

WHY DO THEY SING? A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO WHAT MOTIVATES
AN AFRICAN AMERICAN ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNITY OF SINGERS

by

KWAMISE TAYLOR

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MUSIC EDUCATION

2026

Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Michael Mitchell, D.M.A., Chair
Deborah J. VanderLinde, Ph.D., Co-Chair
Robert A. Martin, Ed.D
Elizabeth Kattner, Ph.D.

© Copyright by Kwamisa Taylor 2026
All rights reserved

*To my family and ancestral lineage—
whose faith, sacrifice, and song
formed the ground upon which I stand.*

*To my spiritual cloud of witnesses
whose presence steadied me
in moments unseen and whose legacy
continues to surround and sustain this work.*

*To the tapestry of teachers
who shared knowledge generously
and modeled the discipline of craft.*

*To my students—past, present, and future—
who remind me
that learning is sacred exchange.*

*To Him who sits on the throne
and unto the Lamb,
be all blessing and honor and glory
and power, forever and ever.
(Revelation 5:13)*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many individuals and communities whose presence, support, and shared love of music made this work possible.

First, I extend my sincere appreciation to my dissertation committee for their guidance and thoughtful engagement throughout this process: Dr. Deborah VanderLinde, Dr. Michael Mitchell, Dr. Robert A. Martin, and Dr. Elizabeth Kattner. Your insights and commitment to scholarly rigor helped shape this work in meaningful ways.

I am also profoundly grateful to the singers who participated in this study and to the broader African American ecclesiastical musical tradition that inspired it. The voices, stories, and lived experiences shared by participants illuminate the deep cultural, spiritual, and communal significance of singing within these sacred spaces.

My sincere appreciation is extended to the music ministries of New Prospect Missionary Baptist Church, Gracious Saviour Lutheran Church, and Messiah Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan. Each of these communities has been an important part of my musical tapestry and spiritual journey. Their commitment to worship, fellowship, and song embodies the very spirit of this study.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleague in music ministry, James L. Newby IV, whose dedication to the sacred music tradition and whose collegial support have been meaningful along this path.

To the many friends, colleagues, students, and mentors who journeyed with me along the way, I offer heartfelt thanks. Your kindness, prayers, and belief in my work sustained me through this process.

Finally, I acknowledge my family and loved ones whose presence has been a constant source of strength. To my son and my "other children," your presence reminds me of the importance of striving to be a beacon of perseverance, learning, and faith.

In many ways, this journey reflects the spirit of Ubuntu—the understanding that “I am because we are.” The voices, encouragement, and shared humanity of so many people made this work possible.

And perhaps that same spirit lives at the heart of why we sing.

Kwamisa Taylor

ABSTRACT

WHY DO THEY SING? A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO WHAT MOTIVATES AN AFRICAN AMERICAN ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNITY OF SINGERS

by

Kwamise Taylor

This qualitative narrative study examines why members of a historically rooted African American ecclesiastical community are motivated to sing. Centering African American ecclesiastical singers as theory-generating voices, the study situates musical motivation within a culturally specific, relational, and spiritually informed context. Through interviews, participant observation, and narrative analysis, participants' accounts of formative experiences, communal practices, and sacred traditions were examined to understand their impetus to sing. Findings indicate that motivation within this community emerges through an interdependent relational ecology shaped by sacred orientation, inherited musical practice, communal belonging, affirmation, ritual energy, and culturally situated validation. These motivations function as layered and mutually reinforcing rather than discrete or hierarchical constructs. Singing is experienced as spiritual responsibility, cultural continuity, relational participation, and embodied identity within a historically situated worship tradition. The study further introduces the Motown Effect, a culturally embedded motivational dynamic in which historical, geographic, and

relational proximity contributes to aspirational validation and reinforced musical identity. By centering African American ecclesiastical knowledge and lived experience, this study expands prevailing frameworks of musical motivation and contributes a culturally grounded model of ensemble engagement. Implications extend to choral scholarship, music education, religious studies, and ethnomusicology by affirming that motivation within African American ecclesiastical ensemble contexts is relationally sustained, culturally-transmitted, and historically-situated.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Excerpt from “I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry”	16
Figure 2.	Precursors and Components of Team Flow	46
Figure 3.	Conceptual Model of Motivation for African American Ecclesiastical Ensemble Singing	112

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW	6
The Black Church	6
The Historical Context of the African American Church and Its Traditions	8
The Offspring of the Invisible Church: What is ‘black church’?	9
Worship Traditions	11
Theological Underpinnings of Faith	12
Oral Traditions of Worship: Congregational Singing	14
Culture	17
African American Culture	18
Cultural Mores	18
Personhood and Identity	19
Identity	20
Place Identity	22
Social Identity	23

African American Religious Traditions	27
The Worship Experience	30
Interaction Ritual Theory and Activity	34
Collective Effervescence	35
Emotional Contagion	35
Emotional Synchrony	36
Social Cohesion	38
Social Identity Theory	39
Collective Gatherings	40
The Experience of Flow	41
Team Flow/Group Flow	43
The Affect of Ecclesiastical Engagement	47
The Worship Experience	47
Motivation	52
Motivation as a Psychological Construct: The Orientation of Motivation	53
Causation of Motivation: The Internal Locus of Causality	54
Self-Determination: A Theory of Motivation	55
Intrinsic Motivation	56
Competence	57
Autonomy	58
Relatedness	58
A Sense of Community	60

What A Fellowship!	61
Well-Being: It is Well with My Soul	64
Well-being and Wellness	65
CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY	69
Qualitative Research Design	71
Methodological Approaches	71
Narrative Inquiry	72
Observation	74
Researcher Bias	76
The Three Dimensional Inquiry Space	78
Living Alongside	78
Data Collection and Analysis	79
Researcher Observation	79
Focus Groups	80
Interviewing	81
The Focus Group Interview	82
Establishing Credibility	85
Researcher Bias	86
Triangulation	86
Member Checks	87
Peer Debriefing	88

CHAPTER FOUR	
DATA ANALYSIS	90
Emergent Themes	91
Theme 1: Singing as a Sacred Calling and Spiritual Responsibility	93
Theme 2: Singing as Emotional Sustenance and Release	94
Theme 3: Singing as Expression of Self and Identity	97
Theme 4: Singing Through Social Invitation and Influence	101
Theme 5: Singing as Inherited Practice and Formative Legacy	103
Theme 6: Singing as Status, Validation, and Social Capital	105
Theme 7: Singing as an Act of Love and Devotion	107
 CHAPTER FIVE	
FINDINGS	110
 Relational Structures within the Motivational Ecology	113
Theological and Cultural Foundations	114
Ritual Energy, Affirmation, Social Cohesion, and Sustained Engagement	115
The Motown Effect	117
Conclusion	119
References	121
Appendix	153
A. International Review Board Exemption Approval Letter	153

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Singing has been a defining feature of African American ecclesiastical life for more than two centuries. Rooted in the spiritual, cultural, and communal practices formed during enslavement and carried through generations, congregational singing and choral participation remain central to expressions of worship, identity, and resilience (Costen, 2007; Mamiya, 1996; Mapson, 2014). Within many Black churches, the choir is more than a musical ensemble—it is a spiritual community, a cultural institution, and the site of emotional, social, and theological meaning-making. Through the act of singing, this community of singers negotiated personal identity, expressed their faith, and participated in a collective ritual that has shaped African American life. While scholars have had discourse on the historical, musical, and liturgical dimensions of African American sacred music (Abbingtion, 2001, 2009, 2014; Costen, 1993; Gates, 2021; Mapson, 1984), there has been minimal attention given to motivational factors that inspire singers to participate in ecclesiastical choral ensemble activity. The question of *why they sing*—why individuals choose to join, remain active, and commit to continuous choral participation—warranted study. In an era marked by shifting church attendance patterns, competing time demands or constraints, and evolving cultural practices, understanding these motivations is both timely and necessary.

This qualitative inquiry explores the lived experiences of this ecclesiastical community of singers to gain greater understanding of the emotional, spiritual, cultural, and relational factors that shape their engagement. The study centers on the narratives of the participants as they describe what singing means to them and what compels them to participate within the ecclesiastical space through the worship experience. The objective of this study is to understand motivation for singing within an African American ecclesiastical setting and to contribute to the broader canon of African American religious, cultural, and musical scholarship. Additionally, this study examines whether participating in ecclesiastic choral ensembles contributes to a more enhanced, fulfilling, and meaningful life experiences; and whether questions of value, spirituality, connectedness, personhood, and purpose have any bearing on participation. By examining why singers engage in this communal practice, this research offers insight into the power of music and singing and its role in shaping identity and its meaning within the African American community.

Within African American religious participation, music and singing has been a conduit for expression, resilience, and identity. From the Invisible Church¹ to contemporary worship services, singing has functioned as a means of hope, survival, and deliverance. These are the anchors that encourage these individuals to contribute to worship and engage in a practice that is spiritual, cultural, and relational. In many African American churches, choir membership requires an ongoing commitment to rehearsals and the regular responsibility to provide ministerial and musical support during worship

¹ Many slaves were obliged to worship clandestinely in hidden enclaves on the plantations as units of what came to be called the “invisible institution” (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 24).

services. Participants willingly participated citing religious obligation, spiritual connection, or a vehicle for emotional release. All things considered, these motivations illustrate the role that singing played in their lives individually, collectively, and within the ecclesiastical community they serve.

The black church is foundational to this research because of its undeniable influence on the African American community at large and the collective life experiences of this community of singers. Like the early church, and the historical invisible church, the contemporary church offers space for African Americans to worship in their own way. It gives them space to be seen, valued, and affirmed by people of their own kind; while preserving the uniqueness of their rituals and culture. The constructs of Black church, personhood, and identity toggle between two domains: the spiritual and the social, as well as various other dimensions particular to these domains. Concepts of faith and connection, well-being, socio-emotional theories, and other social phenomena are explored as well as particular psychological perspectives. These concepts and perspectives, including motivation, behavior, and emotion address the question *Why Do They Sing?* through a multifaceted lens. These psychological, social, emotional, and cultural concepts relative to this choral community are tightly wound together. The ideas put forward represent the locus of why this group of African American ecclesiastical singers gathered on a regular basis. The discourse on the Black Church provides cultural context concerning the ecclesia, theological underpinnings of faith, the religious ritual of worship, traditions, the importance of music and singing, and Christian fellowship through lived experience.

The *Why Do They Sing?* participants are socially situated within the African American cultural community, while being equally immersed in Black church mores. The black church was, and remains, an integral part of the African American way of life for this community of singers [and] has long been considered a bulwark in the Black community (Barnes, 2005, p. 967). The ecclesiastical institution of the participants serves its congregation and the community at large by meeting their needs, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. Music and singing serve as a medium to address these needs. For this community of singers, choir rehearsal is an activity that validates who they are and *whose*² they are as well as an activity that gives them a sense of belonging to this community of faith, this music ministry, this choir, this soprano, alto, and tenor section. “Singing...and worship helps to silence the outside world and realign the inner spirit with transcendent principles. As it does in other realms of experience, ...singing helps cope with difficulty, establish identity, [and] create a sense of unity and belonging[.]” (Norton, 2016, p. xviii)

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study and provides the contextual and conceptual foundation for exploring motivation within an African American ecclesiastical choir. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, including the historical, cultural, musical, and theoretical frameworks that inform this study. Chapter 3 details the methodology employed, including research design, data collection procedures, trustworthiness measures and researcher positionality. Chapter 4 presents analysis of the data corpus, including emergent themes and insights from

² In this context, *whose they are* is a cultural colloquialism identifying one as a child of God.

participant narratives, reflections, and extant data. Chapter 5 will summarize the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

The Black Church

Serving as a cornerstone for this research, the black church has had a profound impact on the broader African American community and the shared experiences of this community of singers. Whether considering the early beginnings, the ‘invisible church,’ or today’s contemporary congregations, ecclesiastical spaces have consistently made room for the black community to practice their faith authentically—preserving the richness of their culture, customs, rituals, and traditions. Nelson (2001) espouses that “there is ample evidence of attempts by European Americans to deny the personhood of people of African descent. This denial by whites of black humanity has resulted in slave mentalities, inferiority complexes, and low self-esteem among many African Americans” (p. 97). Today, much thought is given to creating environments that are diverse, culturally sensitive, and respectful of orientation and gender-neutral communities. This has not always been the case. Causally and historically speaking, the Black church was a safe space. It was a place where one could be free—free from restriction, if only for a few hours. In the Black church, attendees were free to be their authentic selves, without fear of the slave-owner during times of bondage, free from subjugation during Jim Crow³ and now, in the face of racism and systemic oppression—a place to feel whole.

³ Racial segregation and discrimination enforced by laws, customs, and practices in especially the southern states of the United States from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 until the mid-twentieth century ([Jim Crow](#) | [Definition of Jim Crow by Merriam-Webster](#))

Black church is a socio-cultural construct that addresses “psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs of its [constituents]”⁴...of which music and singing play a significant role. Discourse on the Black church⁵ is necessary because it—black church—is the fertile ground from which African American identity and community was forged and nurtured. Capitalization of the phrase ‘Black church’ denotes the religious institution, while its lowercase counterpart indicates the religious and/or spiritual experience witnessed or had. It is within the experience of black church that personhood is rooted and grounded, including all aspects of identity. Further, the theological underpinnings of faith, the worship experience, and the concept of community are central constructs of the Black church.

The African proverb, “I am because we are” or *Ubuntu*,⁶ seems to encapsulate the cultural identity of the African American community. It is difficult to determine whether this way of being and doing was epigenetic material or generationally transmitted. Robb (2017) describes Ubuntu as a concept that “embraces the idea that humans cannot exist in isolation. We depend on connection, community, and caring—simply, we cannot *be* without each other” (p. x, emphasis added). ‘Being’ in this context may be interpreted to mean that one becomes who he or she is as a result of every interaction within the activity of their respective and varied communities. These communal transactions contain

⁴ Nelson, Angela M.S., *Why We Sing: The Role and Meaning of Gospel in African American Popular Culture*, In *Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African American Music* (2001, p. 101)

⁵ In this context, the capitalization of the term ‘Black church’ refers to the black church as an entity. Lower case ‘black church’, for purposes of these qualifying questions will refer to characteristics of the entity, its function, worship style, and other aesthetics.

⁶ Ubuntu is the African word or concept translated to mean, “I am because we are.”

epigenetic evidence—our cultural behavior is expressed in multiple ways without any change from its point of origin—as well as generational evidence, meaning—much of the things we do have been handed down or assimilated by immersion in our familial environment. This familial environment is not confined to the home life. Whatley (2001) asserts that African American religion is the matrix of African American life. Religion, by way of the black church, was (and perhaps remains) so significant to the black community that Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) described it as the womb of black culture (p. 17). They not only characterize religion, and for purposes of this discussion—the black church, as the space where black culture is nourished and nurtured, [b]ut religion is also the heart of the culture because it raises the core values of that culture to ultimate levels and legitimates them (p. 7). For centuries, the black church served as a cornerstone to the community. It was the primary meeting space (Brown, 2009, p. 320) and the first place where mutual suffering could be addressed (p. 321). The church was a place of self-help (Barnes, 2005; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Mapson, 1984) and where African American culture was shaped.

The Historical Context of the African American Church and Its Traditions

Writers of the African American Registry⁷ have presented the origin and historical importance of the Black Church, some of its founding tenets and beliefs, and provide a definition of the term black church. The first ‘churches’ for African Americans originated as slave gatherings on plantations in the form of “invisible churches.” The invisible church, according to E. Franklin Frazier (1957) grew out of a desire for enslaved

⁷ *The Black Church in America, a brief history*. African American Registry (2020).

Africans to worship in their own way, which was unlike the slave masters. They assembled secretly, participating in rituals and forms of worship reflecting the culture that they had been involuntarily separated from as a result of the Transatlantic slave trade (Frazier, 1957; Walker, 1979). Watley (2001) supports the supposition of the ‘invisible’ church being the cradle of African American culture. He frames it as “the matrix of American life and the fulcrum of the African American community” (p. 28). Further underscoring the genealogy of the black church, Jackson (1980) suggests that enslaved Africans and freedmen originated the first black churches under the Methodist Episcopal denomination [where] many of the practices of contemporary worship can be traced back to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (p. 28). In concurrence, Daniel (2014), asserts that “the black church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the black community” (p. 6). It is from this point of origination that African Americans can affix, anchor, and attribute their hopes and dreams, and from which a large part of their identity stems.

The Offspring of the Invisible Church: What is ‘black church’?⁸

There are varied understandings of the meaning of the term ‘black church.’ Black church has been characterized as: a set of American, Christian churches that have historically been founded, led, and attended by black people (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Daniel, 2014). They are “independent, historic, and totally black controlled denominations,” a singular title used as a shorthand term to signal a particular type of history, worship service, [and] social, economic and political power (Daniel, p. 2). The Black church represents Christian congregations whose leadership, liturgies, and

⁸ The term ‘black church’ in the lower case is a characterization of a form of worship, including all of its unique attributes.

theologies reflect black history and culture (Daniel, p. 2). While a singular black community may hold the same ethics, spiritual and political ideals (Daniel, p. 3), contemporary African American Christian places of worship may have different doctrines and political positions. Synthesizing these perspectives, one can surmise that “the term ‘black church’ presents many details of racial and religious lifestyles unique to black history.”⁹ ‘black church’ (lowercase intended) represents the unique approach of African American congregants toward worship and their collective expression within the worship experience. There are many similarities within and among African American worship institutions and denominations—to the extent that many African American worshippers can easily assimilate into any other African American ecclesiastical institution’s way of worship from a theological and musical perspective, based on their personal normative experience within their ‘home’ church.¹⁰ “Despite various denominational polities, liturgical traditions, and geographical distinctions, striking similarities in spirituality exist among the majority of Black American congregations in the United States” (Williams, 2018, p. 198). Daniel (2014) expands the definition of what black church is and provides context to its cultural parameters. She affirms the significance of the church to African American community and the importance of music ministry within the context of the black worship service. Along with Cone (1994) and Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), Daniel confirms that “[b]lack church music [is] second only to preaching in importance to black church services (p. 121). In addition, Daniel grounds the African American theological

⁹ *"The Black Church in America," a brief history - African American Registry, 2020*

¹⁰ Home church refers to the church that one may have grown up in and still attend or the church that one has joined, has membership, and attends regularly and consistently.

tenets of the faith and hope in who God is, what He has done, and what He will do—characterizing “the messages of faith and hope, and one’s relationship with Him, as a ‘communal experience’ delivered through the ministry of music for one to enjoy” (pp. 121-122).

Worship Traditions

Wimberley (2001) gives an appropriate definition of worship and succinctly encapsulates the essence of the purpose and product (meaning outcome) of the ‘black church’ experience. He ties together the foundational understandings of the African American religious experience—one of faith, deliverance, and hope—individually and collectively. Based on the African American worshipers’ biblical knowledge of God’s works and their personal relationship with Him, through learned experience, there is a reliance that “He, meaning God—is a very present help in the time of need” (KJV, Hebrews 4:16).¹¹

Watley (2001), along with Daniel (2014), endeavors to clarify the essence of the African American worship experience for persons for whom this form of ecclesiastical activity is foreign. Watley (2001) labels it as “mysterious” but explains that for the African American, it is the nuanced language of their community (p. 292). While observers may characterize unfamiliar practices as primitive or frenzied, those who are immersed in the culture or have an appreciation for cultural differences “recognize [these practices] as [expressions of] celebration and affirmation” (p. 292). Further, Watley

¹¹ For purposes of this literature review, all scriptural references are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

points out that “the unique character of Black worship resides in its theological underpinnings” (p. 293).

Theological Underpinnings of Faith

As researcher-participant and an African American immersed in black church culture, the theological underpinnings of the African American ecclesiastical community have always been one of *faith*, meaning trusting in God, *salvation*, meaning to rescue from or to be liberated from undesirable conditions, and *hope*—the hope for a better future. These threads are remnants from the ancestral past of slavery that run deep within the African American community; they comprise the DNA of black worship traditions. Evidence can be found in the testimony of a church mother¹² or through songs of the church. Abbingtion’s (2014) article, “*If It Had Not Been for the Lord on My Side*” is just one example of testimonial colloquialisms found in the black church community. The completion of that phrase, which is a popular song of the people, is “*where would I be, where would I be?*” The phrase is indicative of the trust, liberation, and hope that is foundational to the African American worshiper. This thread of resiliency connects the contemporary African American to the Middle Passage in that they found resonance with the plight of the children of Israel. Like them, [enslaved Africans and their contemporaries] maintained a strong belief (faith/trust) that God would hear their prayers (hope) and relieve their suffering (deliverance/liberation/freedom). Faith, hope, and deliverance are the underpinnings of the Black church, rooted in a theology of survival. Abbingtion (2014) identifies this theology of survival as one “that allows a people to

¹² Church mother is a title of respect given to an elderly female member of the church.

celebrate the ability to continue the journey [despite] the...tentacles of racism and oppression, and [invites them] to sing...(p. 133).

Weekes (2014) provides valuable discussion on insights from African American scholars. She extends the connection between what one sings and lived experience, established by the writings of Walker (1979) and Ramsay (2003). Additionally, there is further historical content on the origins of the black church (i.e. the ‘invisible’ church, Frazier, 1957), the cultural importance of musical expression, and some of the performance practices that have characterized the African American worship experience—past and present—as identified by Walker (1979) and Southern (1997). Applying Walker’s (1979) thesis that “what black people are singing about religiously...provide[s] a clue to what is happening to them sociologically” and Ramsay’s (2003) premise that “social settings...or cultural spaces...provide a window of interpretation that allow [one] to enter into...the processes of African American identity making” (as cited by Weekes) gives illumination to why this community of singers *sing*. Singing, an expression of emotion and feeling, in the midst of whatever their lived experience offers, provides an opportunity to transcend a present reality—what’s happening now—to see a future reality—a hope of that which is desired. The third verse of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,”¹³ penned by James Weldon Johnson in 1920, and adopted as the African American national anthem, poetically expresses the tenets of the African American Christian’s faith and supports an emotio-socio interpretation:

¹³ This was first written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson and set to music by his brother, John Rosamond Johnson in 1899. Performed first in 1900, it became the official song of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1919.

*God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far along the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.*

The first line, *God of our weary years, God of our silent tears*, is indicative of a lived experience, invoking God's presence into a particular situation. Here, an ancestral, historical reference to slavery is inferred. Secondly, *Thou who has brought us thus far along the way*, speaks to the African American community's trust that God is with them in their circumstances and has liberated them out of undesirable conditions. The enslaved Africans were eventually freed from bondage and oppression, though the journey continued. Lastly, *Thou who hast by Thy might, led us into the light, Keep us forever in the path, we pray*, suggests that there is light at the end of the tunnel and this is the hope, that we can transcend or survive certain circumstances for a better future.

Oral Traditions of Worship: Congregational Singing

"[M]usic [and singing] has always played a primary role in the religious tradition of black Americans since the time of its origins in the Africa-influenced slave culture of the antebellum period (Walker 1979, pp. 29-30; Weekes, 2005, p. 523)." In *"Transformational Worship in the Life of a Church,"* Ulmer (2014) defines one of the historical performance practices of the African American church rooted in the Baptist tradition. 'Lining-out' or "Dr. Watts" is a type of a cappella singing where a leader of the church, preacher or deacon, raises¹⁴ a song or hymn, usually during the pre-worship

¹⁴ Raising a hymn or song means to 'start off' singing a particular hymn or song.

period of a religious service. For the Baptist Christian, this portion of the religious service is known as ‘devotion.’ Musical/ecclesiastical experiences for this community of singers included participating in congregational singing of the more common “Dr. Watts” long-metered or lined out hymn, “I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry.”¹⁵ The performance practice as described by Ulmer (2014) follows:

This refers to the call-and-response genre of African American hymnody: one person sings the first line of a song, and the congregation “answers” with the next line or a repetition of the initial line. This song style was characterized by what often sounded like humming and/or moaning on the part of the congregation’s response. Words, phrases, and melodies were stretched and extended beyond meter and beyond the more structured European methods of precision timing (p. 178).

¹⁵ This is not the version from the movie, *The Preacher’s Wife*. It is a transcription of a lined-out hymn of the church.

394 I LOVE THE LORD, HE HEARD MY CRY

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to You...
Psalm 61:1-2

Slow, very free (ad lib.)

Leader:

1. I love the Lord, He heard my cry!

All:

I love the

Lord a-He a-heard

my cry! And pit-ied ev-'ry groan,

an and pit -

ied ev - 'ry groan.

Leader:

2. As long as I live when troub - le rise,

All:

Long as I

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a 'Leader' part and an 'All' (all) part. The tempo is 'Slow, very free (ad lib.)'. The score includes lyrics for two verses. The first verse is '1. I love the Lord, He heard my cry!' and the second is '2. As long as I live when trouble rise,'. The 'All' part provides a harmonic accompaniment to the 'Leader' part. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and dynamic markings like 'ten.' (tension) and 'pit-ied' (pitied).

Figure 1: Excerpt from “I Love the Lord, He Heard My Cry”

Reprinted from *African American Heritage Hymnal* (2001, p. 394). Copyright 2001 by GIA Publications. Used for educational purposes.

Dargan (2006) offers other “synonyms for ‘lining out’ including ‘reading out,’ ‘wording out,’ ‘deaconing,’ and ‘the old one hundreds’” (p. 26). He also supplies further commentary on the performance of this congregational practice:

One who “lines out” reads, intones, or chants the lines or couplets of a hymn stanza in the manner of a “call,” to which the congregation “responds” by singing the same words. To get the singing started, a member then “raises” the hymn by offering a “suitable tune”—one that is known within that particular community and coincides with the poetic meter of the hymn stanza. Following the lead, the congregation swells the throng of sounds (p. 27).

