

ECLECTIC STYLES ENSEMBLES AND THE ROLE OF INFORMAL LEARNING
EXPERIENCES IN SECONDARY ORCHESTRA PROGRAMS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine an eclectic styles ensemble and the role that the ensemble plays in students' musical growth through the use of informal music learning practices. One high school orchestra program which features an extracurricular eclectic styles ensemble was examined through observation of rehearsals and interviews with the teacher and several students. Observation and interview data demonstrate that informal music learning can be a valuable part of eclectic styles ensembles. Students predict that skills that they attained through participating in the eclectic styles ensemble will better support their musical growth beyond high school than a traditional orchestra class alone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....6

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS13

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS 26

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION..... 36

REFERENCES.....42

APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER.....45

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 46

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The majority of string education in secondary schools in the United States utilizes the western classical music tradition focusing on music produced primarily in western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Beyond string education, music education scholars are pushing towards including music of a variety of other styles promotes musical experiences in school that are more aligned with students' musical lives outside of school (Allsup, 2016; Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Kratus, 2007; Williams, 2011). One of changes employed by string educators in recent years is to start eclectic styles ensembles which are groups separate from a traditional orchestra class that perform music in non-western classical styles including but not limited to: fiddle, Celtic, bluegrass, jazz, rock, pop, mariachi, etc. These ensembles, which have also been called alternative styles ensembles, take many forms and provide students with opportunities to play music of a variety of different styles and in many cases learn in ways beyond playing what is on the page.

A history of non-classical string playing in schools

The earliest form of organized, non-classical string ensembles in schools were Strolling Strings ensembles which became popular in the 1950s. Ensembles like "The Golden Strings" founded by violinist Cliff Brunzell in Minneapolis, MN performed choreographed ballroom shows playing showtunes and other popular musics from the time. Noted educational composer James "Red" McCleod made the ensembles more accessible for many by publishing collections of tunes perfect for these dinner party settings. Strolling strings ensembles still exist today with the most famous being the Air Force Strings, a 20 person strolling strings ensemble which performs as an extension of the United States Air Force Band.

Beginning in 1980s, another track of non-classical string playing emerged focusing on American and Celtic folk music. The Calgary Fiddlers were founded in 1982 by Dr.

Norman Burgess and played formal concerts featuring North American folk music rather than show tunes as a part of a larger event like strolling strings ensembles. Another example of a school based folk music ensemble that began in the 1980's is the Mamaroneck String Band founded by Andrew Dabczynski in Mamaroneck, NY which went on to become a credit bearing course in that school district. They performed at the 1987 joint Music Educators National Convention (MENC)/ASTA conference in Baltimore, MD which Dabczynski believes is the first performance of a fiddle-based ensemble at a national educator's convention (A. Dabczynski, personal communication, February 12, 2019). Dabczynski documented this experience in a how to article titled "A Band in the String Program" (Dabczynski & Straub, 1987). The article is the first example of an article published in a teacher's journal (*American String Teacher*) aimed at aiding other teachers start their own folk music centered performing ensembles as "an important new dimension" to a string program (p. 74). Another noteworthy ensemble is the Saline Fiddlers established by Bob Phillips in 1994. Mr. Phillips recalls starting the group as a formal expansion of teaching bluegrass and old-time fiddle music to his middle school aged daughters and their friends. (B. Phillips, personal communication, February 12, 2019). The Saline Fiddlers grew into a touring ensemble that inspired countless other groups including the Chelsea House Orchestra, the Mona Shores Fiddlers and the ensemble examined in this study.

Eclectic styles ensembles are defined as ensembles that perform music primarily not drawn from the western classical canon. Other potential terms used to describe such groups are alternative styles ensembles and non-classical ensembles, but this paper will use "eclectic styles" as that is the term currently supported by the American String Teachers Association (ASTA). A more formal integration of eclectic styles education came with the first ASTA conference in 2001 which advocated for the inclusion of styles of music beyond western classical music in the string curriculum (Fortune, 2014). In 2003, ASTA hosted an

alternative styles conference and invited teachers from around the world to come and share their music and teaching strategies with American string teachers. Beginning in 2010, ASTA created the annual “Eclectic Strings Festival” as a competition/conference for eclectic styles players and formally brought it under the ASTA National Conference umbrella in 2015. An eclectic styles committee is dedicated to expanding programs and running this annual solo competition for non-classical music at the national conference annually. Teachers and teacher educators also propose and present numerous sessions about eclectic styles at each national conference.

Practitioner accounts

In addition to inclusion at ASTA national conventions, eclectic styles education has become a popular topic in *American String Teacher (AST)*, ASTA’s monthly publication on topics within string teaching. West (2014) surmised that the increasing number of publications concerning eclectic styles could be because of a belief that non-classical string playing in schools is lacking due to teachers feeling underprepared to teach non-classical styles (West, 2014). Former ASTA President and aforementioned founder of the Saline Fiddlers, Bob Phillips is a frequent contributor of “how-to” literature encouraging teachers to include non-classical ensembles in their program. Phillips, B. and Phillips, P. (2002) co-wrote an article “The ABC’s of putting together a youth fiddle group,” offering advice regarding musical selections/arrangements, performance structure, sound technology requirements and other logistical factors. They argued that the preparation of fiddle music and focusing on learning a large amount of repertoire developed over many performances is a valuable learning experience when juxtaposed with a classical orchestra program, which often will perform a musical selection just once. In a more recent article about “Pillars of Great Music Programs” (2016), Phillips, B. made the case that “Ancillary programs” like

fiddle ensembles are a great recruiting tool and can be an avenue to reach out to students who wouldn't otherwise be in a music class.

Phillips, S. (2002) (unrelated to Phillips, B. & Phillips P.) discussed "Tradition Based Fiddling" and later produced an accompanying video tutorial entitled "Bluegrass Fiddle Boot Camp" (2003). He observed that fiddling was very healthy in 2002 "despite gloomy forecasts of extinction," and supported this point by highlighting important growth in different regions and styles of fiddle music at large. He cited the rhythmic dance elements of southeastern fiddle music and the technical challenges of bluegrass and its connection to songwriting as powerful experiences for students. Also included are sections on Contest fiddling, native American music and commercial country. Phillips, S. stated that there is at least one type of fiddle education that every teacher should be able to latch on to.

Farrar-Royce (2006) discussed the specifics of maintaining an alternative styles program for strings in an article for *AST* writing, "The nature of alternative styles music encompasses the essence of tiered learning and addresses multiple learning styles and the individual needs of many students..." (p. 40-41). She discussed the benefits of learning by ear in addition to reading music and argued that fiddle tunes are excellent for differentiating instruction to learners of different levels. Fiddle music possesses parts of varying difficulty including melodies, rhythmic chopping parts, bass lines in addition to complicated solo breaks allowing students of all levels to perform together. Farrar-Royce included brief "how-to" overviews of teaching fiddle, bluegrass, rock, dance music and others and closed with advice for hesitant teachers. "Do not be afraid of starting a group. It takes time to develop a tradition. Persevere and concentrate on improving musicianship through folk music. The rest will take care of itself" (p. 43).

