in theory. The kids know that their performances are excellent because of this training.

Most parents I spoke to commented about the demands Jean placed on her pupils. "Teamwork", "life-long lessons", "self esteem", "honest feedback", "rise to the occasion", and "expecting the best" were all terms or phrases used by the parents to describe the choral experience at West High. One mother told me her daughter picked Mrs. L. as her favorite teacher after her daughter received an excellence in education award. The daughter did not always like the expectations her choir teacher placed on her, but she always wanted to work really hard for Jean.

Classroom Climate

Jean's teaching personality is one of quiet strength. She appears confident in front of the classroom, always smiling and acknowledging her presence to students with eye contact that communicates a sanguine air. She is an optimist. Her optimism permeates her speech, her dealing with students, and her running the classroom. She balances a business-as-usual attitude towards managing the class with an inviting friendliness towards her students. I felt at home in the classroom immediately. As students poured into the classroom, I sense they felt at home, too. This is their classroom, their teacher, their pride, their music, their school, their time together. Jean spoke about how she develops a class climate, regardless of socioeconomic level.

> I became really involved with those five human needs that William Dennings talked about. Again, it's all person to student relationship. I think the first thing you have to do is look at your culture, look at your dynamics, and figure out what your kids need. And certainly they need to know what a minor third is, but they if they don't have a family life, they could care less what a minor third is. So they have to feel a sense of belonging, they have to feel fun, like this is worthwhile; they have to feel free to express their ideas, and they have to take risks without being told that mistakes are bad. And by having an environment like that, then any sort of teaching can occur. I don't care if you're teaching music or algebra, or whatever. But as long

as the kids feel those needs are being met, you can teach them anything.

Jean is very expressive with her conducting movements and facial gestures while teaching. She often closes her eyes during moments of musical peaks, and she delivers strong hand and arm gestures to match the expressiveness of the music. She models a lovely, pure singing voice that her choirs quickly imitate. Her passion for beauty through singing is evident as she consistently talks in terms of what is right and good and wonderful. She cultivates happiness through her personal attitude, in which she exudes through her positive spirit the sheer joy of wallowing in beauty. She typically roams from one side of the choir to the other while in the mode of active teaching. As certain trouble spots arise in the rehearsal, she addresses the problem by physically approaching the section in the choir that need work. As she works with sections, she always encourages and smiles with the change of choral behavior.

The first day I arrive, Jean sports pajamas because it is "pajama day" in the school. Throughout the day, she acknowledges those students who also participated in the activity. Her polite treatment of students helps them feel comfortable. I sense the students feel understood as a young adults. That Monday morning, Jean empathizes with her first hour choir about "Monday-like" behavior and how to deal with it. On Dress-Like-A-Rock-Star day, Jean acknowledges that she didn't dress like any rock star because she simply did not know much about them. She asked several students who they were dressed like, and engaged in humorous ribbing about the extent to which they were successful in looking like them.

Jean has high expectations for her students regarding behavior and musicianship. Routine is obvious, as every student behaves like they know exactly what to do once they arrive to class. This is evident as students walk into class with a dignified air of ownership and an apparent premonition for what will transpire in the next 50 minutes. Each student is

responsible for their own music and a pencil for marking directives. Piano accompaniment is rarely used while rehearsing. Students are frequently asked questions, "What do you need to do to get that phrase more accurate?" "What is the problem?" "How can I help you with that?" "Where do you think the choir needs work?" In one advanced choir, a student has a pitch pipe, and is responsible for giving the pitch at any given moment in the rehearsal.

Relationship With Students

Jean's strength in building student-teacher relationships is her passion for choral music coupled with immense love for her students. She constantly compliments them, encouraging with enthusiasm their good citizenship and choral behavior. On the first day I began writing notes at West High, I tabulated her saying "excellent" to her students seven times in the first fifteen minutes of class. Students feel good around her because of the warmth that exudes from her personality. She listens to students with care. Her solutions to student problems come quickly, and students walk away feeling satisfied. Jean treats her students with dignity by building them up. She acknowledges their humanity by showing her own self-hood. Her mannerisms while interacting with her students are very polite. She affectionately calls her women students "girlies."

> Jean: You know, children are our most precious commodity. They are the future; they're *my* future. You know, we should be treating them like kings and queens. They are our most precious resource that we have. I don't care if you live in the United Sates, Africa, wherever...they should be our highest standard. I just believe that with all my heart.. That's what I've decided. I talked to you before about my child-centered learning. I want every child in my class to feel successful, every child to feel like...boy...they're really special. They deserve everything...they need to work hard, but there's always someone there that will be behind them. And if it's just me, if I'm the only one they have, then at least they have someone. Where this comes from, I think, is a combination of my childhood growing up, and being so supported in my family life; and then, of course, marrying a wonderful man. The biggest thing that I want kids to understand with me is that you can risk it all, and if you fail miserably, it's OK. You pick up the pieces and you move on. And I really believe that I have that.

> Interviewer: So a choir teacher needs to be a human being in all its manifestations, in every sense of that word...
>
> Jean: Yep, I think every teacher should feel the way I do. Every teacher should realize that we are child-centered, and that the child comes first. And you know, this may sound trite, but you to really need to love kids: you have to love them *ALL*. You have to put-up with their crap, and you have to like being around them. You really do...

Jean's students know that she cares for them because she frequently asks them for their own thoughts and ideas about what is happening in the classroom. "How do you feel about that?" she asks them. "Good for you," is her reply, "OK, so let me hear that again." While teaching the women's ensemble "Lauchen und Weinen" by Schubert, Jean says, "I don't remember, did we do this already, girlies?" By the look on her face, and the posture of her attitude, I guess she really knows that they indeed have, but she wants the students to answer. She continues, "Did you notice we take a breath at measure 69?" The students respond nonverbally. "Shall we do that naturally together?" They practice it. After solfege singing, and practicing notes on a neutral syllable, Jean says with a huge grin, "Now let's do it with the German. I can't wait!" A student later responds, "It sounds funny." Jean replies with a kind grimace, "Yes, it does sound kind of funny, doesn't it?"

Jean builds teacher-student relationships by being interested in her student's lives. She talks openly with them about her reactions to events and issues that arise in life. One day she talked about how proud she was of her students as they all had the same t-shirt on at a pep-rally last Friday. As she looked over the sea of faces in the bleachers, she could pick out the choir students in the crowd because of the shirt. She expressed how she swelled with pride that they were proud enough of the choir program to show the whole school.

Jean begins each class by standing in front of the choir and patiently waiting for the class to focus on her. She watches them while smiling. After the students are quiet, Jean asks section leaders for attendance. After this perfunctory duty is completed, she again

faces the choir, smiles, and asks if there anything that anyone has to say. Every choir has a time of fellowship at the beginning of the hour, during which the students express news of the day, personal concerns, or telling stories. One day a student talks for several minutes describing vandalism at her uncle's car shop. "Some rotten person smashed windows in all the cars and stole stereo equipment," she said. Others listen intently, and Jean stares at the story-teller with her hand on her chin. Many others react aloud while the student described the scene. At the end of the story, all eyes turn to Jean to see how she will react. Jean explains:

> You know, kids, some times bad things happen for a reason. As strange as it may seem, bad things happen to test us; to help us think about what's right. It's a check system for morality. The fact that you are concerned about this behavior says to me that you have a value system. You care that this activity may be a bad thing. I think that's really good. I'm just glad that no one was hurt, even though this sounds like a terrible thing.

On another day, a special-needs student in the back row raises his hand. The young man is awkwardly spirited with a bit of inappropriate friendliness. His dark horn-rimmed glasses stay at the end of his nose. He talks with a subtle lisp. His clothes and hair are unkempt and his appears underdeveloped for a high school age man. He has a small plastic toy hanging around his neck with white plastic string. It appears to be a piece of Salisbury steak that a puppy would play with. After Jean calls on him, he explains to the entire class the reason he has it , how it is used, and what it means to him. Jean acknowledges every word the young man says. "You have new dog, Tony? You're lucky to be able to enjoy it. What is his name? Is that a toy for him?" No one in the class reacts to this conversation with underhandedness. Not one classmate reacts negatively. All appear to accept this interaction between the teacher and the student as normal.

Jean's principal also spoke of this attitude of acceptance.

> Interviewer: Tell me about your own personal philosophy on why you think the arts are important. More specifically, why do you think choral music is important?
>
> Principal: One of my big pushes building-wide is to start offering more classes that

are performance-based or hands-on for the kids who do not necessarily excel in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Jean provides the opportunity for all sorts of those types of kids to be in her choir. She only has one choir that they actually have try-outs for; her ensemble. The rest of the choirs, she pretty much takes whoever signs up, within reason and depending on schedules, and so on. I think having the opportunity for those kids to try out for something, and be a part of something special is because of the way she handles them; she cultivates them. She gets them ready. To see that and see those families come to the events. I think, for me, that is really gratifying.

I persisted with Jean to delve deeply into her personality and explain why she has the drive to accept students for who they are and help them achieve high standards.

Interviewer: I'm a fly on the wall while you're teaching, and you don't know I'm there. Suddenly I appear as myself and ask you "Why do you do the things you do?" What would you start talking about?
Jean: Why do I do the things I do?

I: ...In your classroom...during attendance and ALL through. What's your theme?

J: I mean, the first thing that popped into my head when you said that is: that I want these kids to be the best people they could possibly be. I want their world to be at their feet. I want them to feel successful....I want them to feel good about themselves.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is? Is it something you've learned in your life? Where does that conviction come from?

Jean: That's really interesting. On a personal level...my mother and father...my father has an eighth grade education. He had to quit school and take care of the family business. My mom grew up in the deep south on a just poorer-than-heck farm. She had eleven brothers and sisters. She wanted very badly to go to college to be a teacher, but you know, they just couldn't afford it. There were no grants or anything. So, my parents are just real hard workers...they're real blue-collared people. But when I was growing up, they were very, very, very supportive.

Jean fosters relationship with her students by openly sharing her own individualism as a woman and a human being. At the end of class on Valentine's Day, she hands out chocolate kisses at the door. In class that day, she openly speaks about her daughter's new dress for that evening's father-daughter dance. She tells a detailed story about her daughter's anticipation of the event, where they shopped for the dress, and how she couldn't wait to get home from musical rehearsal to hear all about it. Students listen to the story and react openly with audible sighs of delight at her daughter's cuteness. The students relate to Jean through this vicarious experience.