Culture

In defining culture, Geertz (1973) highlights Clyde Kluckhohn’s¹⁶ characterization. Culture is

[t]he total way of life of a people; the social legacy the individual acquires from his group; a way of thinking, feeling, and believing; an abstraction from behavior; a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave; a storehouse of pooled learning; a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems; learned behavior; a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior; a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men; a precipitate of history; and turning perhaps in desperation, to similes, as a map, as a sieve, and as a matrix. (p. 5)

This characterization supports the concept of Ubuntu and the seminal role of the Black church. More succinctly, “[c]ulture consists of whatever people do, have, know... or experience because they participate in a particular community or network (Fiske et al., 2017, p. 80). Swidler (1986) defines culture as “symbolic vehicles of meaning, including

¹⁶ From *Mirror of Man*, 1949

beliefs, ritual practices, art forms and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories and rituals of daily life” (Barnes, 2005, p. 273). She further posits that “culture consists of socially-constructed symbols and activities that provide meaning and establish and reinforce expected behavior among group members (p. 968). However, the symbolic vehicles of which Swidler speaks are more likely to be considered elements of African American culture rather than defining characteristics.

African American Culture

Perhaps more than anything, African American culture—identity and personhood—is inextricably tied, first and foremost, to skin color and the African American’s historical position in American society. For centuries, this has been, and continues to be—despite recent efforts to affect societal change under the guise of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the African American’s lived experience. “It has only been within the past [fifty] years that scholars of African American history, culture, and religion have begun to [bring forward these] distinctive forms of culture...” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990, p. 2) that were incubated and promulgated in the Black church.

Cultural Mores

Cultural mores in the African American community reflect a deeply rooted set of shared values, collective expectations, and social practices that have been shaped by centuries of lived experience. These mores emerge from African ancestral traditions, the historical realities of enslavement and systemic oppression and inequity—which gave rise to resilience and faith—and the ongoing pursuit of dignity, identity, and belonging. They continue to shape how African Americans relate to one another, interpret the world

around them, and maintain continuity across generations. These ways of being and doing, in African American culture include, but are not limited to respect for elders, expressiveness and vibrancy in communication, the importance of religion or spirituality, resiliency, communal support and care, excellence in achievement, and extended kinships beyond the family unit.

Personhood and Identity

Elliott and Silverman (2015) describe personhood as that which “emerge[s] from the dynamic synthesis of all your embodied processes (p. 157). It is a nebulous composition of all things that make you—you. Among these things, personhood includes—but is not limited to—intersubjectivity, empathy, connectedness, compassion, emotion, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-identity, spirituality; all of which are expressed in unique and varied ways. These, and other components, comprise a personhood system that “are completely integrated, embodied, and spinning continuously inside and outside—interpersonally and intrapersonally—to make us who we are (p. 168). Hogle (2018) succinctly describes personhood as “that which makes each individual unique in an internalized sense or perception of being...develop[ed] in relation to others within experiences, in and through relationships with others” (pp. 73; see also p. 358). The relationship with self is an ongoing process involving an interrelated collaboration of each component of your personhood system.

Your unified nature is what enables and powers the *you-ness* of you as an extraordinarily complex being that experiences everyday life as a seamless flow of conscious and nonconscious experiences of all kinds [which comprise your] thoughts, intuitions, emotions, sensations, memories, and so forth. (Elliot & Silverman, 2015, p. 157, emphasis added)

In other words, personhood is the equivalent of all things that you perceive as you. It is “comprised of all things intrinsic to the ‘you’ that you are. It is constructed by the sum of all our interactions within the context of our experiences” (Elliott & Silverman, p. 157). As such, identity flows out from personhood. In *Persistence in Choral Music*, Fryling (2015) came upon “a study of Australians over the age of sixty that revealed that music allowed them to understand and develop their self-identity through coming to know and reflect upon their own personhood, establishing music as a means to identity formation (p. 16; Hays & Minichiello, 2005). Certain experiences are capable of shaping our view of ourselves and others. Hogle (2018) states that experience weaves our personhood (p. 35). The totality of our ongoing experiences is knitted together. We wear them like second skin, consciously and/or subconsciously, as personhood. Hogle (2018) goes on to say that we develop our personhood through experience...(p. 39). Out of our socially situated, individual and collective, ongoing, lived experiences of personhood, identity is manifested.

Identity

People have as many social identities and personal identities as there are groups that they feel they belong to or personal relationships they have. Identities vary in subjective importance and value, and chronic and situational accessibility. However, in any given situation, only one identity is psychologically real—the salient basis of self-construal, social perception, and social conduct (Hogg et al., 2000, p. 252).

Several identities can be presented, depending on the social context. There may also be multiple identities operating in tandem to navigate within a social setting. A social scientist must view identity as a social construction that is malleable to some degree, and

as plural rather than singular (Hardin, 2001, pp. 7166-7170). As such, it is important to explore how identity is defined and constructed. According to Elliot and Silverman (2015), psychologists usually use “identities” in reference to a person’s sense of self and the personal attributes and external relations that are individually defining (p. 362). A closer look at this declaration suggests that identity is constructed by way of three interdependent processes—how one sees themselves (personal identity), the multiple aspects or dimensions of identity, and how one’s varied social interactions affect their way of being. Freire (2013) discusses identity under the guise of three components: personal identity, social identity, and place identity. Each of these approaches are appropriate applications with regard to why this community of African Americans sing—individually and collectively.

Like the concept of personhood, defining identity is complex. In all of its complexity, identity is, in a nutshell, an agglomeration of social theories. Freire’s (2013) components of identity serve as an overarching framework to organize and analyze the motivation for this community of singers’ active and collective involvement in choral activities. We can stipulate that identity is constructed within the context of our social interactions. “Hegel...viewed identity in terms of social activity. He noticed that our sense of self arises from our interactions with others” (Elliot & Silverman, p. 362). The participants in this study are connected to one another by their affiliation with an ecclesiastical institution, through which they participate in the group activity of choral singing. Earlier explication provides supporting evidence of the church being the hub of the community’s social activity. The church “is where African American identity was

constructed in the period following emancipation (Brown, 2009, p. 321). Although our multi-faceted identities are continually evolving, for this community of singers, the church is still foundational to how they view themselves and who they believe themselves to be—individually. Some scholars concur that the enactment and maintenance of identity occur through social interaction (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Gossett, 2002; Zanin et al., p. 442). This suggests that the social circles and situations one may find him or herself are substantially tied to identity construction and formation. Participation in choral activities, for this group of singers, is nestled within variegated social structures. There are several convergent and overlapping social identity theories and group structures at work that give insight into these participants' motivations that have bearing on their collective and individual identity. Pearce et al. (2016) postulate that there are psychological and physiological factors that affect different levels of identity particular to intergroup singing (p. 11). Freier's (2013) components of identity offer a means to examine intergroup dynamics from the perspective of nested identities (Meisenback & Kramer, 2014; Zanin et al., 2016). These components are analogous to Clandinin's (2013) concept of the three-dimensional inquiry space, also called the commonplaces of narrative inquiry, and dovetail nicely into the interplay between temporality, sociality, and place embedded within our individual and collective experiences.

Place Identity

The ecclesiastical setting where this community of singers rehearse and offer praise and worship is a protestant institution. Its mission statement includes the tagline,

*“the church where the spirit of unity abides, the church where the vision lives and shines, and the church that loves and cares.”*¹⁷ The tagline invokes a sense of community, progressive activity, and affection. Prior to the global pandemic, during a period of thriving, the congregational membership consisted of approximately 2700 members, with an estimated regular weekly attendance of 1500 members. The physical venue is the place where relationships are consistently reinforced and supported through communal (ritual) activity: worshipping together, praying together, fellowshiping together, and singing together. It is a warm, inviting, reasonably intimate space. According to Williams (2018), ritual [activity] is perceived in terms of how it serves human life. It helps people, both individually and corporately, to withstand life’s challenges (p. 65). The church, for many African Americans—including these participants, provides a place for like-minded individuals to come together to receive affirmation and reify their faith. The cohesiveness of religious members [through ritual activity] strengthens their social identity as believers (Saroglou, 2011; Bailey, 2014, p. 35). Within the context of the physical venue and the social setting, several aspects of identity are enacted and maintained.

Social Identity

Social identity theory captures how individuals categorize and evaluate themselves and others according to the groups they belong to (Prayag et al., 2020, p. 374). The study participants claim membership to, and maintain some form of relationship with, this ecclesiastical institution. In doing so, “the individuals actively build their own identity and do so in a harmonious way with the context...through their

¹⁷ Bulletin reference dated, December 1, 2019

interaction with the culture (Massimi & Delle Fave, 2000; Boffi et al., p. 216). Culture, in this instance, represents ethnic culture as well as religious or church culture, which in a broader sense can be attributed to a community of practice (Wenger 1998). Nevertheless, the more salient issue is that these participants' motivations can be explained by a hierarchy of group identity constructs.

[G]roups can be based on common identity, where members bond collectively to a shared social identity (social identity theory), or based on common bonds, where members form personal relationships with each other based on interpersonal attraction (social cohesion theory) and may secondarily develop a group identity to reflect this (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Hogg & Turner, 1985; Hogg & Williams, 2000; Prentice, Miller, & Lightdale, 1994; Pearce et al., 2016, p. 497).

Eudaimonistic identity theory, as presented by Mao, Roberts, and Bonaiuto (2016) seems to lend itself well to this community of ecclesiastic singers. Mao et al. suggest that eudaimonistic identity theory is

where an individual is seen to recognize elements of his or her true self, including interests, talents, and abilities, through participating in a range of personally salient (identity-related) and...self-defining activities (p. 289).

Eudaimonistic identity theory is based upon the concept of living well, being well, and feelings of contentment and happiness. Derived from the Greek, eudaimonia, is usually translated as happiness or well-being, but it has some of the same connotations as 'success,' since in addition to living well it includes doing well.¹⁸ Most all of the study participants related their engagement in choral activity to love, happiness, joy, and feeling good, but also to their sense of connection and spirituality. Attention is given,

¹⁸ [Eudaimonia - Oxford Reference](#)

here, to the individual (or person) because certain dimensions of identity, such as self-esteem, spirituality, and personal achievement are contributors to engaging in group activity or aligning oneself with a social group.

A social group, according to Hogg et al. (2000), is a collection of more than two people who have the same social identity—they identify themselves in the same way and have the same definition of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from specific outgroups (p. 251). By this definition, the collective congregation of this religious community qualifies as a social group—as does every other aggregation of people nested within the larger group identified as NPMBC¹⁹, including the music ministry and the study participants. They identify as members of the church, members of the music ministry, members of a choir, and members of a particular voice group. They also identify as African Americans and members of a Black church. In theorizing about situated social identities, particular to this community of singers, there is an overlay of culture and community practice that is so intricately intertwined, it is challenging to discuss them as separate entities—as each component seems to operate symbiotically. Fornas (1995) states that

Cultural practices created cultural identities: symbolic patterns or ordered sets of signs which interact both with subjectivities and with social communities. Neither social nor subjective identities can be directly observed. A person's collective belonging or inner self is not in itself clearly visible for another person...Cultural identities are specific structured units in our symbolic interaction with which we construct, designate or characterize collective (social) as well as individual (psychological) identities. Cultural identities thus mediate between the external and the internal, and between the objective, the social and the subjective. But they simultaneously form an arena of their own, a symbolic order with specific codes and processes. (pp.179-180)

¹⁹ The ecclesiastical institution shall be identified as NPMBC.

Music and singing are an integral part of the worship experience in the African American church. Many of the study participants referred to the eudaimonistic quality of engaging in choral activities. Similarly, a study by Batt-Rawden and Andersen (2019) cited four key findings related to singing in the choir: 1) that group singing was first described as joyful, bringing vitality, strength and resilience through a combination of physical, psychological and emotional effects, 2) it was so fundamental that it felt connected to their survival..., 3) it gave...participants a deeper sense of both their own individual identity and of belonging to a group, and 4) how [singing in] a choir could lead to frictionless social inclusion...[and] a greater sense of community cohesion (p. 146). Singing in the choir qualifies as situated social action. It takes place within the context of a rehearsal or performance, at a specific place, under the premise of working together to achieve the same goal, outcome, or purpose. As these participants work together with a common objective, a shared identity emerges.

Shared social identity refers to a set of people who view each other as members of a common social group. In colloquial terms, it refers to a sense of “we-ness.” It is therefore not just about the ways I view the group....Nor is it just about how we view ourselves...Rather, shared social identity is a reflexive construct that combines both elements. It is about seeing myself and seeing others as united through belonging to a common category, and about assuming others do likewise. Because I see others as fellow group members, I am intimate with them; because I assume others see me as a fellow group member, I assume they will be intimate with me. Together, these constitute the glue that allows group members to work together effectively (Novelli et al., 2020, pp. 159-160).

In a religious context, these social interactions, even in a rehearsal setting, can be emotionally charged.

...[T]he event itself creates shared social identity (here, because people assume that those who are co-present in a highly charged religious space are common

devotees) and this leads to a number of consequences including cooperation, mutual solidarity, and a positivity towards the presence of others (Alnabulsi & Drury, 2014; Alnabulsi et al., 2018; Hopkins et al., 2019; Hopkins et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2015). (Novelli et al., p. 160).

The participants' collective affinity for singing, their love for the Lord, and sense of spiritual responsibility creates, what one would say in the Christian vernacular, ties that bind. There is a hymn in the New National Baptist Hymnal that references relationship in terms of bonding. Composer John Fawcett wrote:

*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love! The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above...*²⁰

The premise of the hymn was concerning a kind of familial connection that like-minded people share, in the context of their faith. This type of relational bonding is prevalent among Black church congregants and extends beyond its physical walls into the community at large. Pearce et al. (2017) states,

The fact that relational bonds between singers developed in an environment of heightened collective closeness lends support to social identity theory, which predicts a top-down explanation of group formation, whereby individuals identify with the group and then develop interpersonal attraction based on this shared social identity (Hogg & Williams, 2000; Pearce et al., 2016, p. 507).

This revelation concisely threads together the significance of place, group, and person identities respective to this community of singers.

African American Religious Traditions

“No complete picture of [African American] people can be given without due attention to the black religious tradition.”²¹ Its religious identity is rooted in a theology of

²⁰ Blest Be the Tie that Binds, The New National Baptist Hymnal, 1977; 1986; p. 359. See also [Discipleship Ministries | History of Hymns: "Blest Be the Tie That..." \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/history-of-hymns/blest-be-the-tie-that-binds)

²¹ William B. McClain, 1981, Songs of Zion, p. x

survival. Abbingtion (2014) identifies this *theology of survival* as one “that allows a people to celebrate the ability to continue the journey in spite of the insidious tentacles of racism and oppression and to sing, *It’s another day’s journey, and I’m glad about it!*” (p. 133). The enslaved Africans, as well as contemporary African Americans, found a resonance with the plight of the children of Israel. Like them, the people maintained a strong belief (faith/trust) that God would hear their prayers (hope) and relieve their suffering (deliverance/freedom). He sets forth “two unquestionable elements” in examining black religious tradition: (1) African Americans needed to know God for themselves and (2) the struggle for survival and eventual liberation (p. 130).

The contemporary African American religious philosophy can be synthesized into one thought: *No matter what, trust God in all things*. Theologian James Cone explicated that black religion was “wrought out of the experience of the people who encounter the divine in the midst of historical realities,” gave hope and meaning to African Americans who were oppressed and denied personhood (Brown, 2009, p. 5). The church was the gathering place where faith could be freely expressed, and hope affirmed or restored. In times like these, it would not be uncommon for this community of people to be found singing, “*We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord. Trusting in His Holy word, He’s never failed me yet. Oh, can’t turn around, we’ve come this far by faith.*”²² One of the primary functions of the church, according to Myrdal (1944) was to “sustain the hopes of its members in the face of adversity and give them a sense of community” (as cited by Spivey, 2008, p. 17).

²² Goodson, Albert A., *We’ve Come this Far by Faith*, arr. Thurston G. Frazier (1965)

The black church culture and religious experience is a phenomenon that evolved from the blending of European and African constructs. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) described it as “a unique ethnic culture fused from the strands of Africa, America, and Europe...that was forged among black people during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (p. 126). Other scholars support the view that the black religious culture is the product of West African and Euro-American influences, pointing out that African culture shaped the music, lifestyle, thought patterns, and the world view of transplanted African Americans (Mitchell, 1979; Mapson, 1984, p. 35). For the African and, subsequently, the African American, religion was not compartmentalized as an activity to be engaged in during a specific day, time, and place but was essential to daily living. Fox (2014) suggests that religion was not disconnected from the rest of society but consisted of rituals inherently connected to all areas of life (p. 383).

The act of worship, in the black church, is the culmination of expression with regard to faith, hope, healing, help, and deliverance. It contains paradoxes that, on the surface, seem antithetical but are salient to its essence. Within the context of a worship service, there are expressions of sorrow and joy, weeping and dancing, reverence, and exuberance—for the African American community, worship is inherently celebratory. The Psalmist David exhorted, *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the LORD.*²³ For the participants, and the congregation in which their identities and membership are nested, this is a call to “go to church and have a good time in the Lord.” Because of the historical circumstances of black people, worship in the black tradition

²³ Psalm 122:1, King James Version (KJV), Holy Bible.

has reflected a particular tone and texture...[y]et these particularities are rooted in the divine-human encounter as dialog: God talks...persons listen (Mapson,1984, p. 44) and respond.

The Worship Experience

This community of singers are members of an African American Baptist church. The *leitourgia* or ritual activity they engage in is perfunctory but, very closely retain the meaning originally intended by the early Baptist churches founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is a Call to Worship, Hymn of Praise (which serves to encourage congregational singing), Prayer (including intercessory and offertory prayer), Offertory, Sermonic Moment, Invitation to Discipleship, and Benediction. The described worship format almost parallels some of the “African traditions [and] prayers of early [the] African American worshipers [which] included invocations, adorations, praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition (Costen, p. 31). Interspersed between these aspects of worship are musical moments that are planned, and those that are spontaneously inspired by the Holy Spirit via the present atmosphere of the worship service. “Worship, then, is a corporate demonstration of belief and faith in God through adoration and praise, an attempt of the human spirit to touch the divine through religious activity” (Mapson, 1984, p. 43). Mapson’s Biblical Model (p. 43) as delineated is reflected in this community’s ritual activity:

1. Worship...[has] a variety of forms, resulting from the responses of the many cultural and social groups that embraced the Christian faith.
2. Worship [is] a spontaneous act...
3. Worship [is] an act of celebration.

The worship experience serves as a vehicle for exercising spirituality, expressing gratefulness, and demonstrating reverence through tangible, observable responses which include but are not limited to singing, clapping, and lifting hands. These elements are not specifically limited to the black Baptist community. They may also be identified in the African American church community at large.

The activity of worship is not without nuance. There is almost no distinction between worship—a demonstration and expression of adoration and reverence—and praise in African American religious services. Praise, according to Teal (2014), means to commend; to express approval or admirations; to extol in word or song or deed. It is the way in which one demonstrates, through activity that is readily observable by [others], one's thankfulness to God (p. 547). Praise for this community of singers and the congregation it serves, is the outward acknowledgement of God's work in their lives. Praise and worship, therefore, is a noun *and* a verb. It connotes a segment *of* the worship service but also suggests participation or engagement *in* the worship service. To be thorough and inclusive, it also represents a particular genre of Christian contemporary music. However, discussion of genre, here, is unnecessary and tangential. The construct of praise and worship can be understood as a spiritual encounter that is corporate yet personal, dialogical, and spontaneous. Praise *is* worship...and worship is praise. Ulmer (2014) asserts that "praise and worship...became inseparable elements of a total worship experience...(p. 180). The dialogical and spontaneous aspects of praise include utterances of assent—in the form of "Amen," "Yes," or other cultural expressions (i.e., shouting)—and/or actions of praise which include singing, the lifting or clapping of hands, or

instrumental interpolations in response to the preacher, soloist, or choir. “Praise and worship generally operate in tandem. It is regarded as an interactive fellowship with the Creator whereby one ascribes, through tangible response—singing, clapping, lifting hands—the requisite honor and worth that is due” (Teal, 2014, p. 550). There is biblical support regarding the interconnected nature of praise and worship. Ulmer (2014) records that “the bible includes a wide range of physical movement and expression in its images of worship, such as bowing down, lifting hands, clapping hands, processions, and singing. It involves both the presentation and the participation of the worshiper” (p. 186). Within the context of an African American worship service, praise and worship is usually that portion of the service set aside for or devoted to singing. It is an opportunity for the assembly of the gathered community of faith to corporately, and deliberately, express themselves. Singing, according to Abbington (2014), [is a major] focal point of worship in the black church as magnets of attraction and primary vehicles for spiritual transport and formation (p. 129). Praise and worship, through the ministry of music, is a powerful medium in the black church. Teal (2014) states that praise is always visible and/or audible and that it must be expressed physically (p. 548). The lifting of hands represents total surrender, the giving of oneself completely, vulnerability, openness, and receptivity to the Creator within the context of a worship service. Teal (2014) outlines additional expressions of praise that include but are not limited to those previously mentioned. These outward expressions of praise signify, in some instances, an emotional release. The “praise break” is of notable significance in the black church. It is a musical interpolation, usually facilitated by the organist, that can either elicit an emotional release from the

gathered community or the interpolation is in response to the emotional energy present within the worship experience. The “praise break” is spontaneous and climactic. It can occur when the spiritual and emotional energy in the sanctuary accelerates. The praise break can be characterized as exuberant, jubilant, energetic, and loud. It is comprised of the voices of the people intertwined with the voices of the instruments. It is improvisational, rhythmic in nature, with percussive accents, a heavy bassline and a driving tempo. It is not uncommon to witness members of the gathered community clapping in unison, tambourines playing, shouting²⁴, “getting happy”²⁵—which may include shouting or dancing, tears of joy, or lifting of the hands. It can be episodic, occurring and reoccurring in waves, and/or lasting for several minutes. This atmosphere is the embodiment of Roberts (1969) saying: “When man cries, God hears.” In this moment of praise, there is, for the gathered community of faith, evidence of God’s presence among them.²⁶ A praise break may occur at any time—before, during, or after the sermonic moment, following a choral selection, in response to a prayer or words of exhortation—and comes to an end when the spirituo-emotional encounter naturally tapers off. Expressions of praise are specific to the individual giving praise. Both praise and

²⁴ Shouting is experienced when the Holy Spirit rills and empowers the worshipers so that they are unable to remain still. Shouting is one way that a person responds to the encounter and movement of the Holy Spirit in worship (Costen, 1993, p. 36).

²⁵ “African Americans understand this as a special divine moment of happiness and joy during a spontaneous encounter with and enabling of the Holy Spirit. This ecstatic moment may be referred to as ‘getting happy.’ What happens to cause one to shout must also be understood in the context of one’s psychological and religious orientation, needs, and expectations, as well as the accompanying element(s) of worship (preaching, praying, singing, or the shouting) of someone else” (Costen, 1993, p. 36).

²⁶ Psalm 22:3, King James Version (KJV), Holy Bible

worship are volitional acts (Teal, p. 552). How, when, and why one offers praise is purely contingent upon personal experience.

Within the context of the worship experience, communication is historically expressive, emotive, and participatory. This includes call-and-response, testifying, embodied gestures, vocalized agreement, rhythmic and musical speech patterns. This expressiveness is not performative; it reflects emotional transparency, communal engagement, and connection. It affirms that communication is a shared experience rather than a passive exchange.

Interaction Ritual Theory and Activity

Interaction Ritual Theory is considered to be a more detailed explanation of Durkheim's (1912/1991) concept of collective effervescence. Collins (1984, 2004) suggests that the following characteristics, which he labels ingredients, must exist and can be applied to any social phenomena (Liebst, 2019, p. 28):

1. a number of co-present individuals
2. physically gathered in a demarcated place
3. sharing a common mood and focus of attention
4. reinforced by bodily processes of rhythmic entrainment.

The elements of Interaction Ritual Theory are applicable to choir rehearsals. At any given rehearsal, a contingent of thirty to sixty individuals are co-present in the choirstand (demarcated place) to participate in and for the purpose of 'making a joyful noise unto the Lord' (common mood and focus of attention). Reinforcement of bodily processes of rhythmic entrainment can occur through participants' clapping or swaying to the music while simultaneously singing the proposed rehearsal or worship service repertoire, which

may elicit an emotional response from the collective. “Collective effervescence is an intense and shared emotional state experienced by ritual participants. It is independent of and larger than any single participant” (Draper, 2014, p. 231).

Collective Effervescence

Durkheim (1912/1991) posited that... “collective effervescence” [is] produced by joint participation in religious rituals...[He] did not make a clear distinction between a social relational emotion, affect, mood, motivation, and social relationship—or indicate [what] mechanism... evokes collective effervescence (Fiske, 2019, pp. 74-75).

Durkheim’s ideas, barring clear distinctions, align very closely with the cohesion determinants associated with the study participants. The social context (rehearsal and worship service) presupposes that the resultant outcome of the ensembles’ choral activity (joint participation in a ritual, religious experience) will produce collective effervescence. Choir rehearsal, in the context of black worship culture, is almost always considered a religious experience and, by its nature, will always have the propensity to evolve into “a strong shared emotional experience that connects [those participating] to the collective...its identity and goals” (Collins, 2004).

Emotional Contagion

Each of these elements are relevant to the regular and special choral activities of the participants. Other phenomena that arose within rehearsal sessions and performances of the participants is the “emotional contagion effect.” Hatfield et al. (1994) define this as “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally” (p. 5; Schiepe-Tiska & Engeser, 2012, p. 99). This type of synchrony is

commonplace within black church choirs, as well as the congregation at large, and generates—at least for this community of singers—the type of intimacy that supports their physio-psycho-socio-emotional wellbeing.

Studies indicate that [c]horal singing...seems to be positively linked to subjective health, wellbeing, and identity...described as a vital activity for health maintenance, stress reduction, and the ability to cope with the ups and downs of everyday life. It is also a bridge building activity constructing social connectedness and belonging in a community. By offering an opportunity to explore emotions and provide vitality, choral singing entralls, empowers and enriches (Batt-Rawden & Anderson, 2019, p. 146).

There is a phrase in the hymn *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*²⁷ that states, “Oh, how precious is the flow...” While the songwriter is referring to the cleansing and redemptive power of the Triune God through the sacrifice of His Son, this research suggests that these sentiments can be applied to flow theory and wellbeing. How good and how precious it is to be in synchrony—spiritually, socially, emotionally, and historically connected—through song.