As eclectic styles became more popular at educational conferences and as resources for teaching them became more prevalent, more ensembles were created that meet outside

of a curricular orchestra class. Ensembles that fit the description play a multitude of musical genres including but not limited to bluegrass, Celtic, rock, jazz, mariachi, and pop. Groups vary from after school clubs that meet a few times a month for a collective music experience to high level touring ensembles that perform over 50 concerts a year. Many of these groups emphasize creative music making skills like composing, arranging, and improvising while others employ written arrangements. Teaching styles vary as well from a rote based “learn tunes by ear” tradition to learning everything through standard notation and formalized arrangements.

In addition to the formalized integration being supported by ASTA, there has also been a growth of non-classical string playing in pop culture. The rise of YouTube and the associated ease of sharing music across the world has made a variety of eclectic string playing available to young listeners. Artists such as the *Piano Guys* and *2Cellos* perform covers of popular songs on string instruments and publish their arrangements for students to learn and perform. A quick YouTube search for “violin tutorial” produces thousands of how-to videos, many of which are for music outside of the western classical genre.

As eclectic styles ensembles become more popular, the need for research about them grows. Practitioners point to improved aural skills, better memorization skills, and better practice habits among participants in eclectic styles ensembles but there is a lack of empirical research documenting students’ development within eclectic styles ensembles and more specifically how students view their experiences in these programs.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There literature documenting student experiences in eclectic styles ensembles is limited, so this chapter will research regarding non-classical music making in addition to literature specifically detailing eclectic styles ensembles. Definitions provided by research about informal music learning are important when exploring non-classical music making, so it is included in addition to research regarding the early inclusion of eclectic styles and how prevalent they are in public school orchestra programs before discussing the insights we currently have into students experiences in eclectic styles.

Informal Music Learning

Formal music learning refers to teacher planned and directed instruction while informal music learning is guided by the learners rather than the teacher. Lucy Green, a leading scholar on informal music learning, focused on learning practices of popular musicians (*How Popular Musicians Learn*, 2001) and the application of those practices to secondary general music classrooms (*Music, Informal Learning and the School*, 2008). Green (2001) described the learning style of a popular musician as one that begins as a solitary copying exercise that grows into learning from peers/more experienced musicians in more organized sessions (p. 96-97). She also wrote that technical skills are acquired as needed and that music theory is learned similarly. Green took these concepts further when she developed them into a study examining how informal music learning concepts could be applied to school music learning. She (2008) found that when students were asked to replicate a recording, the musical output and music learning that took place surpassed their teacher's expectations. Students were split into groups and completed musical tasks across seven stages that focused on individual and group learning tasks. Students were able to replicate recordings and create their own music in these small groups with limited input from the instructor demonstrating a potential for informal music learning in school settings.

Folkestad (2006) discussed the evolution of the term informal music learning. He noted that a common distinction of formal and informal learning as is whether the learning takes occurs inside or outside of school, Folkestad argues that the distinction between formal and informal music making is “sometimes blurred” and that, “it is important to distinguish between where the learning/activity takes place on the one hand, and the type and nature of the learning process on the other hand, in order to be clear about whether formal and informal, respectively, are used in describing formal and informal learning situations and practices or formal and informal ways of learning” (2006, p. 142). Folkestad also described four aspects helpful in considering whether a musical experience is formal or informal. The first is “situation,” referring to the physical location where the learning takes places. The second is “Learning styles,” which describe the nature or quality of the experience. The next aspect is “Ownership,” that is, who is making the musical decisions in the process. The final aspect is “intentionality,” the distinction between playing with the purpose of learning or playing for the sake of performing. p. 141-142). All four aspects are independent items and should be considered when determining the formality of a musical experience and demonstrate that many experiences may be more complicated than just a simple designation of formal music learning or informal music learning.

Jones (2014) examined the experiences of students who were trained in “traditional, notation-based band instruction” when exposed to informal learning practices in a secondary band setting. Eight students were asked to complete similar tasks to the students in Green, (2008) such as aural copying and creating their own music, but with within the instrumental music setting. In this study, the most “informality” came from students not using written sheet music for a teacher to guide their learning. Students struggled initially in what Jones describes as the “sinking” portion of a sink/swim dichotomy. She notes however, that students were able to be successful after a few days of practice which mirrors

Green's (2008) findings and all students reported coming away from their informal music learning experience with an appreciation of different forms of learning. Jones goes on to advocate for informal learning as a supplement to ensemble education noting that informal learning . . .

1. . . . revealed deficiencies in student learning . . .
2. . . . gave students opportunities to apply their knowledge and develop skills that can benefit them in band . . .
3. . . . allows students opportunities for creative musicianship . . .

Eclectic styles research

Early eclectic styles

One of the earliest research studies exploring eclectic styles education examined the potential for taking Appalachian folk music and using it as a teaching tool in public school settings. Dabczynski (1994) conducted a phenomenology of noted fiddler, Jay Unger's "Northern Week at Ashokan" camp in 1991. After outlining his experiences as a participant/observer at the camp, Dabczynski discusses the potential for eclectic styles as a tool to further string education. Referencing his teaching experience and Dabczynski (1987) cited in Chapter one of this study, he writes that the experience:

"[Embodies] distinct qualities recognized as essential to excellence in education. . . [including] a collective sense of purpose among those who chose to attend both as students and teachers; learning that was connected to "real world" experiences; alignment of behaviors with desired outcomes; instruction from the best models and based on the best knowledge available; thorough engagement of students in active, collaborative, creative decision-making; commitment to a set of values and ethics; frequent opportunities for performance-based evaluation; commitment to quality, not mediocrity; opportunities for lifelong learning, exploration, and perusal of renewing, empowering personal development;

dignified, respectful, non-coercive relationships; acceptance of change as an indication of growth; and, a tangible, joyful sense of community” (p. 220).

Dabczynski views these qualities as something that are important to education and reasons to add an eclectic styles ensemble to orchestra programs.

Teacher inclusion

Following the rapid growth of eclectic styles as a part of string education, several studies have examined the prevalence of non-classical music in public school orchestra programs. Edinger (2013) examined eclectic styles in string education in Pennsylvania and found that many teachers offered a non-classical based ensemble. She found that 32% of those surveyed offered an eclectic styles ensemble (specifically fiddling or jazz). While this data might be promising, the small sample (53 teachers) makes it hard to generalize.

Further, the study revealed that little professional development had been done in teaching non-classical music. It was also found that the majority of teachers who included eclectic styles used instructional strategies more associated with western classical music practices rather than practices more associated with the style of music being performed.

Lindamood (2011) conducted a nationwide survey on the use of traditional, jazz and popular styles in secondary school orchestras. She found that while most teachers have a positive perception of the place of eclectic styles in the string curriculum, most feel uncomfortable teaching it due to a lack of knowledge and experience. Lindamood examined teacher perceived preparedness, and like Edinger, (2013) found that less than 30% of teachers felt they had any training in teaching eclectic styles. Many reported attending a session at a conference, but that was the extent of their professional learning. Under 10% had attended any sort of training outside of a conference such as dedicated workshops for teachers or an immersive camp in music of a different style.

