

“Let Them Hear Our Voices, Singing in Harmony”:

A Qualitative Case Study on a Workplace Choir

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to investigate a novel example of music in a workplace setting, employees singing together. Music listening at work and music making in a choral context are typically separate areas of study in the current research literature. Music listening at work is associated with various positive emotional, psychological, and physical outcomes (Haake, 2011; Korzcynski, 2003; Lesiuk, 2005; Stachyra, 2015), as is active choral music participation and creation (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Brisola & Cury, 2015; Clift, Nicol, Raisbreck, Whitmore, & Morrison, 2010; Merkt, 2012; Silber, 2005; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). In order to provide a foundational understanding of active music participation in a work context, a qualitative case study was used to explore a unique workplace choir that is maintained and managed by employees in a care home in Atlantic Canada. The motivations for implementing and maintaining such an ensemble were examined, as well as the perceived benefits of choir membership. Findings suggested that the implementation of this particular workplace choir was influenced by a rich musical culture in the province as well as strong organizational acceptance and support. Choir members reported numerous benefits encapsulated within the themes of Personal Wellbeing, Personal Growth, Purposeful Work, and Serving Others. The document concludes with implications for practice as well as future research.

Keywords: workplace choir, active music participation, music use at work

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Gran: For the inexhaustible supply of love and support, I thank you.

Friends and Colleagues: For walking this road with me and always bringing the wine, I thank you.

Music: For teaching me the language of my soul, I have no words...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
PROLOGUE	1
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	2
Background and Purpose of the Study	3
Rationale for the Study	5
Assumptions	6
Definitions	7
Thesis Organization	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Music in the Social World	10
Receptive Music Use in the Workplace and Beyond	11
Benefits of Choral Participation	19
Statement of Intent	25
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	27
Qualitative Research	27
Constructivist Paradigm	28
Case Study	29
Research Strategies	30

Case Selection	30
Sources of Data	30
Participant Recruitment	31
Data Collection	31
Data Analysis	32
Trustworthiness of Method	35
Delimitations/Limitations of Method	38
Ethical Considerations	38
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	40
Context of the Case Study.....	40
Context of the Choir.....	44
Musical Province and Musical Facility.....	45
Maritime Music Culture.....	45
Northwood Music Culture	46
Genesis of a Workplace Choir	48
Four Singers	49
Experience and Meaning of Workplace Choir Participation	51
Personal Wellbeing.....	51
Personal Growth.....	52
Purposeful Work.....	54
Serving Others	56
Looking Forward	61
Institutional Acceptance of the Choir	62

Informal Nature.....	64
Summary.....	66
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	68
Summary of the Findings.....	68
Connecting the Case Study to Existing Research.....	73
Research Regarding Music Enjoyment at Work.....	73
Research Regarding Choral Music Participation.....	74
Research Regarding Music in Care Homes.....	75
New Research Connections.....	75
Summary.....	78
Strengths, Limitation, Considerations.....	79
Strengths.....	79
Limitations.....	80
Additional Considerations.....	81
Implications for Future Research.....	82
Researcher Reflection.....	84
References.....	87
Appendices.....	93
Appendix A: Information Sheet.....	93
Appendix B: Consent Form.....	94
Appendix C: Demographics Sheet.....	96
Appendix D: Interview Guide.....	98
Appendix E: Transcript Release Form.....	101

Appendix F: Debriefing Form	102
Appendix G: Email Survey	104
Appendix H: Amended Consent Form	106
Appendix I: Northwood Mission Statement and Values	108
Appendix J: Northwood Adapted Songs.....	109

PROLOGUE

“I AM MUSIC”

I am music, most ancient of the arts. I am more than ancient. I am eternal. Even before life began upon the earth, I was here - in the winds and the waves. When the first trees and flowers and the grasses appeared, I was among them. And when humanity came, I at once became the most delicate, most subtle and most powerful medium for the expression of emotions.

In all ages I have inspired people with hope, kindled their love, given a voice to their joys, cheered them on in various deeds, and soothed them in times of despair. I have played a great part in the drama of life, whose end and purpose is the complete perfection of human nature. Through my influence, humanity has been uplifted, sweetened and refined. With the aid of humanity, I have become a Fine Art. I have a myriad of voices and instruments.

I am in the hearts of all and on their tongues, in all lands among all peoples, the ignorant and the unlettered know me, not less than the rich and the learned. For I speak to all, in a language that all can feel. Even the deaf hear me, if they but listen to the voices of their own souls. I am the food of love, I have taught people gentleness and peace; and I have led them onward to heroic deeds. I am a comfort for the lonely and I harmonize the discord of crowds. I am a necessary luxury to all. I am Music.

- Anonymous (Lingerman, 1995, p. 191)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Music has long been a powerful motivator in my life. As a young child, I learned simple tasks, like how to spell my name or how to tie my shoes, through songs that my mother made up. She was, and remains, a creative woman who can weave a tall tale with ease or make otherwise monotonous tasks more lively with song. My own love of music surely finds its roots in such an upbringing. This love was further nurtured when I was accepted into a first-rate choir made up of children aged 12-16, which has since grown to be world renowned for its high calibre choristers and outstanding performances.

While I was in the choir, I learned not only of the personal satisfaction that comes from making music with others, but also of the deeper ways that it can touch us individually and collectively. I remember very well the emotional changes I experienced as a virtue of joining – and eventually leaving – the choir. I learned about commitment to something that was greater than myself and I developed a sense of gratitude for the gift that I was given – a voice to use and a medium through which to share it.

My desire to carry out research related to music in some form was an inevitable one. Looking back, music has long been one of the strongest motivators for me personally and the one constant in my life that I could always return to for personal fulfillment. For the most part, my musical involvement has been limited to the fringes of my post-secondary and professional experiences. It is precisely this absence of music that prompted my reflection on musical participation in the professional realm. I know subjectively how much music lifts me up and I wonder why this apparent secret is yet to be discovered on a grander scale. Upon considering this musical void in certain contexts, I began to ask myself different questions.

How many people can recall a time when a commonplace event, like a meeting, was changed by introducing music? What might happen? Would people be annoyed or enjoy the unusual disturbance? How many people have workplaces that invite the receptive use of music; work environments where employees can listen to music throughout their workday? What does music add? Is its absence noticed? How many employees have ever been invited to participate in a musical experience in their workplace?

I believe that aside from the receptive use of music, most individuals will not have experience with music in the workplace. Is this problematic? I think perhaps it is. I may have a greater passion for music than many others but the lack of active music making in professional environments is disheartening to me. As such, the opportunity to design a study that explored this novel idea was appealing.

Background and Purpose of the Study

With the increase in availability of music technologies like iPods, iPhones, and uninterrupted online music streaming, background music in the workplace appears to be growing as a part of the new office ritual (Haake, 2011; Stachyra, 2015). However, some employers may think that enjoying and creating music in the workplace is unprofessional and can undermine productivity, particularly when that work is not directly related to music (Hutsul, 2004).

However, there is extant literature that notes the positive effects of music on the productivity and enjoyment of a plethora of cognitive and work-related tasks (Clift, Nicol, Raisbeck, Whitmore, & Morrison, 2010; Groß, Linden, & Ostermann, 2010; Lesiuk, 2005; Partington, 2009; Yinger & Gooding, 2014).

This body of research appears to have resulted in only negligible modifications to the nature and acceptance of music enjoyment in the average workplace (Haake, 2011; Hutsul, 2004;

Stachyra, 2015). This austerity, in conjunction with competing philosophies about the place of music in a professional setting, appears to have resulted in certain work climates that may allow for a specific type of receptive music enjoyment, such as background music, but neither encourage nor promote the development of novel music forms. However, with the increase in a younger and more fast-paced work force (DeTienne, Agle, Phillips, & Ingerson, 2012) and with innovative companies like Google, Facebook, and Boeing openly advocating the benefits of music in the workplace (Cook, 2017), I wondered whether the tides might be shifting toward a more accepting view of the use of novel and creative outlets. As such, this research sought to explore the unique experience of group music making in a professional environment.

I was surprised to learn about workplace choral ensembles, and in particular the case under consideration in this study. I wondered if working in a senior care home – a professional setting that often utilizes music to increase physical engagement, social bonding, and overall enjoyment for senior residents (Lum, 2011; Myskja & Nord, 2008) – might be one of the reasons that this staff choir had been implemented and embraced within the organization. I also wondered whether the dynamic musical atmosphere and community of collaborative musicians within Halifax (Hracs, Grant, Haggett, & Morton, 2011) provided additional impetus for this novel workplace activity.

The purpose of this case study was to explore a unique workplace choir. The primary research question guiding the study was: *What are staff member experiences of participation in a workplace choir?* Further sub-questions were aimed at learning about the motivation for implementing a workplace choir among staff members, the benefits and/or challenges associated with choir membership, and how choir membership is maintained.

Rationale for the Study

As previously mentioned, the topic of music (and specifically choral musical expression) holds significant personal and professional interest to me. As a former chorister and someone who has experienced firsthand the benefits and challenges that accompany membership in a choral ensemble, the discovery that a choir had been created by a cross-section of senior care home employees – separate from musical activities that include the residents – was intriguing. Not only was the motivation for implementing a choir in this specific context fascinating to me, I was also curious about how the choir was successfully maintained and any potential benefits experienced by its members.

In my experience thus far, it is rare to come across the active use of music in most workplaces. The two workplaces in which I directly experienced music as an accepted part of the day, in regards to both receptive enjoyment and active music making, were a group home for adults with physical and cognitive exceptionalities, and a day program for a similar population. In these instances, music was used as a bridge between employees and participants, as well as an enjoyable way to pass the time. However, outside of these jobs, and within my academic and other professional ventures, I have not witnessed musical enjoyment or participation on a similar scale. As such, this study was in part driven by a desire to explore the use of choral music creation and involvement in an unconventional context.

In the current body of literature, there is a paucity of research on group music making in workplace environments. Studies that explore group music making tend to focus on choral music in typical settings (i.e., outside of work or school as an extra-curricular activity) (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Brisola & Cury, 2015; Merkt, 2012), or what appear to be the more typical settings for creating music at work (i.e., in care homes with residents, not between staff

members) (Lum 2012; Myskja & Nord, 2008). Though individual receptive use of music by staff members has been documented (Haake, 2011; Hutsul, 2004; Lesiuk, 2005; Stachyra, 2015), researchers appear to have paid little attention to the potential benefits of group music making in a similar context.

Group music making is associated with numerous positive effects in different educational, therapeutic, and even correctional settings (Groß et al., 2010; Partington, 2009; Yinger & Gooding, 2014). The carry over of positive effects between these settings provides a meaningful rationale for academic exploration into workplace choral ensembles. The aim of the present study was to understand more deeply the personal experience of individuals who participate in a staff choir by presenting a detailed account of a cross section of employees who are now or were once active members of the workplace choir under consideration. As such, it is my hope that the present study will contribute to a small but evolving body of research that documents the use of group music making in novel settings.

Assumptions

There were certain assumptions inherent to this study. To begin with, I presumed that there would be benefits that members of the staff choir gain from membership in the musical ensemble (e.g., friendship formation, skill development, enjoyment). This assumption was based on my own experience as a member of a choir as well as my belief that in order to develop and maintain involvement and interest in a workplace choir in addition to typical workplace duties, certain benefits or rewards would need to be present. Furthermore, I believed that these benefits would be likely to emerge in different extra-musical areas (e.g., personal, social, professional). This assumption was again formulated around my own lived experience as a chorister, but was

also heavily supported by extant literature (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Groß, Linden, & Ostermann, 2010; Lesiuk, 2005; Partington, 2009; Yinger & Gooding, 2014).

Additionally, I believed that there was a catalyzing event or a convergence of factors that contributed to the implementation of such a workplace choir. For instance, perhaps workers were feeling dissatisfied or burned out by their positions as helpers and together decided to create a space in which they could interact as friends and musical collaborators. Or maybe the musical atmosphere of this particular Maritime province was a significant contributor to, not only the creation of the choir, but also its perpetuation and acceptance by staff and community members alike.

Generally speaking – based on my own experience and existing research on the topic – I believed that choral membership would predominantly be described as positive in nature. Active music making can create strong emotional and social bonds among members, with benefits that extend outward, whether that be to the workplace or to the wider community. As an extension, I assumed that this particular workplace choir would function similarly and that participants would describe their experiences more favourably than not.

Finally, I believed that, in order to fully understand their individual and shared experiences, the members of this choir needed to be given the freedom to determine the themes under exploration and analysis. Based on the aforementioned assumptions, I chose a case study and relied on semi-structured interviews and survey responses, supported by secondary sources to provide the richest method of inquiry into this particular case.

Definitions

There are key terms and definitions that are used throughout the thesis as follows. First, *choir*, *workplace choir*, *staff choir*, *choral ensemble*, and *group music making* are all used

interchangeably to denote active group musical participation via song. As workplace choirs are an understudied area in contemporary research, there is little evidence to indicate any contention regarding appropriate terminology. Rather, each of these terms is used in various articles referring to organized groups of individuals who sing and make choral music together (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Clift et al., 2010; Merkt, 2012).

The term *receptive* music enjoyment is used to denote music use that is less participative (i.e., listening to music individually), while the term *active* music enjoyment is intended to denote the more involved aspects of music enjoyment (i.e., creation and performance of music with others).

Finally, the term *extra-musical benefits* refers to any additional positive outcomes (e.g., personal, social, physical, emotional, etc.) that are gained via musical participation that are not related to aspects of music making, like developing talent or mastering a difficult vocal transition.

Thesis Organization

This thesis document is organized as follows. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, its purpose and rationale, and the research question itself. Additionally, there are brief sections regarding important definitions and my prior assumptions related to this research. In Chapter Two, the literature review, I provide an account of the research on music use at work as well as choral participation in a general context. This is followed by a description of the methodology and research practices in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four is a representation of the results, starting with a description of the context of the case study, which provides an introductory understanding of the roots of the care home as well as its current status. Next, the context of the staff choir is briefly described. The distinct

musical culture in the Maritimes and the senior care home are then illustrated and are followed by a discussion surrounding the genesis of this workplace choir. After, the participants are introduced and descriptions of their experiences in the choir are organized into four themes (i.e., personal wellbeing, personal growth, purposeful work, and serving others). The chapter concludes with a look into the future of workplace choirs, by examining how this particular workplace choir has been successfully maintained.

Chapter Five, the discussion, includes a summary of the findings. The data is expounded and meaningful themes are identified and discussed in connection with the existing body of literature. Strengths, limitations, and additional considerations of this study follow. Finally, there is a focus on the future of research in this field and its potential contributions as a means to more fully enjoy and engage in work life. The document concludes with researcher reflections on the study, the care home, and my hopes for research of this nature moving forward.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents an overview of relevant literature related to music enjoyment and music creation. Pertinent literature regarding the extra-musical benefits of general musical participation and enjoyment as well as the outcomes of receptive music enjoyment in the workplace are reviewed, and a shortage of research regarding active music making in professional environments is identified. These sections are followed by a brief introduction to choral music as a specific type of active music enjoyment, as well as the individual and group-related outcomes of choral participation. The chapter concludes with a statement of intent in regards to adding to the growing field of inquiry surrounding the benefits of novel music forms (i.e., choral music participation among staff) in novel environments (i.e., at work).

Music in the Social World

Music in its various forms is a near constant staple of contemporary society (Hracs et al., 2011). Although its origins cannot be traced to the first instance of musical expression, music has been found in most known and documented societies and has been used for human communication; language, art, aesthetic pleasure, and entertainment purposes (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Faronii-Butler, 2013; Partington, 2009). Musical expression in the form of singing is recognized as an enjoyable activity for many and is also a complex behaviour used to express that which cannot be entirely communicated through spoken word alone (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Kirsh, van Leer, Phero, Xie, & Khosla, 2013). Some people even believe that music and song have the power to cross between the metaphysical planes of existence and, therefore, use them as anchors in spiritual and other ceremonial practices (Partington, 2009). On a less ethereal level, music and song have been found to promote self-awareness, enable personal growth, and serve as a vehicle for creativity and identity formation (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Kirsh et al., 2013).

The multi-faceted nature of music revealed in this brief introduction indicates the varied influences that music and song can have in our social, emotional, physical, and spiritual worlds. Music and song were used and appreciated long before research practices existed to substantiate any associated benefits. Clearly, the powerful effects of music need not be studied or quantified in order to be valued. Perhaps this is one reason that only certain musical activities are represented in the current body of research whereas others, such as group music making in novel contexts, are relatively understudied. It is with this dearth of research in mind that I dig deeper into the more commonly studied aspects of music in a workplace context, as well as those in which there is a comparative paucity.