Emotional Synchrony

Perceived emotional synchrony (PES) is a proxy for the notion of intense shared emotional experience introduced by Durkheim (1995) in the classic concept of collective effervescence. For Durkheim, collective effervescence is a shared or group state of high emotional arousal related to intensification of emotions by social sharing, felt in religious and secular collective rituals, irrespective of their content (joyful feasts or sad funerary rituals), which empowers the individual. Sociology of collective emotions also emphasizes that the experience felt during collective gatherings consists of a high mutually shared emotional arousal that emerges from all types of collective rituals; reinforces a sense of unison; and implies synchronization of emotional responses that, in turn, reinforces social cohesion (Włodarczyk et al., 2020, pp. 1-2).

²⁷ Convention Press. (1956). *Baptist hymnal* (p. 204). Nashville.

Emotional synchrony is a defining element of the collective religious experience. It reflects the range of emotions that emerge when individuals participate together in shared ritual activities. Draper (2014) suggests that synchrony can be observed through the heightened emotions of joy, awe, inspiration, and a sense of nearness to the Divine during worship. These emotions are not solely individual but come about also by the atmosphere created by collective, shared engagement. Social identity research suggests that greater emotional uplift within collectives signal a deeper process of group identification. Hopkins et al., (2016) describe effervescence as the degree to which participants experience collective activity as intensely positive, linking these affective responses to a strengthened perception of belonging and purpose. This aligns with Durkheim's (1995) assertion that communal rituals "reinvigorate" the individual by embedding them within a network of shared meaning. Emotional synchrony, within this community of singers, is both an affective and relational phenomenon emerging from ritual activity. Within Black church choirs, these emotional experiences may serve as a motivational anchor. In this regard, synchrony presents as more than an emotional high, it affirms one's presence, strengthens one's purpose, and bolsters one's continued active engagement in the ensemble participation. These emotional experiences become part of the group's memory and tapestry. Aligned feelings of spiritual intensity create conditions of mutual and interpersonal understanding where a sense of "we-ness" can develop and collective identity can form. This kind of emotional resonance may contribute to a greater sense of belonging.

Social Cohesion

Social cohesion examines human behavior within the context of a social group. Psychologist David McClellan (1917-1998) suggested that humans have a need for affiliation, meaning—people [have] need of involvement and belonging within a social group. Social groups can be defined as any set of human beings who either are, recently have been, or anticipate being in some kind of interrelation. The term group, or social group, has been used to designate many kinds of aggregation of humans.²⁸ Cohesion indicates some form of adherence or attachment. Ensembles, choirs, or teams consist of an affiliated aggregation of human beings connected by and/or for a common interest or purpose; as it is with this community of ecclesiastical singers. Further, these participants not only exhibited a familial kind of connection through their collective involvement in choral activity, but also by way of membership in and service to the same ecclesiastical institution.

Measures of social cohesion now appear to encompass any attitude or behavior that could be construed as indicative of a person's attraction or attachment to a group (or social category) or to other members of a group. (Friedkin, 2004, p. 412)

These ecclesiastical singers are embedded in a relatively complex social network structure. Determinants of cohesion within this group are grounded in multi-level interpersonal relationships, religious duty, emotion, and black worship culture.

Moreno & Jennings (1937) defined cohesion as "the forces holding the individuals within the groupings in which they are," and Festinger et al., (1950) defined cohesion as "the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group." (Freidkin, 2004, p. 411)

²⁸ [Social group | Types, Characteristics & Examples | Britannica](#)

The cohesion determinants may be viewed as the acting forces that bind this group of ecclesiastic singers together. There is an interconnectedness among these determinants that gives rise to a particular energy within the context of rehearsal or worship service. This particular energy is described by Collins (2004) as emotional contagion, a socially derived construct central to collective effervescence.

Social Identity Theory

When individuals align themselves or have resonance with a group of individuals, social identity theory is at work. Social identity theory according to Pearce et al., (2017) is when “groups based on a common identity bond collectively to a shared identity” (p. 497). Operatively, bonding is an essential element in social identity theory, which implies a connectedness between participating individuals. It may be inferred that social identity theory is fundamental to social cohesion theory. “Based on common bonds, members form personal relationships with each other based on interpersonal attraction and may secondarily develop a group identity to reflect this” (Pearce et al., p. 497). In this ecclesiastical setting, the music ministry, its choirs, and the congregation of the church, maintain a kinship of being “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

One key universal characteristic of religion, drawn from a large number of studies, is the use of kin terms in religious contexts, as, for example, a priest may be called father while a nun may be addressed as mother or sister. Members of congregations may refer to one another as children of God, the Father, and as brothers and sisters to one another. The widespread use of these kin terms in situations that do not involve biological kin (e.g., religions, sororities and fraternities, tribes and clans) seems to have a common effect: it helps create a metaphorical family, the members of which tend to act as kin, preferentially cooperating with and sacrificing for their metaphorical relatives. While religion is not the same as a sorority, as the cooperation may be much more intense, this particular characteristic of religion is ancient and found around the world in all societies (Steadman & Palmer, 1995, as cited by Coe et al., 2015, p. 47).

This kinship, though not biological but prevalent in religious circles, creates relationship. African Americans commonly refer to members of their ecclesiastical institutions as their “church family.” It is not uncommon to hear this characterization several times during a formal or informal religious gathering. This pseudo-relationship may be contributory to the social cohesion that exists within the choral ensembles—between individual choir members, their respective vocal sections, and musicians at the church. To be fair, this phenomenon is not exclusive to music ministry but extends to the church body-at-large, including the totality of its collective ministries and leadership. There are relational and collective aspects material to the larger church community and its smaller choral subset, which may be significant to well-being.

Since both relational and collective bonding may play roles in promoting health and well-being, behaviors and activities that can facilitate the development of personal relationships on the one hand, and collective identities on the other, could yield substantial public health benefits (Pearce et al., 2017, p. 497).

Collective Gatherings

Durkheim (1995) theorized that “collective gatherings can reinvigorate the individual”...that groups of individuals, when gathered together, communicat[ing] in the same thought and action, feel a sense of comfort and enjoyment (as cited by Włodarczyk et al., 2020, p. 2). These types of occurrences possess an energy that draw others to involvement. Many of the participants became members of the choir resultant to their individual experience within a worship service or some other music ministry-related choral event. Once an individual is grafted in, a plethora of social dynamics may be considered.

The Experience of Flow

The state of flow, relative to the participants, is personal and individual. The flow experience is particularly subjective, though its descriptors may be broad and varied. Csikszentmihalyi (1996), along with a few of his co-laborers and contemporaries in research, have defined flow thusly: “Flow is a subjective experience in which people report performing their best; when in flow, the individual operates at full capacity” (van den Hout et al., 2016, p. 234; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Study participants exhibited signs of flow when performing repertoire that they liked and were well-rehearsed. Whenever this phenomenon occurred, they were excited to attend the next scheduled rehearsal. Their collective experience of flow could be conveyed as “a psychological state in which the person feels simultaneously cognitively efficient, motivated, and happy” (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 277). At its core, flow generates an immersive, in-the-moment state of happiness, enjoyment, and personal satisfaction. Coordinated activity, such singing together, creates an environment conducive to a state of flow. The term flow, coined by Csikszentmihalyi, was derived from research into motivational factors pursuant to human recreational activity (1975). Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) called flow the “optimal experience” in the sense that “[f]low is defined as a psychological state in which the person feels simultaneously cognitively efficient, motivated, and happy” (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 277). Other researchers have defined it as a feeling of oneness (Schiepe-Tiska & Engeser, 2012, p. 105), complete immersion or absorption in an activity (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, p. 1; Keeler et al., pp. 1-2; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), optimal fulfillment and

engagement (Csikzentmahalyi, 2014, p. 266). “Flow is a state of...motivation in which a person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing for the sake of the activity itself” (Baumann, 2012, pp. 165. Most may equate this kind of occurrence to being “in the zone,” or for musicians—“in the groove.” Flow theory manifests when certain aspects of focused engagement, cohesion, and coherence are present. “When experienced in group settings, flow [only] holds the *potential* to facilitate social...interpersonal connection” (Keeler et al., 2015, pp. 1-2)...because flow is a subjective experience (emphasis added). Conditions associated with flow experience include concentration, enjoyment, connection, curious emotion of interest (Silvia, 2008), a feeling of control, the presence of a challenge, persistence, and cooperation.

The capacity to experience flow appears to be nearly universal. Nevertheless, people vary widely in the frequency of reported flow. People also differ in the quality of their experience, and in their desire to be doing what they are doing. (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, pp. 244-245)

Flow, then, “is an experience with [interrelated] components, which represent the experience of flow. [I]t cannot be reduced to a single component and all attempts to take one component off as the definitional aspect of flow will consequently disregard essential parts” (Schiepe-Tiska & Engeser, p. 2). Schiepe-Tiska and Engeser (2012) assert that [f]low, in group [situations], is a very complex phenomenon because there are many interactions between numerous people (p. 99). In the case of this community of singers, at any given rehearsal session forty to sixty people may be present; and, depending on the occasion, as many as ninety to one hundred choristers may gather to sing together.

There have been several studies specifically examining flow experience within music settings (Custodero, 1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Freer, 2003; Kraus, 2003; O'Neil, 1999). These studies collectively imply that during flow experiences:

1. the music-making of individuals is inseparable from that of the ensemble
2. individuals are able to monitor and adjust their singing in response to the ensemble sounds around them
3. conductors are aware of the individual needs of singers within the larger ensemble
4. the repertoire and rehearsal techniques are artistically authentic and developmentally appropriate (Freer, 2003, p. 74).

Engeser and Schiepe-Tiska (2012) define [f]low [as] a state in which an individual is completely immersed in an activity without reflective self-consciousness but with a deep sense of control (p. 1). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) conceptualized the term and, through his research, developed nine [conditions] that may be present during a flow experience. van den Hout (2016) suggests the following (p. 234):

- 1) clear proximal goals every step of the way
- 2) immediate feedback to one's actions
- 3) balance between challenges and skills
- 4) no worry of failure
- 5) distractions excluded from consciousness
- 6) a merging of action and awareness
- 7) the disappearance of self-consciousness
- 8) distorted sense of time
- 9) the activity is done for its own sake (intrinsically rewarding [autotelic])

Team Flow/Group Flow

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow focused on the response of individual involvement in activity. In "seeking to understand what makes activities inherently motivating" (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, 2012, p. 8), flow theory is a core construct in the analysis of "*Why Do They Sing?*" During observations, certain segments of rehearsals

would give rise to synergistic movement amongst members of the choir emulating a flow state or collective effervescence. There was an equivalence in their emotional state, reflective in the enjoyment on their faces and the zeal in which they sang—each motivating the other to sing well without actually articulating it. Perhaps these moments of creating harmonious sound gave one meaning, purpose, and a feeling of accomplishment.

Concurrent with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) delineation of flow was the idea that flow might also be connected with the dynamics of a cohesive group...this developed into a theory of 'group flow' that describes how the group, as a unit, experiences an analog of the flow state. (van den Hout et al., 2016, p. 233)

Identifying connections between the individual and the activity of singing, the individual within the community of singers, the community of singers within the socio-emotional/socio-cultural environment, causal relationships, and resultant behaviors may illuminate or explicate human motivation for ensemble singing within an ecclesiastical context. Inghilleri (2014) suggests that there is a "link between flow and sociocultural experience [that] regards both the intrapsychic relationship that individuals build with cultural artifacts and the influence of affective relations and participation in groups (Boffi, 2017, p. 216). The components of team flow and group flow possess several similarities—such that their respective elements may be applied interchangeably in examining what motivates this community of singers. van den Hout (2016) posits that the following conditions must be present for team flow to occur (pp. 235-236): [A]ll members of the group must share:

1. Common goal
2. Aligned personal goals that contribute to achieving the common goal
3. High skill integration present within each group member

4. Open communication: group members listen to one another and achieve familiarity with each other
5. Safety: a psychologically safe environment to perform personal tasks in the interest of the team

Quinn (2005) offers a supporting definition of group flow.

Quinn (2005) described group flow as people experiencing themselves moving together toward shared or complementary goals, adjusting in real time to each other's expectations, needs, and contributions, and learning how others work and how to interact effectively along the way. When groups are in flow, interactions between members appear effortless and efficacious—each person is fully focused on the currently contributing group member (rather than on the self and concerns related to, for instance, portraying a positive self-image) and the unified actions of the group as a whole, all the while experiencing strong interpersonal connections (Lavoie et al., 2024, p. 2; van den Hout, Davis, & Weggeman, 2018).

As these concepts of team flow and group flow are closely aligned in definition and description, all consequent references to flow relating to a team or group construct will be presented within the context of a group.

Flow in groups is a very complex phenomenon because there are many interactions between numerous people. Besides factors of the person and the situation, other factors on the group level may become important to foster flow for example, size and structure of the group, relationship between group members, or trust. (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, 2017, p. 99).

Within the context of this African American community of singers, their ecclesiastical environment, whether it be rehearsal or participation in worship, easily serves as a vehicle for flow. As complex as the phenomenon may be, these individuals come together with the intent to be on one accord. There is an expectation, not only of the singers, but also the constituents of the congregation, to engage in unity of purpose, and to partake in emotional fulfillment and/or release through participation in corporate worship.

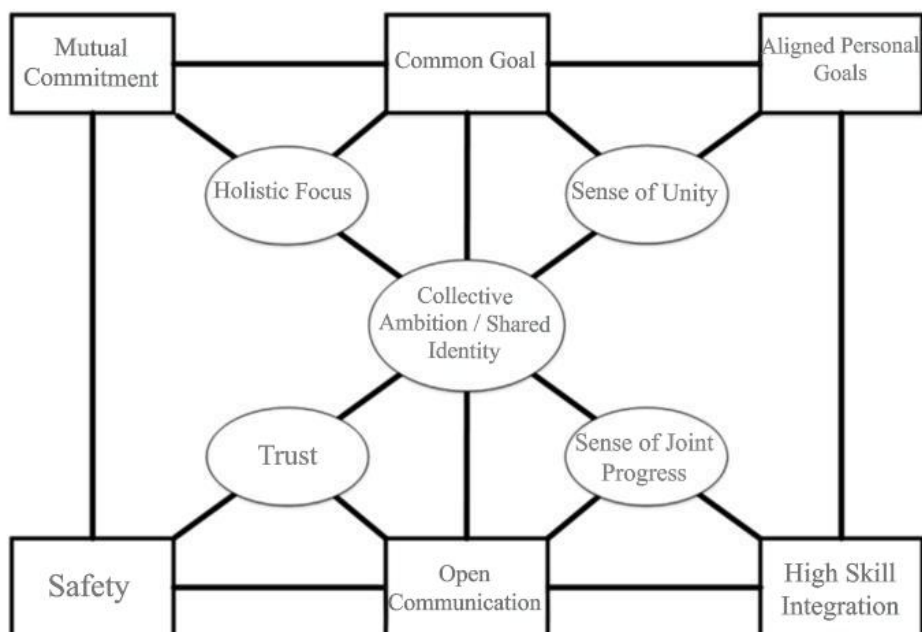


Fig. 2 Precursors and components of team flow

Figure 2 shows the six precursors (rectangles) to achieve team flow and the components (ovals) that characterize the shared experience of team flow. This figure illustrates the relationship between the precursors and the components. Taking into consideration team flow theory, we expect that a team first needs to determine their collective ambition, which operates as starting point of flow and turns into a component (shared identity) when all precursors are met. The precursors mutual commitment and common goal primarily determine the presence of the shared component holistic focus, the precursors common goal and aligned personal goals mainly determine the presence of the shared component sense of unity with the team, the precursors high skill integration and open communication mainly determine the presence of the shared component sense of joint progress, and the precursors open communication and safety mainly determine the presence of the shared component trust (van den Hout et al., 2016, pp. 237-238).

The presence of group flow within this community of African American ecclesiastical singers illuminates how shared musical immersion can be the catalyst for collective effervescence, emotional contagion and synchrony, where singers experience unity of purpose. These moments of entrainment are inseparable from the context in which they

occur—a context shaped by interaction ritual activity, communal memory, and cultural religious traditions of the Black church.

The Affect of Ecclesiastical Engagement

The Worship Experience

According to Costen (1993),

The worship of African American Christians is informed by at least four streams of tradition: traditional African primal world views; Judeo-Christian religion; African American folk religion...and Western/Euro-American *leitourgia* (liturgy)—the work of the people as ritual action, ministry, and service—is reflective of the experiences of a particular people deeply aware of the power and the promise of God (p. 10).

This community of singers are members of an African American Baptist church. The *leitourgia* or ritual activity this congregation engages in is perfunctory but, for the most part, retains the meaning originally intended by the early Baptist churches founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is a Call to Worship, Hymn of Praise (which serves to encourage congregational singing), Prayer (including intercessory and offertory prayer), Offertory, Sermonic Moment, Invitation to Discipleship, and Benediction. The described worship format almost parallels some of the “African traditions [and] prayers of early [the] African American worshipers [which] included invocations, adorations, praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition (Costen, p. 31). Interspersed between these aspects of worship are musical moments that are planned, and those that are spontaneously inspired by the Holy Spirit via the present atmosphere of the worship service. “Worship, then, is a corporate demonstration of belief and faith in God through adoration and praise, an attempt of the human spirit to touch the divine through religious

activity” (Mapson, 1984, p. 43). A cursory analysis of this form of congregational worship meets each element of Mapson’s Biblical Model (p. 43):

1. Worship, especially as reflected in the New Testament, had a variety of forms, resulting from the responses of the many cultural and social groups that embraced the Christian faith.
2. Worship in the New Testament and to a degree in the Old Testament, was a spontaneous act...
3. Worship in the New Testament was an act of celebration.

These elements are not specifically limited to the Black Baptist community. They may also be identified in the African American church community at large. This supports the notion that the concept of black church is a socio-cultural construct. Additionally, the black church, through the vehicle of worship, “continues to help an oppressed community find meaning and make sense of life, maintain community identity and continuity, find direction, and provide healing and empowerment (Costen, 1993, p. 7). For the African American religious community, when “man cries, God hears” (Roberts, 1969, p. 15) the voices of His people.

The declarative statement “cry” elicits visions of tears rolling down one’s face. It is an emotional response to a state of being, situation, or circumstance. Its etymological origin suggests that to cry means to yell out, utter, beg, implore, or to speak earnestly and loudly.²⁹ Within the context of the African American ecclesia, using a modicum of academic discretion, Roberts’ (1969) sentiments, in speaking to the aesthetics of African American worship, might declare: “When the community of faith *cries out* to God, He hears them.”

²⁹ www.etymonline.com

The discourse on the activity of worship would be incomplete without recognizing particular nuances. There is almost no distinction between worship—a demonstration and expression of adoration and reverence—and praise in African American religious services. Praise, according to Teal (2014), means to commend; to express approval or admirations; to extol in word or song or deed. It is the way in which one demonstrates, through activity that is readily observable by [others], one's thankfulness to God (p. 547). For this community of singers, as well as the congregation it serves, praise is the outward acknowledgement of God's work in their lives. Praise and worship, therefore, is a noun *and* a verb. It connotes a segment *of* the worship service but also suggests participation or engagement *in* the worship service. To be thorough and inclusive, it also represents a particular genre of Christian contemporary music. However, the latter is tangential to this study. The construct of praise and worship can be understood as a spiritual encounter that is corporate yet personal, dialogical, and spontaneous. Praise *is* worship...and worship is praise. Ulmer (2014) asserts that "praise and worship...became inseparable elements of a total worship experience...(p. 180). The dialogical and spontaneous aspects of praise include utterances of assent—in the form of "Amen," "Yes," or other cultural expressions (i.e., shouting)—and/or actions of praise which include singing, the lifting or clapping of hands, or instrumental interpolations in response to the preacher, soloist, or choir. "Praise and worship generally operate in tandem. It is regarded as an interactive fellowship with the Creator whereby one ascribes, through tangible response—singing, clapping, lifting hands—the requisite honor and worth that is due" (Teal, 2014, p. 550). There is biblical support regarding the

interconnected nature of praise and worship. Ulmer (2014) records that “the bible includes a wide range of physical movement and expression in its images of worship, such as bowing down, lifting hands, clapping hands, processions, and singing. It involves both the presentation and the participation of the worshiper” (p. 186). Within the context of an African American worship service, praise and worship is usually that portion of the service set aside for and/or devoted to singing. It is an opportunity for the assembly of the gathered community of faith to corporately, and deliberately, express themselves. Singing, according to Abbington (2014), [is a major] focal point of worship in the black church as magnets of attraction and primary vehicles for spiritual transport and formation (p. 129). Praise and worship, through the ministry of music, is a powerful medium in the black church. Teal (2014) states that praise is always visible and/or audible and that it must be expressed physically (p. 548). The lifting of hands represents total surrender, the giving of oneself completely, vulnerability, openness, and receptivity to the Creator within the context of a worship service. Teal (2014) outlines additional expressions of praise that include but are not limited to those previously mentioned. These outward expressions of praise signify, in some instances, an emotional release. The “praise break” is of notable significance in the black church. It is a musical interpolation, usually facilitated by the organist, that can either elicit an emotional release from the gathered community or the interpolation is in response to the emotional energy present within the worship experience. The “praise break” is spontaneous and climactic. It can occur when the spiritual and emotional energy in the sanctuary accelerates. The praise break can be characterized as exuberant, jubilant, energetic, and loud. It is comprised of the voices of

the people intertwined with the voices of the instruments. It is improvisational, rhythmic in nature, with percussive accents, a heavy bassline and a driving tempo. It is not uncommon to witness members of the gathered community clapping in unison, tambourines playing, shouting³⁰, “getting happy”³¹—which may include shouting or dancing, tears of joy, or lifting of the hands. It can be episodic, occurring and reoccurring in waves, or lasting for several minutes.

Collective effervescence, emotional contagion, emotional synchrony, and emotional energy have a direct impact upon and connection to the human response mechanism, which ties into the emotive aspects of spirituality and the affect of ecclesiastical engagement. Costen (1993) asserts that “African American congregations generally agree that corporate Christian worship is acknowledgment of and response to the presence and power of God as revealed in Jesus the Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit” (as cited by Williams, 2018, p. 198). Who we are in the present moment equals the total of all our experiences. Our spiritual lives bear no exception. “Thus, spirituality, the totality of one’s religious life, stems from one’s existential experience of God’s presence in worship and music” (p. 198).

³⁰ Shouting is experienced when the Holy Spirit rills and empowers the worshipers so that they are unable to remain still. Shouting is one way that a person responds to the encounter and movement of the Holy Spirit in worship (Costen, 1993, p. 36).

³¹ “African Americans understand this as a special divine moment of happiness and joy during a spontaneous encounter with and enabling of the Holy Spirit. This ecstatic moment may be referred to as “getting happy.” What happens to cause one to shout must also be understood in the context of one’s psychological and religious orientation, needs, and expectations, as well as the accompanying element(s) of worship (preaching, praying, singing, or the shouting) of someone else” (Costen, 1993, p. 36).

The cultural aspects embedded in religious tradition and activity, characteristics of the African American worship experience, and attributes of community are the fertile soil that nurtures the participants' motivation to sing collectively.

Motivation

“To be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). The formation of theories of motivation began to take shape with Aristotle (384 to 322 BCE). The Greek philosopher's interest in the impetus of behavior yielded an early blueprint for subsequent motivation models. “In *Rhetoric*, he wrote: Thus, every action must be due to one or other of seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning, anger, or appetite.” (Schreiber, 2017, p. 3). Motivation is an intangible precursor to action and/or behavior.

...[A]ll our actions are the result of emotion or reason. Overall, we tend to seek pleasant things and try to avoid or reduce pain. This is important for the rest of motivation research and can be seen to some extent in just about every [motivation] model (p. 3).

Motivation, in and of itself, has several components to consider. If we were to extract information from compiled definitions of motivation, we would discover that the attributes of motivation include that it [is]:

1. Psychological construct (Evans, 2015)
2. Comes from within (Ormrod, 2004; Shreiber, 2017)
3. Energetic action (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2000)
4. Causation, explanation, and rationale for behavior (Elliot, Covington & Martin, 2001; Blumenfeld, 1992; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012)
5. Directed behavior (Pezzoulo, Van Der Meer, Lansink & Pennartz, 2014)
6. Social (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

7. Personal (Schreiber, 2017)

Most current theories of motivation have the concept of intention (e.g., Lewin, 1951) at their core. These theories address factors that promote (vs. fail to promote) people's understanding of behavioral outcomes and have been described in various ways (Deci et al., 1991, p. 326).

Motivation as a Psychological Construct: The Orientation of Motivation

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), “orientation of motivation concerns the underlying attitudes and goals that give rise to action—that is, it concerns the *why* of actions” (p. 54). The *why* of one's actions inherently points to emotion and behavior—concepts that are germane to this discussion. Examination of this community of singers' motivation for participation, individually and/or collectively, revealed purposes as simple as coming together for singleness of purpose: to serve God through song or as complex as, but is not limited to, aspects of identity, spirituality, belonging, and cultural tradition. When this group engaged in ‘singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs’³² within the ecclesiastical environment they serve, there existed a propensity for change—change in the atmosphere, change in feeling and function, and in mood and manner—all rooted in emotion and behavior.

Motivation is the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way (Elliot, Covington, & Martin, 2001, p. 12). What compels one to do one thing or another? Motivation refers to factors that activate, direct, and sustain goal-directed behavior and the needs or wants that may drive behavior and explain what we do

³² The New King James Bible, Colossians 3:16

(Chandon et al., 2011; Elliot, Covington, & Martin, 2001, p. 12). Several of the participants indicated that the impetus behind their involvement in music ministry stemmed from their sense of duty to God, a spiritual obligation, or an expression of love for God. “[M]ovation’s key attribute has always been the internal state as a causal mechanism” (Schreiber, 2017, p. 2).