Jean builds relationship with her choirs through a subtle sense of humor. One day while rehearsing, the tenor section struggled with some technical problem. After some time of singing and correcting within the section, Jean reiterated to the class the strategies the tenors just now used to solve vocal problems. "Of course," she said tongue-in-cheek, "who really knows why the tenors do what they do." On another day, Jean could not get out of her mouth fast enough what she wanted to say. She stumbled over her own words and we all laughed at her. She laughed with us and admitted, "I just couldn't spit it out." As a result of this, she began commanding directions: "Sit!" she said. The students did. She suddenly realized how that must have felt to us. "Speak! Sit! Speak!" she grinned, snapping her fingers as if we were dogs. We all grinned.

Parents of Jean's students spoke openly about the way she treats their children. "She just has a way with teenagers," said one mother. "She treats them like adults -tells them like it is -fun like. She is able to find the balance of parent and friend." Another parent said, "Jean is a very caring individual for the whole person. She teaches about life. My daughter had a love-hate relationship with her. On the one hand she loved her because of all that she taught her about life. On the other hand, she hated her because she was a demanding perfectionist with the musical training. Mrs. L. ended up being the most influential teacher of my daughter's high school experience." A third parent, and teacher-colleague of Jean echoed this sentiment, "Jean is an excellent teacher. She has the firmness and the excellent rapport. There is a mutual respect there. She knows when to confirm what they do well."

Discipline Strategies

There were no negative behaviors displayed by students the entire week I spent at West High School. Students routinely came and left the vocal music room exhibiting

wholesome pubescent chatter and laughter. No student was particularly boisterous or overly obnoxious in behavior. There was no pushing or shoving, and I observed no arguments or intense conversation. Regardless of age, students appeared mature and ready to do the work that would be asked of them.

During class, students are very attentive to the task at hand, and to Jean when she teaches. Most students quietly watch the action. They automatically sit tall when they sing. A very small amount of whispering occurs during all classes, but nothing that disrupts the flow of the class. Class action is fluid. The small amount of talking is a natural reaction to class directives. Jean hardly ever "hushes" her classes; the students often "hush" themselves. Her discipline is gentle. One day, after some idle chatter filled the room during instruction about some Latin text, she quietly said, "I do expect talking about the pronunciation; then I'll wait 'till things die down." Things did die down, and she continued.

> Interviewer: I've noticed all week that there's a moment of repose before you begin the class. Just before you officially start the lesson, what is going through your mind?
>
> Jean: Um...well...to tell you the truth, I think part of that is a teaching technique. I am not a screamer or a yeller. My voice is very fragile. You know, I used to have the healthiest....full of stamina singing and speaking voice. And the last ten years have really changed. I've always said to the kids, "Look, you just have to be aware of what's happening, when I start towards my stand, be aware that I want to start." I used to say "Good Morning" right over their talking. And I decided, I don't want to do that. I want to make them aware that things are starting to happen and to clue in. So, they're really good at that.
>
> I: Well, they hush each other, I've noticed. And there's a lot of self disciplining going on.
>
> J: Yes, then they start quieting down, and then it gets really quiet and it's a nice moment. It's a nice moment for everybody. They all focus in. It's a little moment of silence, and then you start in. I mean, that's why I'm doing that. But secondly, while they're calming down. I look at them and give them a little smile...so they know ...they're not in trouble or anything. It's not like I'm standing there going "OK, hurry up, let's go!" I want them to know that's not the feeling going on. Also, I think I'm reviewing in my mind what I need to accomplish. I'm reviewing how I want to get this thing done.

My field notes contain two instances in which any semblance of disciplinary conflict occurred. The first was when an upperclassman did not have his music during class. Jean simply stopped the action of the class and quietly asked the boy, "Todd, where is your music?" The class fell silent. Some students looked at Todd. He inaudibly admitted he left his music at home. "Pardon?" Jean cupped her ear with her hand. The boy said something again. "I'm sorry, I can't hear you," Jean persisted. After the boy responded a third time, Jean looked at him, squinted her eyes, and said "You left it home, eh? Hmmmm." Nodding her head gently, she continued the action and looked away. Apparently this interaction with his choir teacher was all Todd needed to get the message that he had better not forget it again.

On another day it was discovered that William had taken the wrong choir shirt home with him on the day they were handed out. Bruce raised his hand during announcement time to tell Jean that he was missing his. Jean asked a series of questions, and after some discussion, it became obvious that William had taken Bruce's shirt. It was not clear whether this was a mistake or not. Furthermore, it became apparent that an exchange of the shirts was not an option because not only did William already wear Bruce's shirt, but he also washed and dried it. Jean patiently walked the gentlemen through the problem and made it clear that the conflict needed to be worked out between the two of them. She offered some solutions and said, "You can see where I really cannot do anything more to help you two gentleman. William, I think you and Bruce better work this out. Would that be acceptable to you, Bruce?" Bruce nods, Jean responds, "Great!" End of conflict.

Teaching Strategies

Jean possesses the ability to psychologically "hook" her students into thinking towards her common goals for class learning. This is done by speaking to them in such a

way that they feel empowered to think for themselves. She addresses the whole choir using the pronoun "you" as plural. However, as I participated in the class, I felt she was talking directly to me, because at the moment, I was thinking in the same mode, or I identified with what she was saying. I wrote in my field notes several of Jean's most typical "hook" sentences, in which the whole choir was addressed, but I took them personally:

> I think the diminished chord is kind of cool, don't you?
> Watch that page turn, it's a killer.
> I'm thinking...but I could be wrong...I'm thinking that you need to revisit that tomorrow.
> You're showing me that we take a breath at measure 16...
> You know what I find very interesting about this?
> That is a sign of a good choir.
> Did you notice that you really wanted to get that?
> I like this...handsome choir.
> Answer me truthfully...why did you...?
> My goal is to...do you think you can do this?
> Guess what? When you sang that phrase like that, you probably were thinking...
> Read my mind...yup, Lisa, I'm going to ask you to sing this way...
> Guess what you were thinking just now? Yup, about the words; not tone quality.
> Now you'll see the method to my madness.
> I know this is grunt work; it's not much fun. But it will pay off in the long run.
> Can someone put into words why you like this piece?

These quickly constructed sentences, interpolated throughout the fabric of rehearsal, engage the student's mind in significant ways. Students are motivated to listen and subsequently solve problems because they easily relate to what is being said. Furthermore, the group responds collectively because they are influenced individually, but in the same fashion.

> Jean: You know, I like my kids to believe that they are successful because of *them*. I mean, I know that they attribute some of it to me, but they just feel really good about themselves. After all, isn't that what education is really all about? It is empowering the child; empowering the child to believe in themselves, and believe that anything is possible as long as they try hard and learn.
>
> Interviewer: In the other school, one of the students said to me in an interview, "My teacher gives me power." And I said, "The power to do what?" And he was speechless. He didn't know how to express that. So I ask you. Can you please say for me what that child meant? "My teacher gives me the power to..."

> J: ...gives me the power to to be the best I can be. Gives me the power to push myself to the limits; gives me power to achieve success...gives me the power to push the envelope, us...gives me the power to be all I can be. You know, education has changed. Teachers used to control their classroom; they taught with control. They were the definitive element. "You listen to me; you do what I say; you have two pencils." Well, I don't believe that works well. I think that a teacher needs to be a facilitator. "What do YOU think? How do YOU feel about this? What do YOU think needs to happen? What's the next step for you? How do we solve this? That way, it sort of takes the control out of the classroom and empowers the student. I just really believe in the idea of empowerment. Especially in music because it gives the kids a chance of feel ownership in the program. It feels like it's their program, thus it gives the idea of family. See that's where the family part comes from. It's this idea of "This is my program. I own this. I am responsible."

Jean's teaching strategy involves placing the responsibility of behavior on her students. "Let me ask you some honest questions," she says. As the students ponder the answers, they rehearse. At one particular moment, the alto section made some obvious mistakes. "Alto's," Jean exclaims, "shoot, shoot, shoot. What happened there?" Then her eyes begin to twinkle and her ubiquitous grin grows wide. On another day she says, "Never be afraid of making a mistake, and admitting you were wrong." The students appear to like this. I wrote in my notes that I sensed the choir members feel very safe in this environment.

In Chamber Choir one day, the choir was singing "Haec Dies" by William Byrd. Even though the choir was trying to rehearse with Jean's coaching, things broke down with each new rehearsal of sections. The students appeared somewhat bored and listless. Jean suddenly placed the singers in a single file line around the room, facing in towards the middle. This strategy did not help the problems. The students were not working hard enough. She gave them a pep talk, in which she admitted that her speech was a "Sermon on the Mount," but she had to preach it because she was frustrated with their giving up. "You're giving up!" she exclaimed, "Stop that! CAN'T is a four letter word, and I know you can do it. I KNOW you can do it! You tell me what measure you start feeling bad, and we'll fix it."

Jean chooses to teach with praise and perpetual optimism. She unceasingly gives

the choirs positive feedback both for citizenship and choral behavior. Students appear to soak-up her friendliness. They are eager to please her. "Oh my gosh, kids, that was beautiful. Mozart is jumping up and down in Heaven hearing you sing this so well," she says to her 9th grade girls. The girl's faces beam with giddiness. Later she asks a technical question about the music, then says "First person who gets the answer, gets a blow-pop." In another choir later in the week, she responds to good singing by clapping her hands and saying, "Very cool. Very, very cool!" On another day, she looks at her Chamber Choir and says, "You all look so wonderful today. What is it about what you look like that effects what we do in this class?"

The week I observed the West High School choral program marked the 20th anniversary of Jean's teaching at the school. Jean ordered a cake to celebrate the occasion, and on Friday, the classes ended early so that each student in each choir could enjoy some cake. Prior to being released to the cafeteria, Jean told her history of building the choral program at West High. The students listened attentively and appeared to enjoy this promotion of their choir program. They ate and celebrated eagerly.

Teacher Personality Through the Lens of the Students

Individual Interviews

Like East High School, it was a challenge at West High to relate the data from student verbalizations with previous thematic categories. The student's verbiage contained several themes within one sentence or paragraph. For example, one interviewee talked about respect in choir as...

