

THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN A MUSICAL THEATER
PRODUCTION ON THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND POSSIBLE SELVES

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By

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Dedication

To my family and my students.

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Abstract

The Impact of Participation in a Musical Theater Production on the Personal
Development of High School Students: A Case Study Investigating Communities of

Practice and Possible Selves

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This case study examined how participation in a high school musical theater production formed a community of practice, which impacted students' possible selves. Interviews with five students from the cast of the musical at a suburban public high school in a mid-Atlantic state constituted the primary source of data and supplemental data included a performance observation, the performance program, and informal anecdotes. Data presentation included a narrative vignette to provide rich, thick description. Prestructured case analysis aligned the findings to the frameworks of communities of practice and possible selves, and pattern coding analysis revealed the themes of family, work, actor identity, and confidence. Consistent with the literature, data indicated that participation in a high school musical theater production fostered the development of a community of practice and furthered students' notions of their possible selves. Future research could examine school musical theater productions through family theory and the development of a Possible Selves Program in Musical Theater.

SECTION I

Introduction

Musical theater has been a staple of American entertainment for over a century (Jones, 2003; Miller, 2007), and school music programs have incorporated musical theater into curricula for decades (Feay-Shaw, 2001). In recent years, educators (Bobetsky, 2009; Bos, 2012; Feay-Shaw, 2001; Lee, 1983; Ross & Durgin, 1998) have explored the potential benefits of involvement in musical theater and the transformative impact of musical theater productions on students' lives and development. For example, Bos (2012) explored an inclusive youth musical theater troupe in which participants displayed exceptional progress with their personal development, specifically gaining confidence and coping strategies. Musical theater in schools often operates in close connection with the music education and theater departments, displaying the interaction between these disciplines (Bobetsky, 2009). Exploring the environment present within school musical theater productions and the thought processes that students cultivate during these experiences might offer further insight into how participation in these productions impacts young peoples' personal development.

As a 13-year-old junior high school student dealing with a myriad of internal crises concerning my emergent self-identity, being cast as Bert Healy in my school's musical theater production of *Annie* had a profound impact on my personal development. While attending rehearsals, making new friends, and working toward the performance, I noticed changes in a variety of aspects of my life. I gained a solid sense of self-worth

within my new group of friends, which included peers my own age as well as students in every grade of high school. Through my interactions with these friends, I developed stronger social skills, gained confidence, and began to refine my self-identity. These developments fueled participation in 10 more shows during high school and later pursuit of an undergraduate degree in music education with a minor in musical theater.

Nine years after *Annie*, I completed a semester of student teaching as a high school choir director, during which I assisted with the high school musical. Throughout this experience, I witnessed transformations among my students who participated in the musical that were similar to my own. One student in particular seemed to undergo a complete personality makeover, growing from a quiet, bored, seemingly self-conscious loner to a friendly and outgoing addition to the music program. While other influences such as joining choir and the school's gay-straight alliance may have contributed to this student's experience that semester, I was reminded of the school musical's impact on my own social development as an adolescent and became interested in further investigating the impact of musical theater on adolescent personal development.

Statement of the Problem

Existing literature (Bos, 2012; Feay-Shaw, 2001) indicates that participation in musical theater can have a positive, often transformative impact on student participants' personal development, yet research that considers specific elements of participation that may contribute to this phenomenon is lacking. Based on the existing literature, it seems that the social environment of musical theater productions and the thought processes required for participating in a school musical, such as character development and

experimentation with identity, may indicate the ways in which participation might impact students' personal development. Considerations of personal development for this study encompassed concepts such as social skills, self-identity, work ethic, self-confidence, motivation, and goals for the future, all of which are consistent with the literature.

Definitions

The following section includes definitions of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and Possible Selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), both of which served as guiding frameworks in this study.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice served as a framework through which I investigated the rehearsal environment of a musical theater production. Communities of practice are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2006, para. 3). The environment of high school musical theater productions coincides with various elements of communities of practice including meaning, practice, community, and identity based on Wenger’s (1998) description of these elements:

- 1) *Meaning*: a way of talking about our (changing) ability—individually and collectively—to experience our life and the world as meaningful.
- 2) *Practice*: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
- 3) *Community*: a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence.
- 4) *Identity*: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities. (p. 5)

Each of these facets of communities of practice is present in various aspects of musical theater productions, as confirmed by the findings detailed in Section IV. Working

together as a cast during rehearsals and performances allows students to develop their individual and collective abilities to experience Wenger's concept of *meaning*. The task of mounting a musical theater production and striving for excellence in its execution offers students the opportunity to engage with shared resources, perspectives, and frameworks that foster the mutual engagement of *practice*. The social configurations within each cast, as well as the impact of the musical production on the school and general community, situates each student's participation within a context of *community*. As students prepare throughout rehearsals to present the final performances, their participation helps to develop their *identity* and their personal histories of becoming within the contexts of the production, their school, and their community. While exploring musical theater productions as communities of practice indicates the conditions present to aid in student development (Countryman, 2009), the actions and thought processes that student actors undergo while developing their characters during a production might also have a significant impact on their development.

Possible Selves

In examining the requisite thought processes for participating in a musical theater production such as examining identity through character development, possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) served as a framework through which I investigated students' self-identities. Possible selves theory considers what students might become, what they hope to become, and what they fear becoming. Self-concept, which encompasses who one was in the past, who one is now, and who one might become in the future, is an integral part of possible selves theory (Lee & Oyserman, n.d.). Many approaches to

acting (Cole, 1983; Hagen, 1973; Stanislavski, 2008) that influence rehearsing and performing dramatic works, including musical theater works, advocate for a connection between actor self-identity and character identity. This examination of character and identity helps students develop a stronger understanding of past, present, and future selves, all of which constitute one's self-concept (Lee & Oyserman, n.d.). By developing, analyzing, and portraying a character in a musical while interacting with the identities of other students, production team members, and industry professionals, students involved with musical theater productions in school can investigate a wide range of possible selves.

Research Questions

This study investigated a group of students who acted in a high school musical theater production. By examining the social environment of rehearsals through Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and students' concepts of their past, present, and future self-identities through Possible Selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the aim was to investigate how the environment of musical theater productions might impact students' personal development. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. In what ways does participation in musical theater productions as a cast member foster the development of communities of practice among high school students?
2. In what ways does participation in musical theater productions as a cast member impact individual students' development of possible selves?

Timeline, Limitations, and Delimitations

Participation in the study was limited to students at one public, mid-Atlantic, suburban high school and was delimited to students in the cast of the school musical. I prepared the literature review during the fall semester of 2012, and I collected and analyzed data for this study between March and April of 2013.

Organization

This document contains five sections. Section I includes an introduction, statement of the problem, definitions, research questions, timeline, limitations, and delimitations. Section II contains a review of literature relevant to the current study, specifically examining literature of musical theater in schools, communities of practice, and possible selves. The methodology for this study comprises section III and includes explanations of research design, site and participant selection, data sources, data collection procedures, and trustworthiness. Section IV presents and analyzes the data through a vignette, elements of communities of practice, elements of possible selves, and emergent themes. Section V provides a conclusion that summarizes the findings and answers the research questions, connects the findings to reviewed literature, identifies implications of the study, and offers suggestions for future research.

SECTION II

Review of Literature

The following section presents literature dealing with musical theater in schools, communities of practice, and possible selves in order to investigate the impact of musical theater on the personal development of high school students. Each of the following sections addresses aspects of the research questions by providing context for the current study.

Musical Theater in Schools

Literature dealing with musical theater in schools ranges from production-centered texts outlining the logistical requirements of producing a musical (Bobetsky, 2009; Lee, 1983; Ross & Durgin, 1998) to participant-centered documents focusing on the developmental and emotional impacts of musical theater on children (Feay-Shaw, 2001; Bos, 2012). For contemporary education, this literature requires consideration within the context of the National Standards for Theatre Education (Consortium of National Arts Education, 1994), though some literature existed before the advent of these standards. The push for articulating national standards for a number of academic disciplines during the 1990s (Porter, 1994) led to the development of national standards in arts education as well. Included in these standards for the arts were the National Standards for Music Education (National Association for Music Education, 2012) and the National Standards for Theatre Education (Consortium of National Arts Education, 1994), the intersection of which provides a context for musical theater education.

The National Standards for Music Education delineate skills that every student should gain from music education. As a musical endeavor, participation in musical theater can aid in students meeting the following standards for music education:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture. (National Association for Music Education, 2012)

Similarly, participation in musical theater can target a number of the National Standards for Theatre Education, most clearly displayed by the specific mentions of musical theater in the following standards:

Grades 5-8

Content Standard #6: Comparing and incorporating art forms by analyzing methods of presentation and audience response for theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and other art forms

- a) Students describe characteristics and compare the presentation of characters, environments, and actions in theatre, musical theatre, dramatic media, dance, and visual arts...
- d) Students describe and compare the functions and interaction of performing and visual artists and audience members in theatre, dramatic media, musical theatre, dance, music, and visual arts. (Consortium of National Arts Education, 1994, pp. 47-48)

Grades 9-12

Content Standard #6: Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and new art forms

- a) Students describe and compare the basic nature, materials, elements, and means of communicating in theatre, dramatic media, musical theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts

Content Standard #8: Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present

c) Students identify cultural and historical sources of American theatre and musical theatre. (Consortium of National Arts Education, 1994, pp. 66-67)

Though musical theater certainly addresses many of the national standards in music education and theater education, the lack of continuity in the pedagogy for musical theater specifically was an area of concern for Snider (1995). Using the arts framework for the state of California as her guideline, Snider (1995) investigated available instructional materials and existing curricula for musical theater pedagogy. Snider found that, at the time, there were no formal teaching methods for musical theater, and there was a noticeable lack of inclusion of musical theater in existing standards and frameworks. In response to the comments and needs of teachers she interviewed, Snider presented a standardized sample curriculum that incorporated data from her research with the state arts framework as a potential methodology for musical theater pedagogy. The sample curriculum for musical theater pedagogy included the areas of history, audition techniques, production values, and professional conduct. Each of these sections provided specific content for educators to address in their teaching and offered ways in which educators could meet national and state standards for the arts by teaching musical theater.