Causation of Motivation: The Internal Locus of Causality

Maslow (1943/1954) established some of the foundational concepts regarding the nature of motivation and machinations of human behavior. His writings suggest that there are five basic needs that serve as the impetus for one’s actions: satisfying physiological needs, safety needs, love, self-esteem, and fulfilling and/or reaching one’s perceived potential (self-actualization). These needs, inherent in all human beings, come from within and, though unquantifiable, may be considered personal and unique to the individual. Though Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is not germane to this discussion, it is worth noting that his research has bearing on the subject of motivation, particularly as it relates to the internal drive to act, whether the impetus be internal or external. Maslow’s work gives rise to other theories of motivation which include concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, modes of behavior, and socio-emotional experiences.

Motivation may seem to be an individual pursuit. One may be motivated to accomplish personal goals or achieve an individual desired objective. Embedded within the drive to act is the need for the acceptance of others (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Self-Determination: A Theory of Motivation

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a construct of motivation salient to this study. It provides supporting evidence concerning the impetus to act, the accomplishment of personal goals, and satisfaction of one's needs. Deci and Ryan (1985) examined the concept of motivation and determined that the impetus to act was dependent upon satisfaction of one's internal needs and/or the particular social contexts present. "[S]elf-determination theory (SDT) addresses...personality development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, ...the relations of culture to motivation, and the impact of social environments on motivation..." (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 182). There are two distinct delineations that emerged from Deci and Ryan's work—that motivation presents itself as either autonomous or controlled.

Autonomous motivation comprises both intrinsic motivation and the types of extrinsic motivation in which people have identified with an activity's value and ideally will have integrated it into their sense of self. When people are autonomously motivated, they experience volition, or a self-endorsement of their actions. Controlled motivation, in contrast, consists of both external regulation, in which one's behavior is a function of external contingencies of reward or punishment, and introjected regulation, in which the regulation of action has been partially internalized and is energized by factors such as an approval motive, avoidance of shame, contingent self-esteem, and ego-involvements. When people are controlled, they experience pressure to think, feel, or behave in particular ways. Both autonomous and controlled motivation energize and direct behavior, and they stand in contrast to amotivation, which refers to a lack of intention and motivation. (p. 182)

Self-determination theory has been described as a macro-theory of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This suggests that there are additional subsets relating to motivation to be considered. Deci and Ryan (2000) developed a self-determination

continuum outlining types of motivation, describing its impetus and corresponding action. The spectrum of motivation included amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. Along this continuum, the subset theories include Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) and Organismic Integration Theory (OIT).

Cognitive evaluation theory (CET) was presented by Deci and Ryan (1985) as a sub-theory within SDT that had the aim of specifying factors that explain variability in intrinsic motivation. CET is framed in terms of social and environmental factors that facilitate...intrinsic motivation, using language that reflects the assumption that intrinsic motivation, being inherent, will be catalyzed when individuals are in conditions that conduce toward its expression. In other words, it will flourish if circumstances permit. (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 70)

The important components from this subset theory are the variables inherent in intrinsic motivation and social contexts or environments that may act upon or influence the desire to act, as well as intrinsic motivation as it pertains to self-determination and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs—including competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The participants' involvement in music ministry is voluntary and comes from an internal desire to engage in the activity of ensemble singing. Their engagement can be described as intrinsically motivated behavior.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsically motivated behaviors, when viewed through the lens of self-determination theory, contain a psychological component and a social component. Accordingly, three basic psychological needs have been put forth: the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Competence

Defining components of competence include efficacy, attainment, and adaptation within a social context. Schreiber (2017) defines competence as the need to be effective in your environment. He continues by saying, “[e]ssentially, you are being successful and are able to seek out appropriate challenges to demonstrate and expand the skills and knowledge that you currently possess” (p. 45). Competence is the first of three basic psychological needs introduced by Deci and Ryan (2000). The two researchers suggested that “competence involves the desire to be effective in interacting with one’s environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; White, 1959)...[which could be expressed by] using one’s skills, interactions, or capabilities to help control situations and outcomes (MacIntyre, Schnare, & Ross, 2017).³³ The desire to be effective within social contexts, thereby demonstrating competence, is also supported by the work of Elliot, McGregor, & Thrash (2002). Their findings suggest that competence is a reactive response.

It evolved in humans to provide the adaptive advantage of being able to develop skills for negotiating and manipulating their environments in order to avoid danger, hunt for and locate food, and find shelter (Elliot et al., 2002; Evans, 2015, p. 68).

Competence is one of three micro-components of motivation...”which has as its proximal aim the pleasure in being effective” (White, 1959).

³³ Self-determination theory and motivation for music Peter D. MacIntyre, Ben Schnare and Jessica Ross Abstract Psychology of Music 2018, Vol. 46(5) 699 –715 © The Author(s) 2017 Article reuse guidelines: SAGEpub.com/journals-permissions DOI: 10.1177/0305735617721637 journals.SAGEpub.com/home/pom)

Autonomy

Autonomy is commonly defined as independence, freedom—or a descriptor for a self-governing institution, organization, or community. “Within SDT, however, autonomy is defined more precisely. [Autonomy or] autonomous behavior is congruent with the sense of self, and arises with feelings of volition, choice and being the cause of one’s behavior” (Evans, 2015, p. 70). Study participants equated much of their identity with their involvement in music ministry; not only regarding the activity of the ensemble—singing, but also their connection with the people, the purpose, and the place in which the engagement occurred. Involvement or membership in the ensemble was each participants’ choice and volition, for a collective purpose which was unique to each individual.

[A]utonomy reflects a sense of free will and choice when it comes to one’s behavior. This sense of free will allows persons to act upon their own volition, instead of feeling controlled by external forces (Deci & Ryan, 2000). People want to feel as though they are able to engage in activities and behaviors that are of personal interest and importance (MacIntyre, Schnare, & Ross, 2018, pp. 701-702).

Findings suggest that voluntary participation in music ministry for this community of singers fostered a positive environment, promoted a stronger sense of community among members, and contributed to the collective well-being of the group.

Relatedness

Deci et al. (1991) suggests that relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one’s social milieu (p. 327). It is important to note, for purposes of clarity, that the concepts of relatedness and belongingness may be discussed simultaneously and/or interchangeably. Researching self-determination (SDT)

and its varied sub-theories have revealed the following equivalencies:

competence→effectance (White, 1959), autonomy→personal causation (de Charms, 1968), and relatedness→belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Other terms considered to be equivalent to relatedness within the context of this study include connectedness, interconnectedness, intimacy, coherence, and attachment.

Deci and Ryan (1990) defined relatedness as the need to develop long-term secure relationships with people. We desire frequent positive interactions with others in warm caring relationships (Schreiber, 2017, p. 46). Study participants engaged in the activity of singing at regular and consistent intervals, within an organized social context for several years. As participant-researcher, I observed that there was an inherent tendency, when gathered for a specific purpose, to develop connections, build relationships, or at the very least have the desire to establish these connections. According to Evans (2015), people depend on the formation of close bonds with others in complex social networks (p. 68). The music ministry in which these participants claim membership could be viewed as a complex social network. It consisted of separate choral ensembles of individuals that shared a similar interest in singing, including a male chorus, a women's chorus, a mixed chorus, a praise team, and mass choir consisting of the collective members of the aforementioned ensembles. "[The] music itself provide[d] the means for social connectedness" (Evans, 2015, p. 69). Other layers of connection within this 'social milieu' included familial ties, previously formed friendships, and other personal and/or professional connections.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that the need to belong (relatedness) has two main features:

1. ...people need frequent personal contacts or interactions with the other person[s]
2. ...people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future (p. 8)

There is a strong social component relative to choir membership. Particular to this community of singers, interpersonal bonds existed in the form of friendships, relative kinships, and marriages. Congenial interactions were frequently engaged in by virtue of similarly situated persons (within a choral section, i.e., soprano, alto, tenor, bass) or through opportunities to volunteer in community involvement activities. Belonging to this group, as a member of this 'body of believers', bound together through music and singing, these participants have formed long-lasting relationships forged through collective social and emotional support in times of sadness and/or celebration.

A Sense of Community

Founded in 1924, the ecclesiastical community that served as the context for this study, has had a vibrant music ministry and a rich musical legacy. A large majority of this community of singers have been members of music ministry for more than 60 years. Over the course of the church's 101-year history, the music ministry has continued to maintain a strong core group of members. Addressing why this community of ecclesiastical singers continue to, actively and consistently, engage in the shared activity of singing for more than a century includes spiritual responsibility in ministering to God's

people in song, a personal sense of duty, and membership in a community of culture and tradition.

What a Fellowship!

In 1887, composer Anthony J. Showalter (1858-1924) wrote the hymn *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*.³⁴ In most, if not all African American churches, this hymn is also known as *What a Fellowship*. The hymn's lyrics speak of the joy, peace, encouragement, and security felt being in relationship with the Triune God. These four attributes can also be experienced in the socio-cultural activity of choral singing. Chong (2010), along with Clift and Hancox (2001) and Bailey and Davidson (2005), found "evid[ence] that singing brings people together when they have a common interest in making music together. Singing in choirs offers various interpersonal benefits [which includes] building a sense of belongingness" (p. 121). There is an intimacy or closeness associated with belonging, whether it be in personal relationships or group relationships. The sense of "*I belong to it and it belongs to me*" suggests a strong bond or connection. Gunter Kreutz (2014) posited that there were "evolutionary theories [supporting] that singing and music emerged to enhance social bonding and mutual attachment in larger groups of individuals (p. 55). Whether evolutionary or biological, the fact remains that humans are social creatures. They have a need to interact with one another in some capacity or another. Music and singing are the vehicles through which the participants are connected, bonded, and attracted. Pearce (2016) postulates that "[a]ny form of music-making in groups involves a number of behaviors that might independently influence the connection felt

³⁴ Showalter collaborated with his friend, hymnist Elisha Hoffman, in composing *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*.

among group members. [These include] sharing motivation and attention to produce a cohesive sound (Reddish, Fischer, & Bulbulia, 2013; Shteynberg, Hirsh, Galinsky, & Knight, 2014), prediction of the behavior of other members (Sebanz & Knoblich, 2009), coordination itself (e.g. Hove & Risen, 2009) and experience of shared success (e.g. Launay, Dean, & Bailes, 2013; Pearce, 2016, p. 520). In the context of a rehearsal period, as well as a worship service, choir members exhibited any one or all of these behaviors at a given moment during the shared activity. There was observable evidence of connectedness between members within individual sections (i.e., soprano, alto, or tenor section), as well as connectedness between members in sections that were not their own. A playful competition between sections, to produce a good sound, sing a part correctly, or vocalize nuances and articulations flawlessly contributed to this concept of shared motivation and shared success. In addition, during the “active singing” portions of the rehearsal—while either standing or sitting—it was a common practice to sway in synchrony.

These shared goals, attention foci and successes are all likely to enhance feelings of closeness and affiliation with the group. Furthermore, the synchrony of timing, pitch and breathing is likely to contribute to closer social bonds, because movement synchrony has been associated with increased prosociality (e.g. Hove & Risen, 2009; Launay et al., 2013; Launay, Dean, & Bailes, 2014; Reddish, Bulbulia, & Fischer, 2013; Reddish, Fischer & Bulbulia, 2013; Valdesolo, Ouyang, & DeSteno, 2010; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009). Indeed, both singing synchronously...and singing in coordinated turns has been linked to increased feelings of belongingness to a group. (Koudenburg, Postmes, Gordijn, & van Mourik Broekman, 2015, as cited by Pearce, p. 520).

One particular concept, within this community of singers, unexpectedly emerged after singing together for a period of time. Elliot (2015) described it as a “variation on social cohesion theory” (p. 82). Kirschner and Tomasilla (2010) introduced the concept

of “musical we-units” and “an intuitive feeling of community” (p. 361). The first instance of a “we-unit” in this music ministry arose within the alto section of one the choirs. Six first row altos (altos that routinely sat on the first row of the choir stand) began referring to themselves, and the alto section inclusively, as the “Alto Department.” This illeism solidified the alto section and served as a mechanism for increased confidence in singing and cohesiveness. Some of the members of “the Alto Department” began participating in activities outside of choir rehearsal and worship services, developing extremely close friendships. Revisiting the concepts of collective effervescence, emotional energy and the closely associated energy stars, and flow—“Durkheim (1965 [1912]) theorized that commitment to religious groups is achieved and maintained through collective religious rituals that produce "collective effervescence" –a strong, shared emotional experience that connects participants to the collective and its identity and goals (p. 652, as cited by Batt-Rawden and Andersen, 2019). Emotional Energy (EE), as developed and defined by Collins (2004) is “a "socially derived. . .feeling of confidence, courage to take action, [and] boldness in taking initiative" (p. x). He also coined the term “energy stars” which refers to those individuals that have the ability to coax out the emotional energy in others. Collective effervescence is a by-product of the intentional activity generated by energy stars within a group. Presumptively speaking, energy stars would be individuals that are personable, charismatic, and outgoing. They possess a natural ability to persuade those around them to enthusiastically engage in the task at hand. They have an affective, magnetic personality. Generally, within the African American ecclesia, persons possessing this kind of aura or “emotional energy halo” (Collins, 2004, p. x) might be a

pastor, minister of music, choir director, organist/pianist, deacon, or other similar person possessing such social capital. Wollschleger (2012) found that congregations in which worship services produce more collective effervescence have higher rates of church attendance because "people will continue to return to rituals that give them a high level of EE." (as cited by Batt-Rawden and Andersen, 2019, pp. 653-654). In the same way, it is not illogical to suggest that the phenomena of collective effervescence and its corollary branches lend evidentiary support for why this community of singers *sing*.

Well-Being: It is Well with My Soul

There has been considerable discourse on the subject of wellbeing in relation to the arts, through quantitative and qualitative research. [O]ver the last 20 years, researchers have begun to address the nature of the effects of choral singing on health and well-being, particularly in amateur singers (Dingle et al., 2019, p. 1). In the broader context, attention to health, wellness, and wellbeing is essential for effective life management. The concept of salutogenesis was introduced by Aaron Antonovsky (1979) while reflecting on the question of what makes one healthy. The basis of the concept is to determine how health is derived, rather than on the cause of illness and infirmity. Batt-Rawden and Anderson (2019) explicate that when an activity contains salutogenic properties, it "promotes health and strengthens the healthy aspects of an individual..." (p. 141).

Health, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or

infirmity³⁵ (Gick, 2011, p. 177). As an addendum to this definition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also suggest that health is “a resource that allows people to realize their aspirations, satisfies their needs and to cope with the environment to live a long, productive, and fruitful life. In this sense, health enables social, economic, and personal development fundamental to wellbeing.”³⁶ These definitions allude to the endogenous aspects that are inherent to dimensions of wellbeing. However, in ascertaining the meaning of wellbeing, the body of research is indeterminate. “Given the varying populations and methodological approaches, perhaps it is not surprising that the research lacks an overarching theoretical framework, including what is meant by health and well-being” (Gick, 2011, p. 177). There are those among the research community that will use the terms wellness and well-being interchangeably. However, research suggests that while they have fundamental commonalities, there are subtleties that indicate the two are not the same.

Well-being and Wellness

Being well denotes a continuity of care for oneself, taking deliberate action to maintain a sense of inner peace, stability, or equilibrium. Our personal well-being, without any specific attention, is constantly monitored. We actively and presently evaluate our well-being by conversing with ourselves—self-talk, if you will. Other ruminations may yield the term ‘*mindfulness*.’ Mindfulness is akin to being in the moment, having awareness of, or giving attention to something. Lynch and Wilson

³⁵ Preamble to the Constitution of WHO as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19 June - 22 July 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States, Official Records of WHO, no. 2, p. 100

³⁶ Wellbeing Concepts, CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>

(2018) relay the definition of mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (p. 850; Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Lynch and Wilson go on to say that “mindfulness is widely associated with the mitigation of stress and enhancement of emotional well-being (2018, p. 850; Bishop et al., 2004). We determine how we feel about ourselves—physically, emotionally, and socially—by arriving at an understanding of ourselves within these domains. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention affirm that while there is not a definitive determination of what well-being is, “there is general agreement that at minimum, well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods..., the absence of negative emotions..., satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning³⁷. Wellness, similarly, embraces a few of the aforementioned attributes as well. Stolle characterizes wellness as:

a holistic integration of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, fueling the mind, engaging the body, and nurturing the spirit...it always includes striving for health, it’s more about living life fully and is a “lifestyle and a personalized approach to living life” in a way...that allows you to become the best kind of person that your potentials, circumstances, and fate will allow (harboursiderotary.org).

These overlapping constructs may or may not be distinguishable. Well-being is a holistic concept. To parse it out requires considering intangible components. “Research includes the study of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Hedonic wellbeing is concerned with pleasure, [while] eudaimonic well-being focuses on maximizing human potential” (Gick, 2011, pp. 178-179; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004).

³⁷ Wellbeing Concepts, CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>

Studies on hedonic well-being have produced theories (Seligman, 2011) and findings that support contributing factors to personal well-being that include positive emotions and enjoyment (Seligman 2011, Beck, et al., 2000; Kreutz, et al., 2003; Tewari et al., 2012), emotional release from tension, increased energy and positive mood (Bailey & Davidson (2005), satisfactory social status (Keyes, 1998, p. 122; Clift, 2012), and feeling connected to and/or interaction with others (Dingle et al., 2019; Clift & Hancox, 2001; Skingley & Bungay, 2010). The body of research examined yielded four common dimensions or “pillars” of well-being—of which there was consensus: physical, emotional, spiritual, and social. The outliers, which bear mentioning only for purposes of inclusivity, were intellectual/mental, environmental, occupational/vocational, and financial. Much of the research reviewed involved biological processes that do not directly impact the question of why this community of singers participates in choral activities of the church.

Studies indicate that [c]horal singing...seems to be positively linked to subjective health, wellbeing, and identity...described as a vital activity for health maintenance, stress reduction, and the ability to cope with the ups and downs of everyday life. It is also a bridge building activity constructing social connectedness and belonging in a community. By offering an opportunity to explore emotions and provide vitality, choral singing enthralls, empowers and enriches (choral singing has enthralled, empowered and enriched me, Batt-Rawden & Anderson, p. 146).

Literature affirms singing as a multidimensional practice that supports well-being, wellness, and holistic human flourishing. It suggests that singing may lift the mood of singer, effect positive personal and communal change, and enrich life through embodied experiences. Within ecclesiastical contexts, as the data suggests, singing functions as a liturgical response that quiets external distractions and realigns one’s spirit. Through this

process, participants were able to cope with difficulty, affirm their identity, and nurture unity and belonging. These outcomes reflect particular dimensions of well-being, namely, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social. For this community of singers, these were lived realities that supported the affect of participating in ecclesiastical choral activities.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Framing the study through the lens of narrative inquiry serves as the vehicle to “gather personal stories, give voice to marginalized perspectives, and [establish] a deeper connection between researcher and participant” (Williams, n.d.). It offers sufficient flexibility to capture the nuance inherent in lived experience and cultural expression within a layered social context. The socio-emotional, socio-cultural context of this community of singers requires an examination of overlapping, interwoven social theories, which include but are not limited to self-determination theory (SDT), intersubjectivity, socio-emotional phenomena (i.e. social cohesion, collective effervescence, interaction ritual theory, flow, etc.). These psycho-socio-emotional and cultural constructs contain elements that may overlap or seemingly interlock with and/or amplify the elements of additional theories in a kind of circular reasoning.

Observing the participants through the lens of narrative inquiry highlights “the unique expressions of [these] individuals, and the environment and circumstance that shape [their experiences]” (Williams, n.d.). Preliminary motives pertaining to singing for this community of singers are demonstrated in four quadrants: spiritual, social, health and wellness (well-being), and enjoyment. Sub-categories flow out from these constructs that contribute to a matrix of psycho-socio-emotional connection embedded in a cultural context (see figure 2).

Muhammad (2024) asserts that “[s]electing the appropriate research method is more than just a procedural step—it is a decision that will shape your entire project. Your [methodology] influences everything from how you collect data to how you present your findings” (p. 30). In many instances, the terms methodology and framework may be used interchangeably, including interjecting the term “design” into the fray. Early in the process of determining how to approach the research question, *Why Do They Sing?* consideration was given regarding the best vehicle to convey the breadth and depth of my anticipated findings. In the interest of clarity, academic research falls within two approaches: quantitative research and qualitative research. These approaches frame the research design.

Research design, much like a carefully crafted blueprint, lays the foundation for the construction of knowledge and exploration of new frontiers. Each design choice represents a strategic decision, a conscious selection that molds the trajectory and outcome of your research endeavors. Embracing the typology of research design is akin to equipping yourself with a diverse toolset, ready to tackle the complexities and nuances of the research landscape (Muhammad, 2024, p. 36).

Quantitative research is reserved for categories of research that gather and analyze data in a more numerical and statistical sense; conducting experiments, offering hypotheses, and providing tangible, specific and replicable outcomes. This type of research design is not well suited for the review and analysis of social inquiries, in that “the complexities of human behavior and social phenomenon” may not be sufficiently represented adequately in research findings using typical quantitative tools (p. 40). However, qualitative research investigates questions which cannot be quantified by statistics. “Some authors use the term [qualitative research] to differentiate linguistic data from numeric data. Other authors

use the term to distinguish studies conducted within naturally occurring contexts from those conducted within the controlled environment of a laboratory” (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 5).

“Qualitative research focuses on human behavior from a participant’s point of view” (Leonard, n.d.). Themes that emerged from this study explore subjective, socially-situated constructs like cultural expression, motivation, emotion, spirituality, duty, identity, and inclusivity. These concepts are more conducive to examination by qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative Research Design

Muhammed (2024) asserts that qualitative research is an approach that focuses to explore and understand the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of individuals. “[It is an] approach...particularly useful for studying complex issues where context and depth of understanding are key” (p. 87). Again, the primary objective of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the impetus behind engaging in the activity of singing with a particular group of culturally connected persons, and whether questions of value, spirituality, connectedness, personhood, and purpose have any bearing on participation. “Qualitative research...allow[s] for a nuanced exploration of intricate phenomena” (Muhammed, p. 85).

Methodological Approaches

A methodology provides a guide for collecting the requisite data to support the researcher’s inquiry. Methodologies equip the researcher with particular processes to

collect and analyze data. Closely associated with methodology in qualitative research is the concept of theoretical framework, which also has bearing on data collection and analyses. Muhammed (2024) defines theoretical framework [as] a set of broad concepts or principles used to guide your research. These frameworks also serve to link your research to concepts or theories developed by other researchers, which may assist in establishing the legitimacy of the research question. The application of narrative inquiry as a qualitative method yielded a rich body of data.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry provides the framework for the researcher to bear witness to and acknowledgement of the life histories and ongoing experiences of the subjects of the phenomenon. By design, narrative inquiry is collaborative, situational, and ever evolving. Applying the key concepts of narrative inquiry—personal narratives, cultural contexts, and social backgrounds—to this research required an intimate view of lived experience, identity, culture and social context of this particular group of peoples. Williams (n.d.) outlines the concepts of narrative inquiry to include voice, which “pertains to the unique expressions of individuals in their narratives...”, context, and co-construction. “Co-construction highlights the collaborative nature of storytelling, where researchers and participants together shape meaning through dialogue” (Williams, n.d.).

Drawing from the work of Dewey (1938), Clandinin (2013) identifies this as the three-dimensional inquiry space: temporality, sociality, and place—also termed, the commonplaces of narrative inquiry. Attending to the commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place is what differentiates narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin, from

other methodologies (pp. 38-39). Clandinin's (2013) sociality commonplace, relating to this study, can be likened to the concept of collaboration. There is a social aspect to collaborating. One must come together with another, in relationship, to create a desired outcome. Being in relationship implies a connection to a person, a place, a thing. Thinking within the sociality commonplace means that as we endeavor to communicate the 'stuff' that comprises our experiences, we cannot adequately or authentically convey them—in totality, outside of the things with which we are connected. In other words, neither we nor our experiences are severable from our dimensional relationships to time, persons, and places. Additionally, social intangibles such as feelings and emotions, which color our experiences, are equally inseparable. "Narrative inquirers attend both to personal conditions [what I call social intangibles] and, simultaneously, to social conditions" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 40). There is a continual interplay between temporality, sociality, and place embedded within our experiences. Notwithstanding certain nuance, Clandinin (2013) and Williams (n.d.) conceptualization of narrative inquiry are demonstratively parallel. Narrative inquiry is the demonstration and articulation of one's experiential perspective over time, within an environment, and among similarly situated persons. Williams (n.d.) aptly characterizes this as "exploring the complexities of individuals' lives over time."

Narrative inquiry is not particularly a linear process. The researcher embarks upon the journey of gathering information from participants' lived experiences—which may be a chronology—but more often than not participants' experiences are often reflexive and recursive; one experience dovetailing into another or one experience harkening back or

recalling another, providing depth and meaning to the present. Using a narrative framework provides a vehicle for illuminating the complexity of the human condition and offers research participants an opportunity to share themselves authentically, emotionally, and unabashedly; in other words, to tell their personal stories. Clandinin (2013) describes narrative inquiry as a methodology of personal experience (p. 33). Highlighting the social aspects of narrative inquiry, the researcher will find it to be an immersive experience. Essential to this framework is the opportunity to live alongside study participants in an ongoing, continual basis which promotes a collaborative or shared experience. This type of immersion offers the researcher the possibility of gaining embodied knowledge, giving rise to broader understandings of culture and social context. Being immersed in the rehearsal and worship culture of these participants granted access to the intricacies of black church culture, its religious history and musical practices as it relates to singing, the profound affect (rather than effect) of group participation, and to recognize themes as they emerged, as well as social theories at work.

Observation

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that observation is powerful and summarize the following advantages which are germane to interpreting the data corpus. Engaging in observation yields the following benefits:

1. maximizes the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, [and] customs
2. allows the inquirer to see the world as his subjects see it, to live in their time frames, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment.
3. provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively...[I]n a real sense[,] it permits the observer to use *him[or her]self* as a data source (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273).