> ...just set...you walk into the classroom and it is the first thing you talk about every single day. She'll mention if we are talking when someone else it talking. And she'll say that is not healthy because you are trying to talk over someone. You walk into the classroom and there is respect and she gives it back to you. We respect her because she respects us.

I underlined above words in blue, red, and orange, indicating that they coincide with the

themes of personal professionalism, class climate, and relationships.

Another example comes from student #3:

> Mrs. L. has taught me so much just about life; how to be a better person, and how to take on responsibilities which are really important; and how to become a great singer, too. I mean, how we come together as a team and make beautiful music all in one. She'll work with you, and if you don't get what she wants you to, then she finds a "back door" way to understand it. She really kind of seeps into your brain and gets you to understand what she wants you to. She's got a million techniques to make things work. She's got it all. I've never met someone like her in my entire life. I will never forget her as long as I live because she means so much to me.

The above datum could be underlined in red, denoting the theme of teacher-student relationships, orange denoting teaching strategies, or blue denoting personal professionalism.

Most students in both the individual and focus group interviews at West High spoke of group dynamics as a powerful outcome of experiencing choir. This outcome suggested a subsidiary theme, generated from the perspective of the students. The following conversation provides an example of this theme:

> Interviewer: Why do you feel choir involvement is meaningful?
>
> Student #4: It has taught me so much that I can use later in life.
>
> I: Let's explore that. What is it teaching you that you can use later on in life?
>
> S4: Well, for one, just the experience of working with other people and trying to all come together as one sound, not 60 separate sounds. It taught me group work.
>
> I: What shall we call that?
>
> S4: Harmonics?
>
> I: Group harmony? Cooperative learning?
>
> S4: Yeah! It all comes back to the group. I believe that if we didn't get along as well as we do, then we wouldn't flow and harmonize as much as we do.
>
> I: Why do you folks get along so well?
>
> S4: We just do....Mrs. L. makes it really...you know...we always do stuff together as a group. It is not a class you walk into and sit by your friends. At the beginning of the year she places you by people that you really don't know, and makes you get involved with different groups. You grow a bond with them, and I just think that is really good.

The most powerful themes concurring with previous emerging themes are included below, and supported with raw data from student interviews.

Personal Professionalism

The theme of personal professionalism emerged in subtle ways from the students at West High. However, I found two discussions that specifically address Jean's professionalism as a teacher:

Student #4. (female)

She is one of the most hard working people I have ever met. She stays here until odd hours of the night working on lesson plans for the next day. She doesn't settle for "just fine." We might be singing fine, and to most people they would hear it and say, "Oh, that's beautiful." But she can hear things that a lot of people don't; and she can say that it is nice, but it is not the best. She is very blunt about things. She doesn't work around things. She tells you straight forward that you're flat; it's not like you have to bring the pitch up a bit. She goes right to it because she doesn't want to waste time with beating around the bush. She wants you to go right into it with clear mind and straight forward attitude.

....when we come in, she always has a smile on her face. She welcomes us with open arms, she doesn't single out one kid. To be as good as she is, you've gotta be very strict, but yet have a playful side to you as well. You have to have emotion.

Student interview #5. (male)

I just think she's got an expectation that she sets. She sets that high expectation and she doesn't settle for anything lower.

Interviewer: In what manner? How does she set high expectations?

S5: She demands respect from the beginning.

I: How does she do that?

S5: If you slack off, she is right on your case. Even in chamber choir, there is 65 of us, and not one person can slack off.

I: How does she do that?

S5: I don't know. She has been teaching for a long time. She is excellent at what she does. I don't know; I don't really know how to explain that.

I: I know it's difficult, but that's precisely what I need to get down on paper. Get more specific. What is it about her? How does she get mutual respect?

S5: Her personality.

I: Talk to me about her personality. What is she like as a person?

S5: She is demanding, a demanding person.

I: How does she act demanding?

S5: She's got confidence. Everything she does, she has confidence. If she is talking to someone she doesn't know, from the beginning she kind of takes over them. I think that is the reason she gets a lot of respect.

Classroom Climate

Students alluded to class climate by talking about the feeling of family in the room. Most of the this feeling was said to be a result of Mrs. L.'s friendly and positive attitude. Several students spoke of the difference between the vocal music room and core-subject classrooms. The difference was the vocal music room invited a lighter, friendlier atmosphere, where students felt in control of the class milieu. Core classes tended to be teacher controlled, unfriendly, and cold.

Relationships With Students

A prevalent theme that emerged while interviewing Jean's students was the sense of belonging to a group or the sense of being part of a family. Students spoke about the family theme as it manifests itself through the mutual respect fostered by Jean. This theme permeated all student interviews. The following excerpts exemplify these findings. Some interviews are presented in their entirety for maximum understanding of thematic context.

Student interview #1. (female)

Interviewer: What makes choir fun for you?

Student #1: It is a family. I love music and the feeling I get on stage, but is being with the choir that is like having your family around you making beautiful music. Mrs. L. tries really hard to make a family atmosphere.

I: Can you be very specific about how she does that?

S1: We can't do negative put-downs. She is always encouraging. We can't laugh at each other but she allows us to joke around. It is a light atmosphere but serious in that we can't be negative at all; we're only into positive building.

I: So if someone were take over the choral program from Mrs. L., make a list of some of the things you want in a new teacher.

S1: Caring about student's individually.

I: How does she do that?
S1: She listens to us. Every once in a while she'll take time out of her class and ask what is going on, is there anything you guys want to talk about. She wants us to be our best, which shows how she cares about us. We have these different words: we have family excellence, respect, and responsibility. At the beginning of the year we have a choir initiation, and she sings with our other choir director. They sing and perform for us and they have create ensemble. Last year they wrote what it meant to them. So right from the beginning you know what her standards are she doesn't sink below that.

Student interview #2. (male)

Interviewer: What makes it special here? What kinds of thing make this awesome place to be in?

Student #2: I think a lot of it is family attitude. We have a strong connection with everybody in the choir and with our director. The respect towards her is definitely a key.

I: How does that family thing happen do you think?

S2: Just going through junior high together and going through school and stuff, you are with those people all of the time. You get to know them. Also having a positive attitude towards new people too. You just bring them right into the family.

I: Tell me more about how your teacher gets you to feel that family feeling.

S2: Well, I guess to begin with the top choir -chamber choir- it isn't really a select choir. Whoever wants to be in it comes in and they can do it. Everybody has the chance to sing; they may not be the best singer or they may be some of the best singers in the school, but everybody is on the same level. They all have a chance to do their best in choir and put forth their best effort.

Student interview #10. (female)

Interviewer: I assume that the choral experience here is meaningful to you. Can you talk to me about *how* it is meaningful to you, or *what* is meaningful to you, or why it is meaningful for you?

Student #10: It is a great experience because it teaches you a lot about respect and

being an individual. It is fun because singing is my life.

I: Can you explain a little bit more about what you mean by respect?

S10: It teaches you to respect people and to listen to people. A lot of students get up in front of a class and sing, and it is teaching us that even if someone isn't the best singer, you always give them the respect they need, and always tell them that they are doing a good job.

I: So this respect thing...how else do you know that there is respect in your classroom?

S10: People are clapping and people are quiet when others are singing. Always alert to what other people think.

I: Why are they so nice to each other? Why does that happen here?

S10: Because we are family.

I: That *family* word has come up a lot in the interviews. I'm wondering if you could talk to me a little bit about that. What do you mean by the word *family*?

S10: We are one, one group, one voice.. we are always there for each other.

I: How do you think that happens in the class? What do you think is making that happen?

S10: Good question. I really do not know; it is just something that I think is just there. It is just something that we all believe in.

I: Why is that?

S10: I do not really know.

I: Well, let's think about what happens everyday in class. Why do you think this happening right now? (points to choir room)

S10: Because it is fun.

I: What makes it fun?

S10: Just the fact of getting up in the morning and knowing you're going to sing.

I: How do you think Mrs. L. helps this happen?

S10: She pushes us.

I: Can you be more specific?

S10: She pushes us to be the best we can.

I: Why do you think she does that?

S10: Because she wants us to be the best we can be. She wants to come out on top.

I: What do you think drives her to do that?

S10: The fact that we are the best choir in the state.

I: What else?

S10: Just seeing the happiness in everyone's faces when we do good.

Student interview #11. (male)

Interviewer: ...what is it about choir that is meaningful for you?

Student #11: Choir is meaningful because, for me personally, music is the biggest aspect of my life, and the most moving, most meaningful thing in life, both in choir and outside of choir.

I: Why do you think that is?

S11: Probably because music is not *just* music, it has a spirit in a sense. It is very moving and very emotional; it gets you going. You always leave choir happy because....well...because it's choir.

I: What else?

S11: Probably the people in it. You sing with your friends all the time....she's a cool teacher that gets you through the day.

I: Talk to me about that...

S11: Mrs. L. is cool. She is always there: she makes you feel good.

I: How does she do that?

S11: She always seems to compliment on the small things that most people would not compliment you on, but just throw it out as nonchalant. She always compliments you, so you feel good.

I: Can you give me an example of something that is normally not complimented?

S11: For example, the small things in life, like respect.

I: Let's get specific about that...

S11: We respect each other greatly in choir, student to student, and teacher to student, and student to teacher. It is expected and it is rewarded often.

I: How does that come about?

S11: The family and love: you do not disrespect your family or your close friends

or the people that you care about. Choir is truly like a family in a sense.

I: Tell me more about how that happens. I want to know why you feel like this is a family.

S11: Well, you spend an hour every single day with these people. You build up relationships that will last forever. It builds over time and you get closer and closer to people and build better relationships, and eventually through the passion of music, everyone is here for the same purpose. With everyone having the same interests, you eventually become really close and family-like.

I: I am trying to find out what is happening with you and your teacher that promotes the family thing. Keep going, I want to know more...
S11: It is indescribable. It is not like another class where you go to class and you just sit. Mrs. L. is always encouraging and enthusiastic about class, and choir, and about music.

I: Pretend that Mrs. L. is retiring and your principal hires me to take her place. What would be some of the things that you would want me to carry on as your teacher?

S11: With Mrs. L., you would have huge standards, and a huge place to fill. ...Respect, love, passion for music, especially because that is so visible. Strictness, morals, willingness to teach and to show students what music truly is about.