It should be noted that an initial literature search of the PsycINFO, CINAHL, and ERIC databases using the terms workplace choir and group music making revealed few articles. It was not until these keywords were combined with additional terms, such as music therapy, singing, choir, choral, group dynamics, wellbeing, and working conditions, that more articles were identified.

The articles concerned with music in the workplace predominantly focused on the productivity of workers in regards to receptive music enjoyment in the workplace, while those concerning music making at work were more commonly focused on group home or other care settings, with active music making occurring between staff and residents/clients. These search results reinforce the notion that active music enjoyment among staff members in a workplace setting has been largely overlooked, and that music in general is a complex activity, as well as a multidisciplinary area of study.

Receptive Music in the Workplace and Beyond

In contemporary Western society, music is accepted as a valuable contributor to the

shared social experience of human beings (Hracs et al., 2011; Kirsh et al., 2013). As such, research has explored the utility of music in various domains and, specific to this study, within the professional environment. While music in the workplace has been argued by some to be distracting and irritating, much research has indicated that receptive music enjoyment can provide meaningful benefits with negligible drawbacks. In fact, when negative consequences of music listening at work are noted, they are often associated with a lack of control over the music (e.g., volume, style, etc.) and a lack of familiarity with it (Gatewood, 1921; Haake, 2011). However, once these factors are controlled for, positive outcomes of music include contributing to a space in which workers are able to effectively engage and perform workplace duties. As long as workday tasks are not highly complex, personal music enjoyment can provide a reprieve from daily monotony and repetition (Haake, 2011; Stachyra, 2015).

Engagement in musical activities while completing any variety of tasks is not a recent development. Taking a step back in time to the African diaspora, when these people were kidnapped and sold as slaves in America, they brought with them rich musical traditions (Smith, 2011). In the fields, the labourers would engage in *field hollers* and *work songs* (Smith, 2011). The field holler was traditionally sung solo, but intermittently a holler or cry from that singer might be echoed by the larger group, whereas work songs were generally sung together in a group format (Smith, 2011). These call and response style songs served several purposes. They were a means for individuals to communicate with one another without the overseers' awareness, they relieved the boredom and physical exhaustion that often accompanied repetitive tasks, and they also helped with the rhythmic synchronization of the more physical tasks, resultantly increasing productivity in the fields (Haake, 2011; Smith, 2011). This instance alone demonstrates the many uses that music can serve in its employment and enjoyment.

Although the traditions of the African people may seem an extreme example of the use of music in work-related duties, it was in fact these exact musical traditions, coupled with the worship music of European settlers, that formed the foundation of rhythm and blues and popular music in North America as it is known today (Smith, 2011). From field hollers to minstrels to blues to pop, the nature of musical production has had many variations and transformations over the years. So, it would appear, has its consumption in different domains.

With this musical evolution as well as that of the nature of the labour process, a specific body of research followed which examined music in the workplace. Following the industrial revolution, research driven by organizational desires to increase productivity explored the effects of music and song on worker fatigue, boredom, and productivity (Korczynski, 2003). Korczynski's (2003) historical overview of music use in the workplace reviewed the phenomenon in the UK over three distinct periods: "pre-industrialization, industrialized capitalism, and post-industrial capitalism" (p. 314). Findings confirmed that music use at work has necessarily shifted throughout the centuries as our relationship with work as well as music consumption and creation has changed.

To summarize the findings of Korczynski's (2003) review of relevant research, in pre-industrialism, music and work were mutually composed. In other words, songs were sung during work and were often about the work itself. They provided a distraction from the demands of the labour, at the same time addressing those demands (Korczynski, 2003). In essence, songs came out of the workers' experiences and told the stories of their work.

Industrialized capitalism brought about a new era, when work was beginning to be paced by large and noisy machines, and a rise in management-imposed prohibitions on both music and singing in the workplace (Korczynski, 2003). The new prohibitions were ostensibly both a

product of, and a contributor to, the new labour system, which was characterized by management's control over workers and working conditions. Rather unfortunately for workers at the time, a widespread belief that music was distracting and therefore inappropriate in a work setting was beginning to set in (Korczynski, 2003). There was the distinct separation of work and play and it was assumed that music should be categorized as play and, thus, have no part in work (Korczynski, 2003). Notably absent in Korczynski's (2003) review, and the greater body of research in general, is commentary on how this tight control and prohibition of music informed workers' experiences during that time.

Around the mid-19th century however, music was changing. Music was beginning to be mass-produced, which ushered in the use of modern music-listening devices (Korczynski, 2003). The advent of the radio provided a different and more receptive means of experiencing music; people listened to music that was created for them and transmitted to them as opposed to actively creating it themselves (Korczynski, 2003). This receptive music enjoyment provided more capacity for workers to focus on work tasks, and slowly it began to creep back into the workplace, if only to be used during breaks or downtime (Korczynski, 2003).

Finally, Korczynski (2003) explored music use during the post-industrial setting, our current context and thus most applicable to the research at hand. As the workplace started to become more individualized, providing workers with a great deal more autonomy, music consumption was following a similar trajectory (Korczynski, 2003). Personal music players, like boomboxes, paved the way for devices that allowed for the individual and eventually private enjoyment of music, when headphones and compact players were introduced. These types of technology in conjunction with the ability of workers to exercise more freedom at work meant that there was a new opportunity for each employee to effectively choose the soundtrack for their

own workday (Korczynski, 2003). Music use at work gained traction as research focused on the experiences of individual workers started to emerge. Much of the research indicated that music was beneficial for monotonous tasks and there were even recorded increases in productivity; however, these studies commonly relied on reports from researchers or management, not employee experiences or opinions (Haake, 2011). This begged the question: What did the workers themselves think?

In early research, there was one notable study that explored this particular viewpoint. In 1921, research with students of architecture demonstrated overwhelmingly positive reports of music on assignments, work, and even emotional outcomes (Gatewood, 1921). A total of 86% of architecture students completed a survey created by the researcher and reported that music was not only helpful in speeding up their work in creating drafts and meeting deadlines, but that it was also a contributing factor to a more positive affect, and helped to improve task performance (Gatewood, 1921). These students also indicated that music helped to create a pleasant and more structured break in between periods of hard work (Gatewood, 1921). This early study demonstrated a theme that would later come to be found in much of the research as indicated by self-report surveys, productivity levels, and even researcher and managerial observation: receptive music enjoyment has broad positive effects in a workplace context (Haake, 2011; Lesiuk, 2005; Stachyra, 2015).

Moving into the current study of music in the workplace, the theme continues. In one particularly stringent and thorough example, Haake (2011) utilized a holistic approach to examine the receptive music enjoyment practices and preferences of employees in the UK. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, nearly 300 employees were surveyed. This exploration into the uses and functions of workplace music enjoyment utilized only participants

who were free to choose whether or not to enjoy music throughout their workday, so as to be more observational than artificially experimental. Participants were recruited from various office settings, ranged in age from 20 to 65 years, and were at different professional levels (i.e., administration, management, secretarial, etc.). The majority rated their jobs as moderately stressful on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*not stressful*) to 5 (*extremely stressful*).

These quantitative data were combined with qualitative survey data. Haake (2011) created a 20-item survey and included various questions about musical preferences and scenarios in which employees would and would not want to listen to music, the format in which they listened to music, the frequency with which they chose to listen, the types of tasks they completed while listening, and reasons they chose to listen. Some questions were open-ended, others were forced-choice, while others provided options from which to choose. Haake (2011) found that respondents listened to various styles of music (e.g., rock, pop, classical) from a variety of sources (e.g., radio stations, personal collections, online channels). The participants who listened to music while working reported that it increased their emotional wellbeing, improved their concentration, and provided inspiration, positive distraction, and a sense of control over their personal space.

Other studies that focus on the effects of music on mood and task performance have identified similarly positive emotional, personal, and professional outcomes of individual enjoyment of music at work (Lesiuk, 2005; Stachyra, 2015). In Lesiuk's (2005) study, music listening at work was measured in terms of its effects on emotional affect, work output quality, and time spent on task among computer software developers, a group that commonly reports high levels of daily stress. The fast-paced work environment of Information Technology (IT), the competitive and creative nature of the work itself, and the trend of downsizing are all

contributors to the high levels of stress reported (Lesiuk, 2005). As music has been found to have positive effects on individuals' subjective and physiological stress levels, Lesiuk (2005) wanted to explore whether music use would demonstrate similar results in a high-stress work environment.

Data were collected from 56 software developers (41 male, 15 female) at four different Canadian software companies over a period of five weeks. Questionnaires were used to provide information about demographics and individual affect prior to beginning the study. Next, participants were asked to log music use and to complete questionnaires when listening to self-directed music, music prescribed by the researcher, and when not listening to music (Lesiuk, 2005). Three dependent variables were measured intermittently over the course of the five weeks: state positive affect, quality of work, and time on task (Lesiuk, 2005).

Results indicated that when music was absent, affect, quality of work, and time on task all suffered or showed negative outcomes for workers (Lesiuk, 2005). Additional findings indicated that the type of music also affected each of these areas differently, with self-directed music trending more positively than that which was assigned by the researcher (Lesiuk, 2005). This study echoes the findings of research on the beneficial outcomes of receptive music use at work. While certain differences naturally exist between workers and workplaces, extant literature appears to collectively support the notion that, generally, music use in a work context can have overarching positive qualities for the individuals who are able to choose to utilize it.

Stachyra's (2015) investigation into the presence and acceptance of radio music in the workplace provides further support for the idea that music can be a positive addition to the work day. The study also expands the research in terms of exploring the method of delivery. Types of communication present in four popular Polish radio programs were analyzed over a span of 9

months between 2012 and 2013. Findings indicated that the programming typically involved entertainment, music, information and commentary, and ever present was a certain level of mutual communication between the listener and the voice on the radio (Stachyra, 2015). That is to say, the messages from these programs consistently targeted the workplace listener by acknowledging that listeners were indeed at work, and that being in such a setting comes with certain restraints (e.g., attentional capacity, time of day); restraints that the radio programmers respected and accommodated.

Harkening back to the industrialization stage referenced in Korczynski's (2003) research when work and play were kept strictly separate, Stachyra's (2015) research provides support for the idea that, in fact, listening to the radio at work allows the post-industrial worker to work and play at the same time. Indeed, radio programs today (in one particular area in Europe, at least) appear to very carefully operate within the constraints of work – like time of day, style of music, types of radio contests, etc. – while also retaining the desirable and stress-reducing elements of play (Stachyra, 2015). Modern workplaces now seem to be accepting the idea that work does not necessarily preclude forms of entertainment or leisure. Although it explored music at work from a different perspective, Stachyra's (2015) study indicated that when delivered by a radio program that is aimed at a working audience, “music is the friend of work” (p. 274).

This small but long-running body of research shows that the functions and uses of music in a professional setting have changed just as the professional settings themselves have. Earlier research focused on and identified the synchronization of workers and alleviation of boredom as the common functions of music at work. Contemporary research into receptive musical enjoyment in modern offices appears more closely tied to mood and wellbeing. Listening to music at work in this age has been found to provide both a means with which to more effectively

engage in tasks as well as an acceptable escape or interruption to the monotony that can set in on a daily basis. This growing body of research indicates that receptive music in the workplace has positive effects on job productivity, satisfaction, inspiration, concentration, and even stress relief. However, there is a shortage of studies on workplace environments that utilize group music making amongst staff, as well as the meaning of participating in music creation and performance.

This lack of research into the benefits of novel music experiences and expression in a professional context seems shortsighted. The research findings reviewed here in addition to numerous studies that demonstrate the positive long-term effects of active music making on the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive aspects of individuals of all ages (Groß et al., 2010; Partington, 2009; Yinger & Gooding, 2014) suggests promise for the benefits of similar musical expression within the workplace. The use of music in educational and therapeutic settings has been found to increase individuals' ability to self-express, to stimulate interpersonal relationships, to increase cognitive functioning, and to manage, reframe, and improve emotional wellbeing (Gardstrom, 2008; Raglio et al., 2010). This body of research provides support for my interest into the effects of group music making, and in particular choral music participation, in novel contexts.

Benefits of Choral Participation

Singing is an activity available to the majority of people regardless of their skill level. Most individuals have the capacity to sing, and with a little practice, can pick up a tune or even the elements of an entire song (Merkt, 2012). This accessibility may be one of the reasons that group singing has long been a social and creative outlet (Brisola & Cury, 2015), and is increasingly becoming an accepted form of active musical expression, with extra-musical benefits for choristers and audiences alike (Clift et al., 2010). For example, music listeners are

often gifted with a sense of social connection and a general feeling of pleasure, while those who sing have consistently demonstrated extra-musical benefits like increases in emotional, mental, and even physical wellbeing (Clift et al., 2010). Additionally, choral participation requires participants to exercise and expand upon both personal and interpersonal skills, both of which are integral in the modern workforce.

There is a dedicated body of research that explores the effects of choral singing on choristers. A 2010 review of the literature by Clift, Nicol, Raisbreck, Whitmore, and Morrison examined extant literature regarding group singing, wellbeing, and health. The researchers explored group choral ensembles that were formed in the community as well as those formed specifically in therapeutic response to certain medical conditions. Clift and colleagues (2010) gathered that, while it was difficult to draw definite conclusions regarding the overall benefits of group music making based on the diversity of the studies under consideration, there were indications that music and singing can be both psychologically and socially beneficial to participants, with differential physical effects.

There have also been various studies focused on the emotional and cognitive effects specific to choral music participation, between various groupings of singers, and in different settings (although not in the workplace). For example, in one comparison study, Bailey and Davidson (2005) explored the differences between Canadian choirs that were already formed and functioning: one made up of homeless or otherwise marginalized individuals and others that were made up of predominantly middle-class individuals. First, semi-structured interviews developed by the researchers were employed to explore the homeless participants' experiences. Researchers were interested in participant experiences inside and outside of the choir, including any changes that occurred since their membership in the choir and their decision to join the

choir. Because the researchers identified specific areas of interest from the interviews conducted with the first group of participants that they wished to compare with the second, the participant group made up of middle class choir members was instead formed into a focus group (Bailey & Davidson, 2005).

Eight individuals were interviewed from the choir made up of homeless individuals (eight men, 43 to 64 years old), all of whom were noted to struggle with various mental health disorders and addictions issues. The eight participants from middle class choirs (one male and seven females, 24 to 59 years old) did not self-identify as having severe mental health or addictions issues (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). However, once cross-choir comparisons were made using the data gained from interviews and focus group participation, many similarities emerged, with certain distinctions between the groups.

Specifically, Bailey and Davidson (2005) found that membership in an amateur choir made up of marginalized individuals with little or no musical experience yielded the same (and sometimes even greater) positive emotional effects as it did for the more privileged individuals with higher levels of training. Additionally, individuals in both choirs reported comparable feelings of emotional release, increased positive affect, and relaxation by virtue of their choir membership (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). Interestingly, the choir made up of marginalized individuals reported higher levels of enjoyment and confidence during performance than did the second group and also evidenced lower levels of individualistic or self-serving behaviours in the choir setting, reporting that the social nature of the choir practices was a benefit that they were not frequently exposed to outside of that setting (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). Perhaps the somewhat elitist perspective that many trained musicians hold about the necessity that successful singing requires certain levels of expertise are challenged by these findings. Findings which help

to illustrate that active music making in a choral setting is beneficial on many levels, regardless of the quality of sound or the experience of the individuals who make up the group.

Additional research supports the use of choirs to promote an inclusive social network in any variety of settings, which no doubt can be extended to include the workplace. Merkt's (2012) research, for example, focused on the inclusion of differently abled individuals in various academic and social domains by analyzing the *Voices Choir* in Germany. The choir was open to differently-abled individuals and typically-abled individuals, including friends, family members, classmates, and even senior citizens in the community (Merkt, 2012). As a result, it was a heterogeneous group made up of approximately 25 differently-abled and 50 typically-abled individuals, though the numbers fluctuated each season (Merkt, 2012).

Data were collected from portfolios of written statements and brief interviews from different choir members over a period of several seasons, each of which consists of one semester or 15 weeks (Merkt, 2012). Findings suggested that when choirs were formed to include differently-abled individuals, overwhelmingly positive results were consistently found for everyone involved, though the benefits differed among them (Merkt, 2012). Typically-abled members reported a notable increase in comfort with others whom they otherwise would not have had contact, a greater sense of empathy, and general increases in emotional wellbeing (Merkt, 2012). Differently-abled choristers shared the increase in emotional wellbeing and additionally reported a desire to attend choir rehearsals more regularly and therefore demonstrated increased levels of sociability, as well as a greater sense of inclusion (Merkt, 2012). This research indicates that group singing has the potential to provide significant overarching collective and individual benefits for groups composed of individuals of differing ability levels.