Norgaard & Taylor (2016) also surveyed a nationwide sample of teachers on the use of eclectic styles and focused on inclusion of improvisation performances of music across different genres. The study found that 40% of teachers played music of eclectic styles on performances and found that less than half of those teachers included eclectic styles repertoire when performing at adjudicated festivals. The authors stated that one of the implications of their findings could be that, “Even if some teachers include improvisation as a classroom activity, not adding it to the concert sends a signal that this activity is not important enough to showcase to parents and administrators” (p. 59). Teachers have the power to demonstrate what is important through concerts, and this lack of performance could be a roadblock to furthering students’ non-classical music making. Lindamood (2011) and Norgaard & Taylor (2016) both found that a majority of teachers see eclectic styles as an important part of the string curriculum, but due to a perceived lack of professional development resources, a significantly smaller number of teachers have enacted changes in their programs to reflect this. These two studies appear to suggest that eclectic styles may be viewed as important, but they are also underutilized in string programs

McMahon (2014) speculated that teachers don’t include fiddling in their classrooms for reasons that included not feeling comfortable with the style, discomfort with teaching and learning aurally, and distaste for some stylistic elements that may infiltrate classical playing. She also noted that not all teachers have complete control over their program decisions and may be held back by administrative factors. Despite these factors, McMahon concludes that the “resources incorporated in the study justify fiddling as one of the viable alternative styles in the orchestra classroom” (p. 85). McMahon addresses the practitioner concerns that are listed regarding teaching music of different styles and dispels myths about fiddle technique hurting classical technique in the areas of posture, bow technique, and

proper fingerings and advocates for rote learning to be applied for all levels of learning (p. 87).

Student preferences

Only a small amount of attention has been paid to students' experiences in eclectic styles ensembles. Mick (2012) examined students' listening preferences to music of eclectic styles. The purpose of the study was to guide teachers to styles that students most enjoy as “. . . enjoyment is a crucial component of music education” (p. 75). He found that Celtic music was the most preferred genre. However, Mick also found that students listening interests corresponded to the music that they had most recently played or had experience playing suggesting that their “dislike” of other styles could be due to lack of exposure.

Fetter (2011) observed that the students' musical experiences in his eclectic styles camp “String Jam” were more connected to the individuals who did the teaching than to the musical style itself. String Jam hosted guest artists versed in several non-classical styles so the campers, elementary and secondary school string players, could learn from them. The guest artists included players with expertise in Irish Traditional, Jazz, Old Time Fiddle, Funk, Rock and Roll, and other musical styles. (p. 16). Fetter, who served as the camp director, interviewed several students and asked them about their experiences with the music and the guest instructors. The first interviewed student was a middle schooler who discussed that her camp experience encouraged her to “explore musics that interest her and create music with others outside of her (classical) ensemble experiences” (p. 117) He also spoke to a high school student who identified most closely with classical music. Her experience was slightly different with her holding more of an allegiance to her teachers, rather than any particular style of music (p. 116). This study aimed to examine student perspectives but does so through the limited scope of a summer camp, so further research of students who play both classical music and music of eclectic styles year-round is needed.

The literature regarding eclectic styles ensembles is limited in comparison to other topics in string education. There is applicable material related to informal music learning, which is an aspect of many non-classical music making experiences, and there is some research showing the prevalence of eclectic styles ensembles and perceived challenges of teaching non-classical music in the orchestra classroom. Considering the paucity of research on students' perspectives and depth of teacher reasoning for eclectic styles ensembles, the purpose of this study is to examine an eclectic styles ensemble and the role that the ensemble plays in students' musical growth through the use of informal music learning practices.

Research Questions

1. What are common characteristics among students who elect to participate in eclectic styles ensembles?
2. What aspects of informal music learning as defined by Folkestad (2006), are present in eclectic styles ensembles?
3. To what extent do the teacher and students share power in shaping the eclectic styles ensemble experience?

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative study was aimed to better understand a specific learning environment where teachers and students teach and learn music in two distinct settings: a curricular orchestra class, and an extracurricular ensemble focused on a musical style other than western classical music. Specifically, the study looked at the experiences of specific students within these settings through ongoing observation and interviews with the participants. The following characteristics recommended by Creswell & Creswell (2018) for qualitative inquiry were true of this study.

1. The research occurred in the teachers and students natural setting.
2. The study had no stated hypothesis or goals, rather it sought to observe and interpret.
3. The study focused on learning processes and experiences over outcomes.

Case Study

The case study design was selected because of its ability to “study of the particularity and complexity of a single case” (Stake 1995). Strengths of a case study include providing the opportunity to focus on one specific problem or set of problems, and the ability to provide a general understanding and insight into particular research questions through studying a single case (p. 3). For this project, case study was chosen to examine the experiences of students in one school orchestra program. Thomas (2011) establishes that case studies have both a subject and an object which should have equal weight. While discussing Thomas (2011), Barrett (2014) defines the subject as the “focal center” of the project, which for this study is the students’ perspectives. The object is the “analytical frame,” or purpose for understanding (Thomas, 2011).

Stake (1995) also wrote “the rationale for choosing a case is when the case itself is of very special interest.” An important aspect of case study is the selection of the individual

case to be studied. Taking an immersive look at one school district's program provided an opportunity to gain insight from a small sample of students who play in varying ensembles and could later be expanded to include additional cases. I hoped to find what students' thoughts were on why they chose to participate in orchestra and the non-classical ensemble, what students hoped to gain from the experience, whether student experiences were aligned with teacher goals, and how teaching methods and learning procedures change in the differing ensembles.

Site Selection

The following criteria were considered in selecting a site for this study:

1. A secondary public-school orchestra program offering curricular and extracurricular string ensemble experiences that draw from different repertoires.
2. The extracurricular ensemble must function as a performing ensemble with public performances rather than strictly an after-school club.
3. An established program with a teacher who has been in place for a at least five years.
4. Located within one day's drive of the University of Illinois and with access to affordable accommodations.

Potential sites were first identified through a search of ASTA National Convention programs, *American String Teacher* articles, social media, and recommendations of several eclectic styles experts. Following a close examination of several programs that fit the criteria, a mid-sized high school program in a midwestern state was selected. The selected program fit the criteria in the following ways.

A high school program in the upper Midwest was selected for this study. The program has three curricular ensembles and a fiddle group (which will be referred to as "The Fiddle Group" to protect participant confidentiality) which puts an emphasis on

playing non-classical music. The Fiddle Group performs for various school and community events throughout the school year and during my visit was preparing for a local “Fiddle-Fest” that was held the shortly after the completion of the study. The teacher has been with this school district for the past 16 years and shepherded the orchestra program from a small, one ensemble program to a program with four ensembles that are well established in the school and local community. Finally, both the school district and the teacher were very accommodating in opening their program to me for five days for which I am incredibly grateful.

The school is located within 50 miles of a medium sized midwestern city and the district at large serves over 6000 students in seven elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one alternative high school. The high school serves 1900 students in grades 9-12. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2018), the high school population is 51% male and 49% female, 87% white, 6% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% African American. 26% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch programs. The orchestra program includes over 500 students in grades 5-12, with 125 students participating in one of the three curricular orchestras.