Much of the other literature on musical theater in schools addresses the logistical, sequential, how-to aspects of mounting a musical theater production. Lee (1983), Ross and Durgin (1998), and Bobetsky (2009) each described step-by-step elements of choosing, teaching, and mounting a musical theater production in schools. Lee (1983), who described musical theater as "...a medium more ideally suited to the interests and capabilities of high school students" (p. 41), worked through the process of choosing and

casting a show, producing a show, and making a production schedule. She provided an in-depth example of an eight-week rehearsal schedule, but made no mention of cross-curricular connections or content standards (Lee, 1983). The work of Ross and Durgin (1998) also presented a how-to guide for mounting musical theater productions. In their book, Ross and Durgin provided guidelines for choosing a show, finances, auditions, casting, rehearsals, directing, musical considerations, dancing, costumes, makeup, scenery, backstage considerations, programs, the final performance, and a sequential checklist for the months leading up to a show. Discussion of advantages for classroom teachers and connections to school curricula indicated a connection to educational aims. Offering advice on nearly everything Ross and Durgin included, Bobetsky (2009) presented an approach to producing musical theater in schools within the context of music education, suggesting a unit of study for the musical that would involve teachers from other disciplines, strategies for teaching the music, creating an original musical, and assessing the unit of study. Bobetsky's approach addressed the ways in which musical theater productions could meet various national standards for both music education and theater explicitly, providing a clear link between the disciplines of music education, theater, and musical theater.

Lee (1983), Ross and Durgin (1998), and Bobetsky (2009) all included considerations of the impact of musical theater on students' personal development. Lee (1983) wrote of how a director might "watch in delight and some amazement as students perform their hearts out, sing with freedom, act with animation, and add little creative touches that had never been there before—transcending themselves. As if by magic" (p.

41). Writing of the hidden benefits of musical theater in middle school, Ross and Durgin (1998) discussed how children can gain confidence just from “the excitement of being in a real play or on a real stage” (p. 6). Bobetsky (2009) described the musical, social, and emotional benefits of performing in a school musical theater production, reporting that students “will succeed musically and enjoy the social benefits of working together toward a shared goal” (p. x). While each of these sources make mention of benefits for students, other sources center on the impact that musical theater can have on students’ personal development.

Focusing on the growth and development of students participating in a fifth-grade musical, Feay-Shaw (2001) reported three areas of personal development for students: personal and social growth, musical growth, and theatrical skill development. In her ethnographic study, Feay-Shaw examined the process of a musical production with mandatory participation for all fifth-graders. Her research questions concerned issues of educational value, musical and academic benefits, the outcomes in relation to time spent on the production, students’ experiences, and the effect of mandatory participation on the show’s success (Feay-Shaw, 2001). Regarding personal and social growth, Feay-Shaw reported that the musical helped students understand their place as an individual within a group production as well as feelings of personal accomplishment after the effort of bringing the show together. Looking into the different effects of lead roles versus ensemble parts, Feay-Shaw interviewed three children who split the lead role of the production and found that their roles encouraged confidence, but in some cases isolated the students from the group dynamic of the production. For children in the ensemble,

Feay-Shaw reported one student's significant behavioral change from the "class clown" to a leader who "flowed through the entire performance without ever needing a reminder to be quiet" (p. 44). This change indicated a level of personal development or social growth that each child in the production displayed by the time of the final performance, which appeared to stem from the mere experience of participating in the production. Feay-Shaw also examined the musical growth and theatrical skill development of students involved in the musical, but her findings of personal and social growth among students indicate the transformations in personal development that served as the focus of this study.

Bos (2012) wrote about the transformative qualities of participating in musical theater and described a number of individual participants' experiences in high school musicals. Focusing on the Bellevue Youth Theatre (BYT), Bos described the all-inclusive nature of the group, which welcomed participants of all abilities, "giving a role to everyone who auditions, encouraging all participants to develop skills, and focusing on building individuals' confidence and self-esteem" (p. 57). Participants in the BYT program worked with each other's levels of ability and experience as well as social and economic statuses. They grew to depend upon and trust each other while learning to appreciate people different from themselves (Bos, 2012). Generalizing these life-changing activities, Bos wrote, "Lives...are being transformed wherever people are given the opportunities to participate in noncompetitive and inclusive theaters, choirs, and studio performances" (p. 59).

The literature of musical theater in schools spans national and state standards to individual progress of student participants. With so much of the literature focused on how to produce a musical logistically compared to literature focusing on students' transformations during these productions, consideration of the environment created during a musical theater production seems important to further investigate the impact of musical theater on students' personal development. Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, 2006) offered an apt framework through which to analyze the environment of school musical theater productions for this study.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice exist in many forms; all human beings who exist within social contexts encounter communities of practice in one way or another. Members of the same family, workers within a company, students within a school, and musicians in a garage band all belong to communities of practice, which “develop their own practices, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories, and histories” (Wenger, 1998, p. 6). These examples and specifications for communities of practice apply to many musical communities and coincide with many specifications of musical theater productions found in the literature. While research examining musical theater productions specifically as communities of practice appears to be lacking, researchers (Countryman, 2009; Hewitt, 2009; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007) have examined various musical communities through the lens of Wenger's (1998, 2006) ideas that may carry parallels to the environment of musical theater productions.

Countryman (2009) investigated a musical group of people as a potential site for communities of practice. The study involved 33 high school graduates reflecting on their experiences in Canadian high school music programs. Utilizing narrative inquiry and critical grounded theory in her study, Countryman suggested conditions that would foster the development of communities of practice within high school music programs. By conducting and analyzing interviews with the participants, Countryman determined that students' participation in their high school music experiences allowed them to experience musical creativity, leadership, and independence. These experiences grew out of the communities of practice present within their high school music programs. Closing with suggestions for educators to create communities of practice within their programs, Countryman articulated her belief that "pedagogical moves that simultaneously foster musical community and musical agency are steps in the right direction" (p. 107). Countryman focused on Wenger's (1998) concepts of domain, joint enterprise, and practice within programs to determine whether those elements of communities of practice were present. Those elements, in addition to meaning, practice, community, and identity (Wenger, 1998), provide a variety of qualifications for a group to exist as a community of practice. The variety of qualifications within the literature illustrates the malleability of Wenger's (1998, 2006) ideas in a variety of research aims and methodologies, including the investigation of a high school musical theater production in this study.

Reflecting the flexibility of Wenger's (1998, 2006) ideas, Snell and Hodgetts (2007) examined the subculture of the Heavy Metal musical genre through an ethnographic study involving six participants who frequented a New Zealand Heavy

Metal bar called “6ft Under.” The authors sought to move past the traditional media focus on the perceived negative aspects of Heavy Metal music and explore the ways in which fans of the genre, called “Metallers,” co-constructed a community of practice. Through observations, interviews, and photo-voice projects, Snell and Hodgetts found that Metallers joined together as a community in their primary community space (i.e., 6ft Under) and through their attitudes, styles of dress, dance, and knowledge of the genre. Snell and Hodgetts’ study maintained a strong emphasis on artifacts, physical expression of community through dress, and non-verbal components of shared identity as indicators of community. For musical theater, the work of Snell and Hodgetts provides a basis for artifacts, traditional sources of data for qualitative inquiry (Glesne, 2011), to indicate the extent to which a group functions as a community of practice.

Hewitt (2009) examined how stylistic considerations for various musical genres indicated the existence of communities of practice within music education programs in the United Kingdom. A focus of the study was how stylistic differences between genres, or the “extramusical” aspects of a style, informed teaching and assessment techniques within higher education programs. Hewitt described the formal or informal nature of how performers obtain stylistic authenticity in order to join a stylistic community of practice. In his research, Hewitt found that formal means of learning, such as apprenticeship or transmission models, are popular in traditional Western classical music, but many other musical styles develop informal “knowledge-building communities” (Westerlund in Hewitt, 2009, p. 5) through which stylistic considerations disseminate. Examining the necessity of stylistic considerations in higher education teaching and assessment, Hewitt

indicated the need for expertise of those undertaking the assessment and the authenticity of the means of assessment. For example, those teaching or judging a Scottish traditional musician would require a different expertise than those teaching or judging a classical pianist; the means of assessment for a Scottish traditional musician should ideally be very different than that of a classical pianist. Hewitt found that many cases of teaching or assessment practices that were misaligned with stylistic considerations resulted in students ignoring the feedback they received during and after their performances. Writing that “the traditional hegemony of the Western classical tradition has been replaced by a multiplicity of musical styles” (p. 8), the author called for acknowledgment and consideration of stylistic differences in pedagogy and assessment within music education.