In another study, Silber (2005) was curious whether a choir made up of different individuals – in this case prison inmates – would operate in a similar fashion and evidence similar outcomes as a choir from the general population might. As such, she explored the establishment of a choir formed for female inmates at an Israeli prison. Female inmates were chosen due to a lack of research on this population, and the fact that according to extant research, women are more open to arts-oriented activities than men (Silber, 2005). Although inmates have been shown to benefit from group activity, Silber believed that a choir specifically offered a unique social experience that would benefit female inmates in particular.

A musical educator and professional musician formed the choir, which was made up of seven members (aged 17 to 35, serving sentences for crimes of varying severity). In conjunction with a clinical psychologist, Silber (2005) observed and analyzed the participants during practice. The researchers kept journals and videotaped practices in order to draw conclusions about the choral experience for the members. Silber's (2005) research illustrated interesting outcomes, many of which were in accordance with other research on choral ensembles. Findings demonstrated that the choral setting served as a catalyst for both cooperation and trust between members. Specifically, Silber (2005) noted that the group helped inmates increase their skills in the areas of relating to authority, relating to peers, and self-empowerment. Silber's (2005) research provides further support for the belief that musical expression in a choral context provides a safe space for individuals to express themselves, and specific to the correctional setting, an opportunity to grow and develop useful transferable skills.

On an individual level, group singing has also been found to relieve stress, to enhance mood, energy levels, self-confidence, and self-esteem, and has also been shown to provide participants with an increased sense of purpose (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Silber, 2005; Stewart &

Lonsdale, 2016). Brisola and Cury (2015) reported findings based on the first-person accounts of six Brazilian participants. The results were represented in composite form, combining comments from all participants into two categories, the meaning of singing and the impact of singing, in order to explore the overall experience of singing in a choral context (Brisola & Cury, 2015).

Utilizing in-depth interviews spanning several months and analyzing the data for common themes, Brisola and Cury (2015) found that among these adults of mixed genders, ages, professions, education levels, and even general interests – all of whom had prior or current experience in a choir – the experience of group singing was highly emotional and meaningful. All participants separately reported that singing was an activity filled with beneficial aspects, a central theme of which was the opportunity for self-expression, which increased participants' self-awareness, self-confidence, and their overall emotional wellbeing (Brisola & Cury, 2015). It was not only beneficial to each of these aspects of their lives but it also provided a means through which to express creativity and to communicate more effectively with others, demonstrating that individual benefits may naturally lead to more collective ones.

As a collective experience, research has also indicated that participation in a choir can provide additional supports, friendships, and an increased sense of community among choir members (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Brisola & Cury, 2015; Clift et al., 2010; Merkt, 2012; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). A recent study by Stewart and Lonsdale (2016) compared group singing with solo singing as well as membership in a physical team sport. Their rationale was that both choral participation and team sport are activities that involve *joint action*, which involves physical synchrony and the unconscious ability to mimic the actions of others (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). In order to explore whether the benefits of choral participation would be similar to those of members in group sports and thereby parse out the more foundational reasons

for these benefits (i.e., musical expression versus group membership), three participant groups were formed: individual singers, group/choral singers, and individuals who played team sports. More than 300 participants completed standardized scales measuring wellbeing, self-regulation, autonomy, and extraversion, as well as a questionnaire titled “The Psychological Effects of Taking Part in Leisure Activities,” which was developed by the researchers (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). Statistical analyses indicated that while members of a choral group and members of a team sport reported significantly higher levels of wellbeing than did solo singers, choral singers reported the highest overall levels of emotional wellbeing and group cohesion, and placed more value on the group than did the other two groups of participants (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016).

Stewart and Lonsdale (2016) interpreted their findings as a suggestion that membership in a musical group may have a stronger influence on emotional and psychological welfare than the acts of being in a non-musical group or solo singing, by themselves. This finding is relevant to the current study as it indicates that, regardless of the quality of the output or even the experience of singing, group membership in a choral ensemble can have significant outcomes. Perhaps most relevant to the topic under consideration in the present study is the fact that each of the aforementioned benefits noted throughout this chapter, found to varying degrees in several studies, appear to hold across different settings (e.g., prison, college, community, etc.) and in differently abled/privileged populations across the globe. It seems very natural to wonder then, whether similar outcomes might be found in a work environment.

Statement of Intent

As the above review of the literature demonstrates, receptive music enjoyment can have significant positive impacts on an individual’s life and work experience. Furthermore, active music making (i.e., choir participation) is a growing field of inquiry with results that similarly

indicate notable benefits. These two bodies of literature provide compelling evidence to motivate a deeper examination of what is currently lacking in the literature, a bridge between these areas and an exploration into the effects and outcomes of workplace choirs. The current study is designed to address this literature lacuna and answer the following question: What are staff member experiences of participation in a workplace choir?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes an overview of qualitative research, the constructivist paradigm, and the case study, each of which informed the present study. Additionally, a description of the research strategies utilized in the study is provided, which includes a discussion on selection of the case, participant recruitment, sources of data, and analysis of the information. Next, there is a discussion regarding trustworthiness in qualitative research generally, and in this case study specifically. The chapter concludes with the limitations of this research project and a discussion of ethical considerations and challenges associated with partnering with a care home that has a separate ethics committee with its own ethical concerns and requirements.

Qualitative Research

As research on workplace choirs is largely absent in the extant literature, a qualitative approach seemed well suited for the present study. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory in nature and is used to gain a deeper understanding of a given phenomenon (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Morrow, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). It provides a useful method with which to explore a particular case and gain knowledge about the lived experience of those who are a part of it. In keeping with the goals of qualitative inquiry, the aim of the present study has been to gain a deeper insight and understanding of a unique case – one care home’s staff choir.

Relationships are said to be at the heart of qualitative inquiry (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012), and this study directly explored the diverse relationships present in a workplace choir, relationships that lead to the choir’s creation and successful maintenance. The different relationships under consideration in this study included the relationships between members of the choir, those between members of the choir and employees who are not members,

the relationships that choir members have with the residents of the senior care home, and the overarching relationship between maritime musical traditions and the care home. Additionally, it is important to note that the quality of the information I collected was directly related to the nature of the relationships I was able to form with participants, as data collection and analysis required a co-construction of understanding of the reality under consideration.

Constructivist paradigm. Qualitative inquiry tends to be a more responsive approach to research and values the subjective meanings and experiences of a given phenomenon (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Ponterotto, 2005). This leaves room for a variety of ways to conceptualize values and assumptions, especially on the part of qualitative researchers (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ponterotto, 2005). Participation of the researcher can be more or less active, and the goals of research can change based on the paradigm that informs the research. This study was predominantly informed by the *constructivist paradigm*.

The constructivist paradigm (also known as the interpretive/interpretivist paradigm) maintains that there is no one universal truth, but rather that multiple equally valid truths (or realities) are constructed within contexts, between individuals, and often outside of immediate conscious awareness (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). This paradigm places a strong focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of those who are directly doing the living and the experiencing, and the fact that meaning making within these experiences may operate on an unconscious level (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). There is also a strong emphasis on the significance of the interaction between the researcher and the participant. It is believed that through this interaction meanings are uncovered, co-constructed, and more deeply understood (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Hays &

Singh, 2012; Ponterotto, 2005). As all of the main tenets of the constructivist paradigm expounded upon here have been of key importance to this research process, it has been what most informed data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Case study. The case study provides an in-depth investigation into a *case* – a unique phenomenon or experience – in its natural context (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007; Houghton et al., 2013; Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). The present study is both intrinsic and exploratory in nature (Creswell et al., 2007; Percy et al., 2015). That is to say that it is not explanatory or theory driven (Percy et al., 2015), but rather is motivated by an explicit interest and focus on the case itself (i.e., understanding the experience of workplace choir participation) (Creswell et al., 2007).

The case study was chosen as the tradition to guide this research due to its utility in allowing for exploration into a particular, *bounded* phenomenon without requiring theory as an anchor (Houghton et al., 2013). That this case study is bounded indicates that it has boundaries of time, location, people involved, and additional delineations (Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2008). It is a unique way to explore a phenomenon for which there may exist little to no understanding and is the preferred research method for gaining an understanding about the how or the why of a given situation set to be studied in its real-life context (Creswell et al., 2007; Yin, 2008). The case study is also beneficial when the events being studied are not going to be manipulated by the researcher and when more than one source of evidence will be used (Creswell et al., 2007).

Taken together, the parameters of the case study fit well with this project and resulted in a rich description of a particular instance of a workplace choir. The key strategies undertaken to carry out the study were selection of the case, utilization of multiple sources of data, purposive sampling of participants, and inductive thematic analysis.

Research Strategies

Case selection. A key component of this study was the selection of the case, that is, a workplace choir. The selection of this case was a process undertaken in tandem by my supervisor and myself. My interest in research regarding music use and enjoyment, coupled with my supervisor's research expertise and personal network, led me to rather providentially discover a particular Nova Scotia workplace choir. A staff member there brought the choir to my supervisor's attention, who subsequently suggested it to me as a potential research opportunity. Once this workplace choir was chosen as a phenomenon of interest, the research grew up around the case itself.

I began preliminary research into this organization and discovered via their website that they welcome research from outside parties. As such, I began electronic communication with their quality specialist, who provided information regarding the research process within the organization. In order to engage in research with anyone working or living within the care home, researchers are required to draft a research proposal and to go through the organization's own research and ethics committee. I completed this step and eventually received ethics approval from the committee. The research contact then directed me to the individual who would act as a liaison between staff members and myself so that research could begin.

Sources of data. Multiple data sources were used. The primary sources of data were individual, semi-structured interviews conducted with participants of the workplace choir, plus an online email survey option. Secondary sources of data consisted of the organization's website (e.g., mission, vision, core values), a book about the care home, and artifacts related to the choir such as song lyrics written/adapted by the choir, online videos of the choir's performances, recordings and images of the staff choir, lists of musical repertoire, and a workplace newsletter.

Participant recruitment. Participants in the current study were *purposively* recruited with the help of a contact person at the care home. I was in close contact with this liaison throughout the research process, which allowed for relative ease of communication transmission between participants and myself.

Purposive sampling is participant selection that is based on the amount of detail individuals can provide regarding a phenomenon (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Morrow, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005) and thus participants are not randomly selected. Rather, potential participants in this study needed to meet eligibility criteria. In this case, they needed to be past or present employees of the care home and they needed to have direct experience with the choir.

The liaison was provided with an information sheet about the proposed research (please refer to Appendix A) and at my request distributed it widely throughout all areas of the care home via secure internal email. The information sheet sent to staff requested that interested employees email the student researcher (i.e., myself) to discuss details further. When contacted, I responded by emailing a consent form for these individuals to read, sign, scan, and email (or fax) back if they wanted to participate (please refer to Appendix B). Additionally, they were provided with an optional demographics sheet (Appendix C), which each participant completed.

Data collection. Once participants provided consent, the next step in the research process was to arrange a time for a telephone call to complete individual interviews. Please refer to Appendix D for the interview guide. Each interview was completed separately and ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. These interviews were recorded and saved in secure files on my personal computer. Once transcription was complete, I provided participants with an interview summary along with a transcript release form (Appendix E) that I asked them to return signed. Participants were invited to discuss with me any transcript clarifications or alterations they desired before

returning their release forms. All participants were satisfied with their individual transcript summaries and no amendments were requested. Once participants signed and returned their release form, they were emailed a debriefing form (please refer to Appendix F) and informed that they were welcome to further communication with the student researcher if and when desired.

Given the early limited response to recruitment efforts, and challenges associated with conducting phone interviews with a significant time difference between Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, an email survey option was developed (see Appendix G). Both the University and care home ethics committees approved the survey. The care home liaison forwarded the survey to all employees, again via internal email. An amended consent form was also included in the email (Appendix H).

Data analysis. Data were analyzed *concurrently* (i.e., as collected). Concurrent data analysis can be either *inductive* or *theoretical* (Percy et al., 2015); in this case it was inductive. Inductive analysis allows themes and pattern identification to be data driven rather than fit into preexisting categories formulated by the researcher or extant research (Percy et al., 2015). As the study progresses, themes are identified, which helps the phenomenon under consideration to be more fully described and resultantly understood (Hays & Singh, 2012; Morrow, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative research typically employs an inductive process, as it allows for the reflexive revision of themes, thereby providing a more authentic and trustworthy record of the phenomenon under consideration (Ahern, 1999; Hays & Singh, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013).

Operationalizing concepts and identifying themes involved staying close to the data. Codes emerged from the interviews, survey, and secondary data, which then formulated themes regarding participants' individual and shared experiences of choir participation. Although there were some themes that I anticipated based on my prior research and personal experiences, I was

careful about ensuring the terms, definitions, and themes were anchored in the accounts provided during data collection.

Open coding was used as a way to delineate categories/codes and then themes in this data set. This process allowed for an exploration into ideas and meanings contained in the raw data by breaking them into smaller, meaningful concepts (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

Descriptive coding, *in vivo coding*, and *emotion coding* as described by Miles and colleagues (2014) were also used throughout data analysis.

A descriptive code assigns a label to data to summarize, in a word or short phrase, the basic topic in a data set (Miles et al., 2014). Descriptive codes were used in this research when a similar idea or concept was shared but not communicated exactly the same way between participants or data sources. *In vivo coding*, one of the more well-known qualitative coding methods, uses phrases or words taken directly from a participant's own language (Miles et al., 2014). This was particularly useful during data analysis as a way to identify meaningful patterns among individual participant experiences, as well as between data points. *Emotion coding* labels the emotions both recalled and experienced by participants (Miles et al., 2014). I considered it an appropriate coding method as participant experiences and descriptions of music often tended to steer away from cerebral language and toward more sentimental or emotional expressions. Following the initial stage of coding, I worked to identify connections and overarching themes that existed between codes, and then clustered them together to create a smaller, but inclusive set of themes.

Finally, as codes and themes were identified, Yin's (2008) four guiding principles for the analysis of the case study were applied. According to Yin (2008), the researcher must begin by establishing that all data relevant to the case are indeed the subject of analysis. As I considered

this principle, I ensured that no available data that could potentially contribute to the understanding of the choir was neglected in the collection or analysis stages.

The second principle asserts that rigorous analysis must necessarily incorporate findings that are both compatible and incompatible with one another (Yin, 2008). In order to ensure that I was in compliance with this principle throughout the research process, I tried to be reflexive during interviews so as to avoid being too directive with participants, and therefore leading them in the direction of my own personal biases. Additionally, as some codes of a negative nature emerged, I was careful to make use of the aforementioned coding techniques to capture both negative and positive experiences.

Thirdly, Yin (2008) suggests that the most meaningful findings can be highlighted throughout the process of analysis, so that analysis is truly reflective of the major findings identified. Concurrent and inductive data analysis techniques were contributors to ensuring that this principle was upheld throughout the analysis stage. As codes emerged through each interview it became easier to find common themes among the pieces of data. Questions were informed by the flow of information, which provided me with a richer understanding of the functions and experiences of the choir.

Finally, Yin (2008) encourages the use of the researcher's prior knowledge or expertise in moving the analysis toward meaningful interpretations. This principle aligns well with the constructivist paradigm in that it allows for, and even encourages, the co-construction of meaning and overall collaboration between the researcher and the participants. This was by far the principle I adhered to with the most ease, as I have an overabundance of experience with musical expression and choral music participation, as well as a desire to see an increase in the use of music in novel settings. Also, I have a fond appreciation for collaboration that involves a

complex exchange of ideas and allows for conversations to unearth themes that otherwise may have remained hidden without such cooperation. I did, however, need to consistently reflect on this principle and remain reflexive of my position and experiences, so as to carry on as a co-creator of meaning as opposed to its sole architect.

Trustworthiness of the Method

It is increasingly understood that absolute objectivity is not a reasonable expectation to hold for researchers (quantitative and qualitative alike), as we too experience the social world that we study, which informs our personal, social, and cultural values and belief systems (Ahern, 1999). It is, however, expected that these values and belief systems will not disproportionately shape or impose upon data collection and analysis. *Reflexive bracketing* allows qualitative researchers a means through which personal assumptions and preconceptions can be appropriately understood, incorporated, and (when necessary) set aside in an attempt to reflect the experiences of participants (Ahern, 1999).

My ability to be reflexive in this study was dependent upon my own capacity to understand and accept my lived experiences and resultantly how they shaped my methods of inquiry and analysis (Houghton et al., 2013). This is to say, in order to successfully set aside my own preconceptions, I needed to first examine them, understand what they were, and be willing to consistently revisit them throughout data collection and analysis. Bracketing is one way to demonstrate the trustworthiness (or validity) of this qualitative study (Ahern, 1999). It is a reflexive process and it required that, in an attempt to create a study that was free from undue personal influence, I both prepare for and constantly evaluate my participation in the research process (Ahern, 1999).