The Fiddle Group consists of 29 members and is an auditioned ensemble that plays primarily music of Celtic influence but also bluegrass, jazz and rock musics (Ensemble website). The group began in 2004 as a middle school fiddle club. It started small and performed occasionally at school functions playing songs out of the *Fiddler’s Philharmonic* series. The students then began to memorize their music and The Fiddle Group was formally founded when those middle school students moved up to the high school and wanted to continue the experience. Influenced by several other groups in in the surrounding areas, The Fiddle Group grew from a small club to a high-level performing ensemble that performs 20-25 shows a year in and around the local community and hosts an Irish Fiddle

festival annually bringing in guest artists from across North America. Membership is determined by audition and all Fiddle Group students are required to participate in one of the curricular orchestras.

Participants

There were five individual participants who participated in interviews: four high school students who were members of a curricular orchestra and The Fiddle Group, and the orchestra director. The students who participated were recommended by the orchestra director. All participants provided their consent or assent to be interviewed and the process in an Institutional Review Board approved process. Table 1 provides a comparison of interview participant traits.

Table 1

Comparison of Interview Participant Characteristics

Name (Role)	Instrument(s)	Grade/Years of Experience
Mrs. Morrison (Teacher)	Cello	16 years of experience
Lois (Student)	Cello/Bodhran/Vocalist	11 th Grade
Katelyn (Student)	Violin/Mandolin	12 th Grade
Tony (Student)	Cello/Cajon	11 th Grade
James (Student)	Violin	10 th Grade

Participant Details

Mrs. Morrison has been the orchestra director at the high school for all 16 years of her teaching career following the completion of her undergraduate degree in music education. Upon taking over, she grew the program from one orchestra to the three that exist today and founded The Fiddle Group in 2004 as a middle school fiddle club which grew into the high school ensemble. Prior to founding The Fiddle Group, she had no experience with eclectic styles but was inspired by seeing similar high school groups perform and speaking to their directors. Mrs. Morrison is a high energy teacher who frequently moves around the classroom and establishes relationships that extend beyond their common interest in music with her students. She frequently discussed their outside interests and takes time to attend extra-curricular events. She has a strong vocal background gained from singing in choirs while growing up and sings frequently as a pedagogical technique and asks students to sing frequently to aid with musical problems. Outside of school, she enjoys working out and spending time with her husband and two children.

Lois is a junior who plays cello in orchestra and plays bodhran and sings in The Fiddle Group. She started cello in 6th grade in a different district and picked up the Bodhran after being recruited to join The Fiddle Group by Mrs. Morrison. Lois plays cello in Chamber Orchestra, plays Bodhran and sings in The Fiddle Group, and is heavily involved in the school district's annual musicals. She is considering majoring in music in college and says she will continue playing and singing regardless of what degree path she chooses to follow. Lois is a natural leader both musically and otherwise. This is most apparent in observing her relationships with the students in Concert Orchestra, where she is a teaching assistant. She is always willing to help the younger students in addition to her administrative tasks she completes for Mrs. Morrison. As the bodhran player in The Fiddle

Group, she has learned to watch other musicians' feet to better understand how they all individually keep time and can tell you each member's preferred performance shoe. Her best friend is Katelyn (the next participant to be introduced) and the two of them can be seen frequently making others laugh before and after rehearsals.

Katelyn is a senior who plays violin in Chamber Orchestra and mandolin and The Fiddle Group. She started violin in 4th grade and picked up mandolin in middle school as an instrument to play with her very musical family. She takes private lessons on violin but most of her out of school music making comes playing mandolin at church or with her family. She takes her role as a senior in The Fiddle Group very seriously, setting an example for younger students with her energetic performance persona and being a responsible musician who is always prepared for rehearsal. Her musical identity is split between the classical music world as a violinist and bluegrass music as a mandolinist. When learning new music, she listens for musical forms and time signatures which she compares to the music she plays in The Fiddle Group. She enjoys trying to learn new tunes by ear and hopes to continue playing in some capacity when she goes to college in the Fall of 2019.

Tony is a junior who plays cello in Chamber Orchestra as well as cajon in The Fiddle Group. As a classical musician, he also studies cello privately and performs in a nearby youth symphony. His first instrument is the ukulele as his parents were very interested in Hawaiian culture and he learned cajon specifically to participate in The Fiddle Group. Tony is always engaged in some type of music making and enjoys the challenge of learning new instruments. He used YouTube to teach himself guitar, piano and electric bass. He enjoys the challenge of playing a non-pitched instrument in The Fiddle Group as it gives him the freedom to explore different sonic characteristics and to experiment with different beats to keep the groove. His most recent project was figuring out how to incorporate a high-pitched click sound that he recently found through hitting an open seam on his cajon. His favorite

artist to listen to is mandolinist Chris Thile for his innovative arrangements of different tunes and more modern takes on the Bach solo violin repertoire.

James is a sophomore who plays violin in Symphony Orchestra and The Fiddle Group. He started playing in 5th grade and is self-taught on the guitar and piano which he plays in his church worship band. His favorite experiences in The Fiddle Group are performing at the American Legion on St. Patrick's Day and working with the Canadian Band "Ten Strings and a Goatskin." When asked about how he learns music, he described a very direct approach of, "you practice it, and then you learn it." Of the students interviewed, he had the most opinions about orchestral music and does a fair amount of listening to different things that he would like to play. He enjoys music by French impressionists (my interpretation based on the pieces he listed) and music of the early classical period. His favorite orchestra concert of the year is the festival performance because of the level of seriousness that music brings. When he graduates in 2021, he hopes to attend Purdue University to study engineering while still playing music in orchestras or Celtic bands.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in two formats: observation of curricular and extracurricular rehearsals, and semi-structured interviews with the teacher and four students. Observation data was documented through research notes and took place in three settings: Symphony Orchestra rehearsals, Concert Orchestra rehearsals, and a The Fiddle Group rehearsal. The three curricular classes (Concert, Symphony, and Chamber Orchestra) were observed for five, one-hour class periods, and The Fiddle Group was observed for one two-hour rehearsal. Research notes included student behaviors, musical selections, rehearsal strategies, student/student interactions, student/teacher interactions, and the classroom environment at large.

Observations

Observations of curricular orchestra classes: Concert Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, and Chamber Orchestra, took place the week after a performance, so students were in the early sight-reading stages of preparing for their winter concert. For the first several days, the class periods were very free flowing with the objective being reading as much music as possible. By the end of the week, more formal rehearsal processes were followed as the concert repertoire had been determined. The goal shifted from finding appropriate music for each group to preparing that music for the performance which was approximately five weeks away.

The Fiddle Group meets weekly on Wednesdays, and my observation occurred the Wednesday before the group's first major performance of the year at a local Irish festival. This created a rehearsal that was more focused on refining performance practice than learning new music which the interview participants reported being a non-standard rehearsal. The rehearsal was two hours in length and featured run-throughs of tunes in their performance set. The initial plan for the study was to do follow up observations of The Fiddle Group to get a better understanding of what a more typical rehearsal. These observations were scheduled to take place via video conference but ended up not being possible due to severe winter weather. There were several days of cancelled school due to excessive amounts of snow/ice, which all occurred on Wednesdays, leading to cancelled rehearsals. Despite only having one observation period, the accounts from interview participants provide a quality perspective of how a typical Fiddle Group rehearsal proceeds.