Discipline Strategies

Students at West High only alluded to discipline strategies that their teacher used. Mrs. L.'s high expectations for hard work was talked about several times, but discipline was not specifically mentioned. A couple of students talked candidly about how sometimes Mrs. L. would make them feel guilty if they didn't work hard enough. "She will get after you and put you on a guilt trip," one student said.

Teaching Strategies

Student at West High did not speak about specific teaching strategies used by Jean in the classroom. However, many alluded to her hard work, high expectations, and encouragement. Students see Jean as an understanding person who knows her students' needs to the extent that her demands and encouragement are met with enthusiasm and applause. One of Jean's strongest strategic plans for teaching and learning is demand and

encouragement.

Student interview #3. (female)

Interviewer: Can you give me some specific characteristics or traits about her that you think are important for a choir teacher.

S3: Understanding. Striving, really. Setting goals really high. Mrs. L. sets her goals so high all the time. If you keep reaching someday you will become really good. I mean our choir motto is "Being good is not enough when you dream of being great." That is what our little saying is, and it is so true, because she puts that into everything. To be a good person, you need to be on time, you need to be there, you need to be there for each other, you need to help each other out. To be a good singer you need to work hard, you need to sit up straight, breathe deep and all of that stuff that comes with it. Concentrate on what you are doing. So she knows how to make things work and she sets her goals really high. I think that is the key thing: always keep reaching and reaching even if it is as far as the sky, just keep reaching for those goals because you'll get higher and higher every time. That is exactly what Mrs. L. has done. You can tell her whole life she has. Are you going to interview Mrs. L.? You should ask her about her first choir ever. This is my favorite story. She tells us this story about her first class ever here. Her class was a a bunch of juveniles; they were out the window and everything; everything was crazy. At their first concert, before she became their teacher, they got laughed at. So she told them that if they did everything that she told them to do, she promised nobody would laugh at them during their first concert. They buckled down and did what she said, and she pulled as much out of them as she could, because they weren't great singers, and they had no background because they had this teacher before her that just let them do whatever they wanted. So the first concert came and they got a standing ovation, and the kids were...like... "Oh my gosh!"

Focus Group Interviews

Students at West High behaved maturely during interviews, and I was somewhat surprised at the advanced level at which students discussed their program and their teacher. It appeared they were well-practiced in group discussion. Many group interviews included conversations about Jean in the beginning stages of the talks; it did not take long for her name to come up. Themes from the group discussion coincided with those that emerged from the field notes and adult interviews. However, like the focus groups at East High, several themes appeared in a short amount of time while talking. The following conversational excerpts represent powerful sketches of the student's perspective of Jean's effective teaching personality.

Focus group #1. (females)

Student 2: We all have great passion for music. Usually the people that do not want choir because it sounds like an easy A, but it is not. It takes a lot of hard work, a lot of performances, a lot of commitment.

Interviewer: Where do you think that passion comes from?

S3: A lot of that comes from just seeing Mrs. L. and her passion for music. It is so awesome. She almost makes you feel it.

I: How does she do that?

S1: She respects us, so we respect her. She knows that we are going to do the best job that we can; she brings that out in us.

S2: Music just makes her so happy and you can see that. It just lights up in her eyes.

S3: During warm-ups, she wants us to be able to paint and feel the music. She wants us to just be big as we can with our arms and go for it. Whether we make a big mistake or we do it perfect, she does not care. She just wants us to be the best we can be as long as she knows that and we know that.
I: So how would you want me to teach if I took over her job?

S2: It is not the way she teaches, it is her attitude towards teaching.

I: You want me to have an attitude?

S3: Her attitude is to go in here and treat everyone with respect, and have everybody have the same goal. Let's all be one big family. If everyone who walks in the choir room door has that same attitude and same goal, then we respect her attitude.

Focus group #2. (males and females)

Interviewer: How do you think the magic happens in your classroom?

Student #1: I think because all of us are like, all really good friends; it is focused on a family thing. We are all a family. It doesn't matter...as soon as you walk into choir, it doesn't matter who you are, how you look, who your friends are, whatever. We all like each other.

I: Now...how has that been developed?

S2: It came from Mrs. L. I have more friends in choir that I do anywhere else. It is a bond we all have. But it mainly came from her and she is like...let's all be a family.

I: How does she do that with you?

S3: From day one, when we were freshmen, she kept working on it. The fact

is...she wants the doors we walk through into the choir room to be the things that break down the social barriers.

I: How do you know that? What does she say? What does she do?

S1: I know for one, she made these banners with the middle word being music, and then commitment, quality, family, respect, and excellence. That is what we believe in, and now the freshmen experience that whole thing, and we all get together and hold hands and feel the togetherness. No one feels left out, and it feels good.

I: What else? What does Mrs. L. do to promote family. Can you think of anything more, or say it in a different way?

S2: I would never go to most of the teachers in the high school if I had a problem. Mrs. L., you can talk to her about anything you need to. You could break down and cry and she would be like...it's OK.

S3: She actually notices when you're gone. She notices how you dress and what mood you are in. She really cares about every person. Every time I am gone, she is like, well...Tina's gone. She wants to know how your family is, and how your life is going.
S1: She takes time to know every student. In other classes, let's say math class, your teacher just knows you by your name. Mrs. L. takes time to learn about you.

S2: The way she talks to people is a lot more open. She just is really different from other teachers, and it's really comforting. I think that is really good for teenagers who need that kind of support and encouragement. She is the kind of teacher that isn't just there to teach you music. She is there to teach social skills, and life, and everything.

S3: I think it is also cool that she is not afraid to talk about her life and what she has done with her experiences. She talks about her kids and love. I have learned a lot from her in that way, too.

Focus group #3.(males and females)

Interviewer: Where does that respect come from? How does that happen?

S1: From us...created by us.

S2: I think Mrs. L. creates the respect. I think that she comes into the classroom and she makes it serious. It is not a joke to her, we feel like it it not a joke to us. She says, "Down to business," and we are, because we respect her.

I: But *why* is that?

S2: She makes us feel good because if you just listen to her, it's awesome. If you listen to what she says and do what she says, it's perfect. She makes it so good.

I: She makes *what* so good?

S2: She makes us so good...she makes us want to be good.

S3: And the music, too. Because I remember when I first started choir, I was like...I don't want to be in choir. My friend talked me into it. Then after just listening to her talk about it, and teach us the music and everything, I just love music now.

I: Can you describe to me some specific things that she does that brings this out of the kids? Be specific.

S1: I love hearing her stories. I love when she smiles because it makes me smile. She just has this whole aura about her when she come in, and she is all happy, and she makes us stretch and move arms around and be all weird; it just makes you feel good inside and you just want to laugh, and then you just do better.

S2: You want to hear everything she has to say because everything is just like, "Wow! are you kidding?" She makes you glow.

I: She makes you glow?

S2: Yeah. She makes you feel like you're good, like you're an individual, like you can do something. I just walked in and she was like, "Hey, you can do it it if you just work hard." I didn't really think I could to it. I just really wanted to have fun. Now I feel like I can just do anything. She gave me that confidence.
I: How does she do that?

S2: I think...she didn't put me down. She believed in me, even though she didn't know me.

Focus group #4. (females)

Student #4: She is the teacher to talk to if you have a problem. It is pretty nice.

S1: Her door is always open.

Interviewer: How do you know that?

S3: I know because I was absent for a while, and I was having some other problems and stuff and she called me in the office. She asked why I was gone, and I told her I was sick. She told me that you can't miss school, you gotta stay in school, you gotta keep on doing what is right. Right away, she had been observing and been caring about me or else she would not have known that....Yeah... I was really out of school for another reason. But then I really did get sick. She called me in her office and we talked about it just because she cared, and she wanted to see me succeed in choir and school and stuff.

S4: What is nice is that she calls us her kids. You come to class and she doesn't care what you look like. There are many different people that act different ways. Like Tony was talking about his Salisbury steak on a rope, and she didn't discriminate him like other teachers might have. Other teachers might have looked away and just start class. No, she added a comment about it. She thinks it's pretty cool. We consider ourselves one great big family.

I: Describe her personality with some adjectives.

S3: Willing...she is willing to change.

I: OK.. another one....give me a real juicy adjective.

S3: (laughing) Real juicy one?

S1: Auspicious!

S2: Understanding.

S1: Flexible.

S3: She is quite jolly.

Focus group #5. (females)

Interviewer: How does Mrs. L. bring you together?

S4: The music brought us together. Music is the universal language. You all can relate to music in some way.

S2: She has a lot of music in her heart, so when she speaks about it, we understand what that means. In our hearts, after she shows us about it, you just love it.

I: Can you get really be specific? It is going to seem like I am asking the same thing over and over, but I want to come up with many different ways to say the same thing. What is it about your teacher that allows her to show the music in her heart?

S1: She never lets us fail, never gives us the chance to fail. She holds us up to what she know we are capable of.

S2: She gives us expectations and she knows that. She says "If you give kids expectations, they will rise up to the event." It's true. We don't want to let her down or the rest of the choir down, so we always do our best.

I: What else?

S3: When she is directing, you can tell when a director is just going...OK...I am waving my arms. When she directs, we know exactly what she is feeling in the music.

I: How do you know that? Tell me exactly how you know that.

S2: The emotion. The expression on her face...what she tells us about the feeling of the music....how she explains it to us. She wants us to understand.

S1: She wants us to feel what she feels.

S3: She wants to feel what *we* feel, too.

Focus group #6. (male and female)

Interviewer: We are talking about Mrs. L. and how she fosters that kind of feeling. Talk to me specifically about that. What is it about her personality, or what does she do?

S1: She is always there to listen no matter what. If you've got something on your mind, whether it is family problems, boyfriend problems, school problems, she is always there to listen. She has never once turned anyone away.

S2: She always goes out of her way to have a teacher relationship. There are some teachers....you get in there and you do you work. They could care less how you are doing or what you are doing, as long as you're in their class. Mrs. L. checks up on each student.

I: Now how does she do that?

S2: She's got a mother instinct. She like, knows you personally, and if she knows something is wrong, she'll try to come out and ask you what is wrong. She'll just try to get with you all the time to see if anything can be worked out.

Summary

Similar to the findings from Gary and East High, the five themes that emerged from analysis of the interview data sources at West High reflect the themes that emerged from the analysis of my observations. Jean possesses personal characteristics that enhance her teaching capabilities, through which choral students are empowered to perform to their maximum potential. Jean is a virtuous person who demands that high standards of choral music education are met. She works hard to ensure the success of her students through a variety of activities. Her personal strengths as a choral music educator include a love for choral music and her students, an interminable inclination for familial understanding, and a positive command of the class community that she directs.