I should clarify that reflexive bracketing is not a tool that is used to disregard or eliminate the effects of researcher motivation, beliefs, or values. Rather, I used it as a way to reflect upon and more fully understand the effects of my life experiences and how they influenced my role and experience with this study and its findings. This helped me to be an active member in co-creating the themes and meanings derived from the data, but also, I hope, guarded against my gaining an unreasonable amount of control or bias over the direction that the information took.

In addition to reflexive bracketing, I applied several criteria of trustworthiness (Hays & Singh, 2012; Morrow, 2007). Considering both *confirmability* and *authenticity* contributed to a reasonable objectivity on my part in both method and theory. If I have been successful, this should result in a genuine and replicable method of reflecting participant experiences (Houghton et al., 2013). Specifically, confirmability refers to the degree to which any findings can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Houghton et al., 2013). I believe that I have taken up the research in a stringent and well-described way, so that further research can similarly be conducted in the future. Authenticity is concerned that all of the realities are represented and that they can help give meaning to the findings (Houghton et al., 2013). I believe that my careful consideration of each piece of data, both independently and in conjunction with one another, helped to provide a true reflection of the experiences in this workplace choir, and thus their authenticity.

Both confirmability and authenticity are integral to the veracity and applicability of the themes derived from this research (McGloin, 2008) and have been in keeping with the methodological approaches chosen, when considered in conjunction with reflexive bracketing (Ahern, 1999). *Substantive validation* is another criterion of trustworthiness and concerns the relevance of the research contribution toward an understanding of a given phenomenon (Hays &

Singh, 2012). As I have stated throughout this document, the present study adds to the growing understanding of a little studied phenomenon: the effects of active music making, and specifically choral participation, in the workforce.

Each of the aforementioned criteria is intended to increase the *credibility* of the study, which refers to the value and believability of the findings (Houghton et al., 2013). This criterion is further strengthened by my use of *member checking*, which is the process of allowing all participants the opportunity to confirm or deny the researcher's record of their statements (Miles et al, 2014). This was accomplished through the provision of interview transcript summaries. It was only with participant approval to move forward that I was able to officially identify, organize, and define themes in the data.

Finally, the trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by the use of *triangulation*. Triangulation is a common strategy used in qualitative case study and uses several methods to gain information on a given phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013). I used triangulation of both *data sources* and *data methods* in this study. Triangulation of data sources involved the inclusion of several perspectives or participant voices (e.g., those with different roles in the workplace choir), while triangulation of data methods refers to the use of multiple methods in order to more deeply illustrate themes (e.g., interviews, survey responses, recordings, etc.) (Hays & Singh, 2012).

I made use of triangulation in this study to *confirm* the data and ensure that they were *complete* (Houghton et al., 2013). Confirmation involves the comparison of multiple data sources and explores the extent to which any findings can be verified, while the completeness of data is concerned with creating as full and thorough a picture as possible through which to explore and understand this particular case (Houghton et al., 2013). While some critics have argued at the

lack of rigor associated to qualitative research and the case study in particular, triangulation is a strength of this research design as it provides the opportunity for the use of many sources of evidence and exploration (Houghton et al., 2013). In fact, each criterion mentioned above was used as a tool to improve the value of the present study and, as such, was regularly revisited in order to maintain the trustworthiness, and thus the overall quality of this study and the results.

Delimitations/Limitations of the Method

Delimitations. This case study was appropriately bound within distinct confines (Creswell et al., 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Morrow, 2007). These delimitations, or my parameters for the study, include the chosen research tradition, the group, the activity itself, and the time period in which the data was collected and analyzed. This case study provides evidence regarding one group of people participating in the workplace choir over a brief history, which was intended to expand our understanding of their experiences.

Limitations. There are inherent limitations or constraints that my chosen methodology imposed on this study. The very nature of the case study being a detailed exploration into one particular case, grounded in one particular setting, makes the findings difficult to transfer to a wider population (McGloin, 2008). Similarly, smaller samples and the use of purposive sampling prioritize gaining a rich and meaning-laden understanding of a particular phenomenon over generalizability (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Morrow, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

This study was minimal risk and received ethics approval from two institutions – the University and the care home. Initially, I was not aware of the care home’s ethical guidelines and procedures for approval of research. The care home however is an organization that describes itself as an innovative workplace that relies on research to maintain its status as a leader in

providing responsive and appropriate care to residents (Northwood Communications, 2017). As a result, I was required to complete an additional ethics proposal that was reviewed and approved by the facility's research committee.

This additional research proposal and review process was a necessary step toward ensuring that vulnerable people, specifically the residents themselves, would not be exploited or bothered in any way. In keeping with this consideration, I was careful not to take time away from participants' work hours and made myself available at unusual times to adjust for the time difference, which puts Nova Scotia three hours ahead of Saskatchewan. It was also essential to keep the participants in this study safe from scrutiny and/or identification. As such, participants were identified using gender-neutral pronouns (e.g., they/them/their), and quotes were edited to increase anonymity. While it was important to keep participant identity secure, it was decided that the care home in question would not be de-identified in the present study. As a socially inclined workplace that encourages and actively participates in research in order to cultivate a deeper understanding of innovative care techniques and workplace practices, I did not believe that concealing the care home's identity aligned with their overall mission.

Overall, through the debriefing process, the feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive from participants. As participation was voluntary, and those who wished to participate were able to discretely and directly contact me, there was no way for participants to be identified among staff members, unless they themselves chose to disclose this information to one another. The only concerns from participants (though not deemed harmful by any of them, simply inconvenient) were the challenges of technology management and setting up interviews across provinces. Nevertheless, each person expressed a great deal of satisfaction and pride at having been able to be a part of this study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter begins with a chronicling of the care home. Next, the context of the choir, its history, and how it began are presented followed by an introduction to the participants. Thematic findings are then outlined. Findings regarding staff experiences of participation in a workplace choir are presented in table form, elucidated with participant quotes and information compiled from secondary data sources. Quotes are verbatim transcriptions subject to minor editing for the purposes of increasing anonymity, confidentiality, and clarity.

Context of the Case Study: Northwood Senior Care Home

Northwood Senior Care Home is one of Canada's largest senior citizen's complexes and is a comprehensive centre for enriching the lives of older adults (Northwood Communications, 2017; Tetrault, 1999). It is not simply a place where elderly individuals go to live out their final days; it is a lively and vibrant community for residents and employees alike. Northwood opened its doors to senior residents in the early 1970s in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Tetrault, 1999).

However, the journey started many years before, when in 1962, a young businessman by the name of Ed Roach was driving home and heard an interview on the radio. A distraught elderly woman was explaining to the radio host that she and her husband were going to be placed into separate homes, as they could no longer live independently and there were no homes that would accept both women and men.

While Mr. Roach was not an advocate for the elderly in Halifax at that time or even particularly aware of their plight, he found himself both touched and concerned that this was happening. Why, he thought, were there no senior's homes that could accommodate men and women together? These separate homes were effectively forcing couples apart at a time in their lives when they would arguably need each other the most. Mr. Roach would eventually describe

the state of elder care as a “terrifying void in the social system” (Tetreault, 1999, p. 7), and noted that it was precisely that deficit which ignited his passion in social advocacy for elderly individuals in Halifax.

Mr. Roach’s work to open Northwood took years, as the social focus at that time was not on compassionate care for the elderly, but rather on establishing affordable housing for the increasing numbers of young families. Much to his dismay, most people in the local government were as unaware of the status of elder care and supports as he had been. Thus began a years-long journey towards improving the housing, social, and healthcare conditions for Halifax seniors. In preliminary visits, Mr. Roach discovered that the living conditions of this population were deplorable. They were living in slums, in unheated and moldy basements, in isolation (Tetrault, 1999). They were being denied the right to live their later years in dignity. Mr. Roach envisioned an inclusive, clean, and safe alternative to the substandard ones he was witnessing.

Mr. Roach encountered many hurdles in his attempt to make the elderly in Halifax visible to the rest of the community. The city believed that the onus was on the community itself to find housing for this portion of the population, so he went into the community to do just that. He visited homes, which is where he noted the unfortunate living situations of so many senior citizens. He discovered that Nova Scotia was one of only three Canadian provinces that did not have any social programs in place at that time to assist the elderly in finding affordable housing, and that it had no low-cost rental housing that was specifically allotted for seniors (Tetrault, 1999). So he founded the Halifax Senior Citizens’ Housing Corporation (HSCHC), and enlisted the support of the city, which offered to help find a site to build a home; the province, which provided a grant; and the federal government, which offered a low-interest mortgage (Tetrault, 1999).

In 1970, Mr. Roach and HSCHC founded Sunrise Manor, Halifax's first publicly subsidized residence for low-income seniors, followed by Northwood Towers, which provided additional independent living space for the same population (Tetrault, 1999). While this was a meaningful step in providing seniors with much of what they had been lacking prior to his advocacy, Mr. Roach also believed that supported living was a necessity for this population. In 1971, Northwood Manor, a semi-independent housing project opened up on the East side of Northwood Towers (Tetrault, 1999). On one side of the building were apartments and suites for couples and single seniors, and on the other side was a new concept in caring for and rehoming senior citizens, a place that provided supervised room and board. Shortly thereafter, a second level of care was added for those individuals who needed more direct daily assistance. This personal assistance included help with bathing, dressing, eating, mobility, as well as with medication organization and delivery. Originally, it was constructed to home over 400 individuals.

Presently, the Northwood complex is home to 485 residents, and provides outreach support to approximately 200 individuals in the community (Northwood Communications, 2017). Northwoodcare Incorporated is now a three-building complex referred to simply as Northwood and it maintains three levels of care: independent living, supportive living, and assisted living (Northwood Communications, 2017). As before, seniors who are fully independent and want an affordable and inclusive lifestyle utilize Northwood's independent living services. Those who require some assistance in order to maintain their desired levels of independence are placed in supportive living, and assisted living is for those who require direct assistance with most, if not all, daily tasks (Northwood Communications, 2017). Northwood also provides individualized homecare to those who are able to remain at home.

Northwood was developed with the mental, physical, and social wellbeing of elderly individuals at the forefront. The basic philosophy of Northwood is and always has been a concern for people (please refer to Appendix I for Northwood's Mission Statement). It was born out of a desperate need for senior citizens to retain visibility and inclusion in the community as they age, to maintain safe and affordable housing, to continue to live with their partners in their final years, and to manage their lives in a similar fashion as before they required care. This is reflected in the many amenities provided within Northwood, including a tea room, mini mart, gift shop, banking services, pharmacy, physical and occupational therapy services, health clinic, dental clinic, counselling services, activity centre, beauty salon/barber shop, patio, garden, and on-site doctors and nurses. Northwood also has a lounge where dancing, karaoke, and sing-alongs occur, and alcoholic beverages are served (Northwood Communications, 2017).

Providing senior citizens with the same fulfilling lifestyle choices that a younger population enjoys remains a strong focus at Northwood. Being one of Canada's biggest senior citizen's complexes and Atlantic Canada's largest non-profit continuing care organization (Northwood Communications, 2017), Northwood provides services that directly support the mental, emotional, and physical health of the residents, and encourages an active and healthy lifestyle. Care for the residents permeates all areas of this community now.

Northwood was the initiative of an openhearted and principled man who helped a community see that a significant portion of Halifax's population was underserved and that action was required. Northwood remains a force in social advocacy for seniors and an innovator in person-centered care. Perhaps it is not surprising that Northwood would also be a trailblazer in implementing a workplace choir that has been maintained for a decade. Furthermore, the musical

culture in Nova Scotia is unique and active music making is a social activity that appears interwoven into the very fabric of everyday life.

Context of the Choir

While details regarding the workplace choir will be elucidated in upcoming sections of this chapter, a brief account of the structure of the choir may be helpful for the reader's conceptualization of the group. The choir's organization is by no means a strict or rigid framework. Instead, it can be aptly described as an experimental group project between staff members.

For example, the choir does not have a set number of staff who participate. Rather, the group maintains a membership of approximately 10 to 20 members, depending on staff availability, interest, time, and various other factors. There is a set weekly practice when the choir is in full operation, but the group may also be less active during certain seasons, in which case both practices and performances will be reduced. Specifically, the participants noted that during the summer months, the choir is much less active for various reasons (e.g., staff holidays).

During practice and performance, a staff member who plays the piano and/or guitar will accompany the choir. Additionally, choir members sometimes utilize other instruments, like the tambourine. While there is one individual who typically occupies the role of conductor and organizer, there is flexibility in the group such that other members can and do take the lead when necessary. Additionally, the staff choir functions in such a way that all members are equally valued. They all contribute to the music that is chosen, whether that be in the form of adapting lyrics from existing songs, choosing to cover popular music, incorporating sacred music, and even learning culturally divergent pieces that certain members introduce and teach to the group.

As previously mentioned, more details regarding this staff choir will follow. For now, a consideration of the environment in which such a group can flourish will be explored.

A Musical Province and A Musical Facility

Maritime music culture. When I first heard about a workplace choir in Nova Scotia, I considered that it might not be a coincidence that it was in a maritime province. I have never been to Nova Scotia, but I have been fortunate enough to explore other areas of the East Coast and I have noticed that music appears to permeate every aspect of the culture there. For example, upon my arrival to Newfoundland in 2013 for a convention, my group and I were greeted with a song (the name of which escapes me now) and what is colloquially known as a screech-in ceremony. This ceremony is a traditional welcome to non-Newfoundlanders. It involves a song, a drink, and the kissing of a codfish.

I very quickly came to the happy realization that music in various forms would play a large part in my visit. The buskers were aplenty, and music seemed different than what I was used to. There was a specific lilt to it, and often it was not music I heard playing on the radio. Instead, people were playing and singing with instruments that they apparently carried with themselves. I found it strange. Not in an off-putting way, it was simply unlike anything I had been exposed to before. Frankly, I was envious of a culture that for only being a few provinces away from mine was nevertheless unlike anything I had ever experienced on the prairies. My brief personal exposure to the maritime music culture seemed to parallel the experiences of the participants who live there currently, and whose responses demonstrated to me the unique musical culture reflected in the environment of Northwood.

During the interviews, participants confirmed that they believe that Nova Scotia's musical culture is unique, and that it likely contributed to the creation and maintenance of this

choir. As one participant noted, in Nova Scotia “Every second person can sing or play an instrument. We are saturated with talent down here. Saturated.” Another participant spoke about the distinct types of East Coast music, “I think Nova Scotia has its own, the East Coast has its own music community, its own sound. There's a sound. There's a sound.” Characterizing that sound was not quite as simple to put into words however. According to one respondent:

Depends on where you go... If you go to Lunenburg County, it's a little more bluegrass in some ways... more fiddle. You go to Cape Breton and it's a different type of fiddling, you know. It almost reminds me... hmm... I don't know if I can answer that question. I just know that it's different.

This same participant went on to tell me that if I were to spend any time in Nova Scotia, I would undoubtedly get to experience a “kitchen party”:

You just go to your neighbour's and you sit down and you start singing. Somebody always brings a guitar, somebody brings a fiddle, somebody brings an accordion, somebody brings a whatever. And off you go. Music... It's in the lives of people here.

Ultimately, each participant shared that the musical culture in Nova Scotia permeates the very fabric of the lives of the people there. Furthermore, music is not simply a passive or receptive experience. Rather, individuals play a participatory and active role. The music has its own sound and its own ability to bring the community together, “It's not like, it's not like people just sitting down at a piano. It's like a community sits down at the piano.”

Northwood music culture. Just as the music culture of Nova Scotia may seem unique to someone who has been raised in the prairies, so too does the music culture of Northwood. For instance, each participant commented that Northwood was the only place they had ever worked where they were able to actively make music with other staff members. Further to this point are

the many musical activities within Northwood. There is a musical group, The Northwood Players, made up of residents who both sing and dance. There is also a DJ that comes in monthly who plays music for the residents:

He has music twice a month at Northwood on a Thursday and he starts with music from the 80s to whatever. Tomorrow night I think he's having what they call throwback music, which is like Diana Ross and all that old music. Then he'll have country music, then he'll have blues. Every month he plays a variety of music.

Additionally, live bands and singers regularly come in and perform for the residents:

We have different band groups that come in and sing. Like, on a Wednesday night you might have a band with three people singing, and the residents go down. And you might have somebody that – we used to have a gentleman, he used to play the mouth organ – so he'd come up and play the mouth organ and sing. And see he could [speak] in French and English, so you had some French people and some English people, which was perfect because everybody was getting a little bit of it.