In addition to observation data, I interviewed the instructor and four students who participate in one of the curricular orchestras and the extracurricular ensemble. Questions for the director concerned her reasons for including an eclectic styles ensemble and what her goals were for the students that participate in it. Questions for the students focused on

their experiences in performing with the eclectic ensemble and how they view it as similar or different to their curricular orchestra experiences. Students were asked why they choose to be a part of the extracurricular ensemble. Both sets of interviews began with scripted, open ended questions to establish a rapport with the participants and allowed space for the interviews to progress into a more conversational atmosphere regarding topics centered around the research questions.

Confidentiality

In accordance with Institutional Review Board protocols, I have each interview participant a pseudonym and generalized all school, ensemble and geographic information. In addition to obtain parental consent for student interviews, I informed all participants that they were able to remove themselves from participation at any time. Data was kept on a password protected University of Illinois provided Box account and will be discarded on the acceptance of this document.

Data Analysis

I compiled the data rehearsal observation recordings and notes and interview transcripts in addition to a research journal I kept during the study noting observations that were not recorded during class periods. All audio recordings of rehearsals and interviews were transcribed for analysis. While taking notes in the field and while writing initial reflections, I organized my observations using the categories of Content, Methods, and Processes as described by Lucy Green, (2001). Content focuses on the repertoire students are interacting with, Methods refers to how the content is being presented and Processes refers to how the content would be presented outside of a school setting. Green argues that instructional *methods* need to mirror the way that the music is traditionally learned outside of the classroom. I adopted Green's general categories then expanded them to address the needs of the research setting. "Content" referred to whatever the repertoire was in the

moment, “methods” referred specifically to instructional strategies employed by Mrs. Morrison, to the way that the teacher was conveying instruction, and “processes” referring to how individual students were working out musical problems.

I used Folkestad’s (2006) complimentary four aspects to consider when evaluating formal and informal learning provided a better framework to analyze the interviews. The four aspects are:

1. “The *situation*: where does the learning take place? . . .
2. *Learning Style*: describes the character . . . of the learning process . . .
3. *Ownership*: who makes the decisions of the activity . . .
4. *Intentionality*: towards what is the mind directed: towards learning out to play or towards playing?” (p. 141-142)

Following my initial analysis of data according to these frameworks, I organized my findings into the following themes:

A certain type of kid - Mrs. Morrison described The Fiddle Group as being appealing to “a certain type of kid,” so this section examines characteristics of Fiddle Group members through similarities of students that were interviewed.

Eclectic Styles as hybrid learning spaces – Despite the fact that one would assume that The Fiddle Group is an informal learning experience, actually it is neither wholly formal or informal. This section explores the student experience in both types of learning.

Student relationships with ensembles – Students described the connections that they feel to the different ensembles they participate in. All participants talked much more about The Fiddle Group than orchestra. This section explores their experiences and descriptions of participating in different ensembles.

The Fiddle Group as a performing ensemble – The Fiddle Group serves as the public face of the orchestra program. This section explores Mrs. Morrison’s thoughts on this and students’ thoughts on the importance of performing in the community.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important aspect of any case study and is achieved in this study through the following methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

Triangulation – Several types of triangulation were used in this study. They include data source triangulation in which specific instances that were observed in rehearsals were discussed in interviews to establish if they are common occurrences or extraneous data points, and methodological triangulation in which findings are compared against early findings (Stake, 1995, p.113-114).

Member Checking – Interview participants were provided with the opportunity to review their interview transcripts before they were included in the data set.

Rich Thick Description – Observation data taken from field notes is described with rich, thick description providing the reader with a detailed account of what happened in rehearsal settings. Ponterotto (2006) describes thick description as . . .

1. . . . accurately describing and interpreting social actions within the appropriate context in which the social action took place.
2. . . . captur[ing] the thoughts, emotions, and web of social interaction among observed participants in their operating context.
3. . . . interpreting social actions (which) entails assigning motivations and intentions for the said social actions.
4. . . . the context for, and the specifics of, the social action are so well described that the reader experiences a sense of verisimilitude as they read the researcher’s account.

5. . . . “thick description” of social actions [which] promotes “thick interpretation” of these actions, which lead to “thick meaning” of the findings that resonate with readers (542-543).

When interviewing, I adopted narrative techniques (Chase, 2003) that aimed to have participants share stories about their experiences in the search for deeper insight into the observations.

Researcher Journaling – Creswell & Creswell (2018) recommend keeping a journal when conducting qualitative work (p. 189) and advise the researcher of the importance of writing at all stages of the research process as a method of organizing thoughts and improving your analysis (p. 80-83). Accordingly, throughout the research process, I kept detailed research notes of my immediate reactions to events that I witnessed and wrote detailed reflections based on these thoughts in the moment.

External Auditor – The study was supervised by a tenured university faculty member who assisted in designing the study, aided in obtaining Institutional Review Board approval for the study, and provided countless insights both from experience and the writings of other researchers, and reviewed the data record and my ongoing analysis on a regular basis.

The Role of the Researcher/Clarifying Bias

Despite the notion that a researcher can bracket their bias, I have chosen rather to acknowledge and account for my bias while conducting this study. I began this work because of an affinity for music of different styles and its use in teaching string instruments. I grew up in a school music program that put fiddle music at the forefront of beginning strings and had an extracurricular ensemble similar to The Fiddle Group. My student teaching and first teaching position also featured these ensembles and I often incorporate informal music learning practices in my own classroom. In my role as an instructor of undergraduate string methods courses, I impart the importance of including music of many styles into a string

program in authentic ways. These experiences have aided this study by providing me with insight in designing my interview questions and in building rapport with the teacher and students. I also recognize that these experiences may limit my perspective as an outsider, which could influence my conclusions, however I am mindful that the purpose of this paper is not to persuade other teachers to start eclectic ensembles but rather to take a deeper look at students' experiences in these ensembles and understand how participating in one affects their musical learning in both orchestral and non-orchestral settings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The findings are organized into four broad themes. The first theme discusses the type of student that joins The Fiddle Group and is built around Mrs. Morrison description of The Fiddle Group attracting “a certain kid” (Mrs. Morrison, personal communication, November 8th, 2018). The second major theme is how the inclusion of formal and informal music learning aspects in The Fiddle Group effect the student experience. The third theme examines the experiences that students have in relation to the to Mrs. Morrison based through the different ensembles they participate in and The final theme examines The Fiddle Group’s role as a performing ensemble in the community and how these public performances effect the student experience.

“A certain type of kid”

“It pulls at a certain type of kid. It’s something that doesn’t interest every kid, but it grabs certain kids.” - Mrs. Morrison describing why students join The Fiddle Group (Mrs. Morrison, personal communication, 2018)

Mrs. Morrison’s quote regarding the Fiddle Group drawing certain types of students over others points towards the significance that the ensemble has for the students that take part in it. She went on to add that “when it grabs a kid, it really grabs them, and they love it. They’re really attracted to that music” (Morrison, 2018). Fiddle Group students as a whole represent the general demographics of the school as primarily white, middle class students. Given the general affluence of the community, and the tendency of orchestra students to be of a higher socio-economic status than students who are less likely to participate in orchestra (Elpus & Abril, 2011), students who participate in The Fiddle Group will inherently share a certain demographic profile. The requirement that students must participate in orchestra to play in The Fiddle Group also may eliminate students who would participate in an extracurricular group that plays non-classical music but do not want to

participate in orchestra. That being said, Mrs. Morrison's intentions in discussing certain types of students joining the eclectic styles ensemble were intended to go beyond the demographics of the group and are supported by notable patterns in student's joining stories, omnivorous musicianship, independent learning, and listening practices.