Hewitt (2009) focused on communities of practice within genres of music, which could apply to musical theater as a specific genre requiring careful stylistic considerations in its pedagogy and assessment. These specifications help to shape the environment created during a musical theater production, which can include not only stylistic considerations (Hewitt, 2009), but also artifacts present, knowledge of the genre (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007), and the musical community (Countryman, 2009) formed during a production. The subject of music education in Hewitt’s and Countryman’s studies coincides with the inclusion of musical theater in schools and highlights the multiplicity of considerations necessary when mounting a musical theater production. Among these necessary considerations are the thought processes and interactions with various self-identities that students encounter. The theory of Possible Selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) serves a way to examine students’ thought processes during a musical theater production.

Possible Selves

Possible Selves theory concerns individuals' "ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (Markus & Nurius', 1986, p. 954). A multiplicity of possible selves can motivate future behavior and allow for evaluation and interpretation of an individual's current self-concept. A current or working self-concept comprises who one is presently, whereas possible selves focus on the future potential of individuals, allowing for personal growth, malleability, and self-improvement (Lee & Oyserman, n.d.; Markus & Nurius, 1986). While possible selves could encompass any potential identity, Markus and Nurius (1986) explained the importance of context in developing possible selves:

An individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particularly sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences. (p. 954)

In their study, Markus and Nurius surveyed 210 college students with a questionnaire that included 150 future possibilities for the self. Each of these possibilities fell into six categories: general descriptors, physical descriptors, life-style possibilities, general abilities, possibilities reflecting various occupational alternatives, and possibilities directly tied to the opinions of others. The researchers also asked participants whether or not the possibilities applied to their current self-identities. Responses showed that the future selves did not necessarily coincide with their current self-concepts, indicating a sense of change and possibility within the self-concept, allowing their self-concept to become dynamic. This capacity for change allows possible selves to serve as motivation

for action, change, and development (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Markus and Nurius' study introduced possible selves as carriers of dynamic components of self-identity, particularly motivation and self-concept.

Many researchers have centered their research on the motivational qualities of possible selves, often connecting motivation to academic achievement. In one such instance, Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) developed a possible selves program to influence the academic performance of low socioeconomic status students in Detroit, a predominantly African American and Latino demographic at the time of the study. The study included 11 sequential sessions that helped participants to reconcile differences between their social identities and academic possible selves, identify realistic possible selves with strategies to achieve them, find positive academic role models, and reflect on the goals of each session. Data collection for the two-year study occurred while participants were in the 8th grade through the end of their 9th grade year. Major themes of the research aims included the influence of possible selves on self-regulatory behavior, the importance of linking positive possible selves with strategies to achieve them, and the role of personal and social identities within self-concept. The study produced a “lasting change on [possible selves], self-regulation, academic outcomes, and depression” (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006, p. 201) for participants, demonstrating the effectiveness the motivational aspects of possible selves when combined with a process to aid academic achievement. During each of the sessions, the researchers worked to build a group focus on academic possible selves among the students, thus creating a study-wide social context to encourage the progress of academic possible selves within

the group. This focus on group dynamics, social context, and identity could connect to the environment established by communities of practice within musical theater productions. In addition, these elements of social context serve as the basis for possible selves literature that deals specifically with the relationship between gender and possible selves.

Elmore and Oyserman (2012) investigated the role of identity-based motivation and gender in the classroom to examine the fact that girls are outperforming boys in “virtually all visible indicators of classroom success” (p. 176). Exploring the stereotypes that accompany each gender as a potential reason for this discrepancy in performance, Elmore and Oyserman examined gender identity as a source of motivation towards possible selves that are congruent with socially accepted gender roles. Participants completed a math workbook with subtle information regarding academic performance of males and females embedded within the questions, followed by questions concerning their future academic and financial goals. The control group in the study answered similar questions with no mention of academic performance of males versus females present in the questions. Elmore and Oyserman found that the information regarding gender performance influenced participants’ goals for the future as well as the effort they put forward for the math questions during the study. This study indicated the importance of social identity and gender for academic possible selves in general education, similar to Freer’s (2009) work on social identity and gender within choral music education.

To examine the social context of male participation in high school choral ensembles, Freer (2009) conducted in-depth interviews with three male choral singers

from the Southern United States. From these interviews, Freer connected participant responses to possible selves theory and developed a Possible Selves Program in Music that would allow students to identify musical possible selves and develop strategies to achieve them, much like Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) did for their study in academics. In the Possible Selves Program in Music, Freer identified two phases containing three stages each, which included guiding questions for each stage. The conceptualization phase included the stages of discovering, thinking, and imagining, while the realization phase included the stages of reflecting, growing, and performing. Fitting responses from the three participants into his Possible Selves Program for Music, Freer found that role models, often from their families, played a large part in participant development during the conceptualization phase. Male musical role models increased interest in music and expanded musical possible selves for the participants. Development of musical skills within the social environment present among males in choir allowed for persistence in musical endeavors that made up the realization phase of the program.

Persistence in extracurricular endeavors served as the focus for Stevenson and Clegg (2011). The researchers investigated extracurricular activities among UK university students in order to ascertain “what students do, how they understand what they do and how they imagine their activities as contributing to their future possible selves, whether as employable subjects or more broadly” (p. 232). Grounding the inquiry in possible selves theory, the researchers considered the social context of their study, finding that class and gender played a significant role in their findings. Through surveys and interviews, Stevenson and Clegg were able to divide participants into three groups:

those with well-developed career-possible selves, those whose self-concept was firmly grounded in their current state, and those with a continuous sense of identity that considered past, present, and future identities. Identifying these three groups allowed the researchers to determine the primary motivations behind participant involvement in extracurricular activities—namely to gain marketable skills for future employment, for personal enjoyment, or because of an altruistic desire to benefit others. Stevenson and Clegg conducted research on extracurricular activities, including arts-based extracurricular activities such as dance, which makes the findings of their study pertinent to research on a variety of extracurricular activities including musical theater.

Markus & Nurius (1986) focused on possible selves within academic settings, which transferred to the development of a Possible Selves Program (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2006) as well as examination of academic achievement variances between sexes (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012). The focus on academics within the possible selves literature connects to this study's focus on school music productions, which are situated within academic contexts and communities. The Possible Selves Program (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2006) displayed similar characteristics to the Possible Selves Program in Music (Freer, 2009), connects to the musical aspects of the current study. In addition, Stevenson and Clegg's (2011) investigation of motivation to participate in extracurricular activities coincides with the extracurricular nature of many school musical theater productions. The literature of both communities of practice and possible selves offers a glimpse into extant research that frames the context of the current study within the guiding frameworks.

SECTION III

Methodology

The following sections present the methodology for the study and include descriptions of the research design, site and participant selection, data sources, data collection procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

Qualitative Case Study Research Design

This study followed a qualitative case study research design (Stake, 1995, 2000). In a case study, the researcher seeks to understand a phenomenon through the examination of a bounded group (Glesne, 2011). Case studies fall under three classifications: intrinsic case studies, collective case studies, or instrumental case studies (Glesne, 2011; Stake, 1995, 2000). The design of the current study aligned with the specifications of an instrumental case study, in which the researcher studies a case to “provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Most often, the researcher in an instrumental case study knows the focus of the study before its execution and designs the study around established theories or methods (Grande, 2010). For this study, student development through high school musical theater productions served as the focus and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) served as the established theories.

The focus and frameworks (i.e., theories) of this study had a significant impact on choosing a case study research design. The cast of the high school musical production constituted a bounded group (Stake, 1995, 2000), and the framework of communities of

practice offered a way to conceptualize and analyze that group. The examination of personal development through the framework of possible selves required a more unique, personalized look at the members of the group. Utilizing one case to examine the overall focus and frameworks of the investigation coincided with the defining characteristics of a case study research design, making it the most apt approach.

Site and Participant Selection

I collected data at a public high school in a suburban, upper-middle class community in a mid-Atlantic state. I was a student teacher at the school during the year before this study, so I was familiar with the district, the school, the community, the students, and their families. As a student teacher during the previous year, I played in the pit orchestra for the school musical, so I had also witnessed the process of mounting the musical from midway through the rehearsal period to the final performances. My informal observations as a student teacher piqued my interest in examining how participation in the school musical might impact students' personal development.

In selecting participants, I applied purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1988) to obtain a typical case sample (Glesne, 2011) with the goal of choosing participants whose experiences might be typical for a variety of students who participated in the school musical. To that end, I selected five actors based on their class standing, their role(s) in the musical, and their years of experience in the school musical. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from my university and permission from the school district to conduct the study, I arranged with the choir director, who had served as the musical director for the school musical, to allow me to visit a choir rehearsal and

propose my study to the students. As the data collection took place after the conclusion of the musical, visiting a choir rehearsal was the most efficient way to reach the greatest number of students who had participated in the musical, as many students in the musical also sang in choir. During my initial visit, I distributed consent and assent forms (see Appendix A) to the students who indicated an interest in participating, and I returned two days later to collect the signed forms. From the nine signed forms I received, I contacted five interested students in Grades 10-12 who had performed in roles of varying size in the show and had participated in the high school musical for 1-4 years. Each student agreed to participate and I proceeded with the data collection.

Data Sources, Collection, and Analysis

Data for this study consisted primarily of participant interviews supplemented by a performance observation, informal anecdotes, and the performance program. I attended the final performance, obtained a copy of the program from the show, and heard anecdotes from parents, students, and teachers during the intermission and after the performance.