Outside the context of the study, immersion included observing and participating with this ecclesiastical community of singers for more than twenty years. The experience of prolonged and persistent engagement with several iterations of this music ministry provided insight within the context of narrative inquiry relative to my position as researcher-observer/researcher-participant. One of the characteristics of narrative inquiry is that, during the study of the phenomenon, the researcher enters into the inquiry space in the midst of the participants' lives, becoming part of a shared experience. The researcher co-exists in the ways of living, doing, and being—simultaneously involved in, participating in, and immersed together—over an extended period of time. Engaging in the participants' lives in this manner allows one to experience their world: see as they see, do as they do; being included in the activities of the community. Prolonged engagement, meaning—spending extended periods of time in communion with the phenomenon being studied, affords the researcher the opportunity to glean greater insight and understanding of contextual meanings through first-hand accounts than by other means (Lundy, 2008). As researcher-observer/researcher-participant, the objective was to be as unobtrusive as possible in studying the motivations behind the participants' collective and individual involvement in choral activities. My personal and professional experiences with this community of singers have provided the opportunity to establish a depth of rapport yielding trust and transparency. Because of this longitudinal and prolonged engagement, participants were very comfortable communicating their feelings freely and describing their experiences authentically. My relationship to the subject

matter and with the participants is deeply embedded in my own personal experience, and the data corpus suggests that the study participants share this personal connection.

Researcher Bias

To ensure the integrity of this research, it is important to address the possibility of researcher bias.

Understanding research bias is important for several reasons: first, bias exists in all research, across research designs and is difficult to eliminate; second, bias can occur at each stage of the research process; third, bias impacts on the validity and reliability of study findings and misinterpretation of data can have important consequences for practice (Smith & Noble, 2014, p. 100).

During this study, I was engaged as a participant—directly involved with the activities of the group; either as director or singer, and sometimes in a non-participant role. During these non-participant observations, I assumed the role of either accompanist or ‘informed observer’; meaning, I maintained an awareness of and was attuned to the social milieus and other cues in the setting. As a participant observer and informed observer, I was positioned to be keenly aware of “what is said and what is left unsaid, what is represented and what is assumed...includ[ing] language, tools, documents, images, symbols...[unspoken rules]...Most of these may never be articulated, yet [they] are crucial [aspects of the data]” (Wenger, 1998, p. 47).

Membership and participation in this ecclesiastical community of singers serves as a socio-emotional, socio-cultural plumb line in the tapestry of their lives. Narrative inquiry is about eliciting from life stories the insight, essence, and resonance that accompany our philosophical and cultural expressions and our desire for them to be recognized (Clandinin, 2013, p. 184). It gives attention to nuance. Engaging with the

participants through the lens of narrative inquiry provided the vehicle to “gather personal stories, give voice to marginalized perspectives, and [establish] a deeper connection between researcher and participant” (Williams, n.d.). This methodological design offered sufficient flexibility to explore concepts of lived experience, identity, and cultural expression within a layered social context. The *Why Do They Sing?* participants are situated within the African American cultural community, while being equally immersed in Black church mores. Narrative research design highlights “the unique expressions of [these] individuals, and the environment and circumstance that shape [their experiences]” (Williams, n.d). Narrative inquiries are designed to present evidence pertaining to a particular curiosity. Clandinin (2013) suggests that “each narrative inquiry is composed around a particular wonder (p. 42). Pertaining to this community of singers, “Do they sing because they are happy? Do they sing because they are free?”³⁸ From this curiosity—experiential, reflective, and intellectual—and the desire to validate the complexities of African American culture and its relationship to music and singing particular to an ecclesiastical setting, I asked, “*Why Do They Sing? What motivates this African American Ecclesiastical Community of Singers?*” These curiosities are the imaginative beginnings that Clandinin (2013) suggests all narrative inquiries commence.

³⁸ His Eye Is On the Sparrow, Martin, C.D. & Gabriel, C.H; The New National Baptist Hymnal (1977), p. 204; National Baptist Publishing Board. Nashville, Tennessee.

The Three-Dimensional Inquiry Space

Living Alongside

My relationship with this ecclesiastical community began in 1971 as a youth and continued, in some fashion, as a pew member, becoming active in the life of the church as a youth musician for the Youth Choir, and eventually a choral director/accompanist for the music ministry at large. Many of these participants watched me grow into adulthood and become a respected musician. I walked alongside them, accompanied them, directed them, and experienced joys and sorrows with them. I experienced the loss of two pastors with them. I have an intimate knowledge of this community—collectively and individually—and they with me. I understand more deeply than words convey, when a participant shared that “*Music and singing is life and breath.*” I *know* them and feel them. Because of this symbiotic relationship, I became perplexed when evidence of particular behaviors was sometimes incongruent with this community’s claims—individually and collectively—during the course of a rehearsal or worship experience. Wolcott (1988) posits that “[t]here are unique problems to be faced in doing...research in settings already familiar and where our subjects are *us* rather than *them*” (p. 338). This fueled my curiosity. While the participants’ individual and collective reasonings might’ve been “pure,” they may not have known or understood why they were operating in a particular manner. In studying this phenomenon, I examined my own personal motivations—as it was not just about *them*, but also about *me*. This is their story. This is my story. This is our story.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection methods that governed this study were observation (which include participant observation, non-participant observation, and prolonged/persistent engagement), focus groups (interviews and discussion), and participant reflections (written artifacts).

Researcher-Observation

During this research, I engaged in various levels of observation. Most distinctively, I have observed and participated in this ecclesiastical community of African American singers for more than twenty years via prolonged and persistent engagement through the lens of a youth, adolescent, and adulthood. My position as researcher-observer/researcher-participant contained autobiographical parallels with the participants. One of the characteristics of narrative inquiry is that, during the study of a phenomenon, the researcher enters into the inquiry space in the midst of the participants' lives, becoming part of a shared experience. The researcher and participants co-exist in the ways of living, doing, and being—simultaneously involved in, participating in, and immersed together—over an extended period of time. Engaging in the participants' lives in this manner allows the researcher to experience their world: see as they see, do as they do; included in the activities of the community. Prolonged engagement, meaning—spending extended periods of time in communion with the phenomenon being studied, affords the researcher the opportunity to glean greater insight and understanding of contextual meanings through first-hand accounts rather than other means (Lundy, 2008).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that observation is powerful and summarize the advantages which bear acknowledgement. These points were germane to interpreting the data corpus of this study. Observation yields the following benefits:

- maximizes the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, [and] customs
- allows the inquirer to see the world as his subjects see it, to live in their time frames, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment.
- provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reactions of the group introspectively...[I]n a real sense[,] it permits the observer to use *him[or her]self* as a data source (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273).

Observation can be conducted as a participant or as a non-participant. My role shifted between active participation and observational distance depending on the context. Occupying both roles required an acute awareness of the group dynamic and/or any individual occurrences that influenced the whole. Barton (2004) discovered that narrative inquiry is about interpreting the threads of life woven in the fabric of our daily lives. Within African American ecclesiastical contexts, much of what is known, felt and understood is transmitted relationally and communally—through shared experience. Focus groups provided a dialogic space for participants to articulate the significance of singing with this ecclesiastical community of singers.

Focus Groups

Research-oriented focus groups were first established by Merton et al. A focus group is primarily a small contingent of people, which may or may not have similar backgrounds, brought together to provide feedback on a particular topic. To extract meaningful data for this study, three focus groups were organized.

Focus group discussions include gathering a small group of people to have discussions on specific topics or set of issues. The researcher acts as a facilitator, guiding the discussion while allowing participants to interact with one another. Focus groups are specifically useful for exploring collective views and experiences, identifying common themes, and generating new ideas through group dynamics (Muhammed, 2024, p. 93).

The focus groups were invited to share their perspectives on singing, as well as their personal motivations for participating in church music ministry. The extracted data was “analyzed to identify common themes and patterns, offering profound insights into the subject matter” (Muhammed, 2024, p. 40).

Interviewing

Interviewing is a technique employed in the data collection process. It is used to gather information from the point of view of another. It can be an effective tool for obtaining details about previous events and obscurities we may not otherwise know. There are several ways to conduct interviews. They can be formal or informal, conducted in-person, by phone, by survey, individually or in groups—“most qualitative research interviews are semi-structured...allowing the respondents to be more spontaneous” (Brinkmann, 2008, p. 470). Patton (2002) outlines three basic approaches for the open-ended qualitative interview: (1) the conversational interview, (2) the general interview guide approach, and (3) the standardized open-ended interview. This study employed conversational interviews. It allowed for fluidity and the opportunity for respondents to “express their souls” (Rutter, 2015). This community of singers voluntarily immersed itself, during the rehearsal period, in the learning and performance of sacred music, namely, gospel music. The genre can be described as energetic, emotionally charged, spontaneous, expressive, harmonically and rhythmically complex, and concurrently

personal and communal. It is interactional. It is collaborative. It was not unusual to experience a deep connection to the activity and with the members participating together.

Interviewing the *Why Do They Sing?* participants was essential and integral to the research process. I employed one-on-one and focus group interviewing strategies, asking open-ended questions, throughout the data collection phase of my study. Stake (2010) outlines the importance and necessity of interviewing for the qualitative researcher.

“[T]he main purposes for interviewing are:

1. Obtaining unique information of interpretation held by the person interviewed
2. Collecting a numerical aggregation of information from many persons
3. Finding out about ‘a thing’ that the researchers were unable to observe” (p. 95).

Open-ended questions are inquiries that are framed to elicit complex, detailed responses from the interviewee, with the hope of uncovering rich, usable data.

The Focus Group Interview

Patton (2002) argues that

[t]he focus group...is, first and foremost, an interview. It is not a problem-solving session. It is not a decision-making group. It is not primarily a discussion, though direct interactions among participants often occur. It is an interview. The twist is that, unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group, participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (Patton, 2002, p. 386).

The *Why Do They Sing?* focus groups were designed to be discussions. The intent was to facilitate conversations of and from the heart, prompted by pointed questions to share personal points of view and/or feelings for the purpose of identifying patterns and emergent

themes pertaining to the research. Patton (2002) and Muhammed (2024), respectively, offer the following benefits of focus group data collection:

1. Data collection is cost effective. In one hour, you can gather information from eight people instead of only one, significantly increasing sample size. “Focus group interviews are widely accepted within marketing research because they produce believable results at a reasonable cost” (Krueger, 1994, p. 8; as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 386).
2. Interactions among participants enhance data quality. Participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other, which weeds out false or extreme views (Patton, 2002, p. 386).
3. The extent to which there is a relatively consistent, shared view or great diversity of views can be quickly assessed (Patton, 2002, p. 386).
4. Focus groups tend to be enjoyable to participants, drawing on human tendencies as social animals (Patton, 2002, p. 386).
5. The feedback from focus groups is typically more specific, meaningful, and animated than what can be obtained from individually filled out...questionnaires and surveys (Patton, 2002, p. 388).
6. Help gather rich, detailed information...[and]... offer profound insights into the subject matter (Muhammed, 2024, p. 40).

Four focus groups were organized for the purpose of sharing their perspectives on singing, as well as their personal motivations for participating in church music ministry. These focus groups were developed voluntarily. Members of the music ministry were invited to sign up for one of four focus group sessions. The fourth focus group session met on the cusp of the Covid-19 pandemic. The *Why Do They Sing?* focus groups contained four to five members per group, connected first by their affiliation with the ecclesiastic institution and second through their participation in the choral activities of the institution. The focus group sessions, though intended to gather information through an informal interview process, were designed to feel like roundtable discussions. The focus group participants engaged in free-flowing discussions about their personal feelings about singing, as well as the deeper meanings they attached to the activity.

The conversational interview offer[ed] maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appear[ed] to be appropriate, depending on what emerge[d] from observing a particular setting or from talking with one or more individuals in that setting. Most of the questions [were generated] from the immediate context (Patton, 2002, p. 342).

The interview query to each focus group was initiated by requesting their response to the question, “Why do you sing?” I expected a well thought-out, reflective reply. Some of the participants responded with a phrase from the hymn, *His Eye Is On the Sparrow*³⁹: “I sing because I’m happy...” Given the culture of praise and worship within the African American church, and the vernacular commonly used, that response was part truth and part attempt at humor. It was also a good lesson, one that educators call a “teachable moment.” When framing questions, the interviewer must guide the interviewee’s understanding—not in the sense of leading questions to elicit specific answers to support the assumptions of the interviewer, but to provide clarity and preserve the integrity of the response. To do this, it was necessary to recalibrate the query to include the following open-ended questions during our conversations:

1. Why do you participate in choir/choral singing?
2. Can you describe your first choral/choir experience?
3. How did you become involved with singing?
4. Describe the singing experience. How do you feel when you sing? With other people? Alone?
5. Apart from the spiritual aspects involved with participating in music ministry, what else might you attribute your participation in choral activities to?

What actually transpired from the planned course of action was a lively, engaging discussion with input from all participants which yielded answers to the questions put

³⁹ Martin, C.D. & Gabriel, C.H; *The New National Baptist Hymnal* (1977), p. 204; National Baptist Publishing Board. Nashville, Tennessee.

forth—though not necessarily in the order intended. Exploration and discovery flowed freely and easily, as the participants enthusiastically shared their individual thoughts on the subject and each focus group collectively supported their peers. These conversations took a shape of their own, offering each participant an opportunity to share personal, meaningful experiences within the context of singing and music ministry specific to their affiliation with this community of singers. As facilitator, I was positioned to engage in the conversation through the lens of researcher-participant and informed observer. Pursuant to Williams (n.d.), serving in this role supported gathering personal stories which yielded complex emotional experiences, as well as leverage my longstanding relationship and connection with the participants—which gave rise to openness and honesty, uncovering unexpected information patterns or recurring ideas otherwise known as emergent themes.

Establishing Credibility

Lim (2024) asserts that “credibility is about believability and trust in the data and the researcher’s interpretation, essentially answering the question: Are these findings credible to those who experienced the phenomena?” (p. 222). To ensure that the integrity of the research is maintained, qualitative researchers may employ strategies that support data review over time and through variegated processes. Verification of the data corpus collected during my research included triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing. Implementing these techniques served to establish authenticity and to guard against any biases, inherent or unintentional.

Researcher Bias

To protect the integrity of this research, it is important to address the possibility of researcher bias.

Understanding research bias is important for several reasons: first, bias exists in all research, across research designs and is difficult to eliminate; second, bias can occur at each stage of the research process; third, bias impacts on the validity and reliability of study findings and misinterpretation of data can have important consequences for practice (Smith & Noble, 2014, p. 100).

During the study, I was engaged as a participant—directly involved with the activities of the group; either as director or singer, and sometimes in a non-participant role. During these non-participant observations, I assumed the role of either accompanist or ‘informed observer’; meaning, I maintained an awareness of and was attuned to the social milieus and other cues in the setting. As a participant observer and informed observer, I was positioned to be keenly aware of “what is said and what is left unsaid, what is represented and what is assumed...includ[ing] language, tools, documents, images, symbols...[unspoken rules]...Most of these may never be articulated, yet [they] are crucial [aspects of the data]” (Wenger, 1998, p. 47).

Triangulation

Triangulation provides many invaluable purposes: to expose weaknesses in arguments and/or evidence, shore up credibility, flesh out inconsistencies, illuminate the existence or possibilities of multiple meanings, and identify complexities that might have been overlooked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin, 1978; Stake, 2010).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985),

the term “triangulation” [likely] had its origins in the metaphor of *radio* triangulation, that is, determining the point of origin of a radio broadcast by using

directional antennas set up at the two ends of a known baseline. By measuring the angle at which each of the antennas receives the most powerful signal, a triangle can be erected and solved, using simple geometry, to pinpoint the source at the vertex of the triangle opposite the baseline (p. 305).

Triangulation corroborates your data and strengthens the integrity of your information by taking it through a series of proofs or verification processes. Creswell and Miller (2000) use the term convergence when defining triangulation, suggesting the application of multiple strategies or sources to improve plausibility for the inquiry audience. It can confirm findings/interpretations, and operate to identify where more examination is necessary, or expose unusual occurrences.

Stake (2010) suggests that

as you design your study, as you gather data, as you interpret what works, and as you explain to others what you are finding, you need a disposition to doubt. You need to suppose that you are not getting the meaning straight and need to dig deeper” (p. 54).

Triangulating the data from *Why Do They Sing?* required analyzing the emergent themes from the autobiographical accounts, narratives, interviews, and artifacts; clarifying meanings using, but not limited to, member checks and revisiting individual stories—as additional information and/or themes arose out of recollections triggered from memory boxes, particular episodes past, or the current choral activities. My objective for using these strategies was to ensure that ‘the evidence is good’ [and] that the ‘data is believable’ (Stake, p. 123 as cited in Webb et al., 1966, p. 6).

Member Checks

Member checking is the process of cross-checking data captured by the researcher with the participants’ actual representations.

Member checking is both informal and formal, and it occurs continuously. Many opportunities for member checks arise daily in the course of the investigation. A summary of an interview can be “played back” to the person who provided it for reaction...[or]insights gleaned from one group can be tested with another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 214).

Since personal narratives and interviews figure prominently in the data collection process of this study, establishing credibility through member checks was particularly useful.

Respondents’ narrative accounts, focus group data, and interview transcripts of focus group discussions for the purpose of authentication and accuracy were revisited with the participants.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is the process of presenting your work product, in all its forms, for critical review by a disinterested peer. The objective of peer debriefing, in short, is to maintain the integrity of the findings, coax out any themes that may have been overlooked or undeveloped, ask for further explication where needed, and point out any biases that may present themselves. “It is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit with the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Because peer debriefing is external to the inquiry process, the debriefer, who should be knowledgeable about the particulars, can offer a fresh set of eyes to assist the researcher in providing a trustworthy report. A colleague within the African American religious community who also served in music ministry, familiar with the study setting and music ministry authenticated the integrity of this research.

Having established methodological processes, Chapter 4 presents the thematic analysis of the data corpus through examination of participant narratives and the meaning attributed to singing within an ecclesiastical environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the narrative inquiry exploring what motivates members of an ecclesiastical community to sing and participate in cultural choral music-making traditions. While the preceding chapters established the historical, cultural, and theoretical grounding of the Black church traditions, this chapter examines the experiences of the participants whose lives animate those traditions. Their narratives reveal the complex interplay of spirituality, culture, community, identity formation, and personal meaning that shape their commitment to singing within this ecclesiastical environment.

Narrative inquiry is well suited to this study because it addresses the depth, emotion, and contextual richness embedded in the participants' experiences. Rather than dismissing motivations for singing as something superfluous, narrative inquiry illuminates their stories and allows them to unfold organically in ways that recognize transformational moments, spiritual encounters, musical origins, and relationships that ground their engagement. The narrative framework supports and reflects the holistic nature of singing related to the 'black church' experience.

The themes presented in this chapter represent the individual and collective meanings that emerged from the data corpus. They reflect varied motivations for choral ensemble participation, including the role that music and singing plays in their spiritual

and emotional lives, the significance of singing in the choir related to cultural continuity and identity, spiritual formation and responsibility, and communal belonging.

Emergent Themes

Qualitative inquiry demands meticulous attention to language and images, and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience (Saldaña, 2016, p. 11). The focus group conversational interviews provided a wealth of data and insight into the participants' motivations for participation in the choral activities of the ecclesiastical institution they attend. The data was derived through authentic conversations and comfortability of the participants to be transparent and vulnerable regarding their personal experiences. These discoveries emerged from conversation, observation, rehearsal, and worship activity. The participants' motivations were embedded in the traditions that shaped them—from early childhood exposure to ecclesiastical singing, to the intergenerational transmission of values, to the communal expectations surrounding worship leadership, service, and excellence. Their narratives shed light on how personal and collective motivations intertwine, giving rise to a shared sense of purpose.

Recurrent themes were developed into the concepts and categories that follow. High level recurrent themes from the focus group sessions were broadly identified and coded in my research data as love, spirituality, a means of expression, duty and obligation, joy and happiness, generational and family ties, and sense of belonging. Motivations for participating in the choral activities of the church were frequently expressed.

The analysis process included iterative cycles of coding, meaning-making, and recalling or reconstructing participant stories. The first cycle of coding focused on identifying key narratives within each participant's expression; recounting origin stories, specific turning points, emotional utterances, spiritual insights, as well as intergenerational musical lineages. These codes were then filtered through a second cycle, which presented the emergence of thematic categories across participants' narratives. During this process, I reflected on the data through an interpretive lens informed by socio-emotional, socio-cultural, and socio-psychological constructs and theories. The analysis was also undertaken with the understanding that singing for this ecclesiastical community is more than just a musical activity. It is a ritual practice embedded in an historical and cultural ecosystem. Analysis of the data corpus revealed a wide range of motivations for singing that, while distinct in expression, demonstrated meaningful conceptual overlap and relational coherence. Rather than presenting these emergent themes as isolated categories, they were organized into broader thematic clusters to reflect how participants experienced and articulated their motivations for singing as layered, interconnected, and often simultaneous. Clustering allowed related themes to be examined collectively, highlighting shared meanings while preserving participants' voices, individually and collectively. This approach provides a more holistic understanding of how motivations for singing operate within spiritual, emotional, social, and cultural contexts. The resulting themes represent constellations of meaning rather than linear determinants of motivation.

Theme 1: Singing as a Sacred Calling and Spiritual Responsibility

The first theme reflects a sacred orientation toward singing, which encompasses multiple strands of meaning which include singing for God/spirituality, inspiration to others/ministering to God's people, a calling, and a sense of duty or spiritual responsibility to God. Focus group participants consistently described singing as a spiritually grounded act rooted in devotion, purpose, and responsiveness to God. Singing was framed not only as musical participation, but as a form of ministry—an offering intended to glorify God and serve the spiritual needs of the ecclesiastical community they serve. This understanding aligns with African American worship traditions in which singing operates as an embodied practice of one's faith, devotion, and communal responsibility through collective participation (Costen, 2004, pp. 97-98). Also embedded within this sacred/spiritual orientation, participants expressed a sense of duty, articulated as a spiritual responsibility rather than an imposed obligation. This sense of duty reflected faithfulness to God and attentiveness to one's calling. Others described singing as an act of devotion, a spiritual discipline, or means of encountering the presence of God.

Participants commented,

It's all about glorifying God and the way we do that is by serving His people. And that's always been my philosophy. In order to serve God, I have to serve His people.

I've always been a firm believer that music destroys the enemy, it breaks the chains of the enemy....singing in the choir at NPMBC is like breaking chains.

Singing is a form of prayer and spiritual connection. I love singing and talking to the Lord and telling the Lord all about it, you know.

I feel it's my obligation to raise my voice and praise the Lord.

The aspect of spirituality played an important role in shaping why participants chose to sing and remain engaged in ecclesiastical music-making. Their narratives underscore the cultural importance of the Black church and its traditions. For this community, singing functions as a vehicle for their faith, expressions of praise and thanksgiving, and a conduit for the affective experience of worship. It is also an active, aural representation of the theological underpinnings of African American Christians' faith: one of hope, survival, and deliverance—and grounds their identity, sacred or otherwise. Singing, in this sense, functioned as both spiritual expression, responsibility, and service.

Theme 2: Singing as Emotional Sustenance and Release

The second theme reflects the affective dimensions of participants' motivation for singing, emphasizing joy, emotional uplift, and emotional regulation. This theme highlights how participants experienced singing as emotional and psychological support. Across the contexts of participation, singing was consistently described as an activity that provided a positive affect and alleviated emotional strain. For many of the participants, singing in the choir offered space for emotional and personal expression. Their narratives reveal singing as a way to articulate deeper emotions that can only be demonstrated through song. These expressions included but were not limited to joy, sadness, resilience, and testimony. Singing becomes a vehicle for processing life events and experiences—which aligns with African American cultural mores and ancestral and ecclesiastical worship traditions. Cone (1999) asserts that

[this form of expression] is a series of recitals of what God has done to bring the people out of “hurt, harm, and danger.” Through sermon, song, prayer and

testimony, the people tell their story of “how they got over” (as cited by Abbington, 2014, p. 133).

Participants shared that,

Singing gives me inner peace...it reaches some places that...some things and people can't reach.

Singing is a way to process stress and maintain positivity.

I can express—anything through music...that's what music does for me...you know, happiness, sadness, whatever it is. I just use music as a way of...taking all the pressures of life away. It can just dissolve anything.

These characterizations of relief emphasize singing as a form of emotional release and regulation. Participants also expressed feelings of joy and happiness:

I come [to choir rehearsal] because it first gives me joy. And, secondly, I love to sing.

Singing makes me happy, just in general...working with the [children's choir] makes me happy.

It just makes me happy. It is something that I have always been attracted to...whenever I needed my spirits lifted.

My heart is happy when I sing.

The data suggests that joy was not incidental, but a regular and consistent emotional by-product associated with participation in singing. Research on choral participation similarly indicates that collective or ensemble singing can support emotional regulation, reduce stress, and contribute to sustained feelings of joy and well-being among participants. In these narrative accounts, singing served as a means through which the community of singers' emotional well-being was supported. These experiences within

the context of ensemble participation were often described as emotionally immersive, creating space for both individual expression and collective engagement. These affective environments have the potential to intensify one's emotional experience and, thereby, have considerable influence as an originating source of motivation. Affective experiences were not confined to worship settings alone. Focus group participants also described experiencing emotional uplift during choir rehearsals. Although rehearsals were structured around preparation for worship services, participants recognized that the act of singing together could result in an emotional experience, either individually or collectively. One participant described noted:

Music is like the anecdote to anything that is troubling me. I can always find resolve in it. But, the singing...it relieves stress. It brings me happiness. It's a way of expressing myself. I can express anything—happiness, sadness, whatever it is. I just use music and singing as a way of taking all the pressures of life away. It can dissolve anything.