Who are the students who join?

Students all have stories about joining The Fiddle Group that align with Mrs. Morrison's assertion that the group pulls at "a certain type of kid" (Mrs. Morrison, 2018). James discussed how much he enjoyed the middle school fiddle club and mentioned that he started memorizing tunes in middle school (which isn't required) in preparation for joining The Fiddle Group. The music drew him in, and he enjoyed putting in the extra effort beyond what was expected (James, personal communication, November 7th, 2018). Tony had a similar experience as a middle school fiddle club member which he joined to hang out with friends. He enjoyed that experience and decided to continue on into high school. When asked to explain why he joined, Tony didn't have specific reasons and said rather, "I didn't consider NOT doing it" (Tony, personal communication, November 8th). He enjoyed the group and didn't consider missing out on the opportunity. Katelyn has a similar experience to James and Tony citing looking up to high schoolers as a motivation for joining. Katelyn recalled several occurrences in 8th grade fiddle club when the high school students in The Fiddle Group came to work with middle school students, and remembers being impressed with their abilities and loving learning a tune from them which inspired her to join when she got to high school (Katelyn, personal communication, November 8th, 2018). Lois has a different Fiddle Group origin story from her colleagues. She joined halfway through her freshman year after being recruited by Mrs. Morrison. Lois and Mrs. Morrison both recall Lois singing in the talent show (which Mrs. Morrison was judging) leading to Mrs. Morrison actively recruiting Lois to join the group as a singer. Lois's role as

bodhran player was added shortly thereafter and she describes the experience as something that she can't imagine not having as part of her high school experience (Lois, personal communication, November 8th, 2018). Katelyn, James, and Tony's joining stories are tied together by the same motivation to join. They enjoyed what they were doing as part of the middle school club and wanted to continue. Lois is the outlier, directly recruited by Mrs. Morrison, but she still considers the group to be an important aspect of her high school experience that she now couldn't imagine not doing.

Omnivorous musicians

All of the interview participants engage with music across multiple instruments or disciplines. James plays violin in orchestra and The Fiddle Group along with piano and guitar on his own. Tony plays cello in orchestra, cajon in The Fiddle Group, and guitar, bass, ukulele, and others. Lois plays cello in orchestra, and also plays bodran and sings in The Fiddle Group. Katelyn plays violin in orchestra and mandolin in The Fiddle Group. This supports the eclectic styles ensembles expanding traditional orchestra instrumentation (Phillips & Phillips, 2002) and three students interviewed used the ensemble as an opportunity to learn a second instrument.

Participants go out of their way to participate in as many musical activities as possible and are willing to learn new instruments to do so. They refuse to be placed into a specific type of music, or a specific type of musicianship rather preferring to make music in many different settings on instruments that are appropriate in those settings. The students break down the dichotomous relationship classical and non-classical music choosing to act as active participants in both realms. Tony describes much of his instrument learning to be motivated by a specific opportunity to play, learning instruments as needed to participate in additional music making.

Independent learners

Another commonality among interviewed students is they are all comfortable in situations where they are expected to learn something on their own and are willing seek out those opportunities. I previously mentioned that Tony, Lois, and Katelyn all learned new instruments for The Fiddle Group. In all of these cases, the new instrument was something they learned largely on their own. Katelyn picked up the mandolin as part of her family's love of bluegrass music before bringing it to Fiddle Group rehearsals. Lois and Tony both learned percussion instruments for Fiddle Group and describe the experience as being largely self-guided. Lois primarily joined to be a singer but picked up Bodhran using recordings and YouTube videos, and Tony's learning process for Cajon was similar while also being self-taught on several other instruments. James plays violin in both orchestra and Fiddle Group but has learned piano and guitar on his own to participate in his church band.

Students also seek out music learning opportunities that they do not have a formal outlet for such as orchestra or The Fiddle Group. Tony discussed learning eclectic bass and guitar parts to Red Hot Chili Peppers songs for fun and James discussed learning to play songs he enjoys on piano through the use of YouTube tutorials. Lois describes listening to her favorite artists in the car and figuring out intricate harmony parts and Katelyn tries to figure out mandolin parts to her favorite bluegrass tunes. In all cases, students seek out musical experiences outside of any formal school settings and use their ability to play multiple instruments as a way to access those opportunities.

Multidirectional Listeners

Mick (2012) asserts that the listening habits of high school instrumentalists are potentially influenced by the types of music that they perform. Students in this study enjoy listening to music similar to the music they perform. Students enjoying listening to music they perform does not fully describe the relationship in this study. Participants describe

their listening experiences as not only something they enjoy, but also something that they learn from.

Katelyn discussed listening to Celtic and other folk musics with and focuses on their form. She also enjoys finding other groups playing the same tunes as The Fiddle Group so she can emulate the interpretations that she enjoys. James discussed listening to a wide variety of musics and is drawn to the structure, meaning the form and harmony, of the pieces. When Tony listens to music he begins by identifying the bassline and melody parts. He then tries to figure out the inner parts and harmonic progressions, but he says he “sucks at it” (Tony, 2018). As a singer, Lois listens to a variety of musics and relates and enjoys complex harmonies and signing non-melodic parts with her favorite artists.

The students listen to similar musics, but more significantly, they all listen to music for pleasure and purpose. James and Katelyn both listen to analyzing the form or to learn new interpretations and Lois and Tony focus on specific parts of songs that interest them. The two methods of listening correspond to the role that each student plays in The Fiddle Group. Tony and Lois, the percussionists, both discussed listening to music with the intention of understanding the whole in addition to listening to the parts that interested them, whereas James and Katelyn, who play melodic instruments, focus more on learning new melodies and songs versus seeking an understanding of the harmony or inner parts the way that Tony and Lois do.

The “certain type of kid” that participates in the Fiddle Group fits a demographic profile that mirrors the school at large. Beyond the demographic similarities, Fiddle Group students are more likely to learn multiple instruments and engage in independent music learning. They also use independent music learning as an extension of their listening habits, often listening to music to influence their own music learning through copying and analysis.

The Fiddle Group as a hybrid learning space

Much of the literature regarding music learning processes describes music learning as being either formal or informal. Formal music learning is a carefully sequenced set of steps, usually laid out by a teacher, with a defined learning objective or outcome (Folkestad, 2006). Informal music learning has more varied definitions but is generally described as an un-sequenced activity where the learners guide the steps and the learning outcomes rather than the teacher. (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008). Folkestad (2006) suggests four aspects to consider when determining whether learning is formal or informal. *Situation* refers to where the learning takes place, *learning style* refers to the how the learning is happening, *ownership* describes who is making the musical decisions, and *intentionality* refers to the outcomes or objectives of the musical experience.