Instruments are also encouraged and, when possible, are even provided to Northwood staff and residents:

We have residents that really like to play the piano and Northwood has different pianos in different rooms. Sometimes you can go in there and listen to them play on the piano or you could hear one of the residents strumming on the guitars or their banjos or whatever.

Many residents bring an instrument or music-playing device of some sort with them when they move into Northwood, “We have residents that play the guitar, the banjo, the piano. All different things.” It is through each of these different avenues that the rich music culture of Nova Scotia is displayed in the musical culture of Northwood.

Genesis of a Workplace Choir

Like the emergence of Northwood, the creation and evolution of the Northwood Staff Choir has been a years-long process. The catalyzing factor of which was a “diversity circle committee” whose purpose was “to promote inclusion at Northwood.” Northwood was not having problems with a disconnected or unhappy staff. Rather, Northwood leaders wanted a way to support an increasingly multicultural staff, as well as to encourage interactions between employees from different departments. The committee consisted of music lovers and, according to one participant, “one of our diversity circle members came up with the idea of having a choir.” This choir was open to anyone and everyone, but especially to those who “love to sing and who love music.” Furthermore, music was already used a lot within the workplace with residents, so the members of the diversity circle committee thought a choral ensemble might be a natural way to bring staff members together. While they wanted to start a choir for the staff, the initiative was also considered to be for the residents – committee members wanted to serve all of the individuals within Northwood. Music struck them as a way to promote inclusion and community, which might benefit an environment where people both worked and lived.

Although none of the participants could pinpoint exactly when the choir started, there was general agreement that it originated between the years of 2005 and 2010. The lack of a specific date seems to stem from the fact that it took some time for staff members to start coming to practice regularly. An invitational email was sent out to all staff at Northwood several times by the diversity circle committee members, who are considered the original architects of this choir. Slowly, more and more staff members started to attend practices and eventually a consistent, cohesive group was formed with anywhere from 10 to 20 staff members at a given time.

The choir has regularly scheduled practices and occasional performances. However, depending on choir members' interest and availability, practices might be suspended for periods of time, and invitations to perform outside of Northwood will be declined. Repertoire is selected based on interests and recommendations of choir members and/or residents, and is learned using repetition and memorization. Few singers are formally trained and some are not able to read music. There is no set arrangement for the voices in the choir. They sing the parts that best fit their voices for a given song and stand wherever works. While there is no formal choreography, the choir members sway, snap, and clap along to the music in practice and in performance. Generally, there is a choir director but that person has changed over the years, and depending on availability, different members seem comfortable taking a leadership position if need be. The choir is made up of many different people from many different walks of life, but the one thing that connects them is the music they make together.

Four Singers

Four participants – three women and one man, aged 40 to 70 years ($M = 56.75$) – volunteered to share with me their experiences of the Northwood Choir. Three were interviewed and one completed the email survey. Each singer had a longstanding involvement with the choir. Participants reported working in different areas of Northwood, education levels differed, and so did religious denominations. However, a common characteristic shared by each participant was a deep appreciation for and enjoyment of music.

In some form or another, music was a significant part of everyone's upbringing. Their musical appreciation stemmed from this early influence of music in the family, although two specifically noted that they felt they were not overly talented. One participant shared early in our conversation that they were brought up in a "musically inclined family." Another participant also

commented on growing up in a “musical kind of family” and noted, “[music] has always been part of my life and I love it, but I don’t think I’m very good at it.” Another participant described these early experiences with music as a catalyst for joining the workplace choir:

My mom's family is all musical. My uncles, they all play guitars. My mom played piano, they played the spoons. There was always music around, always. Every weekend there was music.

Each participant disclosed previous experience with choirs outside of work. A workplace choir, however, was a new experience. Nevertheless, the decision to participate in the choir was straightforward for each participant given their enjoyment and previous experiences with music. One participant stated simply, “It was just my love of music, my love of music,” born from early musical experiences, that motivated early membership in the choir. This love and appreciation of music in various forms was also evident in the expressive, evocative language each person used. For example, one participant stated that music “makes my soul bubbly,” a similar feeling expressed by another participant who said that singing “fertilizes my soul.”

After talking with the participants, it seemed natural that individuals with such a deep fondness for music would want to incorporate music into their work environment. In fact, participants commented that staff members never considered their workplace choir to be unique until the current study was brought to their attention. Throughout the interview/survey process, it seemed that participants presumed that music was as common in other individuals’ lives as it was in theirs. The fact that these participants were only made aware of the uniqueness of their workplace choir once the present study was proposed demonstrates that music, to this particular group of individuals, is a natural means of providing enjoyment and bringing people together even in a professional setting.

The Experience and Meaning of Workplace Choir Participation

The findings here indicate that the experience of being part of a workplace choir has been positive for these participants and has involved varied and far-reaching effects. These effects extend from the individual to the professional and do not appear limited to only the individuals who actively participate in the choir. Table One summarizes the main themes related to the primary research question: *What are staff member experiences in a workplace choir?*

Table 1.

Themes	Codes
Personal Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic • Stress relief • Providing support
Personal Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating confidence • Providing joy • Recognizing greater potential
Purposeful Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going above and beyond • Wilful sharing of work/personal time • Contributing to something greater than the self • Excellence and pride • Renewed dedication to work
Serving Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reciprocity between staff and residents • Perceived benefits the choir provides to residents: feeling at-home, included, and supported

Personal wellbeing. Participants mentioned numerous effects that positively impacted their wellbeing. One participant stated that the choir has “morphed into a therapy group,” while another noted that when choir practice ends, it is as though the members “just had a one hour therapy session with a psychologist.” Participants shared that employees became noticeably

happier by virtue of choir practice attendance, as indicated by the laughter and music that could be heard spreading throughout the building as they dispersed from each practice.

According to the participants, the choir has acted as an extra layer of support for staff members who are involved in challenging work. Northwood houses hundreds upon hundreds of individuals with varying physical, intellectual, and emotional needs which is demanding for those who provide their care. The choir provides a sort of reprieve from this type of work pressure. It has become a place for employees to share their stress with others who can truly empathize, as well as a place for employees to experience a sense of healing and “emotional release” from the various stressors of their lives -- both work-related and personal. For example, one participant shared a story about a member of the choir who had immigrated to Canada and had experienced a heart-wrenching personal tragedy. As this singer struggled to go on in light of such loss and despair, and to continue with the emotionally exhausting task of caretaking, choir practice became one reason to return to work. When they returned to practice, the members of the choir enveloped this individual in a group hug. Later, the singer reportedly told the members, “You’ve given me my life back.”

Each participant noted that over the years, the members of the choir have acted as a loving family would, providing “personal support” to members through various struggles. These struggles have taken the form of daily work-related trials, like being yelled at by a tired or confused resident, and they have taken the form of more monumental personal tragedies, like losing loved ones. Ranging from a kind word to a group hug, the choir offers support: “The support, the love that people shared was incredible.”

Personal growth. Another common experience associated with making music with co-workers was a sense of personal growth. As a result of choir membership, one participant felt as

though it had helped to bring them out of their shell, saying that the choir “helped with my confidence.” Another participant expressed that being in the choir “helped me be more patient,” an important asset in care-related work. This participant, a self-described perfectionist in terms of the structure of group music making, stated that participation in Northwood’s choir taught them that it can be okay and even fun to open up to the possibilities of runs and riffs (i.e., spontaneous vocal and/or instrumental embellishments to the melody) and to be less structured overall. Additionally, feelings of increased confidence, specifically in regards to musical knowledge and skill level, were enhanced for the participants when other members of the choir looked to them for leadership and guidance.

In addition to these stated benefits of personal growth, participants also shared that the choir has produced a stronger sense of inclusion and camaraderie among members, providing uplifting feelings of joy. Not only have these members experienced their own positive outcomes of membership in the choir, but they have observed it in others:

I believe each one that is in the choir, I believe they have something they're taking away from the choir, within them. Because if you could see the choir and when the choir's singing, if you could look at the faces and see the joy, it's like they totally change when they're singing. I can't explain it, it's like a light comes on, like you can see the brightness in their face. And no one's trying to outdo one another, because I have been in a choir where the people with the best voice, they want to be heard louder than the next person. But, I don't find that with the Northwood Choir. I find that they're mellow and they just roll along and it's just, it's like a light comes on when they're singing.

Another participant suggested that the way the choir has affected members could be considered on a more spiritual level:

I'm not saying [the choir is] religious, I'm saying *spiritual* in that it lifted people up and helped them to realize their potential as friends, or coworkers, or as someone who could make a difference to someone else, and that is really important. To me, spirituality means finding your meaning in life.

Furthermore, when the participants were asked if there were any notable drawbacks to participation in the choir, the responses proved similar, "I can't think of a thing...No I can't say there is." Instead, a sentiment echoed by each participant in one way or another was that the choir has been and still is a joy to them, "It was probably one of the best, one of the best experiences that I have had at Northwood."

Purposeful work. In addition to the personal growth and support associated with participation in this choir, participants shared a sense of "participating beyond their jobs" and "going above and beyond their daily duties." Logistically, the choir itself necessarily requires that staff members give up personal time – usually a lunch hour – for practice. Performances either take place during work hours or outside of work, requiring a voluntary loss of personal time. The time commitment however does not appear to be a barrier for members. For instance, one participant informed me that if an event were happening at Northwood, even staff members with the day off would happily come in to participate beyond the work that they would typically be paid to do.

Beyond the volunteering of time, however, the choir has provided a sense that, as one respondent put it, "I belong to something bigger than myself." Another participant noted that members of the choir perform their daily duties with residents, but the choir is "another way of volunteering and giving." This sense of pride at being able to contribute in ways that are separate from the training that staff members come to Northwood with was expressed in some form by

every participant. That staff members have always been expected to perform beyond a minimally acceptable level is evident in Northwood's Core Values. Specifically, the final value, which states that staff can "always do better" and that Northwood has "a goal of excellence", requires that high standards are consistently set and surpassed in an attempt to work towards the highest quality of care. Interestingly, the choir, whether intentionally or not, has become yet another means for employees to contribute more meaningfully at work.

Not only has the choir provided an opportunity to step outside of assigned work roles, it also seemed to be an avenue through which members could creatively contribute to Northwood's growth. For example, the choir has occasionally spearheaded inclusive and imaginative campaigns within Northwood:

We came up with the *Dignity and Respect Campaign* that came out of Northwood last year, or a few years back. We got together and we sang "We are the World." We went down to the library and recorded it and everything.

Additionally, over the course of data collection, participants repeatedly mentioned instances where the choir rewrote the lyrics to popular songs to reflect the nature of Northwood and/or as anthems for the workplace (e.g., "We are Northwood" to the tune of "We are the World" and "Northwood's People Come First" to the tune of "Lean on Me"). Please refer to Appendix J for the full lyrics of these adapted songs.

According to information the participants shared, the choir has provided many ways for staff members to bring the care they provide to residents to a heightened level. Each participant communicated a great sense of pride in their ability to make a difference by "using their skills in other ways than what they were trained to do." The increase in the services each participant was able to provide then appeared to have a snowball effect that resulted in a renewed sense of

motivation and purpose among members. As members of the choir expressed to one participant, who then shared with me, this choir has had the power to keep staff motivated and even to bring them back to work when otherwise they might struggle:

This is what brings us back on Monday morning. When we finish on Friday with our singing, this is what brings us back. We've had a hard week, we come here, we laugh, we sing ... It makes me feel like I can come back on Monday morning... people would come and say 'I don't feel good today, because of...' but they would usually leave saying 'I can do this!'

Serving others. At the offset, the committee did not anticipate the types of personal and work-related benefits of choir participation, but the choir was always intended to increase general wellbeing at Northwood. In discussing the choir's roots, one participant noted that the early motivation was actually twofold, "It was for both. It was to give the staff an incentive to do something. And we'd be doing something for the residents, that they enjoyed." Clearly, in addition to creating a more inclusive work environment for staff, caring for the residents has also been a consistent piece of this choir from the beginning and continues to this day.

The reciprocal relationship between staff and residents was clearly kept in mind when the committee decided a staff choir could be a worthwhile endeavour. One participant repeatedly shared with me that everything they do on a daily basis, the choir included, is "all about the residents." The mindset of working for the residents and making them as happy and content as possible was echoed by each participant, more than once. The more I learned about this choir, it appeared that every action taken within Northwood has been and continues to be intended to better the experiences of everyone there, but especially the residents. In creating a more inclusive and positive atmosphere between staff and residents, the participants noted that their overall

professional experiences have been improved and so have the lived experiences of the residents.

One participant's story of the power of music on residents stands out in particular:

Music became the thing that people didn't forget. My experience with people with Dementia is that they might not remember their son's name, but they could sing "Amazing Grace". I would have families say 'Mom hasn't talked for five years, how did you get her to sing?'

An additional point brought forward by one participant was the responsiveness of residents to the moods of the staff members they interact with and the value of any activity that improves their disposition:

I've found that residents watch every move that staff make as to how their day is going to go. And I remember one person saying to me, 'When I get up on Monday morning, when I come down, if you have a smile on your face I know everything's okay.'

As each piece of data consistently began to demonstrate, "Northwood is a home" and Northwood is a family.

On the surface, this choir appears to be run by employees, for employees. However, as each participant shared their motivations and experiences within the choir, it was apparent that the choir has become an additional service provided to the residents. One participant explained how the music affects the residents, and how that in turn affects the members of the choir:

I think the Northwood Choir is quite valuable, because the residents really love it, like I said. We went from floor to floor, especially the residents that have Dementia and that, they just seem to love music. They're clapping their hands and that. And that makes us all feel good.

When staff members can bring a positive attitude, it makes for “better residents,” which in turn makes it easier for staff members to remain a positive source of support. Additionally, participants consistently referred to Northwood not simply as a place of work, but more importantly the place that residents call home:

In reality, it’s not just a workplace. People live here... So to be aware of the fact that it's a living space and to be happy in your work is really important...

This is not just a workplace, but it’s also a home. So we want to make everyone feel welcome.

While the choir has always been made up solely of staff members, Northwood residents have by no means been excluded. If they so chose, which according to the participants they often would, residents were welcome to sit in on choir practices. Others would migrate to sit in the hallway and listen to the music as it drifted to nearby areas. In fact, one participant recounted this happening outside of the immediate awareness of the choir’s members:

We heard that they used to line up in the hallways when we practiced, but we used to always have the door closed, so we never got to see it. But one day, we opened up the door and the hallway was packed! (Laughter) It was an awe moment, that's for sure. They were all there, smiling and clapping, and we just felt so good. Everyone just felt good!

Additionally, the participants noted that not only have residents listened in on practices, they have always been encouraged to suggest songs for the choir to sing. As most people can likely relate to, when we hear a song from our childhood or a piece of music that we associate to a special event, we can have a strong emotional response to it. It is no different for Northwood residents, and members of the choir are delighted to provide them with happy reminders whenever possible. This was indicated by much of the choir’s repertoire. In one of the choir’s

performance videos, their set list included songs that would likely be deemed today as oldies-but-goodies. “Teenager in Love” by Dion and the Belmonts, “Earth Angel” by The Penguins, “Let’s Twist Again” by Chubby Checker, and “Wake up Little Susie” by the Everly Brothers all made an appearance in the video. One can see that song choice has been influenced by resident preference. That is not to say that modern songs are not also included, like Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror” or John Lennon’s “Imagine.” It became clear in the responses from participants, as well as a review of the choir’s performances over the years, that staff members and residents alike shared an appreciation of popular music that spans across decades and genres. Additionally, in keeping with the desire to promote inclusion, some song choices have even been influenced by choir members’ cultural backgrounds:

For example a few of our members are from [outside of Canada], and there were a few songs that they wanted to bring to the choir. We actually sang one last year at our multicultural event. So that added to that event and that person felt so proud and included and basically, that is what we’re working towards, you know?

As mentioned earlier, music in all forms is commonplace at Northwood. Residents have always been encouraged to bring as much as they can when moving to Northwood, and very frequently that includes musical instruments. This provision alone provides joy and solace to the residents, so direct invitations to participate in the choir in any capacity have always been openly appreciated. One participant even noted, with a very jovial tone, that when the choir has taken breaks in the past, its absence was certainly noted and became a matter of rather serious inquiry, “The residents would come and ask, ‘When are you guys going to sing again? Are you planning anything?’ Like, they really missed us.”

Another participant informed me that frequently when residents move into Northwood, they experience extreme emotional reactions in response to the upheaval in their lives. They may be frightened, confused by the setting, angry at their new living arrangements, or in despair over the loss of a spouse or friend, for example. Possible emotional turmoil is yet another reason that the wellbeing of the residents and supporting them in the best way possible has always been at the forefront of employees' minds at Northwood. These principles of care for residents and any potential joy that workers might be able to provide were present in every separate data point in this research and were consistently echoed in the interviews and survey:

It's all about the residents... Sometimes I think that they feel forgotten. So it's up to you as a worker in whatever capacity it is, to show them that they're not forgotten and that they are loved.