Student interview data from West High suggest that Jean is a key factor contributing to a meaningful and worthwhile choral experience. The West High School vocal music students state they are empowered by their teacher to be their personal best. They depend on each other as members of a choral community, in which respect and self-worth are driving forces behind excellent performance outcomes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Emerging Themes: Cross-Case Analysis

The purpose of this investigation was to explore, determine, and describe choral teacher attributes and actions as they relate to the learning process and performance achievements in two exemplary choir programs. This chapter presents the results of cross-case data analysis, describing thematic outcomes that illuminate the research questions. The research questions were: (a) Are there distinctive teacher personality traits in these exemplary teachers that appear to influence excellence in performance? (b) What personal teaching techniques, strategies, and other teacher actions are observed in these settings that help to attain effective performance outcomes? (c) What are student perceptions of the exemplary teacher? and (d) What other factors are perceived by the researcher, parents, and administration that influence effective choral teaching and learning?

Defining teaching personality as it relates to effective choral instruction includes identifying the personal qualities by which the teacher connects with students, and through which knowledge is imparted through individualized ways. However, those personal qualities that enrich the educational experience are inexplicable because of the complex nature of human interaction. The difficulty in attempting to operationally define the connection between learning and a teacher's personality stems from the inability to objectively observe the inner self of teaching. However, the *voice* of the teacher, parents, students, and administration, coupled with my observations, provide a means by which the nature of effective instruction may be better understood.

Five main themes emerged through cross-case analysis of field notes and interviews: (a) personal professionalism, (b) class climate, (c) relationship with students, (d) discipline strategies, and (e) teaching strategies. The themes manifested themselves within the fabric of each educator's teaching life, and became evident after comparing field

notes and the scripted interviews from both site visits. Similar patterns of emerging themes are evident from analysis of student interview data, in which the voices of the students reflect the data of the adult's interviews and field notes. While the student voice is graphic, naive, and spoken in a vernacular fashion, their conversations resonated with those of the adults.

Parents and administrators spoke openly about the teachers. None of them hesitated to accept my invitation to talk and were delighted to be asked. All adults who spoke about the teachers were complimentary, confirming my own premonitions about the effectiveness of Gary and Jean in the classroom. The parents focused on the teachers' personal abilities that positively influenced their child's life in many ways. According to the parents, the teachers have a powerful impact on their children, promoting life lessons, self-esteem, hard work, and respect for human beings, as well as music itself. The principals approached the conversation from the standpoint that these teachers made excellent employees who related well to young people.

Results

Personal Professionalism

Each choir director works extremely hard at accomplishing professional goals within a day, a week, a month, or a year. This hard work is exemplified in the amount of time that is spent implementing many musical opportunities for their students, including trips, solo and ensemble events, concertizing inside and outside of school, recruitment, musicals, fund raisers, festivals, and a host of classroom activities. The management of these events and activities involves a significant amount of time that extends far beyond working in the classroom on a daily basis, including many hours of preparation, paper work, phone calling, and e-mailing in the afternoon, evening hours, and weekends. The

amount of work these teachers face on a daily basis makes for an intense working environment. However, both teachers appear to take the intensity with stride. They seem to thrive on it. They are the impetus behind it all.

The teacher's hard work does not go unnoticed by parents, students, and administration. They all appear to appreciate what the teachers do to develop the choir program. Several adults and children mentioned they knew about the many hours their teacher spent on the development of the choral program. Several interviews revealed the attributes of hard work, dedication, and commitment of the teachers.

While the teachers are hard-working individuals, they remain friendly in spirit, compassionate, and polite with whom they come into contact. People like these teachers; they enjoy being around them. This is because the nature of their personalities exudes a warm and caring attitude. They appear virtuous, trustworthy, and dependable. They perform their daily functions with consistency and their personal behavior is stable and predictable. Students feel safe with these teachers. A couple of students stated their teacher represented a mother-father figure to them, while others mentioned that they could confide in and depend on their teachers to listen to them about personal problems and most anything. These teachers appear to be equipped to handle all the sensitive issues that influence pubescent thinking.

Both teachers are confident with who they are as individuals and what they do as choral music teachers. It was after I visited both sites and subsequently wrote this study, that I pondered, "These teachers took a huge personal risk by having me invade their personal teaching life, and allowing me to discuss their very being with all these people." I wondered if I would be so willing to do the same for someone else. I believe Gary and Jean know they are master teachers, and their self-effacing attitude towards this end makes them extraordinarily special ones.

Class Climate

Class climate was the least potent theme that emerged in this study. I chose the color yellow to identify data that suggested this theme. I counted only five instances of yellow underscoring in the interview data. However, class climate remained a compelling phenomenon to me as I observed these choral teaching settings. I immediately sensed a healthy classroom environment upon my arrival at both schools. As a choral teacher, I intuitively noticed a positive feeling-tone in the classroom that infiltrated all activity. I wrote extensively about class climate in my field notes. As I tried to articulate this theme in my mind, I could only identify it with broad feeling-type terms. While reading and listening to the interview data, I identified class climate themes, but they often merged with the other themes I discovered. It was challenging to discern between class climate themes and those of personal professionalism, relationships, discipline strategies, and teaching strategies. All of them contribute to a class climate.

Interviews did not reveal the theme of classroom climate as readily as I arrived at it. A couple of students talked about the "feeling" of the room, but not without mentioning their teacher as the reason. Both teacher-conductors develop a class climate that enhances learning, in which thinking skills are nurtured. This is a result of the personal and professional qualities that these teachers possess. The atmosphere in their classes is wholesome, friendly, positive, and safe. The teachers are consistently happy in the classroom, and routine is predictable and unfailing. Because the students sense the stability of their surroundings in the vocal music room, they are comfortable, and take prideful ownership of the activities that take place there. They are able to study choral music in an atmosphere most desirable for learning and void of any distractions that would prevent total immersion in the activities.

One 9th grade boy at East High told me that he "just liked coming into this room

because of all the cool things to look at." Gary's room contains many items that he uses throughout the week for educational purposes. His room is packed with pictures, cabinets, keyboards, worksheet papers, octavos, and audio-visual equipment. Jean's room reflects the newer construction of the building. It looks sparkling clean and unused. Posters with encouraging statements and idealistic slogans are on every wall. Plaques from festivals, newspaper clippings, and letters also hang everywhere. All these items in both schools contribute to the feeling-tone of the classroom, and indicate what actually happens there. Both teachers explained in their formal interview that when they walk through the door into their room, they ponder the "things" that greet them. They enjoy their classroom environment because it reflects the active and comprehensive choral music education that is found there.

Relationship With Students

Data from all interviews yielded the theme of interpersonal relationships. Without fail, students, parents, administrators, and the teachers spoke of the important role that positive and healthy relationships play in developing effective choral instruction. Based on my own experience with young singers in a very similar context, the relationship themes that emerged did not surprise me. However, the prolific amount of thematic data, and the consistency in which this theme emerged from interview to interview, was overwhelming. All participants in this study mentioned that meaningful choral experiences and effective performance outcomes stemmed from the the ability of the teacher to relate to their students in personable ways.

The students I interviewed in both schools hold their choral teachers in high regard. In most cases, the teachers' names came up at the beginning of the interviews. The significance of this is powerful, because I did not overtly ask about the teachers when the

students first came into the interviewing room. I purposely avoided talking about the teachers, asking questions that would stimulate thinking and talking. "Why is choir class meaningful to you?" I asked. Students mentioned their teacher immediately. That students would talk about their teacher in response to my question is also significant because they did not know exactly what I was investigating upon my arrival. Students heard from their teacher that I was coming, and consent forms were sent home prior to my arrival. However, I sensed most students participated in the interviews out of curiosity (and a chance to get out of active learning for a moment), not to talk about their teacher. The interview data clearly revealed that it is the teacher that generates meaningful experiences in the choral classroom.

Cross-case analysis of the following narrative depicts a common theme; interpersonal relationships play a vital role in effective choral teaching. Gary is a caring teacher. He listens intently to his students when they talk to him. He is genuine interested in them as young people and he understands their world. They are *his* students, and they recognize this. The students like him because he never fails to address their needs as humans, students, musicians, and members of the group. The needs of the singers are met through his generous and virtuous personality. He is open and kind. He possesses self-effacement, allowing his own vulnerability as a human to show from time to time.

Gary believes in his student's abilities. He builds them up and acknowledges the best of their efforts in class. Students feel comfortable with his demands of them as musicians because they know they will not get hurt in any way. He does not embarrass them. They produce for him because they trust that his teaching expertise will be delivered in a loving way. The students feel empowered to succeed because Gary gives them the right to do so. He does this by placing the responsibility of learning upon the student. The students take the responsibility with serious eagerness because they want to please the

teacher who knows them so well.

Many of Jean's students spoke of the family atmosphere that prevails in West High's choir classes. The word "family" appeared 27 times throughout the student interviews alone, and was discussed in 19 of the 22 interviews. Jean genuinely loves her students as she does her own family. She asks them questions about their personal lives, and responds to students who need a listening ear. Jean accepts students for who they are, regardless of intelligence, popularity, looks, or musical capability. She expects that all students do the same by respecting the inherent worth of all people.

Jean's positive attitude towards all of life is the most powerful conduit connecting her to the personal lives of the choir students. Her encouragement to all of them in everything they do is omnipresent. This constant building-up of the human soul is the reason her students love her. It makes them feel good to please her.

Discipline Strategies

Both teachers handle discipline by approaching the negativity of a situation and resolving it with positiveness. This strategy is difficult to describe in educational jargon. I witnessed a couple of situations in which the teacher noticed a negative behavior, addressed the issue, and subsequently talked about the problem. While talking, the teacher approached the situation with an air of confidence, changing the negative attitude of the problem with a kind and firm response. The teachers did not dwell on problems, and no superfluous discussion ensued during conflict management. Situations were dealt with in a quick and kind manner, after which I sensed a "win-win" resolve by all involved.

Both Gary and Jean possess the personal qualities of quiet strength, in which they behave as if they have everything under control at all times. The control feels secure, suspending any threat of group hysteria. The teachers possess a charismatic omnipotence

that students automatically perceive as they interact with one another in the classroom. I believe this exists from the teacher's many years of experience, during which time a repertoire of interpersonal strategies is built for dealing with all student interactions. Their personal moral fiber enhances their ability to discipline effectively.