I prepared interview questions (see Appendix B) based on previous observations and informal anecdotes (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) with the goal of connecting to the frameworks and research questions of this study. I then conducted semi-structured interviews (Glesne, 2011) with the five participants approximately one month after the final performance of the musical. The semi-structured interview design allowed new ideas to emerge during the interviews while maintaining a connection to the topics of the study (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Each interview was 12 to 25 minutes in length and took

place during the students' lunch break in a quiet hallway at the high school. Recordings of four interviews and researcher notes for one interview served as the data for later coding and analysis.

Presentation of the data included a vignette (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which drew from the interviews and other sources of data to portray “a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic” (p. 81) of the case. In this instance, the vignette portrayed a typical afternoon rehearsal as described by the participants, introduced the study participants, and displayed potential emergent themes for interim understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data analysis followed a prestructured case analysis format, aligning with the established frameworks of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, 2006) and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) integral to the research questions. Throughout the data collection and analysis, I sought to categorize the data in relation to these two frameworks, which in turn connected to both research questions. Pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) constituted the final stage of data analysis, during which I identified four emergent themes to “pull together a lot of material into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (p. 69). As themes emerged from the data, I was able to synthesize those themes with the established frameworks of the study to further address the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness encompasses the ways in which a researcher “can claim that their work is plausible or credible” (Glesne, 2011, p. 49). To gain trustworthiness, I triangulated the data from the interviews between and among the participants, analyzed

supplemental data sources, searched for negative cases that could refine the data analysis, acknowledged and clarified researcher biases, underwent external audits of my findings, and sought to provide rich, thick description typical of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). Acknowledging and clarifying my own biases as the researcher was crucial to claiming trustworthiness for this study. Having attributed much of my own personal development to experiences in my high school's musicals, I had to maintain an awareness of this potential bias in designing my interview questions (see Appendix B) and in analyzing the data. My familiarity with the site and the participants before the study led me to consider Glesne's (2011) warnings against "backyard research" (p. 41) wherein researchers investigate sites with which they have personal ties. I considered the resulting issues of backyard research including pre-existing expectations, role confusion, ethical dilemmas, or political ramifications (Glesne, 2011). While I was acquainted with the site and participants from my semester of student teaching, I was no longer an "insider" (Glesne, 2011, p. 42) in the environment, which allowed me to avoid many of the issues of backyard research. An additional bias I considered was the influence of the Hawthorne effect (Macefield, 2007), in which participants might adjust reports of their experiences to address the goals of the study. Since participants were aware of nature of the study before the interviews, I explained before each interview that I wanted to hear about their experiences as honestly as possible without censoring or adapting their responses to what they thought I might want to hear.

Throughout the development of the study, the data collection, and the data analysis, external audits with my faculty advisor enhanced the trustworthiness and

accuracy of my findings. The following presentation of the data includes rich, thick description to allow the reader to “enter the research context” (Glesne, 2011, p. 49), which is a defining feature of qualitative research.

SECTION IV

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

In the following sections, I present and analyze the data simultaneously, which reflects the interactive nature of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). I collected the data through semi-structured interviews (Glesne, 2011), an observation of the final performance, the performance program as an artifact, and anecdotes from conversations with the participants, their parents, and the teachers who worked on the production. Through prestructured case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I connect data to the frameworks of communities of practice and possible selves, and through pattern coding analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I describe several themes that emerged from the data. Reports from multiple participants provided the triangulation necessary to claim trustworthiness for the findings. Meetings with an external auditor to discuss findings and to help me refine and focus my analysis also contributed to trustworthiness.

The presentation is ongoing and holistic to offer a gestalt look at a complete picture, rather than a more traditional, source-by-source presentation of the data. I have substituted pseudonyms for the actual site and participant names throughout, and I have intentionally omitted the name of the musical to ensure the anonymity of the site and participants. The following vignette provides a context for the presentation of the data. While the sequence of events is a combined rendering of my own observations and interpretations, the vignette provides a rich and thick description of the context and includes formal data from interviews and supplemental data sources.

Setting the Scene—Vignette

As the bell rings at 2:47 p.m. two weeks before opening night of the spring musical, 46 high school students make their way to the 3:00 p.m. rehearsal in the auditorium at Fairmount High. Jeremy, a sophomore in the ensemble of the musical, stops by the lacrosse team's bake sale on his way to rehearsal, knowing it might be 8:00 p.m. before he can go home for dinner. This is his first year as a cast member in the musical and he is ecstatic about going to after school rehearsals: "I've made so many new friends. I got a girlfriend, all because of the musical...everyone loves each other and cares about each other, we're like one big family" (Interview, April 10, 2013). One of his favorite parts of being in the musical is the fact that he has become friends with so many juniors and seniors in the production.

As he pays for two slices of pizza and a Gatorade, he spots Ellen coming down the hallway and waves enthusiastically. This is Ellen's third year in the musical and she is feeling the academic pressure of the end of junior year. For Ellen, the musical keeps her going through each year, despite the disorganized rehearsals, the tension between quarreling cast members, and the frantic directors. The "high" she feels after each performance carries her mood for months afterwards and she cannot wait to re-audition each fall (Interview notes, April 11, 2013). Ellen's younger sister caught her enthusiasm for the musical and is also in the ensemble this year.

Jeremy and Ellen chat as they walk down the hallway toward the auditorium. They greet Samantha as she hurriedly jogs past them on the way back to her locker to grab her math textbook before rehearsal starts. She knows she'll have plenty of time to

get her homework done while the ensemble isn't on stage. This is Samantha's fourth and final musical in high school, and she is excited to have two featured roles during large ensemble numbers. Like Ellen, Samantha has felt a lot of tension in rehearsals, but that tension has tainted her experiences. While being well-rounded for college applications was one of the driving factors behind auditioning for the musical her freshman year, she is seriously considering whether or not she wants to audition for musical theater shows in college. "I don't know if I want to deal with the stress that it brings...The people can be very high strung and intense, and I don't know if I want to continue with that path. I might want to branch off and try a sport or a different club" (Interview, April 11, 2013).

As Samantha enters the auditorium at 3:06 p.m., cast members and their backpacks are sprawled around the seats in the audience. Excited chatter fills the space as groups around the room debrief from their day at school. Susan, the drama teacher at Fairmount and the stage director for the musical, finishes a quick chat with the choreographer, Francine, and the music director, Debra. "Okay, okay, okay! Shhhh! I need Victoria on stage, I need Roger with Francine, and I need the guys with Debra in the choir room!" yells Susan over the fading conversation in the auditorium. "Wait, Susan! What about the rest of the girls?" asks Samantha. Susan replies, "You should be going over your dances in the hallway. Where's Victoria?" Victoria, the senior female lead, stands up and walks toward the stage: "I'm right here! What are we working on?"

This is Victoria's fourth year in the musical and she has been working tirelessly to make her performance spectacular. Despite how excited she was to be cast as the lead for her senior show, she came into rehearsals feeling a lot of pressure, especially from the

freshmen and sophomores who felt she didn't deserve her role. Victoria had worried about divisions in the cast that had caused tension during rehearsals: "It's intimidating, which you wouldn't think because I'm this big, bubbly personality that wouldn't get intimidated by anyone, but I did because I'd heard what underclassmen had said about me" (Interview, April 12, 2013). However, in recent weeks, the cast has come together and Victoria has overcome her nerves. She has worked to impress everyone and feels like this year, she had finally found her moment to shine: "This was the year where [people in] my whole grade saw me shine. I did so many activities where my grade was like 'Wow! Where did she come from?' So it was really nice to have my shining moment, but I don't think it'll happen again in the future" (Interview, April 12, 2013).

As Susan works with Victoria on stage, Roger starts to review his choreography for the male lead's solo number in the first act. Roger is a star lacrosse player who has balanced his commitments to also be in the musical for all four years of high school. In the fall, he will attend the local community college to get his general education credits out of the way, but plans to focus on auditioning for film and television in New York City during his college years. "I have a bunch of connections right now, my cousin is in the film industry, but I'm working on getting an agent and talking to important people. My plans are really to just see what happens" (Interview, April 15, 2013).

The afternoon flies by, and when rehearsal ends as scheduled at 7:00 p.m., the cast members make their way to the parking lot. Roger and Victoria laugh about their first attempt at a stage kiss and vow to work on it at tomorrow's rehearsal. Samantha follows behind them; she finished her math homework and decided to go see a movie

with two of the other ensemble members after rehearsal. Ellen finds her younger sister and on the drive home, they talk about the difficult new choreography they learned at the end of rehearsal. Jeremy says goodnight to his girlfriend and walks to the parking lot with a few of the senior guys, eagerly awaiting rehearsal the following afternoon.

The Musical as a Community of Practice

The vignette above provides a context for the more traditional data analysis of the following sections. Data in the subsequent sections address Research Question 1 through prestructured case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that aligns the data to Wenger's (1998) four facets of communities of practice: meaning, practice, community, and identity.