You know sometimes there's a resident that doesn't talk, doesn't smile, doesn't do anything, but the minute they hear music or see the choir, their hands tap and their feet tap, and there's a twinkle in their eye. So I know that we're getting through to them. That just makes me feel... I can't even explain it. It gives me so much joy.

In fact, the interviews were rife with participants' memories of when the choir seemed to touch Northwood residents:

Our first event, we were singing on stage and I have to tell you, there was this one lady who was confined to a walker, usually at all times. She wasn't too mobile really, but that day we got out there on the stage and sang, I looked out there into the audience and I saw her. I saw her push her walker away from her. She stood up on her two feet, put her hands in the air and started dancing... It's like a miracle happened right before our eyes.

It was not just these individual moments that were noted either. One participant recounted that, on a daily basis, residents appeared to respond positively to the choir, sometimes even showing less severe symptoms of certain illnesses, “The folks who have Dementia or Alzheimer’s, some of them do not communicate, but as soon as we started singing, they were singing with us, *word for word.*”

It is apparent that residents were considered in the creation of this choir and have continued to play a part in it. Additionally, each participant reported that the positive effects of the choir have also extended to them, both directly and indirectly. Not only have residents been invited to actively participate in aspects of the choir like song choice, but according to participants they also seemed to share in the joy that comes from the receptive enjoyment of music, in performances and in practices. This joy and inclusion that the residents seemed to gain was a motivating factor for the choir’s creation and appears to have been a significant contributor to staff’s willingness to continue on with it for over a decade. Additionally, according to these participants, not only have staff members gained personal satisfaction from their own participation in this choir, but the choir has served as an impetus for renewed excitement to fully “show up” to work and to spread joy throughout Northwood, “The choir brings positive energy to the residents. Not just to us and residents, but even to their families and other staff.”

Looking Forward

Table Two outlines findings related to how the choir has been successfully maintained over the years and may provide preliminary insight into how a staff choir might function in other work settings. The choir has been differentially maintained over the years, waxing and waning depending on the availability of members, and it appears to be widely accepted within the organization. The format is very informal and grassroots, and it is made up of people who

genuinely like spending time and making music together. By all accounts, the choir is formulated specifically not to add any undue stress or pressure on staff members who choose to participate. As well, the choir’s maintenance has also been reliant on how it is perceived and accepted within Northwood by staff at every level of the organization. Looking forward, perhaps the secret to maintaining a workplace choir can be gleaned from the format of Northwood’s choir, as well as in the level of support it has received throughout the organization.

Table 2.

Choir Creation and Maintenance	Codes
Institutional Acceptance of the Choir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial and administrative support • Contributions within Northwood
Informal Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassroots • Responsive to member needs • Friendship between choir members • Low focus on musical technicality, high focus on fun

Institutional acceptance of the choir. Significant to the exploration of this choir’s continued success is the acceptance and appreciation that the rest of Northwood seems to have for the choir. In the early days of the choir, there were some growing pains. Namely, concerns about the choir’s impact on the fair and equitable sharing of work responsibilities were raised. However, altering practice times seemed sufficient to address this issue and no subsequent negative feedback has been received since. Ever since, Northwood seems to have been overwhelmingly supportive of the staff choir. The participants commented that validation from Corporate was integral in this overall acceptance:

Once we found out we had the support of our corporate office, that really made the difference and people could really feel like they weren't doing something bad, like they

were actually still contributing and working, and weren't slacking off. That we were doing this for a purpose.

Since then, both management and administration have been happy to accommodate the choir for practices and performances, as well as with funding:

We went to the organization and said 'We need a budget,' so they gave us a budget...

When we're having functions, staff that are already at work ask permission to go, but we haven't had a problem yet. Usually if it's the choir and we're asking to do something while we're working, they'll permit us to do it.

One participant suggested that the acceptance of the choir by the administration at Northwood has been bolstered over the years by the perceived positive effects of the choir on those who participate as well as other staff members and residents:

I think it did help the administration to see that relationships had formed. Administration doesn't always see that with staff. They see them as just employees, but in this case I think they saw that this goes beyond, and they were okay with that.

The choir has also promoted pride within the organization. On the CEO's request, the choir performed at an important meeting with accreditors and the board of Northwood:

Someone wrote a song called "We are Northwood" to the tune of "We are the World," and how we introduced it was, the choir was sitting. There were 300 people there in the auditorium and the choir was sitting interspersed with the crowd. They had flags under their seats. And, when the guitar strummed, they all stood up with their flags and processed up to the stage, singing the flag song. So they're singing that when they get up there, on their way up with their flags from all nations of the world, and they get up front and then that slows down and they start to sing this song called "We are Northwood."

And the accreditors turned their chairs around to see this and at the end of the song, all the employees, all the administration stood up and cheered. It was amazing! And the accreditors said, 'This is what your organization is about. It's when people get together like this and can sing a song about what you're about.' We're a family, you know? We're helping each other. We know who our residents are, and that kind of thing. It was just an amazing day. I still think about that. And that's been the amazing part of it, is how therapeutic it has been, but also the contribution that it's made to the organization. This widespread recognition of the choir's contributions of pride and unity to the organization has had a lot to do with the acceptance of the choir within Northwood. In conjunction with the overwhelming support the choir has received from the offset, participants believe it to be a main reason that the choir still successfully runs today.

Informal nature. As previously noted, the Northwood Staff Choir is a grassroots organization. It is run by music-loving employees who have created an easygoing, low maintenance choir. The choir has set weekly practices, but communication is always open regarding staff availability and desire to participate. If too many members are feeling overextended, the choir pulls back; they commit to fewer rehearsals and fewer performances. While a certain level of structure is necessary to run such a group, like set practice times, only members who can make it on any given day attend. If some members are unable to attend a practice, those who are there adjust to accommodate that, and welcome back old and new members as they come:

And that's the beauty of the choir is that if you're busy then somebody else will go. Like, I might not make it for this function, but I can make it to the next function. Everything just flows smoothly.

The choir's approach to roles and responsibilities appears equally relaxed and flexible. While there is usually one specific choir director who often plays the guitar and/or is accompanied by a member who can play the piano, in the past if this individual was unavailable, other members would voluntarily step in. One participant noted that each member of the choir has always played a voluntary role, "Everyone participates in what we're going to sing, what the lineup is, who is going to be standing beside who, which is easy because everybody seems to just fall in."

The choir also seems designed to withstand a certain level of waxing and waning. In fact, it is currently not meeting as frequently as it used to, but according to the participants, that is one of the reasons it is successful. The choir has always been both responsive to the needs of the staff and intended to be a fun experience. One participant explained that in the past, when the choir started to feel too much like work or an obligation, practices were reduced and performances and events were limited to important events within Northwood, like the Christmas dinner or candlelight vigils for residents who have passed:

We felt like we had a lot of people requesting for us to attend different events, it was a little overwhelming. We felt like we were rushed to learn songs within a week or two weeks and it just became more pressure. For a few years, every other week we had an event to attend or a song to learn. That's why I'm saying after those few years went by, we learned to pull back.

At the choir's foundation is a shared love of music among people who seem to genuinely like each other. The quality of sound or individual singer skill level is less important than the shared love and passion for music and singing that each person brings with them, "We can cover

up anybody who is not a good singer. It isn't about how well you sing, it's about how much you want to commit to it."

Everyone is welcome and musical training is not required. To accommodate the individuals who cannot read music, the choir learns new music by rote memorization, "We go line by line sometimes. We just bring it together and we rehearse it until we get to the point where we know it sounds good, and then we take it from there." An online video of the group's performance at an event shows people having fun and enjoying themselves – choir members and audience alike. People are moving around, swaying and snapping to the music, and sporting different styles and colour of clothing. This is not a formal, technical choir dressed in matching attire, and that is one reason that staff members feel comfortable being a part of it. To that end, one participant shared, "Everybody sort of just pitches in and it's really, actually it's just really fun for us. I think we all really like it."

Summary

Based on the information that each participant shared over the course of this project, as well as that which I was able to glean from supplementary data sources, aside from the initial growing pains that required some reworking, the experience of participating in the Northwood Staff Choir seems to be positive and extensive in nature. From its roots of passion for music, inclusion, enjoyment, and service to the residents, to its growing branches of personal and professional outcomes that members report, this choir is like a living entity within Northwood. It is responsive to members' availability, roles and responsibilities are flexible, its operation is relatively low maintenance, and it provides benefits to members, to residents, and even to Northwood itself.

The participants here were forthcoming about their desire to serve residents to the best of their ability, and it seems that the choir has helped them to do so. When the members participate in active music making at work, they are happier, more confident, and they feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves, all of which contribute to a more positive and effective professional environment. The choir appears to have created a positive feedback loop between residents and staff where increases in emotional wellbeing are passed back and forth, to everyone's mutual benefit.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings, followed by an exploration into the current body of literature, which the present study was intended to expand upon. Similarities and distinctions between the findings here and those in extant research are also considered. Next, strengths, limitations, and the additional challenges and considerations encountered throughout this research process are discussed. Implications of the study for further research and the practical application of workplace choirs follows. This document concludes with my reflections on the research process, as well as my hopes for the future of this work.

Summary of the Findings

As previously suggested, music enjoyment at work provides benefits that are both individual and collective, and that extend from the personal sphere to the professional one. Findings from this case study help to support this proposition and to add to the understanding surrounding active music participation in a workplace (more specifically, a care home) setting. Northwood itself was born from one man's social advocacy for the elderly in Halifax. His belief was that care should be, first and foremost, available to the members of society that are often the most vulnerable.

Once he made the care home a reality, this man worked to instill the belief throughout the community and among employees that elder care should be compassionate and person-centered, so as to meet the various needs of the individuals being served. Through this man's determination a successful and multi-faceted senior care home was created. It is sustained through hard work and the belief that elder care must necessarily include innovative techniques in order to see to the holistic wellness of the residents (i.e., physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual wellness). Northwood today serves the diverse needs of well over 400 individuals

with differing cultural values, and employs an equally broad range of individuals with different professional experiences and expertise, as well as cultures and nationalities. It is precisely this diversity within Northwood that was the catalyst for the Northwood Staff Choir.

A diversity circle committee, made up of staff members at Northwood, was formed. The members brainstormed ideas that they thought might help to bring staff members from all areas of Northwood together. Important to note, the motivation for increasing inclusion among staff at Northwood was not motivated by a lack of it. Rather, the committee was responding to the increase in cultural diversity among the staff. The committee felt that an activity that helped bring staff members together would also benefit the residents. Thus came the suggestion to form a choir.

The four participants in this study helped to provide a detailed explanation of the emergence of the staff choir and their own personal experiences of it. Each noted a deep connection to music throughout their lives, within the family and extending outward into their community experiences. However, they also mentioned that this workplace choir was the first opportunity they had ever had like it in a professional setting. An interesting point, considering that they each individually shared that they had not considered their workplace to be unique until considered from an outsider's perspective.

The results of this case study seem to indicate that music and song are impactful in these participants' lives. Upon further exploration, it appears that the participants' appreciation and the resultant creation of a workplace choir was strongly influenced by two main factors. One is the musical culture that they grew up in and were surrounded by; the maritime musical culture. The other influencing factor is the musical culture within Northwood itself, which undoubtedly has also been influenced by the musical culture of the Maritimes.

Rather significantly, according to the participants, the maritime musical culture seems to have a nature all its own. It is unique, and active music making and appreciation are staples of it. There is a busker's festival that happens regularly in Nova Scotia, neighbours have parties that seem to always involve live music in the form of singing with banjos, fiddles, and/or guitars. The participants note that the music there even has its own distinguishable sound. Quite tightly bound to this maritime musical culture is the musical culture that is found within the care home.

Northwood has not only positioned itself as an innovative workplace that promotes new ideas in care, it also welcomes music in a variety of forms. There is a group of Northwood residents that sing and dance and perform together, there is a DJ that comes in to play music for the residents, and residents are encouraged to bring their own instruments or to use the instruments that Northwood is able to provide. Additionally, music seems a useful means through which staff members and residents are able to interact daily, and is an additional way to reach those residents who may struggle cognitively, emotionally, and/or physically. The musical culture both within Northwood and, in a broader context, in the communities around Nova Scotia have played a significant role in the inclusion of a workplace choir within Northwood. It is clear that a love of music in many forms permeates this workplace, from employees, to residents, and even to administration and guests.

Now that the choir has been a functioning component of Northwood for nearly a decade, the results here indicate that the choir itself has had a great deal of influence on those who work and live there. An exploration into the effects that the choir might have on the professional and personal lives of those who participate indicated many, the majority of which are compellingly positive. Participation in this workplace choir has had a multitude of effects, not only on the staff members who participate, but on Northwood as a whole. Also, rather significantly, the effects

appear to extend to the residents. There are several benefits to participating in the choir, organized into the following themes: Personal Wellbeing, Personal Growth, Purposeful Work, and Serving Others.

Each individual participant shared that the choir has increased their wellbeing in that it is therapeutic, it helps to relieve their personal and professional stress, and it is an additional medium through which they can provide and receive support from coworkers. It has also helped them to become more confident, in general, and with their musical skills, specifically. They shared that, aside from providing a general increase in happiness, participants have been able to recognize a greater potential in themselves. This recognition is distinct and specific to their own personal needs. Where one participant feels that they are now more outgoing, another feels that their ability to be an effective leader has increased by virtue of participation in the choir. It is organized to be responsive to its members and the choir seems to provide individualized outcomes, depending on the personal needs of those who participate.

Additionally, the participants shared with me that the choir is another way that they have been able to perform their work at Northwood. By participating in the choir, they are going above and beyond their regular call of duty and making contributions that serve the greater collective of the care home, not just choir members or residents alone. These extra contributions appear to have become a point of pride for the participants. They feel excited and energized to show up fully to work and have observed that to be a powerful way to effect positive change in others, specifically the residents. When the choir members are able to feel proud and as though they are sharing their talents for the betterment of Northwood, the residents receive care that is enthusiastic and effective. Not only are the residents benefiting from the increase in staff member's affect, but they are also benefiting from a sense of their own inclusion with the choir.

While they do not participate in the act of music making, they are encouraged to provide feedback or make requests, which allows them to feel as though they are active and contributing members in their home. After all, Northwood is more than a place of employment for the staff members, it is also a home for the residents.

The results also indicate that the choir members are not the only ones who experience the outcomes of this workplace choir, though it is encouraging that the members themselves are able to note both personal and professional extra-musical benefits. What the interviews, the survey, and the supplementary data demonstrate is that the choir has become a powerful force within this workplace. Perhaps it is due to the focus that is placed on the enjoyment of music itself, and not on churning out technical perfection. The jovial and relaxed nature of musical enjoyment has emerged as one likely reason that the choir has been so successful at Northwood. The choir is organized in the sense that there are set practice times and a fairly cohesive group of participants, but otherwise, it is highly responsive to the time constraints and individual resources of its members. It is not an obligation, but a voluntary activity. Simply put, it is fun.

Yes, membership in the choir requires personal time and one early complaint about the choir from staff members who were not participating was that they were picking up the professional slack of the choir members. Interestingly, this initial concern was the only negative code gained from any of the data in this study. The concern was promptly acknowledged and since then the choir has been supported throughout Northwood. An additional factor which has contributed to the successful maintenance of the workplace choir is its widespread institutional acceptance.

Administration has consistently shown support for the choir, through funding and allowing choir members the time to perform and/or practice. This acceptance has spread

throughout Northwood, to other staff members and even the families of the residents, as the choir's contributions have become clearer. The choir is not just a choir for choir's sake, but in accordance with Northwood's mission to remain a force in social advocacy for the elderly, it has taken an active role to spearhead campaigns within the care home, resulting in community recognition and benefits for Northwood itself.

Connecting this Case Study to the Existing Body of Research

As previously documented, existing literature regarding music use at work and choral music participation indicates a variety of positive outcomes, many of which are echoed by members of this staff Choir. The findings suggest that the choir provides benefits to its members and benefits that extend outward to individuals who participate at varying levels (e.g., residents, administration, family). These benefits both confirm findings regarding music use at work and choral music participation, as well as provide the opportunity to expand the research to include active music making in new contexts. The findings also point to a portion of the literature that was not previously considered; specifically, the connection between job satisfaction and worker wellness.