The curricular orchestra ensembles are the most formal learning experiences offered to students at the high school. Mrs. Morrison and the students follow a clear, accepted routine for rehearsal that is followed by both. Tony described this as “orchestra like normal” (Tony, 2018). Mrs. Morrison ran the rehearsals primarily from the podium giving students specific feedback often using metaphor and aural, rote based learning. Lois described student input in rehearsals as completely scripted. “In Orchestra there’s the four set things when she stops. What can you do better?. . .” She explained that what may look like a collaborative process is not one and that the student comments are “the same things over and over again” (Lois, 2018). The final aspect of intentionality is demonstrated by the program structure at large. High school orchestras are clearly formal learning experiences as learning takes place in school (situation), learning occurs in a large group setting utilizing western art concepts and notation (learning styles), the teacher makes the musical decisions (ownership), and the primary objective of the ensemble is the education of the student (intentionality).

Using the model outlined by Folkestad (2006), students' outside of school music making can be classified as informal music making in all four aspects. The learning takes place outside of a formal school setting (situation) and is described as largely self-guided (learning style). Students all discussed learning from YouTube or through copying recordings which Green, (2001) cites as a primary mode of learning for informal music learners. Because learning is often solitary, students also make all of their own musical decisions regarding what to play and how to play it (ownership). Finally, students' outside of school music making is for their own enjoyment rather than a specific performance (intentionality).

Learning in the Fiddle Group has both formal and informal aspects. The learning takes place within a school and its primary purpose is to educate students in playing non-classical styles which both point towards a formal learning experience. However, the aspects of learning style and ownership are both informal in nature.

Much of the music learning in The Fiddle Group is self-guided or done in small groups. Katelyn and James described the learning process for violins as small groups splitting up and figuring out the new tune either from sheet music or by ear before the group recombines to work together. Lois and Tony describe a similar process for the rhythm section, though they come up with their own parts without music. Following the different parts reconvening, the students then decide as a group how to build an arrangement in a process that shows student ownership of the creative process. James adds, "much of the learning that we do in The Fiddle Group has nothing to do with Mrs. Morrison" (James, 2018). This was clear in my observation, as students were the catalyst for most of the musical changes.

This hybrid model of part formal, and part informal music learning has affordances and limitations. The formal aspects provide a structure to support learning in a group of 30

students, and an infrastructure that gives students access to resources such as instruments. Potential limitations brought on by the formal aspects are group needs being placed before individual learning, and authenticity can be a problem with teaching non-classical musics within a formal setting. Affordances of the informal aspects include students' development that could come from making the musical decisions and a more family atmosphere which all the students list as one of their favorite parts of The Fiddle Group. A potential drawback is a less efficient rehearsal process that can sometimes create conflict. Lois discussed a time when she was so upset that she walked out of a rehearsal but noted that she thinks it helps the group grow overall.

The student/teacher relationship

Mrs. Morrison describes her mindset in teaching both groups as switching between “modes” to teach the two different types of ensembles that she directs. Mrs. Morrison in Orchestra mode is more of a director, dictating directions to students who comply whereas Mrs. Morrison in Fiddle Group mode, acts more as a facilitator.

While the repertoire and teaching/learning strategies in orchestra are primarily determined by Mrs. Morrison, students in orchestra view the class as an open experience where their opinions are valued regarding musical and non-musical items alike. Students have a lot of input on repertoire, however Katelyn reports that Mrs. Morrison occasionally will “put her foot down” when it comes to repertoire, but she is always to student concerns. Mrs. Morrison shows relationships with students in Orchestra through genuine interest in their lives outside of the Orchestra classroom. She begins class each day asking students about what is going on athletically or academically, providing a safe space for students to share what is going on in their lives.

Students ascribe the deep, personal connection they have with Mrs. Morrison to their participation in The Fiddle Group. James describes The Fiddle Group as “one big family”

and attributes that feeling to Mrs. Morrison acting more as a facilitator than a formal director. Lois discussed really getting to know Mrs. Morrison as a person outside of school in Fiddle Group events which include social events including laser tag. Mrs. Morrison feels similar, saying that she gets to know students in the Fiddle Group on a deeper level because of the time they spend together outside of school at performances and social events.

Mrs. Morrison is in charge of both the orchestra classes and Fiddle group and makes a point to connect with students in both ensembles. However, both Mrs. Morrison and students report a deeper connection coming from The Fiddle Group because of the outside of school experiences that they have. The informal aspects provide an opportunity for students a deeper relationship with their teacher. Mrs. Morrison serves more of a facilitator than director, empowering students to make their own decisions.

The Fiddle Group in the community

The final theme that emerged from interview data is the role that The Fiddle Group plays as a performance ensemble in the community. Mrs. Morrison offered her perspective emphasizing that “the performance aspect of The Fiddle Group is so incredible, so kids get a confidence I feel that the other kids in orchestra don’t get because they perform way more.” She clarifies how in an orchestra class you learn a set of music to be performed once on a concert while The Fiddle Group learns a set of music which they then have the opportunity to perform 20-30 times, learning from each performance experience.

Students’ favorite experiences in are all community performances. James and Katelyn both talked about the group’s annual St. Patrick’s Day performance at the American Legion in town. When asked what made that specific performance so special, both students talked about how involved the audience is and how special it is to play a local community event with such a participatory audience. Katelyn and Lois both mentioned performing at local senior living facilities as a favorite memory but for different reasons. Katelyn enjoys

the opportunity because her grandmother is a resident, so she feels a special connection with the residents who talk about the performances with her whenever she visits. Lois said that despite the audience's more subdued response, she enjoys performing there because of the joy she thinks the Fiddle Group spreads.

Mrs. Morrison's description of Fiddle Group students being "a certain type of kid" permeates throughout the themes. The "certain type of kid" is someone who is plays multiple instruments and willing to play in both classical and non-classical settings. Fiddle Group students are also confident independent learners who often seek to learn music they enjoy listening too. Students credit many of these shared skills to performing in The Fiddle Group which operates partially as a formal ensemble within the school, but also an informal music learning experience where the students are empowered to learn on their own and make musical decisions. Students also attribute having a deeper personal relationship with Mrs. Morrison because of the informal aspects of The Fiddle Group.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study examined students' perspectives on participating in an eclectic styles ensemble. This examination revealed the significance that informal music learning plays in the Fiddle Group and that students are drawn to it because of the informal aspects. Students extend skills they gain in the Fiddle Group to their music lives outside of schools and see relationships they have built in the ensemble as a significant part of their high school experience.

In this chapter I will discuss my findings in relation to the research questions and explore the implications of the findings beyond those questions. In addition, I will offer ideas for further research regarding the intersection of eclectic styles and informal music learning.

Research questions

What are common characteristics among students who elect to participate in eclectic styles ensembles?

Student participants in The Fiddle Group have many common traits. Students commonly join as a continuation of a positive experience in middle school, enjoy learning multiple instruments, often on their own, and often listen to music for the purpose of learning over enjoyment.