Participants' descriptions of shared engagement suggested moments where rehearsal extended beyond preparation and evolved into an affective worship experience. This can be a common occurrence in black church music ministry contexts. This does not suggest that rehearsal was redefined as worship, but rather that affective and spiritual dimensions of collective singing sometimes blurred the boundaries between preparation and worship. Within African American theological contexts, the atmosphere of praise and worship is always present where two or three are gathered.⁴⁰ These shifts can emerge organically through sustained musical engagement rather than through intentional liturgical planning or positioning. Across both worship engagement and rehearsal

⁴⁰ Matthew 18:20 King James Version

participation contexts, affective experiences were not articulated as the primary reason participants chose to sing. However, the emotional energy and resultant residue present in these immersive experiences served as a platform to reinforce continued engagement, participation, and commitment. This cluster reflects the affective benefit and emotional regulation attributed to collective participation in choral activities. Singing offered participants access to emotional states that support resiliency and well-being. The affective nature of music and singing within a worship experience, whether intentionally positioned as a liturgical service or an organically evolved interpolation in a rehearsal setting, stabilizes individual commitment and deepened this community of singers' overall connection to singing.

Theme 3: Singing as Expression of Self and Identity

Participants' narratives identified singing in the church choir as a meaningful expression of self and identity grounded in collective belonging. Beyond individual affective experiences or personal calling, participants consistently described choir participation as a space of relational connection, shared purpose, and communal affirmation. For these ecclesiastical vocalists, singing was not merely an individual musical act, but a way of expressing themselves within a larger social and spiritual body. Several participants described choir participation as a means of being part of something greater than themselves. Being members of the choir offers identity and space to feel known, supported, and valued. This reinforces a sense of belonging which is rooted in shared emotional experience and musical practice. This sense of belonging extended beyond rehearsal or performance contexts and was often described as an enduring

relational bond within the church community. This was a consistent theme across participants' narratives and participation activity. Most music ministry vocalists described the choir as a family, a safe place, or a home within the larger church community. This sense of belonging was nurtured through shared experiences, mutual support, emotional connections, and collective engagement in choral activity and the pursuit of musical excellence and spiritual responsibility. The participants' sense of belonging was reinforced by regular, ongoing, exposure to one another, through immersion in a group activity where each member of the group was socially and emotionally invested in the collective ensemble as well as its individual members.

Participants remarked:

There's camaraderie. It's camaraderie.

I think all of the men...like what we're doing because they see the camaraderie, but they also see that we're learning—learning more about what God wants us to do.

Just being...fellowshipping with...a group of people who have the same mindset. Just the fellowship...coming and just socializing, talking, sharing ideas, sharing information...

The rehearsals...there's singing, but there's also this—ongoing kinda fellowship type of thing, during the rehearsal process...

The choir is really my extended family...just like when I would do announcements and I would say, 'I love you all'—I really sincerely mean it. ...Even our special choir members... 'I love you, too!' ...But, that-the choir has...ha-has—is really my extended family...I love [NPMBC]. ...I still—when I come in-in the door—you know, I still feel the love. And so, I can't imagine myself being any place else...It's not-it's not routine. It's a need. At this point—you know...just...It's your life. It's an extension of your life.

Elliot and Silvermann (2015) assert that “as persons, we have an innate desire to ...achieve human flourishing, happiness, fellowship, meaningfulness, and self-knowledge” (Elliot and Silvermann, 2015, p. 360). The data corpus would suggest that the choral environment, and more specifically, the ecclesiastical choral community provides the socio-cultural, socio-emotional environment that promotes a profound sense of belonging. Participants remarked:

Just being with a group of people who have the same mindset, coming and just socializing, talking, sharing ideas, sharing information is wonderful.

It is important to me to be around a supportive group of ladies that will nurture me along.

You all are REALLY, LITERALLY my family. You know how people say, “my church family”? You all are my family.

These participant descriptions reflect African American ecclesiastical traditions in which identity is shaped through shared participation, long-term involvement, and relational connection within the church community. Within these contexts, the black church has historically functioned not only as a religious institution but also as a central socio-cultural space. As such, the choir often operates as a microcosm or micro-community where affirmation, accountability, and shared responsibility to the music are experienced through ongoing participation. Individual participants described singing as meaningful when seen through the lens of ensemble participation rather than singing alone. Singing with others created a shared sonic-spiritual experience in which was distributed across the group. This collective experience appeared to reduce performance

anxiety and foster confidence, as participants contributed to a unified whole as opposed to being relegated to a supporting role in an individual's experience. They shared:

When I was in the sixth grade, I tried out for the choir and had a very bad experience because I got stage fright. When I opened my mouth, nothing came out. I've learned to manage my anxiety over the years, learning the techniques. I'm not afraid to sing now.

Choir members will encourage and support one another during the course of the rehearsal period. This encouragement and support could be in the form of a smile, leaning in to sing together and/or standing together.

For many participants, long-term involvement in the choir provided stability through life transitions, serving as a relational and spiritual anchor during periods of personal change. Several focus group participants shared personal stories of life transitions. One particularly poignant reflection shared how music, singing, and the support of the choir and larger ecclesiastical community carried them through the uncertainty of surviving cancer. The participant shared:

*I had gone through my cancer journey and while in the hospital, Hezekiah Walker's song, *I Need You to Survive*⁴¹ ...I would just sit there and sing that. I said, I know what I have to do, Lord. I have to join the choir. I think there is someone out there—just by looking at me, will feel inspired. I am going to draw people to you through music. And I promise You, I will praise You with all of my heart if You get me through this process. And, wow, it's the best thing that's ever happened to me.*

Additional narratives further suggested that choir participation functioned as a cohesive unit rather than a collection of individual members. Descriptions emphasizing mutual reliance, and collective purpose indicate the presence of what may be interpreted as we-units—social formations in which individuals experience themselves as part of an

⁴¹ Walker, H. (1992). *I Need You to Survive* [Song]. On *Focus on Glory*. Benson Music Group.

interdependent whole. Within this structure, identity was articulated through collective language, i.e. ‘the alto department’, reinforcing the idea that meaning and belonging emerged at the group level. This group orientation seemed to deepen participants’ emotional investment in choir participation. Several narratives reflected sustained engagement and strong emotional ties to the choir. This breadth of commitment seemed to be socially and spiritually grounded, reinforced by the ritual experiences such as rehearsals, worship services, and other church-based activities. These regular and consistent gatherings created opportunities for shared focus, emotional alignment, and group boundaries, i.e., participation in voice sections. These interactions appeared to generate emotional energy and strengthen participants’ identification with the ensemble, creating shared emotional responses that appeared to spread across the group, contributing to collective cohesion.

All things considered, this theme illustrates singing as an expression of self that is formed, experienced, and sustained within collective identity. Choir participation demonstrates not only a community of musical practice, but also a cultural-spiritual significant space where participants experienced belonging, affirmation, and shared purpose through embodied, communal engagement.

Theme 4: Singing through Social Invitation and Influence

Participation in choral activities was most often initiated through social invitation and relational influence within this ecclesiastical community. For many participants, engagement in singing emerged through encouragement extended by peers, friends, choir members, or music leaders who recognized potential. These invitations served as a portal

through which participants were drawn into the musical life of the congregation. Some participants recalled being invited to sing after being heard singing informally or gradually influenced through regular and consistent exposure to the music ministry's role in worship. In several narrative accounts, proximity to the choir—whether through attending worship services, observing rehearsals, or listening to others minister through song—cultivated a curiosity and interest that eventually led to participation. Participation in communal practices is often facilitated through relational access and social engagement, as individuals become involved through observation, invitation, and gradual participation (Wenger, 1998). The attraction to singing may have been attributed to the emotional energy witnessed or experienced during ritual activities. Participants recalled their entry into the music ministry:

Betty asked me. She said, "Why don't you join the choir? Come and join the choir." And she was, like, insistent. And I said okay, I'll think about it.

Yeah, my ex-husband was encouraging, but I was going to join anyway.

A friend of mine—her parents went to a very small, little Baptist church. They encouraged me to come. She was probably my biggest champion.

I was invited to sing, invited to prayer meeting.

Michelle wanted me to come hear her choir. She wanted me to listen and the choir director invited me to sing. He said, "Well, come on!"

By these accounts, participation was mediated through interpersonal affirmation, recognition, and invitation. Social influence operated through encouragement, modeling, and access. Witnessing others sing and experience the centrality of music in ecclesiastical environments shaped some participants' perception of singing as something they could—

and perhaps should—do within the body of their congregation. This theme highlights how communal openness and interpersonal relationships can initiate engagement in ecclesiastical music-making.

Theme 5: Singing as Inherited Practice and Formative Legacy

Several participants described singing as an activity embedded within their early family life experiences. It was not necessarily formally introduced through music classes or private lessons, but rather experienced within the rhythms of home life, community, and worship. Participants spoke of singing as something they were “raised in,” “grew up doing,” or had “always been around.” Participant shared:

Part of the reason I’m singing today is because I learned when my mother used to take us to Sunday School—but, we were also singing in school and then in church.

I always loved to sing. I was inspired by the choir at my church, ‘cause we used to go to church almost every day.

Singing, for these participants, functioned as a form of expression woven into everyday life, affirming Lincoln and Mamiya’s (1990) assertion of the church being “the cultural womb of the [African American] community” (p. 8). Within this context, singing operated as an inherited practice—transmitted intergenerationally through observation, imitation, and communal participation rather than formal instruction. Participants’ narratives revealed that singing often happened relationally, shaped by proximity to parents, siblings, church members, and particularly effervescent vocalists. Participants recalled,

My dad was a quartet singer; my mother sang in the choir. We also had a group called The Smith Junior Four. It was my two brothers, my sister, and me.

Singing runs in the family. Although, my kids are a lot more talented than me!

My brothers created a little group with Aretha Franklin's kids.

I started singing by listening to my mother and my aunts and older cousins singing in the choir.

These early encounters positioned singing as a communal norm. It became intertwined with familial memory and formative experiences. The formative nature of these early experiences contributed to the internalization of singing as an aspect of personhood and self-identity. Because singing was introduced within these familial and ecclesial contexts, the meaning it carries can be associated with belonging, continuity, and legacy. Participants' narratives suggest that singing was culturally situated, tied to ecclesial and communal involvement. Additionally, these early experiences were directly connected to a heightened interest in musical activity and ultimately resulted in ensemble participation within an ecclesiastical environment. Through repeated exposure over time, singing became embedded in participants' understanding of what it meant to be present, faithful, and engaged within the church community.

The focus group participants did not specifically describe a point of realization concerning their decisions to sing. The motivation was framed as something already in motion, inherited through formative and/or intergenerational experiences or immersive ecclesiastical activities. This illuminates the role of the African American ecclesiastical community as a formative ecosystem where musical participation is normalized and sustained across generations. Within this ecosystem, singing—as well as other attributes

or skills—functions as both cultural inheritance and lived tradition, carrying forward shared values, spiritual meanings, and communal ways of being.

Theme 6: Singing as Status, Validation, and Social Capital

The focus group participants' engagement in singing extended beyond early formation and inherited practice. Their collective narratives revealed that singing also functioned as a form of recognition, affirmation, and social meaning within the church and the broader African American communal context. While the church served as a central space for these experiences, the meanings participants attached to singing reflected cultural norms and values that extended beyond the church and into their everyday existence. Singing was not only experienced as musical participation, but as a visible contribution to communal life—one that carried social significance, relational meaning, and symbolic value to them individually. A few participants described choir membership and vocal participation as conferring a particular form of status. One participant commented from the perspective of the ego:

I like the accolades. I like the oohs and ahhs when I do things. I wanted to show off how well I could do.

People around me said, "Boy, you should be up in the choir."

I feel kinda special.

Another participant ruminated on the social standing associated with singing in the choir and its contribution to the worship environment.

It's prestige, you know, everybody else is sounding good. And, you're up there smiling and singing. [People] want to be a part of that.

Another participant shared:

I knew right away that I wanted to be a singer or an entertainer. So, upon graduating from high school—I was supposed to go to Valley State College, but I went to New York because my sister was there. And all I could hear about was the Apollo Theatre.

These reflections signal how standing may be perceived within the ecclesiastical community. Those that possess exceptional vocal ability and acumen are often revered and afforded a high level of respect, which also aligns with broader African American cultural norms.

Validation emerged through both formal and informal means. Participants spoke of affirmation received through encouragement from leaders, compliments from peers, and responsive engagement from congregants. Applause, verbal affirmation, call-and-response gestures, and embodied reactions—such as nodding, excited utterances, or visible emotional responses—served as culturally familiar signals of approval and recognition. These forms of validation reflect African American communicative norms, within the ecclesiastical environment, where meaning is conveyed through collective response and shared emotional attunement.

Singing also operated as a form of cultural capital within African American communities more broadly. Musical ability, stylistic fluency, and expressive authenticity were recognized forms of knowledge that carried social weight. Participants discussed how their perceptions of the more capable and/or expressive vocalists within the music ministry affected their approach to singing and how they valued the more capable vocalists' abilities within and beyond the church setting. In this regard, singing

functioned as a social marker of one's competence and identity across multiple communal and cultural contexts.

Participant validation emerged through communal acknowledgment, appreciation, and relational exchange. Singing with this community created a pathway through which participants were seen and affirmed, further reinforcing social bonds.

Theme 7: Singing as an Act of Love and Devotion

Beyond inherited practice and communal validation, singing is a deeply personal activity, rooted in affection, joy, and devotion. For the focus group participants, singing was referred to not only as something they did in worshipful response, for recognition, or spiritual responsibility, but as something they simply loved to do. They spoke of singing as life-giving, restorative, and emotionally fulfilling, using language that suggested singing was inseparable from their sense of well-being, joy, and inner peace.

Participants described singing as a source of joy, happiness, and enjoyment. It offered an avenue to express feelings that were difficult to articulate, providing relief from stress, grief, and the demands of daily life. They recalled that singing served as a form of comfort and refuge, especially during moments of personal hardship or uncertainty. Participants shared that singing was a source of strength, grounding, and emotional support. Comments included:

I'll come to rehearsal when I'm miserable and I feel better. It will lift me up...it just lifts you up!

Singing gives me inner peace and comfort. I've been singing since I was a child and I remember some challenges, some devastating things that have happened [to me]and singing is what kept me going and brought me out of it.

I find it very comforting. It helps calm my spirit.

I do feel a sense of enjoyment when I'm singing and feel we are doing a good job.

I love to sing. It's a part of my life. It makes me feel good and it makes others feel good.

These narratives place singing as an affective activity through which the participants experienced pleasure, release, and emotional renewal, as well as providing an emotional anchor when certain aspects of life became unsteady. Research on choral participation similarly characterizes singing as an activity that “empowers, enthralls, and enriches” participants, supporting joy, emotional well-being, and sustained engagement over time (Batt-Rawden & Andersen, 2011). In this way, singing functioned as a stabilizing practice, offering emotional regulation across both ordinary daily routines and moments of personal challenge. Moreover, participants framed their love for singing as intrinsically motivated rather than performative. The activity of singing was not a means to an end, but as something done for the sheer enjoyment of it, including personal fulfillment. One of the focus group participants simply stated, “*I love it. I just love it!*”

This intrinsic orientation distinguishes singing from other forms of participation driven by obligation or external reward. The love for singing appeared to be woven into participants’ identities. They articulated their love for singing in conjunction with devotion as expressed through worship. Singing provided a meaningful way to show gratitude and commitment to God. Their contribution through choral participation allowed participants to align personal enjoyment with spiritual duty. Within African American cultural and ecclesiastical traditions, joy, expressiveness, and embodied engagement are understood as authentic expressions of devotion and/or praise and

worship. Through singing, participants expressed and experienced devotion as joyful, participatory, flowing out from communal connection.

Across the preceding themes, participants' engagement in singing was motivated by a constellation of influences, including but not limited to sacred calling and spiritual responsibility, affective sustenance, communal belonging, social invitation, and formative legacy. Viewed through the lens of intersecting dimensions, singing emerges not only as an activity shaped by obligation, recognition, or tradition, but also as an enduring act of love and devotion that supports long-term participation. The following chapter builds on these thematic suppositions highlighting this community of singers' leanings toward choral activity.

CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the analysis by addressing the question guiding this study: Why do members of an African American ecclesiastical community sing? In Chapter 4, I described the thematic patterns that emerged from participants' narratives; the present chapter moves beyond description to examine how these themes function together to illuminate the nature of motivation. This discussion is grounded in the understanding that motivation, as it emerged in this study, is not a singular, discrete, or individual phenomenon, but an integrated and culturally embedded orientation shaped through African American ecclesiastical life. Within this context, rather than treating motivation for singing as a set of several factors or instrumental reasons for participation, the impetus for singing will be discussed through the lens of the participants, as members of a historically and culturally situated people, and as spiritual beings. Particular attention is given to the ways in which affective experience, collective identity, social invitation, inherited practice, validation, and love of singing operate within this community of singers. The participants' motivations emerged as culturally embedded, spiritually grounded, communal practices, and affective experiences that have been carried forward from the invisible church through contemporary Black church contexts. Through this lens, motivation is understood as a dynamic process reinforced by ritual interaction, emotional synchrony, and communal meaning-making. This discussion addresses the

formative and cultural conditions through which singing emerged as a meaningful and compelling practice rather than focusing on the persistence or maintenance of choir participation. Examination is given to how participants came to sing—why singing resonates with them as necessary and desirable in the first place. Each theme considers the motivational forces that oriented participants toward singing prior to sustained involvement, illuminating how spiritual, cultural, relational, and social processes shaped the initial impetus to sing.

To support this holistic interpretation, the conceptual model presented below synthesizes how motivation to sing operates within this specific community of ecclesiastical singers (see Figure 2). This model reflects their motivations to sing as emergent themes born out of the participants' lived experience. While each theme is discussed individually, participants experienced their motivations to sing as interconnected and inseparable, with personhood and identity forming the foundation of motivation, collective participation and belonging functioning as mediating conditions, resulting in outcomes such as joy, affirmation, and well-being as benefits of choral ensemble engagement within an African American ecclesiastical context. The themes have been reorganized in this chapter, reordered and renumbered, to present a cleaner examination of how individual, communal, cultural and socio-emotional processes operate together revealing the impetus behind this community of singers ensemble engagement.

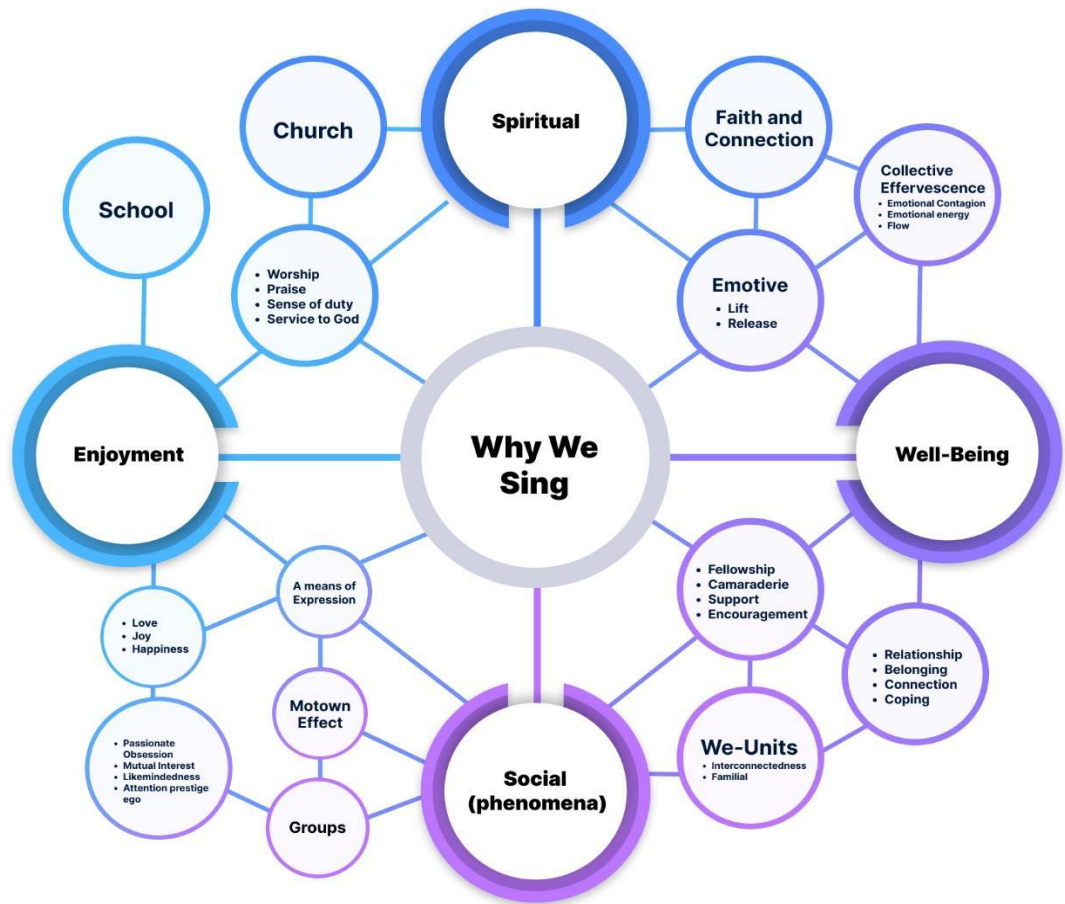


Figure 3. *Conceptual Model of Motivation for African American Ecclesiastical Ensemble Singing*

In the following discussion of the emergent themes, I will present an integrated synthesis addressing why this group of ecclesiastical singers engage in choral activities across themes. During the analysis process described in Chapter 4, themes were presented in the order in which they emerged from the data corpus. The discussion in this chapter reorders the themes to foreground conceptual relationships and analytic coherence. This organization allows the discussion to move from participants' sacred orientation and internalized calling, through inherited and communal influences, toward broader affective, social, and motivational processes that shape their engagement in ecclesiastical

choral activities. The thematic restructuring does not alter the substance of the findings but facilitates a clearer examination of how individual, communal, cultural, and socio-emotional factors operate together to explain why this African American ecclesiastical community of singers is motivated to sing. This provides the foundation from which the motivational ecosystem emerges.

Relational Structures the Motivational Ecology

The participants' motivations were grounded fundamentally in a sacred orientation that emerged from a sense of calling, responsibility, or spiritual alignment. Engaging in choral activity within the context of the church functioned as an expression of individual personhood and spiritual identity embedded within African American cultural mores related to the role of the black church in the African American community. This sacred orientation reflects a theological and cultural worldview in which singing is understood as service rather than performance and as response to the Divine. African American church traditions position worship, including singing for the participants, as a form of spiritual stewardship and communal responsibility, situating participation within a framework of faith, obedience, and collective identity (Costen, 2004; Cone, 1999, as cited in Abbington, 2014). Motivation, therefore, emerged as an ontological orientation rooted in how participants understood their relationship to God, community, and tradition.

Participants' narratives suggest that this orientation is supported through immersion in ecclesiastical life. Exposure to worship practices and traditions, communal singing, and expressions of faith contributed to an internalized understanding of singing

as spiritually necessary and meaningful. Therefore, motivation to sing was something already present—inherited through collective memory and intergenerational practice (Wenger, 1998). Within this sacred framework, affective expression signaled confirmation of alignment between spiritual orientation and communal practice. Emotional and embodied experiences associated with singing reinforced participants' sense of calling and deepened their engagement. This illustrated how affect operates within collective worship or rehearsal experiences as a regenerative activity rather than as an independent motivator (Batt-Rawden & Andersen, 2011). Singing is positioned as an expression of who participants understand themselves to be in relation to faith, community, and tradition.

Theological and Cultural Foundations

This study sought to understand why members of a specific African American ecclesiastical community sing—what activates their impulse to express themselves through singing and what gives singing meaning. The data indicates that the impetus to sing originates in a deeply rooted sacred and expressive orientation. It emerges as calling, compulsion, testimony, and embodied faith; and experienced as internal conviction rather than externally generated motivation. Participants described singing as a means of articulating their faith, lived experience, gratitude, and spiritual witness. Within African American ecclesiastical traditions, music and singing operates as proclamation, exhortation, embodied theology, and spiritual formation (Abbington, 2001; Costen, 1993; Mamiya, 2006). Singing is understood as sacred responsibility directed toward God in service to community. Sacred orientation establishes meaning at the level of identity. The

impulse to sing is intertwined with personal faith practice. This orientation is historically situated. Motivations for ensemble singing were cultivated and assimilated through family life and church culture. Engagement in choral activities was normalized long before conscious reflection. It was a way of being. For this African American ecclesiastical community, music and singing functions, intergenerationally, as both spiritual expression and cultural transmission (Costen, 1993; Raboteau, 2001). Singing reflects cultural heritage, familial lineage, communal memory, and inherited worship patterns.

Ritual Energy, Affirmation, Social Cohesion, and Sustained Engagement

While the impetus to sing originates internally, it is intensified and sustained within the dialogic ritual environment of worship. In African American ecclesiastical contexts, worship unfolds as a reciprocal, communicative exchange rather than performance. Call-and-response, vocal affirmation, physical movement, entrainment, and visible emotional response create a shared field of meaning (Small, 1998; Turino, 2008). Involvement in choral activities operate within this participatory dialogic structure, where expression is offered, received, and returned in real time.

The experiences described by focus group participants were consistent with collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912/1995; Collins, 2004). The musical intensity shared within the worship setting generated synchronized communal energy extending beyond individual emotion. Participants reported experiences of deep immersion, heightened focus, and absorption during these affective contexts. Communal surge and immersive concentration facilitated amplified engagement within the ritual moment.

These elements aligned with the characteristics of flow in artistic engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Reciprocity emerged as a defining dimension of this exchange. Participants described perceiving burdens easing, hope strengthening, and faith deepening while singing. Engagement was reinforced through the awareness that their singing contributed meaningfully to the spiritual and emotional life of the congregation as well as themselves. Historically, within the black church, musical excellence is valued for its capacity to activate the worship experience, evoke a spiritual response, and sustain affective connection. This recognition reflects a longstanding cultural understanding of the ministerial efficacy of music. The affective experience may extend beyond a particular musical moment. Participants described lingering spiritual renewal, emotional steadiness, and intensified relational closeness following rehearsals and services. This affective residue aligns with theories of emotional energy in ritual interaction (Collins, 2004).

Participants also described the emergence of what may be understood as “we-units”—relational bonds forged through shared musical and spiritual experience. Within this community of singers, these connections extended beyond rehearsal and worship environments, continuing in personal relationships and mutual support outside the formal liturgical space. The ensemble singing experience contributed to social cohesion that continued beyond these ritual activities. Their shared calling and shared energy reinforced durable interpersonal connections. Expressive stimuli—music and singing—and communal activity operate in continuous interaction. The motivation to sing is

therefore sustained through ritual energy, dialogic affirmation, ministerial reciprocity, affective renewal, and social cohesion.