Research Regarding Music Enjoyment at Work

The findings in this study parallel those in the body of literature that demonstrate the benefits of receptive music enjoyment at work, indicating that research might naturally expand to include active music making in the same setting. While the act of receptive music enjoyment differs from active music participation in part in that it requires time and a focused effort, it would appear that the benefits of both activities provide comparable outcomes. Namely, receptive music enjoyment at work has been found to have positive effects on job productivity, satisfaction, inspiration, and even stress levels (Haake, 2011; Lesiuk, 2005; Stachyra, 2015).

That participants in this study note similar experiences by virtue of workplace choir participation indicates that music at work, not just in a receptive format, can have notable and beneficial outcomes for those who partake.

Additionally, the findings in this study help to support the notion that receptive music enjoyment provides benefits for those who do not participate in its active creation. In this case, the residents, family members, community members, and additional staff at Northwood were noted to benefit from their receptive enjoyment of the choir's music and the process of music choice, practice, and performance. The findings here help to substantiate previous findings regarding the receptive enjoyment of music in a work setting and provide a foundation for the advancement of research that implements more active aspects of group music making at work.

Research Regarding Choral Music Participation

Revisiting the findings reported in the literature on the benefits of choral participation, the participants in the present study also noted experiencing similar effects from workplace choir membership. According to extant literature, group music making provides emotional release (Bailey & Davidson, 2005), it improves and increases the social network of members (Merkt, 2012), and it relieves stress, enhances mood, and self-confidence, and provides participants with an increased sense of purpose (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Silber, 2005; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016).

Each of these benefits, found in community choirs, prison choirs, and school choirs, with individuals of varying musical and cognitive capacities, have been individually noted by the participants in the present study. The commonality of group music making across various contexts fortifies the conclusions drawn about the benefits of choral music participation, and further adds to the proposition of expanding the research to include choral groups among staff members.

Research Regarding Music in Care Homes

It is important to note that research also exists to support the use of music in homes for the elderly (Lum, 2011; Myskja & Nord, 2008). While it was not a principal focus in the present study, the care home setting was noted to be a potential contributor to the presence of music in this particular workplace. These are specific professional settings that require interplay between the staff and “the work” (aka, the residents being cared for). Extant research indicates that this interplay is aided by music, a finding that is clearly reflected here.

The findings in this study demonstrate that music in various forms is constantly present at Northwood. Separate from daily music activities that involve the residents, the choir provides a space for the staff to create music solely with one another. This space, while having the potential to act as a barrier between staff and residents, has instead contributed to an increase in emotional health and professional direction for the staff, which has also been instrumental in improving the lived experience of residents. Music use within care homes is supported in the literature as a beneficial activity used between residents and staff members. The findings in this study indicate that novel forms of music with different groupings of individuals within care homes can have comparable and even additional benefits.

New Research Connections

One aspect not considered at the offset of the research, but now seemingly significant to the findings in the present study, is the importance of individual wellness and the role that job satisfaction and the professional environment can play. As indicated by the findings in this study, this staff choir has provided advantages for staff members’ emotional and professional satisfaction, purportedly creating a healthier and happier staff, and overall work environment. This begs a question regarding the role that workplace satisfaction can play on the individual

wellness of employees. Further, what is the significance of a happy and healthy work force? How are the factors of professional satisfaction and motivation related to the emotional, psychological, and physical wellness of employees? According to the findings in the present study, it seems that staff satisfaction at work is significantly related to both personal and professional outcomes.

According to one online article – a compilation of conversations between researchers, corporate leaders, and non-profit leaders, all members of the Consortium for Advancing Adult Learning and Development – employers are becoming increasingly concerned with the emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing of their employees (McKinsey Quarterly, 2017). After all, the workplace is rapidly becoming the place where most working adults spend the majority of their waking hours (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005), reducing their ability to maintain work/life balance and healthy social relationships outside of that setting (McKinsey Quarterly, 2017).

This is a significant consideration for two reasons. Firstly, social resources are integral in an individual's ability to maintain a healthy level of emotional and physical wellness (McKinsey Quarterly, 2017). Secondly, as the workplace is where many employees spend the majority of their time, it places the professional environment in a unique position to affect positive change on employees' personal and professional wellbeing. As supported in the current study and extant literature, choral participation provides outcomes that benefit each of these aspects of the person – emotional, psychological, and physical – which may be directly linked to levels of job satisfaction.

The modern workplace is complex. It is becoming increasingly competitive, and has seen an increase in work-related stress (DeTienne et al., 2012). With intensified work-related

pressure, it might naturally follow that workplaces are putting more focus on the wellbeing of staff members. In fact, employees are considered by some employers to be the greatest asset in the workplace (McKinsey Quarterly, 2017). According to the findings in the present study as well as two additional studies expounded upon below, workplaces that provide services which increase satisfaction have necessary implications on the wellbeing of staff.

In 2015, Squires and colleagues explored the factors that contributed to job satisfaction amongst care aides providing long-term care. In an attempt to review these factors, the researchers searched nine online databases and reviewed 42 publications. Data were extracted in regards to the individual and organizational factors that contributed to job satisfaction in this particular population. Squires and colleagues (2015) found that empowerment and autonomy were the most significant individual factors, and that facility resources and workload were the most significant organizational factors, for job satisfaction in this group.

The researchers concluded that workplaces should utilize strategies that employ these factors in order to increase job satisfaction (Squires et al., 2015). The necessity to do so is especially pressing, considering that the job of long-term care can be highly stress inducing and the reality that there will be an increased need for such care workers as the population continues to age throughout this century (Squires et al., 2015). Perhaps, in this specific population of workers, research related to the effects of workplace choirs on staff feelings of empowerment and autonomy can provide valuable information.

In Faragher, Cass, and Cooper's (2005) meta-analysis of 485 studies exploring the link between job satisfaction and the health and wellness of employees, the findings indicated that self-reported levels of job satisfaction were differentially correlated but consistently statistically significant to certain health measures (i.e., emotional/psychological health and physical health).

For example, job satisfaction was most closely linked to psychological health, in regards to burnout levels, self-esteem, depression, and anxiety (Faragher et al., 2005). The correlation between job satisfaction and physical health was not as strong, but still significant, indicating that job satisfaction also influences staff members' health and physical wellbeing to a certain extent (Faragher et al., 2005). This is comprehensible, as it is understood by clinicians that psychological illnesses like depression and anxiety often result in negative physical outcomes (McKinsey Quarterly, 2017). The researchers went on to suggest that professional organizations should provide policies and programs directed toward improving job satisfaction as a means of increasing all around employee wellness and engagement (Faragher et al., 2005).

As there is a body of research dedicated to exploring the benefits of employing a happy and healthy workforce, the findings of the present study can provide further support for research into activities that might improve job satisfaction, and resultantly the wellness of employees (e.g., workplace choirs). This conclusion can be drawn as the wellness factors that these aforementioned studies explored are positively influenced by the presence of workplace music enjoyment in general, and active music making in particular.

Summary

A main cause of chronic illness is stress and one of the most stress-inducing factors of the modern adult's life is the work they do (McKinsey Quarterly, 2017). As a result, an increased research focus on how to improve the wellness of the workforce seems a compelling area of study to expand upon. Research has shown the widespread benefits of music, both receptive and active, on various groups of people in different contexts. In union with the findings of the present study, there seems a strong basis for diversifying the research to explore whether these benefits can consistently be found with group music making in professional contexts.

Additionally, while the present study was not directly intended to explore the interplay between job satisfaction and wellness, it appears that I have inadvertently provided a new avenue of investigation that might provide a framework for how to increase both the satisfaction and wellness of individuals in varying professional fields. While this case is unique, and there is yet to be a field of research dedicated to group music making in a professional setting, the findings here in conjunction with extant literature provide a sound beginning for what could be a fruitful body of research.

Strengths, Limitations, and Additional Considerations of this Study

Strengths. One strength of this study is that it successfully explored a phenomenon that is absent in the current body of research. The findings provide valuable insight into not only the use of music at work, but also how the active creation of music can impact a workplace. This case study has provided rich and detailed information regarding the experience of workplace choir participation in a particular setting. Findings suggest that other workplaces might benefit from such an endeavour and provide ideas about how they might successfully integrate one. An additional strength of this study is that participants proved to be a broad representative sample regarding position within the care home, musical training, age, education level, and even spiritual denomination, yet still noted consistent experiences within the staff choir.

The case study itself provides a rich and detailed inquiry into the lived experiences surrounding a specific phenomenon, and uses multiple sources of data to do so (Houghton et al., 2013; McGloin, 2008). The inclusion of various data collection methods in this study also helped to increase the credibility of the findings as well as the potential to replicate a similar type of study, in search of further evidence for the value of workplace choirs. As such, it has proven to be both appropriate and advantageous to research the Northwood Staff Choir using such a

method. This is a unique case that has yielded both fascinating and beneficial information regarding the experience of active music making within a professional context. The themes that resulted from this case study provide a sound research foundation upon which additional studies can be based, creating wider applicability to the broader research population, and adding to the shortage of research regarding the topic of musical collaboration and creation in the workplace with employee choirs.

Limitations. As previously noted, the case study also comes with inherent limitations. While the findings indicate certain benefits or outcomes of workplace choir participation, they are specific and bound within well-defined confines. For example, the findings here do support existing research which indicates that music use in care home settings can be beneficial. However, from this research alone, it is difficult to know if workplace choir participation would have similar benefits in a different professional setting and in a different cultural context (e.g., one that does not put such a strong focus on music).

An additional limitation to this study does not lie in the methodology, but rather the remoteness of the research. Specifically, I was unable to visit the choir in person, as we are located in different provinces. As a result, I was also unable to observe the choir in practice and/or performance, to experience the culture of the Maritimes as well as the care home, or to form closer connections with the choir members themselves. Again, this research was predominantly informed by a paradigm which encourages the use of multiple data sources and a constant interactive co-construction of meaning, bolstered through relationship building. As such, the distance with which I carried out this research limited my ability to use my chosen methodology more thoroughly in order to gain a deeper understanding of additional aspects of this choir and the participant experiences within it.

Additional considerations. There were additional considerations that needed to be made once the study began. Firstly, the time change between the provinces of Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia created barriers to communication between participants and myself. However, I was able to reduce the significance of this challenge for participants by making myself available at less favourable times (e.g., being awake well before the sun was up or quite late into the night). Additionally, once it became evident that telephone interviews were difficult for participants to arrange with me, my supervisor and I incorporated a survey option in hopes of collecting additional data. This helped to ensure that valuable information could still be collected, but in a more convenient and less time consuming way for the participants.

Another consideration that had to be made was how to use technology to communicate with a population of participants who admittedly struggled with electronic tasks. At first, it was intended that interviews would be conducted via Skype, but participants expressed confusion at how to open Skype accounts and how to properly work within the program. As a result, I opted to conduct interviews via telephone and obtained software that allowed me to record calls and transcribe them. This was a minor adjustment on my part, but was still cause for consideration, regarding how best to remotely communicate with individuals different from myself.

Finally, while this study was deemed minimal risk, I unexpectedly had to apply for additional ethics approval from Northwood itself. As a self-proclaimed pioneer in research aimed at advancing elder care, Northwood has a strict set of research policies that require adherence. As such, the research process was subject to unexpected delays in regards to its commencement.

One final ethical consideration was how important it should be to protect the identity of participants and the institution itself. As Northwood is a corporation that welcomes research, it was decided that protecting the identity of the institution would not serve its purpose of

exploring and participating in activities that might promote beneficial practices in elder care. However, it was deemed necessary to protect the identity of the individual participants in order to provide a safe space for them to share information that might be positive or negative about the choir and, if the case were to arise, about their workplace. As such, quotes taken from participants were de-identified and subject to minor edits in order to provide clarity and protection. A final layer of protection provided to the participants was the use of gender-neutral language. Where *he* or *she* might have been typically used, *they*, *them*, or *their* were instead chosen.

Implications for Future Research

Though the popularity of workplace choirs has yet to reach its pinnacle, according to one newspaper article, there is an increase in innovative companies implementing music in the workplace in the form of staff choirs (Cook, 2017). This is ostensibly in response to the findings mentioned throughout this document, which indicate that singing in a choir can positively impact the psychological, emotional, and physical health of the members. Additionally, according to Cook's (2017) article, companies that have implemented employee choirs are starting to see stronger employee recruitment and retention, increased engagement among staff members, and enhanced teamwork and leadership skills. As these outcomes correspond with the findings of the current case study, further research can help to bolster these findings, and might lead to the proliferation of the workplace choir as a beneficial and even desirable workplace addition, across various professional landscapes.

The present study provides an unprecedented look at active music making among employees in a professional care home environment. It addresses a gap in the literature focused on music enjoyment at work, where the focus has predominantly been on receptive music use. It

provides support for the notion that extending music enjoyment to that which involves active creation among staff members might be beneficial. Further research seems an advantageous venture considering the findings here.

Firstly, as the present study has observed the rich musical atmosphere of this Maritime region, future research might appropriately explore active music making in different locations, as well as workplaces that are not care homes, and thus where music use is a less common practice. However, there exists the possibility that these workplace choirs do not exist in many professional settings as the deep love and near reverence for music strikingly present in this group of individuals may not be as strong in others. As such, future research might take a more experimental approach, where workplace choirs are formed for the purposes of observation. Rather fortuitously, the present study provides a good framework for how to implement, organize, and maintain a workplace choir, so designing an experimental study may prove less of a challenge.

It might also be beneficial to expand the research outside of Nova Scotia. There is clearly a dynamic musical atmosphere and a community of collaborative musicians within Halifax (Hracs et al., 2011). As a result, future research would do well to explore whether a workplace choir's success is linked to its location and the cultural importance placed on music there. Additionally, based on my experiences, I would suggest finding a way to connect with participants in person, whether that be choosing participants nearer the researchers' home or finding a way to travel to the research location. This would not only make it possible to conduct long-term research but it would also provide the opportunity to include alternative types of data at different points, thereby expanding the research across time.

The combination of individual interviews with group interviews or focus groups would likely help to expound upon the similarities and differences between participant experiences and even in different types of professional environments. A senior care home is a professional setting that often utilizes music to increase physical engagement, social bonding, and overall enjoyment for senior residents (Lum, 2011; Myskja & Nord, 2008). As such, that might be one of the reasons that this staff choir has been implemented and embraced within the organization. It would be interesting to know whether different forms of music creation used in divergent professions, where music is used less frequently, would yield similar results for the members and the organization (e.g., in a university program or a Fortune 500 company).

Researcher Reflection

“I find great solace in weekly choral rehearsals. There, people from all walks of life come to surrender themselves to the whole; they come for communion, hoping to perfect a unified sound and for the promise of a deeply exhilarating musical experience. It can be transformative. It is healing.”

Joan Szymko, American composer, Choral conductor

This research has proven to be deeply personally satisfying to me. Throughout the entirety of the project, I was consistently motivated by my own love of music, and in particular the act of group music making in a choral context. As this musical appreciation was something that the participants and I shared, I found their insights to be particularly poignant and relatable.

Intuitively, I understand how and why these individuals have been able to sustain their membership in such a unique choir and I hope that this research is a catalyst for further research, as well as a prelude to the inclusion of active music making in different professional environments. I am also exceedingly impressed by Northwood and the clear and consistent dedication each employee has to being a social advocate for the individuals in their care. They are a shining example of what it means to provide person-centered care and – as someone who

has relied on the services of elder care for my own grandparents – I think that everyone’s experience of care homes could be greatly improved in following the example set by Northwood.

There is a powerful and essential need that individuals have to express themselves and to experience their lives in creative and meaningful ways (Hracs et al., 2011). The present study was formulated around this premise, as well as the importance of health and wellness in all aspects of the lived experience, which necessarily includes the professional environment. This is especially the case as the modern work force is becoming increasingly complex and competitive, and in it, employees experience a daily barrage of both professional and personal stressors (e.g., lack of supervisor support, high expectations, deadlines, coworker conflict, etc.) (DeTienne et al., 2012).

This study provides an early exploration into how choirs can be used as an innovative and strength based means to offset the stressors experienced in the modern workplace and to encourage a healthy and positive workplace culture. Senior care homes especially are work environments that come with particular challenges and stressors (Myskja & Nord, 2008). As such, retaining staff and creating/maintaining a positive work culture is integral.

The Northwood Staff Choir is a unique case, and as such, has provided an opportunity to investigate and understand the experience of choirs in one particular work setting. It is my hope that these findings will increase the understanding of how active music making applies to both personal gains as well as professional ones in this context. While receptive music consumption is present in the modern workforce, further support for the benefits of active music participation might serve to increase employers’ desire to allow and encourage the novel use of musical ensembles in their own workplaces. Finally, it is my hope that this study will be a useful addition

to existing literature regarding the known benefits of music use in therapeutic and novel social settings.