I did not witness at any time negative behaviors from students that intimidated the safety or comfort-level of others. No students argued or "talked-back" to the teacher. Even in large groups of 60 or more students, there was no pushing, shoving, or tumultuous behavior. While listening to student conversations in the classroom, I heard no offensive language being spoken. As students talked to me in casual conversation, they were polite and mature. I sense that this student behavior is a result of the strength of the each community. It appears the choral classroom is part of a larger moral institution, where behavioral expectations are taught. I also believe that the safe feeling prevails because of a trust factor that has been built by both teachers to the extent that students sense their confidence, both in personality and judgement-calls. Students told me that they knew not to cross over the lines of teacher expectations. When I asked why they thought this was so, the students answered because the teacher treated students with respect and dignity. Students gave back to the teacher what was given to them.

The teachers spend an inordinate amount of teaching time getting to know the students on a personal level. This is done by allowing the student to talk, share, and express feelings and emotions. The students told me that their teachers really listen to what their students are saying, and their reactions are honest. These teachers make an overt effort to relate to the student on social, psychological, and behavioral levels of interaction.

The students know that their teachers cares about them because the teachers acknowledges the student's efforts to accomplish performance outcomes. Interview data reveal that students feel good about their teachers' encouragement and honest criticism.

Repeated refrains from the interviews suggest the students know this because the teachers display themselves as human beings, just like them. The students are aware of the teachers' selfhood, and are amazed at their ability to feel what they feel. The teachers relate behaviors in the classroom to all of life, including humor, tragedy, triumph, moralistic compunction, spirituality, esprit de corps, love, death, and a host of other life qualities. I posit that in the context of these two choral situations, disciplined classroom citizenship and excellent choral behavior is established in the classroom, because the students acknowledge the teacher's subtle, yet powerful presence, in which the teacher is the invincible leader of classroom society.

Teaching Strategies

It was assumed in this investigation that these teachers and their choirs are excellent performers. Upon my arrival, it was obvious to me that both of the choral music educators in this study teach with sound pedagogical principles. I was astounded at the beautiful sounds and excellent musicianship that these choirs displayed, regardless of grade level. However, the purpose of this study did not include the observation of vocal methods or techniques. When I began this query, I was interested in teacher actions that enhance the excellent performance.

Specific actions of the teachers did not emerge from the interview data as much as I expected. Students, parents, and administrators focused on the ability of the teachers to encourage and use their personality to teach youngsters to sing. Students found it difficult to articulate how Gary and Jean obtained results. They spoke in global terms, stating "She just has a lot of tricks to get us to sound good," or "He just knows how to get us to do what we are supposed to do."

I observed a variety of choral teaching strategies that included the use of humor, metaphoric language, audio and video presentations, creative choir formations, and

conducting gestures. However, the most prominent teaching strategy I witnessed from both educators, and the most potent theme that emerged from the students and parents, is one of encouragement. This manifests itself in the myriad of ways each teacher inspires the students to learn and grow musically. The teachers have a knack for wooing the singers to press-on and reach goals. The students from both schools talked about the ability of their teacher to set high goals for the choirs and push them to reach those goals. When I asked what characteristics I needed if I were to successfully replace each teacher, the students told me to have high expectations for them and to push them to succeed.

I observed that the teachers are fine musicians. Because of this, the students are fine musicians. Jean rarely rehearsed her choirs with piano. The students sang a cappella most of the time, regardless of whether the pieces had piano accompaniment. I sensed the students at West High thought of themselves as personal instruments who relied on their own strengths as musicians to achieve musical goals. Gary's students are also aggressive vocalists. He consistently places the responsibility of excellent singing on the student. All students appear to enjoy this responsibility. I believe they enjoy it because the teacher encourages choral behavior as a personal endeavor, and rewards the behavior with positive feedback.

An Additional Theme

Curricular Influences

In addition to the themes presented above, one theme emerged that was not extracted from the interview data. Based on my experience as a high school choral teacher, I anticipated the interviewees at both schools to speak of the choral music they sang as a factor in the overall positive experience of singing. A curious finding from this study is that throughout the entire interviewing process, little discussion expressed the actual choral music as a factor for effective teaching and subsequent feelings of excellence in learning

and performing. Only a few students and parents mentioned the curricular content of choir class and how it influenced their experiences. For most participants other than the teachers, choral performance class appears to function as something other than enjoying the art of singing in a chorus for its aesthetic value through literature. Responses from participants revolved around interconnectedness, relationships, and other social values. This lead me to ask, "Do these students and the school community appreciate the music they perform? Do they have opinions about the aesthetic outcome of the music they perform? What kind of value do they place on the choral literature? Do students love choir only because of the teacher and their friendships?"

The purpose of this study did not include the investigation of aesthetic outcomes of choral singing. The discussion of aesthetic properties is beyond the scope of this study. However, choral music is considered an art form that leads to aesthetic awareness. Why data did not reveal the role literature plays in effective choral teaching and aesthetic learning in these settings remains a speculative question. Perhaps the role aesthetics play in each school is implied through the descriptive content of the interviews. However, I expected overt discussion from the participants, describing beautiful music-making with great choral literature as a factor for meaningful choral experience.

Summary

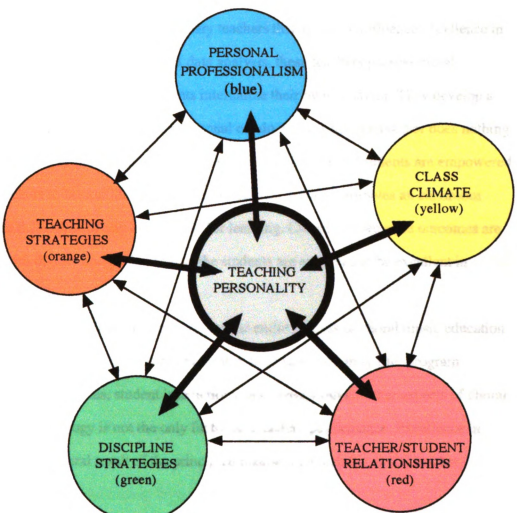
I specify several thematic aspects of choral teaching in these situations that appear to influence the final outcomes of effective teaching and learning in choral performance classes. While the themes that emerged in this study confirm the multi-dimensionality of choral teaching, questions persist regarding the exact attributions that make up effective teaching. Themes that emerged in this study remain elusive, because it is difficult to discern the exact difference between them. During analysis, several parts of the conversation in the interviews were underscored with more than one color. I became acutely aware that

delineating themes into exact categories would be a complex endeavor. I kept asking myself, "To what extent do these personal characteristics coalesce to form effective teaching?" I discovered that the themes form a web of choral music teacher qualities that coexist within a single complex. They coalesce to the extent that each thematic category blends with the others, forming an amalgamation of effective choral teaching (see figure 1).

One example of categorical blending is when Gary mentioned in his interview that he likes to have collages of choir activities on the wall in his classroom. He likes to go in his room and reminisce about times past, and to revisit the stories that the pictures tell. He wants his room to display the activities, in part, so that his students sense the classroom as a West, in which they feel safe and secure. He wants the pictures to take his students beyond the curriculum of the class, such as festival competition, sight-reading, and the stacks of octavos that could be studied. One of Gary's students told me in his interview that the choir room indeed is a place of escape for him. The room represents a quality place, on which he depends for its consistent nature. Is this a teaching strategy? Is it a teacher's way of relating to students? Is it a strategy for creating classroom climate? Does taking the pictures, framing them, and taking the time to nail them up on the wall depict personal professionalism? Does the presence of these items help to alleviate discipline problems? I believe that the answer is yes to all these questions, and it is Gary's teaching persona that addresses the answer.

A similar example of blending themes within one complex whole is Jean's students expressing the family atmosphere in the classroom at West High. While it may seem obvious that family atmosphere would be a part of the class climate theme, the means to getting the family atmosphere involves personal professionalism, relationships, discipline strategies, and teaching strategies. A sense of family is developed because Jean works so

FIGURE 1:
Web of Choral Teacher Qualities for Effective Teaching Personality
(Images in this dissertation are presented in color.)



hard at promoting it. The choirs *are* her family. They are her life. A sense of family means relationships are being built . A sense of family means that forms of disciplinary action will take place. Promoting a sense of family is a teaching strategy, through which Jean obtains excellent performance.

The first research question that guided this study asked, "Are there distinctive teacher personality traits in these exemplary teachers that appear to influence excellence in performance?" Based on the results of data analysis, these teachers possess moral character, through which choral students internalize their own behavior. They develop a value system based on their teacher's personal conduct, and since the teacher does nothing wrong in the eyes of the students, they feel safe and self-assured. Students are empowered by their teachers to be confident musicians because the teacher promotes an classroom atmosphere that is free of any distractions for learning. Choral performance outcomes are produced with dignity and pride because the students are entrusted to be excellent in everything they do.

The moral fiber of each teacher drives the entire process of choral music education in these settings. Ethical standards are evident in their speech, family life, program development, lesson plans, student interactions, and throughout all other aspects of choral programming. Pedagogy is not the only factor in excellent performance. Excellence in performance is a natural result of the principled manner in which the choral teacher behaves.

"What personal teaching techniques, strategies, or other teacher actions are observed in these settings that help to attain excellence in performance?" is the second research question that guided this inquiry. Teachers in these settings are hard workers who spend a large amount of personal time beyond what is expected of them to develop the program. They enjoy the hectic business of daily teaching-life and thrive on offering their

students many opportunities in which to participate and perform. They are humorous people who love to interact with their pupils in positive ways, imparting musical knowledge through human understanding. They talk and listen to their students. They socialize with them through appropriate means, building a rapport that is reflected in daily performances and formal concerts. The teachers foster a wholesome classroom climate, in which the community of singers depend on each other, creating a scaffold of interpersonal relationships.

The third research question asks, "What are student perceptions of the exemplary teacher?" Students in both the settings hold their teachers in high regard. They openly love their choir teachers and depend on them for guidance. The students rely on their teacher to play the roles of mentor, parent, and counselor. Students perceive the teachers to be noble people with whom they place their trust, and through whom they validate themselves as young persons of worth. The refrains of the students portrayed their teachers as respectful human beings who empathized with student thinking.