Meaning. Wenger's (1998) concept of meaning, which concerns the ability for individuals and groups to find meaning in their lives and in the world, surfaced in many of the participants descriptions of their experiences with the musical. Victoria explained, "I tried out and I made it freshman year and I've done it every year since and I've fallen in love. It's my favorite activity in school" (Interview, April 12, 2013). Roger articulated similar feelings, saying,

It's just something I'm really passionate about doing, I love it. It's been such a great experience for the past four years. I know me and [a fellow cast member], we were so sad when it was over—like, that was it. And other people are never going to do this kind of thing again. (Interview, April 15, 2013)

For Roger, who was also an active member of school sports teams, acting in the musical every year served as a venue through which he could express many facets of his personality, an experience that he felt was unique to the school musical. "With sports, you have to be this one, angry, mean person. You've got to want to hate the other team,"

said Roger, “but with theater, it’s just being yourself and letting everything out of you, you know? There’s so much expression” (Interview, April 15, 2013). Roger did not participate in the fall dramas at Fairmount, so his feelings reflected only his experiences in the spring musicals.

In explaining the meaningful elements of her participation in the musical, Ellen explained that the “high” from the culmination of everyone’s hard work during final performances carried her through the each academic year (Interview notes, April 11, 2013). Jeremy described how meaningful the musical had been to him in mainly social terms, referencing his newly established bonds with upperclassmen and beginning to date his girlfriend. While Samantha described a great deal of tension, stress, and frustration, the meaningful aspects of her participation dealt with the refinement of her character and identity. Samantha explained a number of meaningful abilities she had gained from the musical, including

Not stressing out about the big things, especially backstage. People misplace props, directors yell at you or the group, and I realize not to take it personally. They just want what’s best for the musical. Also, if you lose a prop, if you forget to put a costume on, it’s not the end of the world. Things will go on, people will forget. For me, I’m less worried and more relaxed. I definitely became a stronger person. I don’t want to say I desensitized myself, but definitely if I had something to say, I would say it. (Interview, April 11, 2013)

During the interviews, the participants chose three words to describe the environment of the musical (see Table 1). Some participants chose to explain and clarify their word choices, most notably Victoria and Roger. Both participants played leading roles and explained that the words they chose that had negative connotations were actually framed

by the struggles they encountered and ultimately overcame with preparing their leading roles.

Table 1

Participant Descriptions of the Musical

Participant	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3
Jeremy	<i>Fun</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Musical</i>
Ellen	<i>Charged</i>	<i>Intense</i>	<i>Provocative</i>
Samantha	<i>Crazy</i>	<i>Hectic</i>	<i>Stressful</i>
Victoria	<i>Stressful</i>	<i>Intimidating</i>	<i>Exhilarating</i>
Roger	<i>Frustrating</i>	<i>Fun</i>	<i>Hard-working</i>

Practice. The practices that took place during the musical provided a way to “sustain mutual engagement in action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). The participants explained that early rehearsals dealt solely with music. Later in the process, rehearsals included learning choreography and blocking. The three directors were very involved with facilitating the practices of the school musical. As Jeremy explained, “Debra would be working on vocal technique for the songs and she would specifically teach you how to sing, how to act and sing at the same time.” He continued, “Then our dance director, Francine, she would show you how to try to multi-task, so dancing at the same time.” Lastly, he mentioned, “Then of course, Susan would show you how to act sing and dance at the same time. So it’s all three things at once” (Interview, April 10, 2013). The coordination of singing, dancing, and acting was a challenge for many, as Roger explained: “People have never sang and danced before, so that’s hard for a lot of us, plus you’re loosing your breath when your dancing” (Interview, April 15, 2013).

To help newer students learn their music, lines, blocking, and choreography, student leaders emerged throughout the rehearsal process, often based on their class standing and their role in the show. These student leaders included appointed dance captains and self-selected peer leaders with more experience. Jeremy explained,

When people were struggling, other friends or other peers were helping each other learn how to do it better. The dance captains...were definitely showing some of the less experienced dancers how to dance better. Then the singers that are higher up there who have been in the musical for four years and know the musical and the way it goes on were showing the younger kids, like me for instance, how better to sing and how better to dance. (Interview, April 10, 2013)

Student leaders also helped to alleviate discord among the cast members. Ellen mentioned that midway through the rehearsal process, one of the upperclassmen leads spoke with the cast to alleviate tensions between quarreling cast members, and he brought the cast together to prepare a successful production (Interview notes, April 11, 2013). As she was listening, Ellen felt a sense of awe that her peer had taken a leading role off-stage in organizing and motivating the cast. Similarly, Roger reported that occasionally the leads would step in to motivate and focus the cast “because we all knew how much it had to come together, so we all really worked together” (Interview, April 15, 2013). Offering further insight, Victoria explained that the directors had encouraged some of the leads to reach out to the younger cast members during rehearsal: “Francine asked me...she was like ‘You guys are the role models, you have to include them more’” (Interview, April 12, 2013). As the cast worked together to master their coordination and as student leaders emerged to unite the cast’s efforts, many students encountered a strong sense of community.

Community. Wenger (1998) explained the concept of community as “a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence” (p. 5). Jeremy’s enthusiasm for his first experience as a cast member in the musical reflected the significant impact of the musical on the social configurations in his life. He explained, “All of my friends that I made from the musical are actually my group of friends now [outside of the musical]” (Interview, April 10, 2013). He continued, “I still have my other friends and stuff, but I really started hanging out with kids from the musical more.” Jeremy felt a strong connection to his fellow cast members that resulted from a sense of importance and belonging: “There is not one person left out, everyone mattered in the musical...the whole family, loving, equal thing. Everyone in the musical were people like that. If there were mean people, it wouldn’t work out like that, you know?”

Victoria also placed value on the social environment of rehearsals as she reflected on her experiences in the high school musical. Victoria explained why she enjoyed rehearsals:

What makes it fun? It definitely has to be the people. I didn’t really care for *Guys and Dolls* my sophomore year, I didn’t really like the show, I never had. But because I was with my friends, it was okay that I was doing that show for six hours a day rehearsing. Then this show, I loved, but if I hadn’t have had the people, it wouldn’t have been the same. (Interview, April 12, 2013)

Regardless of her interest in the musical itself, Victoria had maintained a strong dedication to participating in the musical because of the community she encountered among her friends during rehearsal.

In contrast, four of the five participants reported significant trouble with the community of the musical during the year of this study. Jeremy, a sophomore, was the only participant who reported entirely positive encounters with cast members of all class standings and roles. The other four participants, all upperclassmen, reported what Victoria called a “huge attitude problem with the freshman” (Interview, April 12, 2013). According to Victoria and Ellen, many freshmen cast members felt that some of the juniors and seniors who were cast as leads did not deserve their roles (Interview notes, April 11, 2013). Victoria described how “It kind of caused a divide this year...the seniors and juniors were all friends because we had been together last year, so there was a huge divide this year between the underclassmen and the upperclassmen” (Interview, April 12, 2013).

The division between upperclassmen and underclassmen revealed complexities in the community of the musical that entirely positive reports, such as Jeremy’s, did not initially indicate. In particular, Samantha mentioned many negative interactions between cast members. In an attempt to create a more positive environment, Samantha tried to reach out to fellow cast members and disregard any unpleasant interactions: “I was more friendly towards other people because I want everyone to have a good experience. If people were kind of mean to me, I brushed it off because it’s just who they are, I can’t do that” (Interview, April 11, 2013). The variance in the community of the musical could have likely been a result of the range of identities present within the cast.

Identity. The concept of identity displays “how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (Wenger, 1998,

p. 5). Two main sets of identities within the cast of the musical emerged from the data: the first were lead roles and ensemble members, and the second were underclassmen and upperclassmen. Samantha summarized tensions between these identities as she described the social environment of the musical as an ensemble member:

Sometimes it's kind of hostile because there're a lot of cliques, especially last year with the upperclassmen...but I found with the underclassmen, they were a lot more open to becoming friends and were a lot more friendly. It was hard this year because the cast was pretty split up. Of course there were the leads, and then we weren't really all together at the same time—we were rehearsing at different times on different days and there wasn't really a time for us to get together. (Interview, April 11, 2013)

Roger also mentioned that “in rehearsal, sometimes we're split up like leads and ensemble parts,” a practice that seemed to highlight the difference between groups within the show. As he thought about the cast, Roger explained that “Some people think ‘Oh, I'm in the ensemble, I don't have to do anything, I can just goof around,’ but with the leads, it's really focused” (Interview, April 15, 2013). This finding triangulated between multiple student interviews and the printed program, which listed the lead and ensemble cast members separately in the program under the headings of “cast” and “ensemble” (Performance program). The division between leads and ensemble members seemed to fuel the strain between the second set of identities within the cast.

Many of the participants recalled or reported very positive experiences with the musical as underclassmen. Jeremy, an underclassman, was ecstatic with “How loving and fair everybody was with each other, and how the seniors were best friends with the sophomores and the juniors were best friends with everyone.” He felt that “there was no discrimination in any way, sense, or form” (Interview, April 10, 2013). Victoria recalled

how during her “freshman year, it was very welcoming. Seniors had no ‘I’m better than you’ attitude, everyone was just embraced and we were all friends. We all ate lunch together, we talked, we all became friends” (Interview, April 12, 2013). Describing how he became involved with the musical as an underclassman, Roger explained “When I was a freshman, I had friends in the upperclass and they told me to go into these drama classes because they said it was a lot of fun, then [an upperclassman friend] pretty much got me into the musical” (Interview, April 15, 2013). Each of these students attributed their continued participation in the school musical to their positive experiences as freshman.