Music making has long been a staple of our social world (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Clift et al., 2010; Partington, 2009) and its role in different settings has shifted alongside the needs and preferences of the individual. I believe that an extension of the research on this valued social practice in any variety of contexts will add to our collective understanding of the various outcomes individuals can experience by virtue of participation. Certainly, as music has served our social, individual, and yes, even professional needs, we too can be of service by exploring our ever-changing relationship with this, “the most ancient of the arts” (Lingerman, 1995, p. 191), *music*.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Information Sheet

Study Title: The Northwood Staff Choir: A Case Study

Researchers: Jessica Couture, B.A. (hons.), (jessica.couture@usask.ca)
Master's Student, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education –
School and Counselling Psychology

Dr. Jennifer Nicol, PhD, (jennifer.nicol@usask.ca; 306-966-5261),
Department of Educational Psychology Special Education
University of Saskatchewan

Please read this form carefully.

The purpose of this study is to explore the Northwood Senior Care Home Staff Choir, the fascinating and unique case of a workplace choir. Specifically, we hope to learn about the motivations for implementing and maintaining such an ensemble, while also inquiring about the perceived benefits of musical expression in general, and choral music participation in particular, for the choir's members.

Individuals who wish to participate will be asked to read a consent form and complete a demographics sheet in which they will answer questions regarding position at Northwood, gender, age, etcetera. Finally, you will be asked to complete an interview with the student researcher (Jessica Couture), which is likely to take approximately one hour.

If you would like to participate in the study, please email or call the researchers to receive the consent and demographics sheet. Once you have read the consent sheet and completed the demographics sheet, we will arrange a time to complete our interview.

Thank you for your time and interest!

Appendix B



Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research project entitled
“**The Northwood Staff Choir: An Intrinsic Case Study**”

Please read this form carefully and print off a copy for your records. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researchers using the contact information below.

Graduate Student Researcher: Jessica Couture (Master’s Student) University of Saskatchewan, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, Jessica.couture@usask.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Jennifer Nicol (Professor), Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 306-966-5261, Jennifer.nicol@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure:

The primary purpose of the research is to explore the unique case of the Northwood Senior Care Home Staff Choir in Halifax, Nova Scotia. As no other similar choirs exist to our knowledge, we are interested in exploring the general motivations for creating such a choir, and how those involved have experienced it.

Data collection will include reviewing written reports on your choir (i.e., workplace newsletters and newspaper articles, both online and print). Additionally, we plan to access recordings (both visual and audio) of concerts that your choir has performed.

We will also ask those who wish to participate to take part in a telephone (or Skype) interview with the student researcher, where more detailed experiences within the choir can be expressed and discussed.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. You are encouraged to e-mail the researchers to ask any further questions that you might have and/or to inquire about the findings of the study.

Confidentiality:

Your data will be kept confidential in that your responses will be de-identified. Pseudonyms will be used for those that choose to participate in the interview portion of data collection. However, there is a risk that anonymity of the choir may be compromised due to its unique status as one of the only workplace choirs among staff members that we are aware of. The information collected will be used for a Master’s level thesis, which may be published in an academic journal or presented at a conference. The data will be stored securely at the University of Saskatchewan by the supervisor for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time during completion of the interview, without penalty of any sort. Once data collection is complete and analysis is underway, you will no longer be permitted to withdraw your data from the study.

Questions or Concerns:

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board [December 19th, 2016].

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to e-mail the researchers at any point, during or after your participation.

Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Ethics committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca, (306) 966-2975.

Out of town participants may call toll free (866) 966-2975.

You may obtain a copy of the results of the study by contacting the student-researcher or the supervisor.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time prior to submission of my survey data.

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS PAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS. YOU MAY ALSO EMAIL THE RESEARCHERS TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THIS PAGE.

By signing this sheet,

YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED

and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

Appendix C



Demographics Sheet

The following asks a few questions about you. These questions help us to determine specific details about the participants we have interviewed and ensure that the final copy of the study has all pertinent information about the participants. Please take a few minutes to answer these questions and email them back once complete.

1. Marital Status (circle correct response)
SINGLE
COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP
MARRIED/COMMON-LAW
DIVORCED/SEPARATED
WIDOWED

2. Sex (circle correct response)
FEMALE
MALE
PREFER NOT TO DISCLOSE

3. Age:

4. What position do you hold at the Northwood Staff Senior Care Home?

5. What is your level of education?

6. Are you a member of the Northwood Staff Choir? (please circle one)
NO
YES

7. How long have you been in the Northwood Staff Choir?

8. Race/Ethnicity/Cultural Heritage:

9. What is your religious affiliation? (Please specify or indicate none)

Appendix D



Interview Guide/Questions

Once individual participants have been identified and provided consent to participate in the interview process (via email correspondence), the following will guide the interview process.

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to share your experience of singing in the Northwood Staff Choir. I would like to remind you that if at any time you no longer wish to participate, you may withdraw from the study and all data gathered up to that point will be destroyed. I want you to feel comfortable sharing your story with me, so take as much time as you need to answer my questions. Also, you can decline to answer any questions if they make you uncomfortable. Please note that I will be recording our conversation on my computer and will be typing up a transcript of our conversation, but before I include any of it in my final thesis project, you will have the opportunity to see the transcript summary and to sign off on it or to make amendments.

I have several questions that will be guiding our interview today, but you can feel free to add anything you feel is pertinent or to ask questions at any time. It's best if we both consider this a conversation that is driven by our common curiosity and interest in your choir!

I am interested in hearing about your experience as a member of the Northwood Staff Choir. Can you start by telling me how you came to participate in the workplace choir at Northwood? ...

(At this point, I listened and probed with questions, the order of which depended on the direction of the conversation. The following is a list of questions I asked to each participant throughout the initial interview process):

The Choir:

1. What is your role in the choir?
2. Can you tell me one standout positive memory that you have from participating in the choir?

3. Now can you think of one standout memory of a challenging or negative experience you have had in the choir?
4. How is the choir organized/maintained? Is there one person or a group of people that take charge of its maintenance?
5. In your opinion, what is the value of the Northwood Staff Choir?
6. How often do you practice and perform as a group?
7. How do you choose your repertoire?
8. What has participation in the choir meant for you?

Musical Experience Outside of the Choir

1. What is your background/previous experience with participation in a choir, musical group, or music in general?
2. Is music a large part of your life and/or identity? If so, how?

Northwood Senior Care Home Staff Choir

1. Have you noticed any benefits of the choir on your workplace (in regards to other staff, as well as residents)?
2. Have you noticed any drawbacks of the choir on your workplace (in regards to other staff, as well as residents)?
3. What role does the choir play in everyday workplace activities?
4. Has the choir had an impact on overall work life at Northwood since it began?

Nova Scotia

1. Have you had other workplace experiences in Nova Scotia that were musically derived? (Please elaborate)
2. Is music a large part of the identity (e.g., the lived experience) of Nova Scotians? If so, how?

** Possible further questions will be responsive to each participant's story.

As data collection and analysis progress, these questions may be revised and become more focused as discovered to be pertinent or not.

Checkout:

1. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you'd like to tell me about your experience with the Northwood Staff Choir?
2. Do you have any questions, concerns or additional comments about our interview?
3. Do you have any concerns about our interview?
4. If it is alright with you, I may send an email asking for a follow up interview if I require clarification on something.
5. Additionally, if you think of something you would like to add, please email me and we can discuss it then, or we can set up another time to speak over the phone.

Appendix E



Transcript Release Form

The Northwood Staff Choir: A Case Study

I, _____, have reviewed the transcript summary of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the summary accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Jessica Couture. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Jessica Couture to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix F



Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation in this research project. It is genuinely appreciated and we hope that you have found your experience to be interesting and educational. As noted in the consent form provided to you at the beginning of the process, the purpose of this study is to explore the Northwood Senior Care Home Staff Choir, a fascinating and unique case of a workplace choir. Specifically, we hope to learn about the motivations for implementing and maintaining such an ensemble, while also inquiring about the perceived benefits of musical expression in general, and choral music participation in particular, for the choir's members.

Music enjoyment in the workplace is becoming increasingly common (Haake, 2011). However, it is more commonly enjoyed in a receptive way (i.e., listening to music) and is less commonly encouraged in an active or creative way (i.e., creating music with coworkers). This may be due to the perception that music at work can decrease productivity and in some cases, result in antisocial tendencies (Stachyra, 2015). However, research exists which indicates a great deal of positive effects of music in the workplace (e.g., increased productivity, motivation, attention, and overall enjoyment) (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Stachyra, 2015). Even with research that testifies to the favourable outcomes of enjoying music in the workplace, it is rare to come across a workplace that encourages the use of active music making in this context. This is what makes the Northwood Staff Choir the main topic of interest in this research project.

The seeming rarity of workplace choirs is what motivated us to explore this interesting phenomenon. We believe that a case study on the choir will add valuable information to the existing body of research regarding music enjoyment and its effects in the workplace. Through the use of individual interviews and an exploration into different aspects of the choir (e.g., performances, repertoire, newsletters), we hope to gain an understanding about this particular workplace choir and create a foundation upon which further research can be conducted.

Overall, the objective of this project is to gain a deeper understanding about this particular workplace choir in order to increase our understating of the experiences of those involved. It is our hope that the research will add to the growing body of literature regarding music use in new and unconventional contexts. Music making has long been a staple of our social world (Brisola & Cury, 2015; Clift, Nicol, Raisbeck, Whitmore, & Morrison, 2010), and any extension of research on this valued social practice will add to a collective understanding of the potential benefits of music in unique and novel forms. It may also help to provide a foundation for improving the experience of individuals occupying different professional occupations.

Again, we thank you very much for your participation. You have helped us further our understanding of the experience of participating in a workplace choir, and we hope that you have enjoyed taking part in this research project.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about your participation or wish to obtain the results of the study upon completion, you may contact me at: jessica.couture@usask.ca.

You may also contact the supervisor of this study, Dr. Jennifer Nicol at: jennifer.nicol@usask.ca.

References:

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- Haake, A. B. (2011). Music listening in workplace settings: An exploratory survey of offices in the UK. *Musicae Scientiae, 15*, 107-129. doi: 10.1177/1029864911398065
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Appendix G



Email Survey

The Northwood Staff Choir is a unique example of a workplace choir. To learn more about this choir, we are interested in the experiences and opinions of people who are involved with the Northwood Staff Choir. Below are six questions we would appreciate you answering.

*Prior to completing this survey, please ensure that you have read the consent form provided in the email and, if you wish, please complete the demographics form that follows. Please note that by returning your email to the following email address: jessica.couture@usask.ca, your **free and informed consent** is implied and indicates that you have read and understand the conditions of participation in this study. In order to ensure your privacy, please be sure to remove the email of the Northwood contact that forwarded you this email before sending it to the researcher.*

Once you have read the consent form attached in this email, please carefully read each question and answer as honestly as you can.

- Note. There are no wrong or right responses, and your answers will be kept anonymous so no one will know the responses you provide, other than the researcher.

1. Why do you participate in the choir? Please list up to 3 reasons.

*

*

*

2a. Please describe a meaningful choir memory that stands out for you. You can write it like you're telling a story -- start at the beginning, then what happened next, and next until you get to the end of this story.

2b. If you have another meaningful memory you'd like to write about, please do. Otherwise, go onto question 3.

3. What has participating in the Northwood Staff Choir meant to you?

4. Do you think a staff choir would work in other professional settings? If yes, please explain your answer – e.g., Where? Why?
5. What is the value of a workplace choir like the Northwood Staff Choir?
6. What tips or advice do you have for people who are interested in starting a workplace choir? Please list as many as you like.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Appendix H



Amended Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research project entitled
“**The Northwood Staff Choir: A Case Study**”

Please read this form carefully and print off a copy for your records. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researchers using the contact information below.

Graduate Student Researcher: Jessica Couture, B.A. (Hons.), Master’s Student, University of Saskatchewan, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, Jessica.couture@usask.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Jennifer Nicol, PhD, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 306-966-5261, Jennifer.nicol@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure:

The primary purpose of the research is to explore the unique case of the Northwood Senior Care Home Staff Choir in Halifax, Nova Scotia. As no other similar choirs exist to our knowledge, we are interested in exploring the general motivations for creating such a choir, and the experience of individuals involved in the choir.

In addition to collecting and reviewing materials associated with the choir (i.e., workplace newsletters, newspaper articles, recordings (both visual and audio) of concert programmes, **we will also ask those who wish to participate to take part in a short email survey, where more detailed experiences within the choir can be expressed. We will also provide a demographics sheet for you to complete to gain an understanding of the breadth of respondents in our study – if you do not wish to complete it, simply leave it out of your return email.**

Survey questions are attached in this email and responses can be entered directly into the body of the email and sent to the following online address: jessica.couture@usask.ca.

Upon receipt of your email, the survey responses will be transferred into a separate document and your email address deleted, to maintain your privacy.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. You are encouraged to e-mail the researchers to ask any further questions that you might have and/or to inquire about the findings of the study.

Confidentiality:

Your data will be kept confidential in that your responses will be de-identified. Pseudonyms will be used for those that choose to participate in the survey portion of data collection. Additionally, as previously noted, your email address will be permanently deleted once your survey answers

are transferred into a separate document.

However, there is a risk that anonymity of the choir may be compromised due to its unique status as one of the only workplace choirs among staff members that we are aware of.

The information collected will be used for a Master's thesis, which may be published in an academic journal or presented at a conference. The data will be stored securely at the University of Saskatchewan by the supervisor for a minimum of five years after completion of the study.

When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time during completion of the survey, without penalty of any sort. Once data collection is complete and analysis is underway, it is no longer possible to withdraw your data from the study.

Questions or Concerns:

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board [December 19th, 2016].

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to e-mail the researchers at any point, during or after your participation.

Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Ethics committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca, (306) 966-2975.

Out of town participants may call toll free (866) 966-2975.

You may obtain a summary of the results of the study by contacting the student-researcher or the supervisor.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time prior to submission of my survey data.

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS PAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS.

By completing and submitting the survey, **your free and informed consent** is implied and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

Appendix I



Northwood Mission Statement

Our Mission: As a leader in continuing care, we build meaningful relationships with our clients everyday and make a positive difference in the communities we serve.

Our Vision: People living life to the fullest, flourishing in a community of belonging, dignity and choice.

Northwood's Core Values: Our values reflect the very nature of our organization, our relationship with each other and our commitment to those we serve.

People Come First: We believe treating each other with respect and dignity builds the trust that is essential to our effective relationships. We foster the talent and potential in everyone.

Everyone Plays a Part: We value a vibrant and diverse community where contributions are recognized and celebrated. We are stronger together.

We Promote Social Justice: We believe in using our voice to influence positive change and fairness.

We are All Accountable: Each person is accountable for their actions in delivering service, proper use and respect of resources, and fostering healthy relationships.

We Can Always Do Better: Achieving excellence in all our programs and services is based on learning from our mistakes, applying the best evidence and setting the highest standards. We value our ability to challenge the status quo in pursuing new opportunities.

Appendix J



Northwood Adapted Songs

“We are Northwood” (to the tune of “We Are the World”)

There was a time we heard a certain call,
Come on staff, let’s join together as one.
Let them hear our voices, singing in harmony....,
It’s true a better Northwood does begin with me....

We’ll show ‘em each day,
So they’ll know how much we care,
That their lives...are as full...as they can be.
It takes lots of people....to make us who we are,
And so we all....must lend a helping hand!

(Chorus)

We are Northwood, we are a family
We are the ones who make a brighter place to do more living.
With the care we’re giving we’re changing people’s lives,
It’s true; we make a better home just you and I.

When you’re down and out, there seems no hope at all
But if you just believe....there’s no way we can fall

Let us realize that a change can only come....
When we.... Stand together as one.

(Chorus)

We are Northwood, we are a family
We are the ones who make a brighter place to do more living.
With the care we’re giving we’re changing people’s lives,
It’s true; we make a better home just you and I.

(Original Chorus)

We are the World, we are the children
We are the ones who make a brighter day so let’s start giving.
There’s a choice we’re making we’re saving our own lives.
It’s true we make a better place....just you and I.

“Northwood’s People Come First” (to the tune of “Lean on Me”)

We believe, people come first
All play a part in our community
So let’s, give it our best
So we can meet excellence and quality

Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
Till I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on

The future, is in our hands
Growths built on trust
And we are not alone
We enable all, to do what they can
And offer them a helping hand

Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
Till I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on

Welcome to our family
Glad you chose us
As part of your future plans
Thanks for coming to work, right here with us
We are so glad you came

So just call on each other
When you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem
That you'll understand
We all need somebody to lean on

Lean on me, Chorus Again
Call me
(If you need a friend)
Call me
(Now sing it now)