Finally, the fourth research question asked, "What other factors are perceived by the researcher, parents, and administration that influence excellent choral teaching and learning? Teachers in these settings possess the innate ability to recognize the learning needs of their students and community. The teachers build their programs by first being attentive to their students, and then setting high standards and goals for them. The teachers coach their students to the highest levels of achievement, developing the choral community to the extent that it functions to its maximum potential. The teachers and their choral program are well-known in the smaller school community as well as the larger regional community. This is attained by building one success upon another, and by not tolerating sub-standard programming. Excellent performance achievements become the norm.

Parents and administrators enjoy the extra-musical aspects of the choral program.

Parents are proud to have their children involved in a learning environment that nurtures respect, dignity, and the results of hard work. Administrators rely on the choral programs for supporting their school's reputation as an excellent institution in the community.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Personal Remarks

This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations. Throughout the discussion, I include literature that supports my remarks. I discovered literature that resonated with my thoughts after I gathered data, analyzed the results, and wrote conclusive narrative.

Conclusions

This study suggests that effective high school choral teachers possess intrinsic teacher personality traits that coalesce with vocal pedagogy to enhance the learning and performance of choral music. The extent to which this coalescence develops to fruition depends on contextual properties. The present study sought to qualitatively describe the nature of choral teaching and learning through the lens of the participants. Analysis of the participant's choral world in these settings tells the complex story of effective choral teaching.

The results of this study comprise an exploration of the teacher-life of two exemplar high school choral conductors. Through the process of systematic qualitative investigation, this report confirms the elusive nature of the art of choral teaching. However, the nature of choral teaching described herein supports the notion that teaching personality is an important feature of choral instruction, because it endorses individuality and personal freedom within a greater whole. Effective choral teaching appears to be multi-dimensional. It involves a complex rehearsal fabric, in which the teacher successfully weaves his or her personality into an overall excellent experience of learning and performing. The process is highly personal and situational.

Describing choral teacher-conductor effectiveness confirms the concept of situational context; it is through the context of these exemplar situations that insight toward

excellence in choral teaching may be fully gained. The description of the two choral teacher-conductors in this study connect pedagogical principles to the personal abilities of the conductor. It may be concluded that excellence in choral teaching is a result of a transcendental integration of teacher selfhood and pedagogy, in which a choral teacher-conductor uses his or her personality traits to enhance choral learning and performance. Parker (1998) explains:

> The techniques I have mastered do not disappear, but neither do they suffice. Face to face with my students, only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my self-hood, my sense of this "I" who teaches -without which I have no sense of the "Thou" who learns...good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher...in every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood -and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning. (p.10)

The high school choral music teacher's ability to relate to young people in a positive manner promoting an atmosphere based on mutual respect significantly contributes to the success of exemplary choral music teaching and learning in these situations. Based on the results of this study, healthy classroom atmosphere encourages choral students to the extent of feeling good about what they do and providing an avenue for learning that is savored, leaving the student to crave more. Because of the positive feeling-tone of the classroom environment in which they interact, the choral students behave in most any way to achieve the excellence for which the teacher-conductor is striving. Thurman (1977) made an analysis of the use of rehearsal time of five choral conductors. He concludes that positive reinforcement is an effective way of improving the general quality of the rehearsal, and

progressing toward the ultimate goals of choral behavior. He suggests:

> The importance and appropriate use of conductor approval has not been sufficiently recognized by choral conductors. All observational studies presently reported show that approval of rehearsal effort is often a rather low priority item. Yet those who scientifically study human behavior suggest that, when properly used, it can be a fundamental part of learning and of the development of dedicated behavior. (p. 8)

The effect of teacher reinforcement is two-way. The behavior of the students reinforces the behavior of the conductor. This mirror image stimulates the teacher and the student to continue practicing and striving for goals that, while not quite yet achievable, improve over time. The result is a feeling of hospitality. Parker (1998) writes:

> Good teaching is an act of hospitality toward the young, and hospitality is always an act that benefits the host even more than the guest. The concept of hospitality arose in ancient times when the reciprocity was easier to see: in nomadic cultures, the food and shelter one gave to a stranger yesterday is the food and shelter one hopes to receive from a stranger tomorrow. By offering hospitality, one participates in the endless reweaving of a social fabric on which all can depend -thus the gift of sustenance for the guest becomes a gift of hope for the host. It is that way in teaching as well: the teacher's hospitality to the student results in a world more hospitable to the teacher. (p. 50)

The positive moral fiber developed within the classroom starts with the teacher-conductor's ability to develop relationship with the singers through personable treatment. The singers, in turn provide hospitable behavior that in turn, generate the wholesome classroom environment.

This study suggests that technically accurate choral behavior without teacher-student relationship is incomplete. Without the cultivation of positive human relationships

and personal identities, technically proficient choirs may be missing a key ingredient in the recipe for artistic excellence. Conversely, choirs experiencing deficient or static performance outcomes, may struggle from dysfunctional relationship-building. The current study reveals that without a psychological component to singing in choral ensembles, the physiological mechanisms of singing cannot produce expressive outcomes to its maximum potential. This psycho-physiological relationship suggests that, as choral teachers perpetuate humanism within their choirs, the students physically produce an aesthetic and expressive sound-force that is pleasing and desirable.

Grechesky (1985) studied the relationship and interaction of conductor and ensemble. He suggested that teacher behaviors exhibited in rehearsals powerfully influence the extent to which communication of musical ideas from teacher to student are successfully implemented. His findings reveal a case for expressive conducting that provides the "connection between the theoretical concepts of absolute expressionism and the art of conducting" (p. 144). Similarly, Gumm's (1991) study sought to measure the conductor's attempts at developing an aesthetic music performance:

> The beauty of the music is brought out through the translation and manipulation of students' musical thought and action. The process involves drawing upon images, ideas and sensations from student's life experiences to bring about the emotional and psychomotor response of an aesthetic performance. (p. 102)

The current study reveals that teachers can bring about an aesthetic and expressive physiological response as a manifestation of their interpersonal communication skills with their choir members.

Analysis of sensory-data imply non-musical dimensions as a factor regarding quality choral instruction at the high school level. The social aspect of singing appears to involve a communal process of learning that is stimulated by the teacher, who engages

students in such a way that they think first in terms of community as they learn. Complete musical knowledge is discovered through a communal source, from which aesthetic choral performance is a natural response. As the teacher stimulates the students to know choral music through social integration, a continuous cycle of teacher-student interaction ensues that nurtures a sense of self and identity within a greater whole. These exemplar teachers reach their students first. The subject matter is a secondary component to learning. Parker (1998) suggests, "Knowing of any sort is relational, animated by a desire to come into deeper community with what we know...Knowing is a human way to seek relationship and, in the process, to have encounters and exchanges that will inevitably alter us. At its deepest reaches, knowing is always communal." (p. 54). It appears from this study that effective choral music teaching includes imparting musical knowledge through sentient properties, in which the students integrate a sense of self, others, and the world around them with the music performed.

The choral music educators in this study appear to have built their own "school" within a school, in which the entire community sees the choral program as something of worth and quality. These small and powerful social domains are built over time by the teachers who take extra steps to involve students in quality activities that breed one successful event after another. As word spreads throughout the community that success is evident within the program, the teacher and the program receive a respected reputation. As the teachers build on this reputation over time with subsequent successful events, a chain reaction continues to perpetuate excellence. Everyone in the community knows about the success because the choral program becomes an entity that everyone talks about. Upon my early arrival to one of the schools, a paraprofessional hall patrol woman noticed me waiting at the vocal music room door. She asked if she could help me, and I talked to her about the reason for my being there. "Well," she said, "You sure picked the right person to study!"

Recommendations

Choral Music Education

This study heightens an awareness of the complexities inherent in successful choral teaching. The uniqueness of individual teachers and the personal strengths they possess as musicians vary to such a degree that defining exemplary teaching may be difficult, if not impossible. However, this study stimulates instructors of secondary music methods courses in higher education to include some units based on the findings reported here. Exploring the quintessence of effective choral teaching, albeit elusive, may prove to be an exercise that stimulates self-reflection and introspection among future choral teachers.

Students in choral music methods courses could be assigned to watch videotapes of secondary choral rehearsals, representing effective instructors like Gary and Jean. Subsequent reactive journal writing throughout the course may enhance reflective discussion about what constitutes effective teaching. Students could also observe over time their own personal growth by reviewing what they wrote at the beginning of the course with what they wrote later in the course. A comparison of these writings may help to identify within themselves some of the same personal characteristics found in the present study.

Similarly, preservice choral music education majors could benefit from monitoring their own teaching with video tape recordings. Comparisons of video-taped rehearsals from the beginning of the year to the end may help to identify personal growth issues. Reflective narrative about their personal teaching growth may solidify development of teaching personality, especially as it relates to the findings of the current study. Additionally, peer coaching and critique would enhance this procedure by writing case-studies about class-mates and presenting them to each other for further study.

Durant (1994) sought to define a model for effective choral teaching. Throughout

the discussion, he suggests that personality seems to have some bearing on the effectiveness of a teacher-conductor. He claims that much has been written about conductors, but it is not clear from the writings what actually makes a good effective teacher-conductor. The author asks "What exactly are the criteria by which a teacher-conductor is judged? How would Georg Solti fare with a high school choir, and how would a high school music director manage with the Chicago Symphony?" (p. 59).

These questions remain speculative. However, the present study suggests exploring the idea that certain personality traits are indeed important in the success of good high school choral teaching, and they can be monitored. Through anecdotal accounts and watching teachers in action, students of secondary choral methods classes may develop a sense as to what are appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for fine teaching. This "sense" of proper behavior may be found in the student's ability to recognize personal teacher actions that are compatible with individual learning styles. Thurman (1992) uses the term "developmental leadership" when discussing proper teacher behavior, which

> ...orients the group toward fulfilling their innate learning capacities where the satisfaction of individuals and the group is paramount; where intrinsic motivation is predominant; and where personal or group achievements in the past are compared with personal or group achievements in the present. (p. 100)

Choral music education departments at the college level should consider personal development and maturity as factors when accepting students into preservice programs. University students enter into choral teacher education programs without prior teaching experience, and often base their knowledge of choral teaching on their previous high school choral experience. Based on the findings regarding teaching personality in this study, some preservice students may possess limited knowledge of the realities of choral music teaching, and may be inappropriate candidates for future practice. Music education

programs should consider a filtering procedure, in which prospective music teacher's personalities are discussed. Acceptance into the program would be based upon the student's propensity to effectively use his or her personal skills to enhance choral music learning.