In contrast, all participants except Jeremy had been in the musical for multiple years and reported a rift between underclassmen and upperclassmen after their first year in the musical. During this study, that rift impacted the auditions and early rehearsals of the musical significantly; Victoria said, “you would not believe the tension we had at the beginning of the year” (Interview, April 12, 2013). Again, the printed program indicated a division of upperclassmen and underclassmen, as only leads and senior ensemble members received printed biographies in the program. Fortunately, the work of bringing the show together in combination with student leaders uniting the cast brought all four grades together by the end of the show. Victoria mentioned, “I had my friends, and then by the end when everyone became friends with the freshman and we were all merging, it was just really great” (Interview, April 12, 2013). The interaction of varying identities within the cast reflected the wide range of possible selves present within the participants.

The Musical's Impact on Possible Selves

The following sections address Research Question 2 through prestructured case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that aligns the data to possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), including who students might become, who they hope to become, and who they fear becoming. Also included is alignment of the data to the idea of self-concept (Lee & Oyserman, n.d.), including past, present, and future identities, as related to students' possible selves.

Possible Selves. Markus and Nurius (1986) presented the idea that “Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming” (p. 954). Data reflected a variety of student interactions with perceived possible selves, including each aspect of potential, hoped for, and feared possible selves. Within the academic culture of Fairmount, many participants mentioned the possible self of a college student and addressed the ways in which the musical contributed to that possible self.

As a freshman, part of Samantha's motivation to audition for the musical reflected her goals to appear desirable to schools during the college application process. She explained, “For high school, I wanted to still be involved for college apps, they want to see you be involved in school, and I was like ‘Okay, well I'm going to try out for the musical’ and I did do that” (Interview, April 11, 2013). As a senior, Samantha had completed the college application and acceptance process, and was reconsidering whether or not she viewed her college student possible self as being involved with college productions. She said, “Now I'm thinking about college and continuing with the musical,

but I don't know if I want to deal with the stress that it brings" (Interview, April 11, 2013). Victoria also debated the role of future participation in her college student possible self, saying "So it was really nice to have my shining moment, but I don't think it'll happen again in the future" (Interview, April 12, 2013). For Samantha and Victoria, reconsidering their future participation in musical theater seemed to indicate a hoped for possible self of a well-adjusted, successful college student and a feared possible self of an unsuccessful, stressed, or unhappy college student.

As seniors with four years of experience in the musical, Roger, Victoria, and Samantha all displayed cognitive processes involved with character development for the musical that reflected potential, hoped for, and feared possible selves. Samantha described her character development process: "Usually I like to create little stories of lives for [my characters] like where they're going and who they are and who they're friends with" (Interview, April 11, 2013). By creating a back-story for her characters, she engaged in identifying possible selves that she could portray on stage as an actress. Victoria expressed a difficulty in conceptualizing various conflicting identities of her character, which reflects thought processes similar to those adolescents encounter with their own conflicting possible selves. She explained,

It was kind of hard because [I play] really three different characters all in one. The first scene, she [enters], she's very innocent and sweet, but the audience doesn't know that it's all an act, and she's really this badass girl from Brooklyn and it's all an act. Then the other one is, she's kind of caught in the between because she kind of does have feelings for the two male leads, but she has to keep remembering her job and why she's there. (Interview, April 12, 2013)

Further supporting the idea of experimentation with character identities reflecting the struggles of emergent possible selves, Victoria expressed her observations that "for

some people, having to act out a character, that's really hard for them, because they would never be that way in person. So I really love how the musical makes you grow as a person" (Interview, April 12, 2013). Not only did Victoria feel that experimentation with characters during the musical was difficult for many students in the musical, she placed value on that phenomenon and described it as one of the elements of participation that she most enjoyed.

Self-Concept. The idea of self-concept encompasses who "one was in the past, is now, and can become in the future" (Lee & Oyserman, n.d., para 1). As students described their experiences in the musical, each participant identified elements of their participation that reflected their past, present, and future possible selves. Based on the literature (Hagen, 1973; Stanislavski, 2008), it seemed that character development might enable students to reflect on their past identities and experiences to imbue their acting with greater meaning. In many of their responses, students indicated that drawing on past selves was not a supported method of character development; most participants responded in the negative when asked if their past personal experiences influenced their character development. However, most participants referenced previous acting experiences as influential in preparing to play their characters, indicating an actor identity that took precedence over a character identity. Participants explained that their past personal experiences had little or no influence on their character development, and some indicated that they did not find value in the past experiences of their character. For example, Victoria summarized the differences between her approach to character development and the approach of a fellow cast member:

For every character he has, he always does a background story, like name, birth, where they've come from. I didn't really think about my character before in her previous life. It started right when I [entered the] stage, that's when her life started. I could have done more background work, but it would have been all made up anyway, so I didn't really see a point to that. (Interview, April 12, 2013)

Victoria's responses suggested that past identities were not important for her actor identity or for her character identity. None of the other participants' comments indicated an opposing viewpoint, which may reflect the design of rehearsals and the acting techniques covered by the directors. Most participants indicated much more interest in the present and future identities of both themselves and their characters.

During the interviews, participants described the similarities and differences between themselves and their characters, indicating the interaction between their present selves and their character-identities. Roger talked about how he and his character were "Both goofy, both like to have fun, we both like women...There are some times where he's laid back as well, which kind of relates to me." He continued, "He always liked to have fun and he liked what he was doing, so I guess that relates to me as well" (Interview, April 15, 2013). Roger described traits of temperament, interests, and sexual orientation as common elements between his present self and his character. Roger also explained, "A lot the stuff that me and Francine, the choreographer, worked on—some of the stuff was just me." This indicates that the directors encouraged a connection between the participants' present self and their character identity. "She wanted me to feel comfortable with the way I was moving," continued Roger, "so a lot of the stuff you've seen on stage is just me. Just me being me and trying to fit into that character." Further supporting the

connection between present and character identity, Victoria described the final scene of the show that revealed her character's true, "badass girl from Brooklyn" identity:

None of the directors had to instruct me or direct me once on that scene. I memorized it, I [walked on stage], I did the accent and they were like 'Oh my God, that's perfect.' So that required no effort because that's so me. (Interview, April 12, 2013)

Participants also mentioned definite differences between their present selves and their characters. Samantha reported the changes she made in her personal demeanor to reflect these differences, saying, "I'm just kind of me, you know? And then with my characters everything is a little overdone, a little more exaggerated, and obviously I speak a little more loudly" (Interview, April 11, 2013). Roger also indicated differences between his present self and his character's identity: "Some of the stuff he does is kind of uncomfortable...some of things he said to different characters were things I would never say" (Interview, April 15, 2013).

Each participant responded that acting in the musical had significant influence on their future goals, reflecting the nature of their future possible selves. Expressing his desire to continue in the musical, Jeremy said "Next year, I 100% want to do the musical. My goal is to get a higher role eventually, and just proceed and do better in the musical aspect" (Interview, April 10, 2013). Ellen spoke about how being in the musical has helped her remain cheerful during the college application process and has helped her cope with the academic stresses of her junior year, reflecting the impact of her participation on her present self as she strove to become her college student future possible self (Interview notes, April 11, 2013). Unsure of her continued participation, Samantha talked about her desire to remain calm and happy as a college student, but

attributed the musical to helping her become “a stronger person” (Interview, April 11, 2013) and being more assertive.

Victoria and Roger, the two leads who participated in the study, indicated significantly different future selves, and each of them attributed the development of those goals to their experiences with the musical. Victoria stated,

Yes, it would be a dream of mine to go on the stage or be a star or go to Hollywood or be in a movie, whatever, but then realistically, it probably wouldn't work out. When I look at the people who are applying to schools in musical theater or vocal performance, they've had training since like birth. Like 12 years of tap dance, lyrical ballet. I'm like 'Okay, I took ballet in second grade, that's about it.' I've never had voice lessons before, I do choir, just because I was in a private auditioned choir in 6th grade doesn't mean I'm qualified in any way to go on and pursue it professionally, especially when it's so cut-throat and there's so much competition. (Interview, April 12, 2013)

From her comments, Victoria felt that a future as a successful musical theater performer was not a realistic option, despite her inner desire for that future self. Instead, Victoria mentioned that her future engagements with performing might align with more amateur or relaxed settings, as she spoke about her dreams for retirement: “My dream retirement job would be to work at colonial Williamsburg as one of the reenactors. I know it sounds funny, but that's what I want to do.” In stark contrast, Roger planned to pursue acting professionally and placed far less value on his college student possible self. He planned to attend the local community college to get his general elective credits “out of the way” (Interview, April 15, 2013), but planned to focus intently on traveling to New York City and auditioning for film and television. He mentioned familial connections to the industry as influencing his decision, but also explained that his only exposure to acting had been through his four years of the school musical. Roger communicated a

great deal of optimism and hope for his future self: “My plans are really to just see what happens...follow your dreams, you never know what’s going to happen” (Interview, April 15, 2013).

Emergent Themes

The following sections address Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 as a result of pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that identifies four emergent themes. The emergent themes of Family and Work address Research Question 1, and the themes of Actor Identity and Confidence address Research Question 2.

Family. All participants mentioned experiencing a positive and friendly environment at some point during their experience with the musical. Jeremy, Ellen, and Victoria specifically used the word family to describe the environment. Mentioning how many friends he had made, Jeremy explained that “everyone loves each other and cares about each other, we’re like one big family.” Ellen supported Jeremy’s feelings, mentioning that one of her favorite parts of the musical was watching everyone grow as a “cast family” and develop throughout the rehearsal process. Victoria elaborated, saying

I know it’s kind of cliché, but you really do become a cast family. Partly because you spend so much time with each other that you just kind of have to like each other. So I always enjoyed rehearsals because, even if I had to sit in the hallway for three hours waiting for my scene to come on, you were with your friends and it was great.