The Motown Effect

Though not mentioned in Chapter 4, an interesting outcome of this study was, what I have coined as, the Motown Effect. Several participants referenced growing up in close proximity to Detroit artists, forming groups that emulated nationally recognized performers such as the Supremes and the Temptations, and imagining themselves on stages long before opportunities for ecclesiastical engagement with this community of singers emerged. One participant reflected,

We had this empty field next door to us. I used to go stand on the pile of dirt and sing. That was my stage.

Narratives like this illustrate motivation as an internal locus of causality shaped within the broader cultural environment. While participants did not explicitly name “Motown” as a formal influence in their interviews, their recollections consistently reflected awareness of Detroit’s sacred-to-secular musical continuum and its presence within their neighborhoods, churches, and relational networks.

The Motown Effect is a proximity-based motivational dynamic in which geographic, relational, and cultural nearness to historically significant musical figures and phenomena contribute to aspirational validation, identity reinforcement, and legitimacy of African American musical excellence via ecclesiastical pathways. The participants of this ecclesiastical community were immersed in a cultural landscape shaped by the legacy of Motown artists and musicians, rooted in gospel music, whose influence extended into

national and international prominence. This proximity served not only as a conduit for admiration and emulation but also facilitated a motivational ecology.

The Motown Effect consists of the following interrelated constructs:

- 1) Proximity – physical, relational, or cultural nearness to artists, neighborhoods, churches, or families connected to Motown lineage.
- 2) Sacred-to-Secular Continuum – visible trajectories of church-based musical formation extending into broader cultural influence.
- 3) Aspirational Validation – affirmation of a desire to and/or orientation toward singing.
- 4) Cultural Legitimacy – validation of gospel-rooted artistry being foundational within American musical history.

Although Motown's cultural impact was global, the motivational dynamic identified here is grounded in local proximity. For this community of singers, Motown was embedded within their lived experience and relational memory. Its motivational significance was reinforced by the participants' recollections of modeling artists' vocal acumen, group dynamics and choreography as well as musical style which validated their collective orientation toward singing. The global reach of Motown artists strengthened the participants' motivations due in part to the community's geographical closeness and cultural connectedness. Therefore, singing and ensemble engagement acquired an expanded meaning within the participants' lived context. Here, the Motown Effect functions as a contextual amplifier—deepening cultural pride, reinforcing traditions, and

situating choral ensemble engagement within a lineage of ecclesiastical musical excellence.

Conclusion

This study asks a central question: *Why Do They Sing?* Why are members of this African American ecclesiastical community motivated to sing? Choral scholarship has emphasized pedagogy, repertoire, and institutional settings, but there is comparatively little information regarding the motivational foundations of African American ecclesiastical singers. This research centers those choristers whose engagement is shaped by sacred orientation, communal identity, and historically rooted cultural practice.

The findings demonstrate that motivation within this community of singers does not arise from isolated psychological constructs but emerges through a relationally structured and culturally embedded ecology where theological meaning, inherited formation, belonging, affirmation, ritual energy, and intrinsic love function interdependently. These elements do not compete or function hierarchically; they form a layered motivational environment in which involvement is simultaneously spiritual, relational, affective, and cultural. By situating motivation within an African American ecclesiastical framework, the prevailing motivational theories are extended beyond individualistic and non-contextualized frameworks. Constructs such as internalization, belonging, and collective emotional resonance offer explanation. This discussion reveals that theological grounding and cultural transmission are structural foundations rather than peripheral influences. Singing, for this community, is not simply an activity to participate in—it is a practice through which personhood and cultural identity is formed and

expressed respectively. Presenting the relational motivational ecology offers a culturally grounded interpretive framework for understanding choral engagement in ecclesiastical contexts. The impetus to sing, in this community of choristers, is activated through sacred calling, intensified through dialogic ritual exchange, reinforced through ministerial reciprocity, and sustained through affective renewal and social cohesion. The relational motivational ecology frames musical engagement as socially embedded, ritually activated, and theologically grounded.

Moreover, this study centers the African American voice and affirms ecclesiastical choirs as sites of sophisticated meaning-making, identity formation, and motivational complexity. The motivation to sing, in this context, is best understood as relational, theological, cultural, and affective at once. The impetus to sing emerges within community, is grounded in sacred calling, reinforced through belonging, strengthened through affirmation, intensified through ritual energy, and sustained through love. This layered ecology creates a theoretical path for understanding motivation for singing within African American ecclesiastical communities. By centering the community of African American ecclesiastical singers as theory-generating voices, this work provides a culturally grounded and relationally informed framework for understanding *Why They Sing*.

References

- Abbingdon, J. (2001). *Let Mt. Zion rejoice!* Judson Press.
- Abbingdon, J. (2014). If It had not been for the Lord on my side: Hymnody in African American churches. In J. Abbingdon (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 129-150). GIA Publications.
- Abbingdon, J. (Ed.). (2014). *Readings in African American church music and worship*. GIA Publications.
- Abingdon Press. (1983). *Songs of Zion: A hymnal of the African American spiritual tradition*. Abingdon Press.
- Abrams, D. (1996). Social identity, self as structure and self as process. In W. P. Robinson (Ed.), *Social groups and identities: Developing the legacy of Henri Tajfel* (pp. 143–167). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (1988). Comments on the motivational status of self-esteem in social identity and intergroup discrimination. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18, 317–334.
- Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (1990). Social identification, self-categorization and social influence. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 1, 195–228.
- Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2001). Collective identity: Group membership and self-conception. In M. A. Hogg & R. S. Tindale, (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group processes* (pp. 425–460). Blackwell.
- Abrams, D., Hogg, M. A., Hinkle, S., & Otten, S. (2005). The social identity perspective on groups: The interface of social and individual processes. In M. S. Poole & A. B. Hollingshead (Eds.), *Theories of small groups: An interdisciplinary perspective*. SAGE.
- Adams, C. (2001). Some aspects of Black worship. In J. Abbingdon (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 297–313). GIA Publications.
- African American Registry. (2020). *The Black church in America: A brief history*. African American Registry. <https://aaregistry.org/story/the-black-church-a-brief-history/>
- Aghahowa, G. (2001). Definitions of praise and a look at Black worship. In J. Abbingdon (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 353–377). GIA Publications.

- Aliapoulios, A. A. (1969). *A study of the adult amateur choral organization in the United States and the implication for adult education* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Michigan.
- Allen, C. (2007). When we send up the praises: Race, identity, and gospel music in Augusta, Georgia. *Center For Black Music Research*, 27(2), pp. 79–95.
- Alnabulsi, H., & Drury, J. (2014). Social identification moderates the effect of crowd density on safety at the Hajj. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(25), 9091–9096. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1404953111>
- Ames, C., & Ames, R. (1984). Systems of student and teacher motivation: Toward a qualitative definition. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 535–556.
- Antonovsky, A. (1987) *Unraveling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. Jossey-Bass.
- Antonovsky, A. (1996) The salutogenic model as a theory to guide health promotion. *Health Promotion International*, 11(1), 11–18
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. A. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 20–39.
- Asmus, E. P. (1986). Achievement motivation characteristics of music education and music therapy students as identified by attribution theory. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 86, 71–85.
- Astalis, P. (2005). *Locating identity: The influence of Erik H. Erikson on society and the social construction of adolescence* (Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1998). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 110–136). SAGE.
- Austin, J. R., Renwick, J. M., & McPherson, G. E. (2006). Developing motivation. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 213–238). Oxford University Press.
- Baard, P. P., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Intrinsic need satisfaction: A motivational basis of performance and well-being in two work settings. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34, 2045–2068.

- Bailey, B., & Davidson, J. (2003). Amateur group singing as a therapeutic instrument. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 12(1), 18–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08098130309478070>
- Bailey, T. (2014). *Spirituality and religion: A scale of strengths and concerns for treatment considerations* (Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology).
- Ball, H., & Teram, E. (2000). *Quilts as social text*. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23(6), 713–724.
- Bandura, A., & Cervone, D. (2000). Self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms governing the motivational effects of goal systems. In E.T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Motivational science social and personality perspectives* (pp. 202-214). Psychology Press.
- Barnes, S. (2005). Black church culture and community action. *Social Forces*, 84(2), 967-994. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2006.0003>
- Barone, T. (1998). Ways of being at risk: The case of Billy Charles Barnett. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 105–116). American Educational Research Association.
- Barone, T., & Eisner, E. W. (1997). Arts-based educational research. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 73–99). American Educational Research Association.
- Barton, S. (2004). Locating Aboriginal Epistemology in a Relational Methodology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45(5), 519–526.
- Batt-Rawden, K., & Andersen, S. (2019). Singing has empowered, enchanted and enthralled me: Choirs for wellbeing. *Health Promotion International*, 35(1), 140–150. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/day122>
- Baumann, N. (2012). Autotelic personality. In S. Engeser (Ed.), *Advances in flow research* (pp. 165–186). Springer.
- Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529.
- Beck, R. J., Cesario, T. C., Yousefi, A., & Enamoto, H. (2000). Choral singing, performance perception, and immune system changes in salivary immunoglobulin A and Cortisol. *Music Perception*, 18(1), 87–106.

- Bell, C. L. (2004). Update on community choirs and singing in the United States. *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*, 2(1), 39–52.
- Benner, D. (1991). Understanding, measuring, and facilitating spiritual well-being: Introduction to a Special Issue. *Journal of Psychology And Theology*, 19(1), 3–5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009164719101900101>
- Berdiaev, N. (2009). *Spirit and reality*. Semantron Press.
- Berg, B. L. (1989). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Berzonsky, M. (2011). A social-cognitive perspective on identity construction. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V.L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 55–76). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_3
- Billig, M. (1976). *Social psychology and intergroup relations*. Academic Press.
- Bilmes, J. (1975). Misinformation in verbal accounts: Some fundamental considerations. *Man*, 10(1), 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2801182>
- Biscaia, R., Correia, A., Rosado, A., Maroco, J., & Ross, S. (2012). The effects of emotions on football spectators' satisfaction and behavioural intentions. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 12(3), 227–242.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., Segal, Z. V., Abbey, S., Speca, M., Velting, D., & Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230–241. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bph077>
- Blair, D. (2010). *The mystery of connectedness: Spirituality and the music experience*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Spirituality and Music Education. Birmingham, UK.
- Boffi, M., Riva, E., Rainisio, N., & Inghilleri, P. (2017). Social psychology of flow: A situated framework for optimal experience. In L. Harmat, F. Orsted Andersen, F. Ullen, J. Wright, & G. Sadlo (Eds.) *Flow experience: Empirical research and applications* (pp. 215–231). Springer.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Boss, L. (2011). *Church choirs: An examination of relevancy in 21st century churches* (Doctoral dissertation, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary).

- Bowlby, J. (1977). The making and breaking of affectional bonds: II. Some principles of psychotherapy. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 130(5), 421–431.
- Branscombe, N. R., & Wann, D. L. (1991). The positive social and self-concept consequences of sports team identification. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 15(2), 115–127.
- Bresler, L. (1996). Towards the creation of a new ethical code in qualitative research. *Bulletin of the Center for Research in Music Education*, 130, 17–29.
- Bresler, L. (2006). Toward connectedness: Aesthetically based research and the arts. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(1), 52–69.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475–482.
- Brewer, M. B. (1996). Managing diversity: The role of social identities. In S. Jackson & M. Ruderman (Eds.), *Diversity in Work Teams* (pp. 47–68). American Psychological Association.
- Brewer, M. B. (2001). The many faces of social identity: Implications for political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 22, 115–125.
- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this “we”? Levels of collective identity and self-representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 83–93.
- Brewer, M. B., & Harasty, A. S. (1996). Seeing groups as entities: The role of perceiver motivation. In E. T. Higgins & R. M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition*, Vol. 3: The interpersonal context (pp. 347–370). Guilford Press.
- Brinkmann, S. (2008). Interviewing. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, pp. 470–472). SAGE.
- Brown, M. (2014). I’m going to live the life I sing about in my song. In J. Abbingtion (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 191–199). GIA Publications.
- Burnim, M. (2001). Leading African American song from this far by faith. In J. Abbingtion (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 257–264). GIA Publications.

- Busch, S. (2013). *Beyond singer vs. non-singer in singing, health and well-being: Development and testing of the singing experience scale* [Master's thesis, Carleton University].
- Cameron, J. E. (1999). Social identity and the pursuit of possible selves: Implications for the psychological well-being of university students. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3(3), 179–189.
- Chandon, P., Wansink, B., & Laurent, G. (2011). A benefit congruency framework of sales promotion effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(4), 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.65.4.65.18389>
- Chen, S., Boucher, H., & Kraus, M. (2011). The relational self. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 149–175). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_7
- Chirkov, V. I., Ryan, R. M., & Willness, C. (2005). Cultural context and psychological needs in Canada and Brazil: Testing a self-determination approach to internalization of cultural practices, identity and well-being. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36, 423–443.
- Chong, H. (2010). Do we all enjoy singing? A content analysis of non-vocalists' attitudes toward singing. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 37(2), 120–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2010.01.001>
- Christens, B. D. (2020). Ultrasociality and intersubjectivity. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 65(1–2), 187–200.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Left Coast Press.
- Clawson, L. (2004). “Blessed be the tie that binds”: Community and spirituality among Sacred Harp singers. *Poetics*, 32(3), 311–324.
- Clements-Cortés, A. (2015). Singing for health, connection, and care. *Music and Medicine*, 7(4), 13. <https://doi.org/10.47513/mmd.v7i4.428>
- Clift, S., & Hancox, G. (2001). The perceived benefits of singing. *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 121(4), 248–256.
- Clift, S., & Morrison, I. (2011). Group singing fosters mental health and wellbeing: Findings from the East Kent “singing for health” network project. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, 15(2), 88–97. <https://doi.org/10.1108/20428301111140930>

- Clift, S., Hancox, G., Morrison, I., Hess, B., Kreutz, G., & Stewart, D. (2010). Choral singing and psychological wellbeing: Quantitative and qualitative findings from English choirs in a cross-national survey. *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*, 1(1), 19–34.
- Coe, K., Keller, C., & Walker, J. (2013). Religion, kinship and health behaviors of African American women. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54(1), 46–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-013-9784-0>
- Cogdill, S.H. (2014). Applying research in motivation and learning to music education: What the experts say update. *Applications of Research in Music Education* 33(2), 49–57.
- Cohen, A. (2011). Research on singing: Development, education and well-being—Introduction to the special volume on “singing and psychomusicology.” *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind and Brain*, 21(1–2), 1–5.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093998>
- Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton University Press.
- Colwell, R. (Ed.) (1992). *Handbook of research on music teaching and learning*. Schirmer Books.
- Cone, J. (1997). *God of the oppressed*. Orbis Books.
- Cone, J. H. (1994). *For my people: Black theology and the Black church*. Orbis Books.
- Connell, J. P., & Wellborn, J. G. (1991). Competence, autonomy, and relatedness: A motivational analysis of self-system processes. In M. R. Gunnar & L. A. Sroufe (Eds.), *Minnesota symposium on child psychology* (Vol. 22, pp. 43–77). Erlbaum.
- Costen, M. W. (2007). *African American Christian worship*. Abingdon Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. , & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124–131.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper & Row.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Rathunde, K. (1993). The measurement of flow in everyday life: Toward a theory of emergent motivation. In J. E. Jacobs (Ed.), *Developmental perspectives on motivation* (pp. 57–97). University of Nebraska Press.
- Custodero, L. A. (2002). Seeking challenge, finding skill: Flow experience and music education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 103(3), 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632910209600287>
- Dagaz, M. C. (2012). Learning from the band: Trust, acceptance, and self-confidence. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 41(4), 432–461.
- Dai, D. Y., & Sternberg, R. J. (Eds.). (2004). *Motivation, emotion, and cognition: Integrative perspectives on intellectual functioning and development*. Routledge.
- Daniel, R. (2014). *Resurrection: Representations of the Black church in contemporary popular culture* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst).
- Daniels, D. (2014). Gotta moan sometimes. In J. Abbington (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 353–376). GIA Publications.
- Dargan, W., & Watts, I. (2006). *Lining out the word: Dr. Watts hymn singing in the music of Black Americans*. University of California Press.
- Davidson, J., McNamara, B., Rosenwax, L., Lange, A., Jenkins, S., & Lewin, G. (2013). Evaluating the potential of group singing to enhance the well-being of older people. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 33(2), 99–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6612.2012.00645.x>
- Deaux, K., Reid, A., Mizrahi, K., & Ethier, K. A. (1995). Parameters of social identity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 280–291.
- DeCharms, R. (1968). *Personal causation: The internal affective determinants of behavior*. Academic Press.
- Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R.J., Pelletier, L.G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3), 325–346
- Deci, E. L. (1971). Effects of externally mediated rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 18, 105–115.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum.

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985a). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 19, 109–134.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life’s domains. *Canadian Psychology*, 49, 14–23.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Motivation, personality, and development within embedded social contexts: An overview of self-determination theory. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of motivation* (pp. 85–107). Oxford University Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). *Self-determination theory. Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guildford Press.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R.M. (2014). The importance of universal psychological needs for understanding motivation in the workplace. In M. Gagné (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of work engagement, motivation, and self-determination theory* (pp. 12–32). Oxford University Press.
- Deci, E. L., Eghrari, H., Patrick, B. C., & Leone, D. R. (1994). Facilitating internalization: The self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Personality*, 62, 119–142.
- Deci, E. L., Koestner, R. F., & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation in education: Reconsidered once again. *Review of Educational Research*, 71, 1–27.
- Denzin, N. K. (1998). Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 1–34). SAGE.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Macmillan.
- Dingle, G., Clift, S., Finn, S., Gilbert, R., Groarke, J., & Irons, J. (2019). An agenda for best practice research on group singing, health, and well-being. *Music & Science*, 2, 205920431986171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059204319861719>

- DjeDje, J. (1989). Gospel music in the Los Angeles Black community: A historical overview. *Black Music Research Journal*, 9(1), 35–79. <https://doi.org/10.2307/779432>
- Djedje, J. (1993). Los Angeles composers of African American gospel music: The first generations. *American Music*, 11(4), 412–457. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3052539>
- Draper, T. W. (2012). *Teaching music through performance in choir* (Vol. 3). GIA Publications.
- Drury, J., Novelli, D., & Stott, C. (2015). Managing to avert disaster: Explaining collective resilience at an outdoor music event. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(4), 533–547. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2108>
- Durkheim, E. (1912/1995). *The elementary forms of religious life*. Free Press.
- Durrant, C., & Himonides, E. (1998). What makes people sing together? Socio-psychological and cross-cultural perspectives on the choral phenomenon. *International Journal of Music Education*, 05-32, 61–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/025576149803200106>
- Dweck, C. S. (2000). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Psychology Press.
- Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E. L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, 95, 256–273.
- Easter, C. (2020). *Let the music play: Harmony of mind, body, and spirit in the African American church* (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Union University).
- Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 109–132.
- Egermann, H., & McAdams, S. (2013). Empathy and emotional contagion as a link between recognized and felt emotions in music listening. *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 31(2), 139–156.
- Eisner, E.W. (2012). *Arts-based research*. SAGE.
- Elkins, D. N., Hedstrom, L. J., Hughes, L. L., Leaf, J. A., & Saunders, C. (1988). Toward a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 28(4), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167888284002>

- Elliot, A. J., & Dweck, C. S. (2005). Competence and motivation: Competence as the core of achievement motivation. In A. J. Elliot & C. S. Dweck (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation* (pp. 3–11). Guilford Press.
- Elliot, A. J., McGregor, H. A., & Thrash, T. M. (2002). The need for competence. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of Self-determination Research* (pp. 361–387). University of Rochester Press.
- Elliott, D. J., & Silverman, M. (2015). *Music matters*. Oxford University Press.
- Engeser, S. (2012). *Advances in flow research*. Springer. <https://doi.org/DOI10.1007/978-1-4614-2359-1>
- Erickson, F. (2011). A history of qualitative inquiry in social and educational research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 43–59). SAGE.
- Evans, P. (2015). Self-determination theory: An approach to motivation in music education. *Musicae Scientiae*, 19(1), 65 –83.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864914568044>
- Evans, P., & Bonneville-Roussy, A. (2016). Self-determined motivation for practice in university music students. *Psychology of Music* 44(5), 1095–1110.
- Farnsworth, P.R. (1954). *The social psychology of music*. Iowa State University Press.
- Festinger, L., Schachter, S., & Back, K. (1950). *Social pressures in informal groups: A study of human factors in housing*. Stanford University Press.
- Fetterman, D. M. (2008). Emic/etic distinction. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, p. 249). SAGE.
- Fiske, J. (1989). *Understanding popular culture*. Routledge.
- Flyvberg, B. (2011). Case Study. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 301–316). SAGE.
- Forgas, J. P., Williams, K. D., & Laham, S. M. (2005). *Social motivation: Conscious and unconscious processes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fornäs, J. (1995). *Cultural theory and late modernity*. Sage.

- Fox, M. (2014). Don't nobody know my troubles but God: Discursive, social, and aesthetic connections and distinctives in "sacred" and "secular" Black Music. In J. Abbington (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 377–398). GIA Publications.
- Franklin, K. (1993). *Why we sing* [Album]. GospoCentric.
- Frazier, E. F. (1957). *Black bourgeoisie*. Free Press.
- Freer, P. K. (2003). Reframing the choral classroom for adolescent male singers. *Choral Journal*, 44(1), 9–17.
- Freinkel, P. (2015). Singing and participatory spirituality. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 34(1–2), 152–166. <https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2015.34.1-2.152>
- Freire, T., Tavares, D., Silva, E., & Teixeira, A. (2016). Flow, leisure, and positive youth development. In L. Harmat, F. Andersen, F. Ullén, J. Wright, & G. Sadlo (Eds.), *Flow experience: Empirical research and applications* (pp. 163–178). Springer.
- Friedkin, N. E. (2006). *A structural theory of social influence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fryling, D. (2015). *Persistence in choral music: An investigation into psychological and sociological factors involved in choral membership* (Doctoral dissertation, Hofstra University).
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. D. (2006). Consumer loyalty: The meaning of attachment in the development of sport team allegiance. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20(2), 189–217.
- Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26, 331–362.
- Galdas, P. (2017). Revisiting bias in qualitative research: Reflections on its relationship with funding and impact. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–2. <https://doi:10.1177/1609406917748992>
- Gates, H. L., Jr. (2021). *The Black church: This is our story, this is our song*. Penguin Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.