Based on the data of the current study, neophyte choral conductors should reflect on their personal abilities to develop relationships. The results suggests that positive relationships between the teacher and the student are extremely important for effective outcomes in the choral classroom. The singers are motivated to do what the teacher asks, and perform to maximum potential because of the relationship they experience with their teacher. Building relationships may be something that develops over time. However, music teacher educators should help those desiring a career in choral music teaching to observe themselves as relationship builders, not only accomplished music-technicians.

Case-studies like the present investigation provide rich learning opportunities for preservice teachers. By reading case-studies such as this one, students experience tacit knowledge about the art of choral teaching. Yin (1984) suggests the reason for case-study is to provide students of teaching ideas for debate. He asserts that case-study retains the holistic and meaningful aspects of describing real-life, complex phenomenon. He sees case study as a rich source of knowledge, in which the preservice student may ask "why" and "how" something exists. Choral music method courses should provide ample opportunity for students to read and write case-studies, visit school settings, and listen to guest choral teachers tell their stories.

Conway (1999) developed an inquiry in which instrumental teaching cases were qualitatively analyzed for study by preservice students in instrumental music education methods courses. After documenting behaviors of four exemplar instrumental teachers, the author reflects that the study of emerging categories of teacher behavior is important for

observation by undergraduate music education majors.

> In many undergraduate music education programs, in-depth experience with a teacher in the field, such as is described in these cases, may happen during a preservice internship or field experience. The writing of a case based on these observations might heighten and bring more meaning to the observation experience, in addition to providing documentation of that observation for fellow students to read and discuss. (p. 353)

Similarly, Jordan (1989) asserts that the case study "...can begin to document the wisdom of practice...and can begin to document and codify the practical pedagogical wisdom of experienced teachers" (p. 58). Through writing cases at the undergraduate and graduate level of study, the profession will be provided with a "knowledge base for teaching others how to teach" (p. 58).

Further Research

More research reflecting the qualitative perspective of choral music teaching is needed, as in-depth analysis of choral situations provide both emic and etic angles toward teaching. However, the definition for effective choral teaching is inadequate, especially for the choral student who desires to teach the art of ensemble singing. Textbooks on the choral profession do not adequately provide context with which to understand the technical jargon that accompanies choral teaching. What is meant by exemplary music educators? King (1998) summarizes his qualitative investigation of an exemplar music teacher, "Because few studies have provided detailed descriptive examples of exemplary music educators, we continue to struggle to know what the term means" (p. 71).

Carter and Doyle (1996) state that, since the early 1990s, a growing trend towards ethnographic research in education has emerged. They suggest that this is happening

because of a renewed interest in the teacher as an educative medium by which to learn about the profession. The teacher is no longer considered an objective cog in the wheel of education, something to be studied from the stance of an outsider looking in. Teaching is a highly personal endeavor and is linked to self identity and life story. The authors assert that autobiographical research empowers the teacher by allowing them to share their personal voice regarding teaching and learning. More stories from choral music teachers are needed to confirm the results of the present qualitative perspective.

In an interview with Brandt (1992), Lee Shulman states that the research community may have learned as much as we can about teaching though the traditional, positivist framework of research. He suggests it is time to explore case-studies and the stories they tell because they help us examine real-life situations and complex phenomenon. Shulman advocates the use of the case-study because of what we can learn from them: real-life experiences help the teacher to know more about learning and how we teach for learning. He is particularly interested in finding ways to discover more about pedagogical content knowledge through the use of case-study investigation. More stories of secondary choral cultures should be investigated to provide the choral community with knowledge about applying educational principles to the art of teaching choir.

More study is needed to explore student perceptions of what constitutes effective choral teaching. The "Freeze Game" that I developed during data collection in the present study may provide pertinent information regarding the success and failure of specific teaching and learning strategies. Preservice university students in field experiences, as well as practicing novice teachers, often fail to realize how they portray themselves to their students. Based on my experience as a supervising teacher, I have observed that student teachers feel frustrated during active teaching, because the students react to their teaching strategies in ways that are not intended. Developing strategies that enable choir students to

know when they are learning would equip the choral teaching profession with a repertoire of teaching ideas that could be taught and learned at the university level. Research that employs the concept of the "Freeze Game" can help this process.

More research investigating the efficacy of individual interviews versus group interviews would aid qualitative researchers in making decisions about data collection. After reading all student interviews, I noticed that individual students did not articulate their thoughts as well as students who interviewed in focus groups. Generally, the individual interviews were less insightful, and the answers to my questions were expressed in rather poor English. I was forced to be persistent with individuals to continue expressing their thoughts by consistently asking the same thing in different ways. Often, I kept asking "why?" and "how"? This made some students uncomfortable, while others reacted to these questions with more specificity. I surmised that this was the first time students were actually asked to articulate feelings about the issues I was investigating. At times, there were awkward feelings in the interviews because the students simply could not express what they were thinking. However, students interacting with one another in the focus interviews stimulated much group discussion. This was a curious phenomenon to me. The group discussions mimicked the potency of community interaction that I discovered in each classroom. The focus group interviews yielded the most potent information regarding cross-case themes.

At the heart of the present study is the contextual story in which both these teachers practice their craft. The success of each teacher is due largely on the a near-perfect match of teacher personality to specific school culture and climate. Moreover, this study describes through vicarious experience how the teacher builds community and a singing culture through personal abilities. However, what happens when these teachers are relocated to another situation? What does the scenario look like when either of these exemplars are

moved to another district or singing-culture? Would the educator's teaching personality change and adapt? Would it *need* to change and adapt? When I asked one of the exemplar teachers this question, the answer came quickly. "I would start by seeing where my new students were at, and work from the bottom up." A principal answered in the following way to the same questions, "It does not matter where you put my teacher or any teacher who has that thing I call the *connection piece*. I think a lot of the issue is how the community feels about certain things. I would say my teacher would be successful as long as the community valued choir." Qualitative studies that examine effective teacher personality traits that are cross-contextual would provide greater understanding and comprehension of the intangible nature of choral teaching. Durant (2000) agrees, "Such research will enable teachers and conductors and the wider educational community to make choices from an informed standpoint" (p. 48).

The current study provides the undergraduate and graduate student in choral music educational scenarios in which they can discuss the effect of socioeconomic levels on choral programs in the public schools. Both of the high schools in the present study are from suburban settings, in which specific values for education, including music education, are indicative of the values of the community. There is little research addressing the success or failure of choral music education as it relates to the community in which it is implemented. More investigation is needed reflecting case-studies from a variety of choral music education settings that include urban and rural programs. Cross-case analysis of specific choral teaching habitats from a variety of communities may suggest universal as well as indigenous themes of choral music education, thus providing choral music teacher educators and their students a realistic picture of "what is out there."

This study asked high school music students why the choral experience was meaningful for them. Many reflected that they simply like to sing. However, they did not

articulate why. Is this true for all singers everywhere? Are there global reasons for singing together? From a broader perspective on choral teaching and learning, research activity should focus on the phenomenon of group singing in and of itself. Group dynamics from various choir cultures may give better understanding as to why groups of individuals are attracted to singing with one another, despite their location, identity, affiliation, or ethnic culture. Durant and Himonides (1998) sought to investigate the singing phenomenon. Their study was guided by one research question: What makes people sing together? The authors explored several investigative approaches toward answering this question by discussing biological, anthropological, psychological, sociological, and ethnomusicological research perspectives. Through a case study, the authors intent was to explore perceptions, beliefs, backgrounds, attitudes, musical, and non-musical behaviors of the singers as a group and as individuals. Future choral music research may replicate this study to check for similarities and differences across cultures.

Personal Remarks

I began this study knowing the myriad complexities that exist in high school choral teaching and conducting. I brought to this study preexisting knowledge, understanding, opinion, interpretations, and ways of thinking about the profession. This preunderstanding helped me to comprehend the choir cultures I observed, and empowered me to investigate these situations with trustworthiness.

The findings in this study are not surprising to me. Yet, the process of my investigation has given me deep insight toward building a choral culture in the high school setting. My teacher selfhood has been profoundly enriched through this project, and I am able to apply the findings in this study to several aspects of my own professional work. I find I am more aware of my own teacher selfhood and its influence on rehearsal strategy

and the final product of my choirs. I observe the powerful impact that moral fiber has on my relationship with individual students as well as the whole ensemble. I am more eager and capable of sharing my selfhood with my students for the use of building community. I no longer feel vulnerable when my true self is seen by my students, and I am freer to share my personal stories to enhance the study of choral music. I sense my students notice in me a natural passion for exploring life through the music. I believe my choirs have new vitality and richness, in which artistic motivation comes from the desire of the students to express their own life through the music. In my quest to know what effective choral teaching is and what it looks like, I confidently say with Parker (1998), "Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life" (p. 11).

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Interview Protocols

Formal Interviews: Teacher

Example questions

What motivates you to teach?
When in your life did you decide that you would become a teacher?
What life experiences molded your decision to become a teacher?
When you walk through the doors of your music room, what thoughts run through your mind?
When the students are gathered and ready for the opening of the lesson, what thoughts run through your mind?
What personality traits do you perceive you possess that empowers your teaching?
When in your teaching career did you first identify yourself as an excellent teacher?
What factors helped shape your opinion about yourself as an excellent teacher?
Some students have told me that (statements regarding teacher). How do you respond to this?
Suppose I was invisible while observing your classroom so that no one could see me and later at the end of the class I magically appeared to ask you questions about your teaching. What questions do you think I would I ask and how would you answer them?

Formal Interviews: Student

Example questions

What is it about singing that you enjoy the most?
What is it about your choir that makes it meaningful for you?
Explain to me your history of singing in choirs.
List some characteristics that you feel are necessary in order to be an excellent choral teacher.
Do you think your choir teacher exemplifies these characteristics in his/her teaching? If so, how?
Describe what you think makes your choir excellent.
Suppose a new student from another school came into the choral program. What kinds of things would you say to them to help them be successful here?
What do other non-choral students think about this program?
Describe what you think would happen if your teacher decided to retire?
What kinds of conversations do you have with your parents regarding your choir experience?

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