Describing the negative environment sometimes present during the musical, Samantha described how the directors “would get kind of frustrated with us if we didn’t do things exactly the way the wanted us to” (Interview, April 11, 2013). In contrast, Victoria mentioned how the directors addressed tensions among the cast by encouraging

the seniors to reach out to freshmen to resolve the social conflicts between them. From this director facilitation, Victoria reported that by the end of the production, “We were really friends, but it took a long time to get there this year” (Interview, April 12, 2013). The triumphs and struggles that participants’ experienced through the theme of family connected to the community element of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), serving to further address Research Question 1.

Work. Many participants described how the work of rehearsals had a significant influence on how much they enjoyed the rehearsal process. Students were either actively engaged and challenged by the tasks, or they had the opportunity to bond with their friends during downtime. Rehearsals consisted of “work, work, work,” said Jeremy. He clarified, saying, “But, when I say work, I don’t mean it in a bad way, I mean we worked and we had fun every single moment. It was a group dynamic, everyone loved each other, it was just a lot, a lot of fun” (Interview, April 10, 2013).

Describing reasons why she enjoyed participating in the musical, Victoria explained, “The musical requires the most work in so many areas. It’s the one school activity that’s the most fun, but it stretches you to grow as a person” (Interview, April 12, 2013). She continued, describing the social impact of the work and its influence on personal growth: “A lot of times, you’re outside of your realm or comfort zone being pushed up on stage, being judged by your peers.” Roger’s comments further supported the interaction between work, social environment, and enjoyment, mentioning rehearsals as “a little chaotic, but at the same time we have to work very hard, we have to keep

focus, but at the same time we're always having fun" (Interview, April 15, 2013). He continued,

We're constantly doing something. Our lunch breaks, we cut them down from the past few years from an hour to a half hour, just because we're constantly doing something and this year was one of the biggest times that we needed to get jam-packed on working. (Interview, April 15, 2013)

The theme of work that ran throughout many participants' responses connected to practice element of communities of practice, offering further insight into Research Question 1.

Actor Identity. The idea that personal past selves had an impact on character development was not a supported claim; however, participants indicated a strong sense of an actor identity. Samantha described her approach to performing on stage, saying, "I'm on stage to have a good time, you know? Don't over think it, don't stress out, because I know some people choke under pressure and that would be really bad on stage" (Interview, April 11, 2013). As an actress, Samantha wanted to enjoy the experience of being on stage, rather than worrying or being stressed about the experience. She went on to explain, "I really liked my part because it was just the right work load for me, it wasn't too demanding, but it wasn't too easy, and it had a lot of stage time, which I was happy about."

Other participants explicitly mentioned their identities as actors. Jeremy described his preparation process, mentioning the new experience of being an actor:

I just had to get in the right state of mind. I had to focus, I couldn't look at the audience or anything. I'm a new actor, I haven't really acted in the past, but I kind of had this idea where I like to totally focus in on what I am and who I am to try to be that person as much as possible and forget about myself completely and who I am. (Interview, April 10, 2013)

Also describing her preparation process, Victoria explained why she did not feel the need to explore her characters in further depth. Speaking from the perspective of her actress identity, she said “It’s not that I’m not a serious actress, I just don’t—for some reason, I don’t go that deep in my characters just because I don’t feel like I need to in order to play them” (Interview, April 12, 2013).

By the end of his final high school musical, Roger expressed his desires to pursue a career in acting. This goal of attaining the future possible self of an actor offered a different perspective of the theme of actor identity, as most other participants did not express an interest in pursuing acting as a career. Through his experiences in the high school musicals, Roger had developed a strong enough confidence in his actor identity that he had decided to pursue acting as a career choice. This correspondence with Roger’s future possible self and other students’ present self-concepts connected the actor identity theme to Research Question 2.

Confidence. Many participants mentioned confidence as an admirable trait of their characters. Ellen and Samantha felt they differed from the characters they played with regard to confidence. Both participants expressed sex appeal and an outgoing nature as characteristics they enjoyed having the opportunity to portray with their characters. Referencing one of her featured ensemble roles, Samantha explained, “Since I was a French maid, I told myself to think sexy thoughts, so that really helped me get into the mindset” (Interview, April 11, 2013). She also mentioned that, in general, “My characters are usually a little bit more outgoing and like, ‘Wow!’ like really out there, because it is theater and you’re supposed to be over the top and really read.” She mentioned the ability

to portray an outgoing, over-the-top personality as a skill required of musical theater performers, and later mentioned that her ability to be confident and outgoing carried over into other aspects of her life, specifically while making presentations in school. Ellen said, “Sure, I’d love to have more sex appeal and to be a little more like my sister and be out there like, ‘Hey! Here I am!’” (Interview notes, April 11, 2013). She described how she enjoyed portraying a French maid in the musical because it offered her the opportunity to portray a character with a great deal of confidence and “sex appeal.”

Similarly to Samantha, Victoria referenced confidence and an outgoing personality as traits required to succeed in musical theater. Describing the attitude problem she observed in the freshman during early rehearsals, she said, “There’s nothing wrong with being full of yourself or knowing you’re good; you have to be that way in musical theater” (Interview, April 12, 2013). Though her comment referenced the negative impact of confidence that bordered on arrogance, she believed confidence to be a necessary quality for to succeed in musical theater. Victoria also mentioned confidence as a similarity between herself and her character as well as in describing her hopes for the future: “Just being confident with herself, [I’d like to] continue with that...a strong woman who knows who she is but can share the rest of her life with someone.”

Victoria and Roger both mentioned the musical’s impact on their personal confidence, much of which came from the nature of their lead roles and the praise they received following their performances. Victoria said, “It was really nice for me to have this shining moment this year” (Interview, April 12, 2013) and mentioned the sense of

accomplishment she felt as members of her grade praised her for her performance. Roger described the impact of praise on his confidence and his goals for the future, saying

My parents have also been a big influence on me with [the musical]. I've gotten some feedback from everyone that I've been doing really well (I'm not trying to brag or anything), but they kept telling me I was great in it and I thought, 'Hey, maybe this is something I want to pursue,' and it has, it has led to that. (Interview, April 15, 2013)

The theme of confidence ran throughout many of the participants' descriptions of themselves, their characters, the requisite personality traits for musical theater, and their goals for the future. As such, the theme of confidence connected to participants' possible selves and self-concepts, which addressed Research Question 2.

SECTION V

Conclusions

This study examined the ways in which participation in a high school musical theater production might impact students' personal development. The presentation of the data aligned the findings of this study to the guiding frameworks of Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and Possible Selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) through prestructured case analysis. In addition, emergent themes surfaced through pattern coding analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data presentation served to address the two research questions of this study, which were:

1. In what ways does participation in musical theater productions as a cast member foster the development of communities of practice among high school students?
2. In what ways does participation in musical theater productions as a cast member impact individual students' development of possible selves?

Findings indicated that participants in this study experienced and became members of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998, 2006) within their high school musical that provided meaning for students, unified them through the practice of rehearsals, offered a sense of community, and fostered many individual identities. The identity facet of the community of practice within the musical emerged as a source of conflict for the cast members, with divisions between lead and ensemble members exacerbating tensions between underclassmen and upperclassmen. As a group, the cast overcame the conflicts

of identity through the practices of the musical, thereby forming a cohesive community that ultimately provided the study participants with meaningful life experiences.

While preparing for the musical, participants reported experiences that indicated their engagement with potential, hoped for, and feared possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), as well as the interactions between the past, present, and future selves of their self-concept (Lee & Oyserman, n.d.). One participant described the value of working through challenges she faced while conceptualizing three different facets of her character, suggesting a connection to the struggles that adolescents may encounter while analyzing conflicting possible selves. Becoming a college student was a common possible self between many participants, and students' hopes and fears often included success or failure in their future. Most participants did not draw on past personal experiences while developing their characters; rather, they drew on their previous experiences as actors or musicians, indicating the predominance of their actor identity over their character identity. Participants found similarities and differences between themselves and their characters, and all participants indicated that participating in the musical had impacted their goals for the future, and thus their future possible selves.

Emergent themes connecting to Research Question 1 included themes of family and work. Three participants used the word "family" to describe the community they felt during the musical. This concept of a cast family also incorporated the negative or dysfunctional aspects of the rehearsal process, including discord among cast members. Many participants also described how the work of rehearsals contributed to their enjoyment and sense of accomplishment. Multi-tasking and coordination were essential

elements of participants' enjoyment of the work during rehearsals, and the social interactions during the work process also contributed greatly to participants' enjoyment.

Themes emerged that connected to Research Question 2, specifically actor identity and confidence. Throughout participants' descriptions of their character development processes, their actor identities seemed to take precedence over their character identities. Some participants referred to themselves explicitly as actors, while some described their goals and attitudes toward performing from an actor's perspective. Participants also indicated that confidence factored into their experience with the musical in the form of portraying confidence through their characters or gaining self-confidence following their performances. Some students reported both portraying confidence through their characters and gaining self-confidence in other aspects of their lives following their performances.