- Geertz, C. (2003). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In Y. S. Lincoln, & N. K. Denzin (Eds.), *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp. 143–168). AltaMira Press.
- Gick, M. L. (2011). Singing, health and well-being: A health psychologist's review. *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, and Brain*, 21(1–2), 176–207.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0094011>
- Glaude, E. S., Jr. (2000). *Exodus! Religion, race, and nation in early nineteenth-century Black America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Glenn, C. (Ed.). (1991). *In quest of answers: Interviews with American choral conductors*. Hinshaw.
- Goldenberg, A., Halperin, E., van Zomeren, M., & Gross, J. J. (2016). The process model of group-based emotion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 20(2), 118–141.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. Jossey-Bass.
- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1), 42–55.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690400300104>
- Guba, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.
- Hallam, S. (2009). Motivation to learn. In S. Hallam, I. Cross, & M. Thaut (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of music psychology* (pp. 285–294). Oxford University Press.
- Hamilton, D. L., & Sherman, S. J. (1996). Perceiving persons and groups. *Psychological Review*, 103, 336–355.
- Hammersley, P. A. (1998). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 110–136). SAGE.
- Hardin, R. (2001). Identity: Social. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 7166–7170). Elsevier.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-043076-7/01895-7>
- Hargreaves, D., Marshall, N., & North, A. (2003). Music education in the twenty-first century: A psychological perspective. *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(2), 147–163. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0265051703005357>

- Harmat, L., Andersen, F. O., Ullen, F., & Wright, J. (2016). *Flow experience: Empirical research and applications*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28634-1>
- Harré, R. (1995). The necessity of personhood as embodied being. *Theory & Psychology*, 5(3), 369–373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354395053004>
- Haslam, S. A. (2004). *Psychology in organisations: The social identity approach* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Rapson, R. L. (1994). *Emotional contagion*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hayamizu, T. (1997). Between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 39, 98–108.
- Hays, T., & Minichiello, V. (2005). The meaning of music in the lives of older people: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Music*, 33(4), 437–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735605056160>
- Hinkle, L. (1987). *The meaning of choral experience to the adult membership of German singing societies comprising the U.S. Federation of Pennsylvania* (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (UMI No. 8728017)
- Hinkle, S. W., & Brown, R. J. (1990). Intergroup comparisons and social identity: Some links and lacunae. In D. Abrams & M. A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity theory: Constructive and critical advances* (pp. 48–70). Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Hitter-Brown, C. (2009). *Singing through struggle: Music as a mode of cultural exchange in African American border city churches after emancipation, 1862-1890* (Doctoral dissertation). Boston University School of Theology.
- Hogg, M. A. (1996). Intragroup processes, group structure, and social identity. In W. P. Robinson (Ed.), *Social groups and identities: Developing the legacy of Henri Tajfel* (pp. 65– 93). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Hogg, M. A., & Rinella, M. (2018). Social identities and shared realities. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 23, 6–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.10.003>
- Hogg, M. A., Abrams, D., Otten, S., & Hinkle, S. (2004). The social identity perspective. *Small Group Research*, 35(3), 246–276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496404263424>

- Hogle, L. (2018). *Going viral: Contagious agency through learned helpfulness in a choral ensemble* (Doctoral dissertation, Oakland University).
- Hopkins, D. N. (2006). *Introducing Black theology of liberation*. Orbis Books.
- Hove, M. J., & Risen, J. L. (2009). It's all in the timing: Interpersonal synchrony increases affiliation. *Social Cognition*, 27(6), 949–960. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2009.27.6.949>
- Hymon, M. (2020). *I sing because I'm happy: The perceived impact of participation in choral music on the identity development of young Black men* (Doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles.
- Izard, C. E. (1977). *Human emotions*. Plenum Press.
- Jackson, I. (1980). Music among Blacks in the Episcopal Church: Some preliminary considerations. *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 49(1), 21–35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42973741>
- Jackson, S. A. (2000). Joy, fun, and flow state in sport. In Y. Hanin (Ed.), *Emotions in sport* (pp. 135–155). Human Kinetics.
- Janesick, V. J. (1998). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 35–55). SAGE.
- Jans, L., Postmes, T., & Van der Zee, K. (2011). The induction of shared identity: The positive role of individual distinctiveness for groups. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(8), 1130–1141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211407342>
- Johnson, B. (2011). Back to the heart of worship: Praise and worship music in a Los Angeles African American megachurch. *Black Music Research Journal*, 31(1), 105–129. <https://doi.org/10.5406/blacmusiresej.31.1.0105>
- Johnson, J. W., & Johnson, J. R. (1900/1905). *Lift ev'ry voice and sing* [Song].
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bpg016>

- Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. M. (2001). Be careful what you wish for: Optimal functioning and the relative attainment of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. In P. Schmuck & K. M. Sheldon (Eds.), *Life goals and wellbeing: Towards a positive psychology of human striving* (pp. 116–131). Hogrefe & Huber.
- Keeler, J. R., Roth, E. A., Neuser, B. L., Spitsbergen, J. M., Waters, D. J., & Vianney, J.-M. (2015). The neurochemistry and social flow of singing: Bonding and oxytocin. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 9, 518. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2015.00518>
- Keyes, C. L. M. (1998). Social well-being. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 61(2), 121–140. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2787065>
- Kgatle, M. (2019). Singing as a therapeutic agent in Pentecostal worship. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 40(1), a1910. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1910>
- Kidwell, M. (2014). Music therapy and spirituality: How can I keep from singing? *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 32(2), 129–135. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mtp/miu023>
- Kim, Y., Butzel, J. S., & Ryan, R. M. (1998, June). Interdependence and well-being: A function of culture and relatedness needs. [Conference presentation]. International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships, Saratoga Springs, NY, United States.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2003). Teachers as researchers, good work, and troubled times. In J. L. Kincheloe, *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment* (2nd ed., pp. 22–47). Routledge.
- Kirschner, S., & Tomasello, M. (2010). Joint music making promotes prosocial behavior in 4-year-old children. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 31(5), 354–364. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2010.04.004>
- Kirsh, E., van Leer, E., Phero, H., Xie, C., & Khosla, S. (2013). Factors associated with singers' perceptions of choral singing well-being. *Journal of Voice*, 27(6), 786.e25-786.e32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2013.06.004>
- Kreutz, G. (2014). Does singing facilitate social bonding? *Music and Medicine*, 6(2), 51–60 <https://doi.org/10.47513/mmd.v6i2.180>
- Kroger, J., & Marcia, J. E. (2011). The identity statuses: Origins, meanings, and interpretations. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 31–53). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_2

- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Kruglanski (Eds.), *Motivational science social and personality perspectives*
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- La Guardia, J. G., & Patrick, H. (2008). Self-determination theory as a fundamental theory of close relationships. *Canadian Psychology*, 49(3), 201–209.
- Launay, J., Dean, R., & Bailes, F. (2013). Synchronization can influence trust following virtual interaction. *Experimental Psychology*, 60(1), 53–63.
<https://doi.org/10.1027/1618-3169/a000173>
- Lavoie, M. (2024). Collective singing and social connection: Exploring the role of shared musical participation in fostering belonging and wellbeing. *Psychology of Music*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356241234567>
- Lavoie, M., Lamont, A., & Thompson, W. F. (2017). Music participation and social bonding: The role of shared musical experiences in fostering connection. *Psychology of Music*, 45(4), 539–554. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735616662922>
- Ledgerwood, A., Liviatan, I., & Carnevale, P. (2007). Group-identity completion and the symbolic value of property. *Psychological Science*, 18(10), 873–878.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01994.x>
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2008). Debriefing. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, pp. 199–201). SAGE.
- Leonard, K. (n.d.). Qualitative research: Definitions, types, methods and examples. *Bizfluent*. <https://bizfluent.com>.
- Liebllich, A., & Josselson, R. (2012). Identity and narrative as root metaphors of personhood. In J. Martin & M. F. Bickhard (Eds.), *The psychology of personhood: Philosophical, historical, social-developmental, and narrative perspectives* (pp. 203–222). Cambridge University Press.
- Liebst, L. S. (2019). Collective effervescence and social bonding: Testing the emotional energy hypothesis in ritualized gatherings. *Sociological Theory*, 37(2), 152–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275119851050>

- Lim, W. M. (2024). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2), 1–31.
<https://journals.SAGEpub.com/doi/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Lincoln, C. E., & Mamiya, L. H. (2005). *The Black church in the African American experience*. Duke University Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed., pp. 1–45). SAGE.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.
- Lockyer, S. (2008). History of qualitative research. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 3, pp. 706–710). SAGE.
- Lomax-Easter, C. (2020). *Let the music play: Harmony of mind, body, and spirit in the African American church* (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Union University).
- Luhrs, R. R. (2015). *Singing for social harmony: Choir member perceptions during intergroup contact* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota).
- Lundy, K. S. (2008). Prolonged engagement. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2, pp. 690–692). SAGE..
- Lynch, J., & Wilson, C. (2017). Exploring the impact of choral singing on mindfulness. *Psychology of Music*, 46(6), 848–861.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735617729452>
- MacDonald, D. A. (2011). Spiritual identity: Individual perspectives. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luychx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research*, (pp. 531–544). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_21
- MacDonald, R., Kreutz, G., & Mitchell, L. (Eds.). (2012). *Music, health, and well-being*. Oxford University Press.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Schnare, B., & Ross, J. (2018). Self-determination theory and motivation for music. *Psychology of Music* 46(5), 699–715.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735617697507>
- Macquarrie, J. (1993). *Paths in spirituality*. Morehouse Publishing.
- Mamiya, L. H., & Lincoln, C. E. (1990). *The Black church in the African American experience*. Duke University Press.

- Mao, Y., Roberts, S., Pagliaro, S., Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Bonaiuto, M. (2016). Optimal experience and optimal identity: A multinational study of the associations between flow and social identity. *Frontiers In Psychology*, 7, Article 67. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00067>
- Mapson J., Jr. (2001). Music and worship in the Black church. In J. Abbington (Ed.), *Readings In African American church music and worship* (pp. 519–523). GIA Publications.
- Mapson, J. (1984). *The ministry of music in the Black church*. Judson Press.
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3, 551–558.
- Markus, H., & Wurf, E. (1987). The dynamic self-concept: A social psychological perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 38, 299–337.
- Martin, A. J. (2008). Motivation and engagement in music and sport: Testing a multidimensional framework in diverse performance settings. *Journal of Personality*, 76, 135–170.
- Martin, J., & Bickhard, M. (2012). An introduction to the special issue on “The New Psychology of Personhood”. *New Ideas In Psychology*, 30(1), 86-88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2009.11.009>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Mattis, J. (2000). African American women’s definitions of spirituality and religiosity. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 26(1), 101–122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798400026001006>
- Maxwell, J. A., & Mittapalli, K. (2008). Thick description. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2, pp. 880-881). SAGE.
- McClain, W. (2011). The liturgy of Zion: The soul of Black worship. In J. Abbington (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 315–325). GIA Publications.
- McCoy, K. R. (2013). The diverse communities of a community choir: Fostering a sustainable system. *Choral Journal*, 53(11), 20–31.
- McKechnie, L. E. (2008). Naturalistic observation. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2, pp. 550–551). SAGE..

- McKechnie, L. E. (2008). Observational research. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2, pp. 573–575). SAGE..
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Merton, R. K., Fiske, M., & Kendall, P. L. (1990). *The focused interview: A manual of problems and procedures* (2nd ed.). Free Press.
- Meyer, L. B. (1956). *Emotion and meaning in music*. University of Chicago Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. SAGE.
- Miller, D. L., & Crabtree, B. F. (1992). Primary care research: A multimethod typology and qualitative roadmap. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 3–30). SAGE..
- Monroe, M. H. (2011). The role of music in African American worship traditions. *Black Music Research Journal*, 31(2), 207–225.
- Moreno, J., & Jennings, L. (1938). Statistics of social configurations. *Sociometry*, 1(3/4), 342–374. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2785588>
- Morgan, D. L. (2008). Emergent design. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, pp. 245–248). SAGE.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE.
- Muhammad, R. (2024). *Research design simplified: A beginner's guide to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research*. MasterMyThesis.
- Murphy, P. K., & Alexander, P. A. (2000). A motivated exploration of motivation terminology. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 3-53.
- Murphy, W., III. (2005). *Worship experience* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Wyv0fsf3Qis>.
- Myrdal, G. (1944). *An American dilemma: The Negro problem and modern democracy*. Harper & Brothers.

- Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 89–105). Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, A. (2001). Why we sing: The role and meaning of gospel in African American popular culture. In F. Jones & A. Jones (Eds.), *The triumph of the soul: Cultural and psychological aspects of African American music* (pp. 97–126). Praeger.
- Nettl, B. (2005). *The study of ethnomusicology: Thirty-one issues and concepts*. University of Illinois Press.
- Neville, F., Novelli, D., Drury, J., & Reicher, S. (2020). Shared social identity transforms social relations in imaginary crowds. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 25(1), 158–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220936759>
- Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 133–144.
- North, A. C., & Hargreaves, D. J. (2008). *The social and applied psychology of music*. Oxford University Press.
- Norton, K. (2016). *Singing and wellbeing*. Routledge.
- Norum, K. E. (2008). Artifacts. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, pp. 25-26). SAGE.
- Novelli, D., Drury, J., & Reicher, S. (2010). Come together: Two studies concerning the impact of group relations on personal space. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(2), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466609X449377>
- Novelli, D., Drury, J., Reicher, S., & Stott, C. (2013). Explaining collective effervescence: Investigating the relationship between shared social identity and positive experience in crowds. *Cognition and Emotion*, 27(3), 483–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2012.693912>
- O'Neill, S. A., & McPherson, G. E. (2002). Motivation. In R. Parncutt & G. E. McPherson (Eds.), *The science and psychology of music performance: Creative strategies for teaching and learning* (pp. 31–46). Oxford University Press.
- Odena, O. (2007). Using software to tell a trustworthy, convincing, and useful story. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 10(5), 357–372.
- Oglivly, P. S. (1979). *The emergent paradigm: Changing patterns of thought and belief*. SRI International.

- Online Etymology Dictionary. (n.d.). Motivation. <https://www.etymonline.com>
- Ormrod, J. E. (2004). *Human learning* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Othman, Z. K. (2016). Validity, reliability, and triangulation in case study method: An experience. *UUM International Qualitative Research Conference Proceedings*, (pp. 350–356). Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Parker, E. C. (2017). A phenomenology of one southeastern African American church choir. *Bulletin of The Council for Research in Music Education*, (212), 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.212.0057>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Pearce, E., Launay, J., MacCarron, P., & Dunbar, R. (2016). Tuning in to others: Exploring relational and collective bonding in singing and non-singing groups over time. *Psychology of Music*, 45(4), 496–512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735616667543>
- Pearce, E., Launay, J., Machin, A., & Dunbar, R. (2016). Is group singing special? Health, well-being and social bonds in community-based adult education classes. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 26(6), 518–533. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2278>
- Pearce, E., Launay, J., van Duijn, M., Rotkirch, A., David-Barrett, T., & Dunbar, R. (2016). Singing together or apart: The effect of competitive and cooperative singing on social bonding within and between sub-groups of a university fraternity. *Psychology of Music*, 44(6), 1255–1273. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735616636208>
- Perry, B. L. (2011). In the mix: Multiracial identity and community. *Journal of Social Issues*, 67(1), 1–18.
- Pew Research Center. (2015). *The changing religious landscape of the United States*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>
- Pezzulo, G., van der Meer, M. A. A., Lansink, C. S., & Pennartz, C. M. A. (2014). Internally generated sequences in learning and executing goal-directed behavior. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 18(12), 647–657. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2014.06.011>
- Piantanida, M., & Garman, N. B. (2009). *The qualitative dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Corwin.

- Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5–24). Falmer Press.
- Pollard, D. (2014). Praise is what we do: The rise of praise and worship music in the urban church. In J. Abbingtion (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 491–519). GIA Publications.
- Postmes, T., & Jetten, J. (2006). *Individuality and the group: Advances in social identity*. SAGE.
- Postmes, T., Haslam, S., & Swaab, R. I. (2005). Social influence in small groups: An interactive model of social identity formation. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 16, 1–42.
- Postmes, T., Spears, R., Lee, A. T., & Novak, R. J. (2005). Individuality and social influence in groups: Inductive and deductive routes to group identity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(5), 747–763. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.5.747>
- Prayag, G., Mills, H., Lee, C., & Soscia, I. (2020). Team identification, discrete emotions, satisfaction, and event attachment: A social identity perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 373–384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.062>
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Quinn, R. E. (2005). *Deep change: Discovering the leader within* (Rev. ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Ragins, B. R., Cotton, J. L., & Miller, J. S. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(6)1177–1194.
- Ramsay, J. (2003). Music and social cohesion: The role of shared musical experience in building community. *Music Education Research*, 5(2), 195–207.

- Reed, M. L. (2005). *Choral singing and social identity: A qualitative study* (Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University).
- Reeve, J. (2002). Self-determination theory applied to educational settings. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 183–201). University of Rochester Press.
- Reicher, S., Haslam, S., & Platow, M. (2018). Shared social identity in leadership. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 23, 129–133.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.08.006>
- Reimer, B. (2003). *A philosophy of music education: Advancing the vision* (3rd ed). Prentice Hall.
- Reis, H. T., Sheldon, K. M., Gable, S. L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Daily well-being: The role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26 (4), 419–435.
- Rensink-Hoff, R. (2002). *Adult community choirs: Toward a balance between leisure participation and musical achievement*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Ontario). Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Renwick, J. M., & McPherson, G. E. (2002). Interest and choice. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72(3), 331–345.
- Renwick, J. M., & Reeve, J. (2012). Supporting motivation in music education. In G. E. McPherson & G. F. Welch (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of music education* (Vol. 1, pp. 559–580). Oxford University Press.
- Resnicow, K., & Vaughan, R. (2006). A chaotic view of behavior change. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 20(4), 251–262.
- Reynolds, J. (2012). The lived experience of community choir members. *International Journal of Community Music*, 5(3), 301–316.
https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcm.5.3.301_1
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2013). *Readme first: A user's guide to qualitative methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984). *Time and narrative* (Vol. 1). University of Chicago Press.
- Robb, S. L. (2003). Music interventions and group participation in health settings. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 40(3), 160–178.

- Roberts, J. M. (1969). *Black music of two worlds: African, Caribbean, Latin, and African-American traditions*. Schirmer Books.
- Roehlkepartain, E. C., Benson, P. L., & Scales, P. C. (2011). Spiritual identity: Contextual perspectives. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luychx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 545–562). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_22
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Rutter, J. (2015, March 31). *The importance of choir*. J. W. Pepper. <http://www.jwpepper.com/johnrutter>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000a). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000b). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2002). Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic dialectical perspective. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 3–33). University of Rochester Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Ryan, R. M., & La Guardia, J. G. (2000). What is being optimized? Self-determination theory and basic psychological needs. In S. H. Qualls & N. Abeles (Eds.), *Psychology and the aging revolution* (pp. 145–172). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10363-008>
- Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., & Grolnick, W. S. (1995). Autonomy, relatedness, and the self: Their relation to development and psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Theory and methods* (pp. 618–655). Wiley.
- Sablo, K. (2008). *Lift every voice and sing: A gospel choir participation experience and the persistence of African American students at a predominately White university* (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania).
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

- Saroglou, V. (2011). Believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42(8), 1320–1340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022111412267>
- Schreiber, J. B. (2017). *Motivation 101*. Springer Publishing.
- Schunk, D. H., Meece, J. L., & Pintrich, P. R. (2013). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). Thick description. In T.A. Schwandt (Ed.), *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed., p. 296). SAGE.
- Sebanz, N., & Knoblich, G. (2009). Prediction in joint action: What, when, and where. *Social Neuroscience*, 4(4), 353–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470910802198436>
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.
- Selph, C., & Bugos, J. A. (2014). Adult perceptions of community choir participation. *Research Perspectives in Music Education*, 16(2), 35–55.
- Sharp, T. (2007). Mega-church mega-choir. *The Choral Journal*, 47(9), 48–55.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Hilpert, J. C. (2012). The balanced measure of psychological needs (BMPN) scale. *Motivation and Emotion*, 36(4), 439–451. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-012-9279-4>
- Sheldon, K. M., & Kasser, T. (1995). Coherence and congruence: Two aspects of personality integration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(3), 531–543. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.68.3.531>
- Sheldon, K. M., Elliot, A. J., Kim, Y., & Kasser, T. (2001). What is satisfying about satisfying events? Testing 10 candidate psychological needs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(2), 325–339. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.2.325>
- Sheldon, K. M., Reis, H. T., & Ryan, R. M. (1996). What makes for a good day? Competence and autonomy in the day and in the person. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(12), 1270–1279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672962212007>
- Shelley, B. (2014). Gospel goes to church again. In J. Abbington (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 399–418). GIA Publications.

- Shteynberg, G., Hirsh, J., Galinsky, A., & Knight, A. (2021). Agency and identity in the collective self. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 26(1), 35–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683211065921>
- Shulman, L. S. (1997). Disciplines of inquiry in education: A new overview. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 1–30). American Educational Research Association.
- Silbermann, A. (1963). *The sociology of music* (C. Stewart, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Silvia, P. J. (2008). Interest—The curious emotion. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(1), 57–60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00548.x>
- Simmons, D. W. (1962). *The motivations and musical backgrounds of participants and nonparticipants in selected community choruses*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Simmons, J. P. (2005). Music and community: The role of group singing in social connection. *International Journal of Community Music*, 1(1), 77–92.
- Singer, T., & Love, T. (2004). The neural basis of empathy. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1036(1), 76–88. <https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1330.009>
- Skingley, A., Martin, A., & Clift, S. (2016). The contribution of community singing groups to the well-being of older people. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 35(12), 1302–1324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464815577141>
- Sluss, D. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (2007). Relational identity and identification. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(1), 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.23463672>
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2014). Bias in research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 17(4), 100–101. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-20142014-101946>
- Southern, E. (1997). *The music of Black Americans: A history* (3rd ed.). W. W. Norton.
- Spears, R. (2011). Group identities: The social identity perspective. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 201–224). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_9

- Spell, G. M. (1989). *Motivational factors and selected sociodemographic characteristics of Georgia community chorus participants as measured by the Education Participation Scale, the Community Chorus Participation Scale, and the Personal Inventory Form* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Spivey, K. (2006). *Why do I go to church? A comparative study of how age impacts participation in the Black church* (Master's thesis, University of Arkansas).
- Stake, R. (1997). Case study methods in educational research: Seeking sweet water. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (2nd ed., pp. 401–422). American Educational Research Association.
- Stake, R. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1998). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 86–109). SAGE.
- Stake, R. E. (2003). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd ed., pp. 134–164). SAGE.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224–237. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695870>
- Stipek, D. J. (1993). *Motivation to learn: From theory to practice* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Stokes, M. (Ed.). (1994). *Ethnicity, identity, and music: The musical construction of place*. Berg.
- Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), 273–286. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095521>
- Tajfel, H. (1974). *Intergroup behaviour, social comparison and social change*. Unpublished Katz–Newcomb lectures, University of Michigan.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.

- Tajfel, H., Billig, M., Bundy, R., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1(2), 149–178. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420010202>
- Teal, R. (2014). Reflections on praise and worship from a biblical perspective: Background, definitions, concepts, and constructions. In J. Abbingtion (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 547–559). GIA Publications.
- Tedlock, B. (2003). Ethnography and ethnographic representation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed., pp. 165–213). SAGE.
- Tewari, S., Khan, M. A., Hopkins, N., Srinivasan, N., & Reicher, S. D. (2012). Participation in mass gatherings can benefit well-being: Longitudinal and control data from a North Indian Hindu pilgrimage event. *PLOS ONE*, 7(10), e47291. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0047291>
- Thomas, E., McGarty, C., & Mavor, K. (2015). Group interaction as the crucible of social identity formation: A glimpse at the foundations of social identities for collective action. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 19(2), 137–151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215612217>
- Tuchman, G. (1998). Historical social science: Methodologies, methods, and meanings. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 225–260). SAGE.
- Tullis Owen, J. A. (2008). Naturalistic inquiry. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2, pp. 547–550). SAGE.
- Turino, T. (2008). *Music as social life: The politics of participation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Aldine Publishing.
- Ulmer, K. (2014). Transformational worship in the life of a church. In J. Abbingtion (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (Vol. 2, pp. 177–190). GIA Publications.
- Umaña-Taylor, A. (2011). Ethnic identity. In S. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 791–809). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_33

- Vallerand, R. J. (1997). Toward a hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 29, 271–360.
- Vallerand, R. J., & Ratelle, C. F. (2002). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: A hierarchical model. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 37–64). University of Rochester Press.
- van den Hout, M., & Kindt, M. (2003). Repeated checking causes memory distrust. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 41(3), 301–316. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967\(02\)00012-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(02)00012-2)
- van Manen, M. (1990). Human science. In *Researching lived experience* (pp. 1–34). SUNY Press.
- van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. SUNY Press.
- Vannini, P. (2008). Situatedness. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 2, p. 815). SAGE.
- Vignoles, V., Schwartz, S., & Luyckx, K. (2011). Introduction: Toward an integrative view of identity. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 1–27). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_1
- Voorhees, B., Read, D., & Gabora, L. (2020). Identity, kinship, and the evolution of cooperation. *Current Anthropology*, 61(2), 194–218. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708176>
- Walker, M., & Lynn, F. (2013). The embedded self. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 76(2), 151–179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272513482929>
- Watley, W. (2001). Introducing the African American churches. In J. Abbingon (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 27–38). GIA Publications.
- Webb, E. J., Campbell, D. T., Schwartz, R. D., & Sechrest, L. (1966). *Unobtrusive measures: Nonreactive research in the social sciences*. Rand McNally.
- Weekes, M. (2014). This house, this music: Exploring the interdependent interpretive relationship between the contemporary Black church and contemporary gospel music. In J. Abbingon (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 521–546). GIA Publications.

- Wellman, J., Corcoran, K., & Stockly-Meyerdirk, K. (2014). God is like a drug: Explaining interaction ritual chains in American megachurches. *Sociological Forum*, 29(3), 650–672. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12108>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- White, J. (1982). *Introduction to Christian worship*. Abingdon Press.
- White, R. W. (1959). Motivation reconsidered: The concept of competence. *Psychological Review*, 66(5), 297–333.
- Wiggins, R. (2013). *Why we sing: A regional study of the Indianapolis gospel music community* (Master's thesis, University of Indianapolis).
- Williams, B. (n.d.). *A guide to qualitative narrative research design*. Insight7. <https://insight7.io/a-guide-to-qualitative-narrative-research-design/>
- Williams, D. (2018). *Worship music as spiritual identity: An examination of music in the liturgy among Black and White Adventists in the United States from 1840 to 1944* (Doctoral dissertation). Andrews University.
- Willingham, T. L. (2001). *A community of voices: A qualitative study of the effects of being a member of the Bell'Arte Singers* (Doctoral dissertation. University of Toronto).
- Wills, R. (2011). The magic of music: A study into the promotion of children's well-being through singing. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 16(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2010.540750>
- Wilson, S. R. (2011). *Community choir: What motivates people to join, stay, and sing: A mixed methods research study* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria).
- Wimberley, E. (2001). The dynamics of Black worship: A psychosocial exploration of the impulses that lie at the roots of Black worship. In J. Abbingdon (Ed.), *Readings in African American church music and worship* (pp. 339–352). GIA Publications.
- Włodarczyk, A., Drury, J., & Kauffmann, R. (2020). Emotional synchrony in collective gatherings: The role of shared social identity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 588127. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.588127>

- Wolcott, H. F. (1988). Ethnographic research in education. In R. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (2nd ed., pp. 327–369). American Educational Research Association.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). On seeking—and rejecting—validity in qualitative research. In *Transforming qualitative data* (pp. 337–373). SAGE.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Wollschleger, J. (2012). Interaction ritual chains and religious participation. *Sociological Forum*, 27(4), 896–912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2012.01361>
- Xygalatas, D., Mitkidis, P., Fischer, R., Reddish, P., Skewes, J., & Geertz, A. (2013). Extreme rituals promote prosociality. *Psychological Science*, 24(8), 1602–1605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612472910>
- Zanin, A. C., Hoelscher, C. S., & Kramer, M. W. (2016). Extending symbolic convergence theory. *Small Group Research*, 47(4), 438–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496416658554>
- Zuckerman, M., Porac, J., Lathin, D., Smith, R., & Deci, E. L. (1978). On the importance of self-determination for intrinsically motivated behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 4(3), 443–446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014616727800400317>

APPENDIX A

INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

DATE: February 10, 2020

TO: Kwamise Taylor
FROM: Oakland University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Why Do They Sing? A Qualitative Inquiry into What Motivates an African American Ecclesiastical Community of Singers

REFERENCE #: 1559695-1

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: February 10, 2020

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption Category 2(ii)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Oakland University IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

The exempt submission includes the following:

- Application
- Consent Form Version 02/10/2020 which has been published as a Board Document under Reviews in IRBNet. **The IRB approved consent document MUST be used in recruitment and consent of participants in the research**
- Recruitment Announcement
- Focus Group Questions

The exemption is made with the understanding that NO CHANGES may be made to the project until such changes have been reviewed by the IRB. Please contact me to determine appropriate revision form(s) that may be needed. Do not collect data while the revisions are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used.

Please retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.

If you have any questions, please contact Kate Wydeven M.S. at (248) 370-4306 or kwydeven@oakland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Oakland University IRB's records.