Connections

Findings from this study indicated that participating in the high school musical did foster the development of a community of practice through experiences with meaning, practice, community, and identity throughout the duration of the musical. Findings also indicated that participating in the high school musical did impact individual development of possible selves through interactions with potential, hoped for, and feared possible selves as well as past, present, and future identities within each student's self-concept. In addition, the data of this study connected to much of the reviewed literature concerning musical theater in schools, communities of practice, and possible selves.

The emergent theme of work connected to Bobetsky's (2009) suggestion that, through participation in a school musical theater production, students "will succeed musically and enjoy the social benefits of working together toward a shared goal" (p. x). Another emergent theme of this study, confidence, connected to the observation that children can gain confidence from "the excitement of being in a real play or on a real stage" (Ross & Durgin, 1998, p. 6). Feay-Shaw (2001) also reported increased confidence among the three children who split the lead role in musical of her study, but also noted that the students' lead roles sometimes isolated them from the group dynamic of the production. This phenomenon from Feay-Shaw's (2001) study was also present in the current study, as participants and the printed program indicated a clear divide within the cast community between students with lead roles and students in the ensemble.

Connecting to literature dealing with communities of practice, the printed program of the show served as an artifact from the musical theater production that supplemented interview findings and indicated the extent to which the group existed as a community of practice, much as Snell and Hodgetts (2007) did with the artifacts in their study of the Heavy Metal genre. As with Countryman's (2009) study, the current study occurred after the conclusion of the musical, so data considered participants reflections on their experiences after time had passed to process the experience, rather than reflections on their experiences while the musical was in progress. This provided a retrospective portrait of each participant's experience in the musical and allowed me to identify elements of a community of practice within their responses, similar to the approach Countryman (2009) utilized.

Findings from this study coincided with much of the reviewed literature dealing with possible selves. Many participants in this study discussed a college student possible self, which aligns with the research into the role of possible selves in academic achievement (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). Findings from this study indicated that participation in the extracurricular high school musical impacted the development of students' possible selves. Stevenson and Clegg (2011) found that motivation for students to participate in extracurricular activities encompassed gaining marketable skills for future employment, obtaining personal enjoyment, or fulfilling an altruistic desire to benefit others. Participants in this study reported similar motivations, reporting that the musical afforded them beneficial experience for their college applications, great personal enjoyment, and a desire to interact with their friends in a social learning environment.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Much of the data from this study supported previous findings in the reviewed literature. As such, implications include support for addressing problems of previous literature, such as organizing and codifying musical theater pedagogy (Snider, 1995). Future research might investigate ways in which a comprehensive approach to theater pedagogy might encourage the development of communities of practice in high school musicals as a means to address state and national standards. This would be a perspective that was beyond the scope of the present study.

Family emerged as a theme of this study, with three participants explicitly describing the cast as a family and all participants mentioning the positive environment

they experienced during their participation in the musical. Future research might consider investigating high school music theater productions through the lens of family theories, such as the Bowen Family Systems Theory (Kerr, 2003). Family theories examine the interaction of varying individual identities, roles, and functions within the family unit. Applied to a high school musical theater production, family theories may offer significant insight into the relationships and social functions that various participants, including the directors, actors, stage crew, and orchestra members, might fulfill.

Participants in this study reported varying degrees of interaction with their characters-identities. Future research might include the development and application of a Possible Selves Program for Musical Theater, similar to the Possible Selves Program for Music (Freer, 2009). A possible selves program that addressed the specific potentials of participation in musical theater might identify character and personal possible selves and develop strategies to achieve them, both on stage and in real life. Existing approaches to acting and character development (Hagen, 1973; Stanislavski, 2008) suggest connections between the actor's personal life and the character's experiences. Combining these existing approaches with the ideas from the possible selves literature, a possible selves program for musical theater could facilitate honest performances and transformative experiences for students through meaningful connections of both the students' possible selves and the possible selves of their characters.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Forms



ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Impact of Participation in a Musical Theater Production on the Personal Development of High School Students: A case study investigating Communities of Practice and Possible Selves

Purpose:

This study will investigate a group of high school students and teachers involved in a musical theater production. The aim of this study is to examine how participation in musical theater and the rehearsal environment impact students' concepts of their current and future self identities. The study will include interviews with students and teachers to examine the environment present in rehearsals, rehearsal design, student interactions, and student perceptions of self identity.

You are being asked to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be involved with the study over the period of the spring 2013 semester until no later than May 1, 2013. You may volunteer to complete one interview with the researcher lasting approximately 20 minutes. If you choose to participate, audio recordings will be made of the interviews with your permission and secured on a password-protected computer until the completion of the study.

Risks and Confidentiality:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. Additionally, no experimental manipulations, deceptions, or known risks or discomforts exist. All recordings and written evidence of observations and interviews will be collected and kept by the researcher on a password-protected computer, to be destroyed at the conclusion of the process of writing the final document. Data from observations and participants' interviews may be presented verbatim in the final document. All participants and identifying features of the school will be assigned pseudonyms, and therefore your identity will not be revealed in any formal documents.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. There is no compensation for participation in this study. If you have further questions about your rights, you can contact Dr. Frank Abrahams.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature, I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have read and received a copy of this Adult Informed Consent Form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding this study, and I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact the researcher or his university supervisor directly.

Print Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature



PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Impact of Participation in a Musical Theater Production on the Personal Development of High School Students: A case study investigating Communities of Practice and Possible Selves

Purpose:

This study will investigate a group of high school students and teachers involved in a musical theater production. The aim of this study is to examine how participation in musical theater and the rehearsal environment impact students' concepts of their current and future self identities. The study will include interviews with students and teachers to examine the environment present in rehearsals, rehearsal design, student interactions, and student perceptions of self identity.

Your permission is requested to allow your child to participate in this study. If you grant permission, your child will be involved with the study over the period of the spring 2013 semester until no later than May 1, 2013. Your child will complete one interview with the researcher lasting approximately 20 minutes. The interview will take place in the choir room. If you grant permission for your child to participate, audio recordings will be made of the interviews with your child and secured on a password-protected computer until the completion of the study.

Risks and Confidentiality:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. Additionally, no experimental manipulations, deceptions, or known risks or discomforts exist. All recordings and written evidence of observations and interviews will be collected and kept by the researcher on a password-protected computer, to be destroyed at the conclusion of the process of writing the final document. Data from observations and participants' interviews may be presented verbatim in the final document. All participants and identifying features of the school will be assigned pseudonyms, and therefore your child's identity will not be revealed in any formal documents.

Please understand that your child's participation is voluntary and that your child may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. You may also withdraw your permission for your child's participation in the project at any time without penalty. If you have further questions about your child's rights, you can contact Dr. Frank Abrahams.

By my signature, I grant permission for my child to take part in this study as a research participant. I affirm that I have received a copy of this Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Form and I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding this study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may contact the researcher or his university supervisor directly.

Print Parent/Guardian's Name

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

Print Child's Name



MINOR ASSENT FORM

The Impact of Participation in a Musical Theater Production on the Personal Development of High School Students: A case study investigating Communities of Practice and Possible Selves

Purpose:

This study will investigate a group of high school students and teachers involved in a musical theater production. The aim of this study is to examine how participation in musical theater and the rehearsal environment impact students' concepts of their current and future self identities.

You are being asked to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be involved with the study over the period of the spring 2013 semester until no later than May 1, 2013. You may volunteer to complete one interview with me, the researcher, lasting no more than 20 minutes. If you choose to participate, I will ask permission to make an audio recording of your interview, which I will store on a password-protected computer until the completion of the study.

Risks and Confidentiality:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. Additionally, no experimental manipulations, deceptions, or known risks or discomforts exist. I will collect and keep recordings and written evidence of observations and interviews on a password-protected computer, to be destroyed at the conclusion of the process of writing the final document. Things you do during rehearsal or things you say during your interview may be presented verbatim in the final document. I will assign all identifying features of you and your school pseudonyms, so your identity will not be revealed.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. There is no compensation for participation in this study. If you have further questions about your rights, you can contact Dr. Frank Abrahams.

By my signature, I, _____, agree to take part in this study as a research participant
(Print Your Name)

and I affirm that my parent/guardian has completed the supplementary Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Form. I have read this Minor Assent Form and had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding this study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, my parent/guardian or I may contact the research or his university supervisor directly.

Your Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

The following questions guided the semi-structured participant interviews and connected to the frameworks of the study, indicated in parentheses after each question.

1. Tell me about your musical background and how you got into musical theater. (Communities of Practice, Identity)
2. Could you describe a typical rehearsal for me? What is procedure when you come in, who leads the rehearsal, what do you work on? (Communities of Practice, Practice)
3. How much of your preparation happened on your own and how much happened during rehearsals? (Communities of Practice, Practice)
4. What is the social environment like during a rehearsal for the musical? (Communities of Practice, Community)
5. If you were to describe rehearsals for the musical in three words, what would they be and why? (Communities of Practice, Meaning)
6. Tell me about the character you played in the musical. (Possible Selves)
7. How did you prepare to play that character? (Possible Selves)
8. Someday, would you like to be like the character you played? Why or why not? (Possible Selves, Future Identity)
9. Describe some of the similarities or differences between you as a person and the character you played in the musical. (Possible Selves, Present Identity)
10. Were your past experiences important to you while developing your character? (Possible Selves, Past Identity)
11. Did being in the musical impact your goals for the future at all? (Possible Selves, Future Identity)