Mrs. Morrison characterizes Fiddle Group members as "A certain type of kid" in reference to the common traits shared by students. It's worth noting that this characterization can also be extended to demographic traits among students. Fiddle group members all come from community that is able to support an orchestra program with an extracurricular group to provide further opportunities that are not available to all students. Because students are required to participate in orchestra to play in the Fiddle Group, there

is further self-sorting that takes place potentially leading to students having so much in common.

What aspects of informal music learning as defined by Folkestad (2006), are present in eclectic styles ensembles?

Learning styles and ownership are both informal music learning aspects of The Fiddle Group. Much of the learning of new music takes place in small group settings with students utilizing solitary learning and small peer groups before coming together as a large ensemble. When the group reassembles, students collaboratively making decisions on matters of arrangement, bowings, rhythm section parts and other musical elements. Formal music learning aspects are also present in The Fiddle Group as the learning takes place within as school (situation), and its primary intent is to educate its members in Celtic fiddle traditions.

To what extent do the teacher and students share power in shaping the eclectic styles ensemble experience?

Both Mrs. Morrison and the students describe students as playing a major role in shaping The Fiddle Group as an ensemble. Mrs. Morrison describes the development of the group over time being student driven, with the ensemble starting to memorize music and other evolutions being proposed and adopted by student members. Students report having a voice in musical decisions and feel that Mrs. Morrison acts more as a member of the group rather than its formal director.

Implications

My background as a musician and teacher leads me to be in favor of non-classical music making experiences for students in secondary orchestra programs. That being said, the existence of an eclectic styles ensemble is not a one size fits all solution that can be easily adopted by all programs in the name of bettering music education. Not all eclectic styles

ensembles are created equal. Some programs rely on learning repertoire solely using classical music methods like formal arrangements which students learn from sheet music and then memorize. Eclectic styles groups can also operate with the director leading large group learning and making the musical decisions in a format no different than curricular orchestra classes. The change in repertoire alone does not mean that students are engaging in informal music learning, building skills that students in this study attribute to being important to their music making outside of school

A common goal that is stated by many music educators is to create lifelong music learners, which I believe is something worth striving for in all music education but is neglected in the way that large ensembles are commonly taught. Simply creating an eclectic styles ensemble is not a solution to this deficiency, but rather a vehicle through which lifelong music making skills can be taught in a more natural setting. The ensemble at the center of study plays primarily Celtic fiddle music, which is an aural music tradition passed down by ear from generation to generation. This aural music copying is a skill that student participants discuss using outside of school to learn music they enjoy. Similar arguments could be made for other musical styles, with the connection to outside of school learning coming not directly from the style of music, but rather through the presentation of that music being true to the music's traditions outside of the school setting.

Student participants all expressed interest in continuing their music education beyond high school, and specifically cited The Fiddle Group as the type of experience they hope to participate in after graduating high school. Students apply informal music learning skills developed in The Fiddle Group to their outside of school music experiences and are the skills that students predict using post high school. Students recognize that formal music learning skills alone cannot sustain their continuing interests playing and performing non-classical music.

Also worthy of consideration are the barriers that exist preventing students from participating in ensembles like The Fiddle Group. There is a socioeconomic element, with orchestras only existing in a small number of traditionally well-funded schools. An even smaller subset of schools that offer orchestra programs offer a non-classical ensemble like the Fiddle Group. There is also a winnowing effect of who participates in high school orchestra (which is required to play in the Fiddle Group) generally having to participate in orchestra beginning in 5th grade and continuing to participate up through high school. This creates a situation where 30 students, out of a total of 2000 at the High School who engage in the informal music learning that students speak so highly of. I do not want to take away from the good things that students gain from the experience, but instead urge the profession at large to consider how we can offer informal music learning opportunities to more students.

Further considerations

The program in this study provides students with a formal western classical music learning experience and an eclectic styles experience using aspects of informal music learning. The two experiences work complementarily with each other. Both a formal orchestra experience and a hybrid eclectic styles experience serve musical development in different ways. Participants played in both ensembles, so it would be impossible to systematically establish what skills were initiated and developed in which ensemble, but the participants do ascribe to the Fiddle Group as having more impact on their musical lives outside of school than their traditional orchestra class. And while this might not hold true for every student, for these participants, the Fiddle Group is a signature musical experience with lasting influence for them. At the same time, it is important to note that their formal orchestra education prior to high school prepared them with the skills to participate in The

Fiddle Group, and their continued participation in high school orchestra continues to develop technical proficiency that allows students to play more complex repertoire in both ensembles.

Recommendations for further study

In completing this study, there were several things that stood out as things that would be worth further examination.

Talking to Orchestra students

This study only examined the perspective of students who participate in both the curricular and extracurricular ensemble. It would be beneficial in future studies examining the student experience to speak to students who only play in orchestra as well to get an outsider perspective of how non-Fiddle Group members view the ensemble. Speaking to non-Fiddle Group students could have provided more insight to what non-Fiddle Group students view The Fiddle Group's role in the program at large.

A hybrid orchestra classroom

An extension of discussing The Fiddle Group as a hybrid learning space is to examine whether some of the informal learning concepts that work so well in the eclectic styles setting could be applied within the curricular orchestra class as well. It would be interesting to see if similar teaching methods employed in the eclectic styles realm would be effective in the curricular orchestra setting as well. Jones (2014) examined informal music learning techniques in secondary band students, and an orchestra version of this study could be done in orchestra programs with and without eclectic styles opportunities.

The role of the musical genre

I remain curious about the role that repertoire plays in eclectic styles ensembles. All of the groups I have been primarily affiliated with primarily use Celtic and American fiddle musics but there is nothing to say that other musics could not accomplish similar goals. Lois

discussed feeling a connection specifically to Irish music and that she believes audiences have a connection with it, but further research is needed in eclectic styles ensembles that feature other styles including rock, jazz, hip hop, mariachi or others. A group featuring different styles of music would potentially draw a different “certain type of kid” providing more students with more opportunities with string instruments.

Eclectic styles ensembles can provide students with an opportunity to grow as musicians through non-classical music making experiences that complement their technical development in a curricular orchestra class. Students report developing music making skills that they use outside of school settings and cite relationships built by the ensemble as being an irreplaceable part of their high school experience. More broadly, the success of the program comes less from the Fiddle Group or the music itself, rather its inclusion of informal music making techniques. These techniques are what students will use to continue their musical growth beyond high school.

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APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER



OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave., MC-095
Urbana, IL 61801-4822

Notice of Approval: New Submission

October 8, 2018

Principal Investigator	Jeananne Nichols
CC	Christopher Livesay
Protocol Title	<i>Case Study of an Eclectic Styles Ensemble within an Orchestra Program</i>
Protocol Number	19213
Funding Source	Unfunded
Review Type	Exempt Category 1
Status	Active
Risk Determination	No more than minimal risk
Approval Date	October 8, 2018

This letter authorizes the use of human subjects in the above protocol. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved the research study as described.

Exempt protocols are approved for a five year period from their original approval date, after which they will be closed and archived. Researchers may contact our office if the study will continue past five years.

The Principal Investigator of this study is responsible for:

- Conducting research in a manner consistent with the requirements of the University and federal regulations found at 45 CFR 46.
- Requesting approval from the IRB prior to implementing modifications.
- Notifying OPRS of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated events, participant complaints, or protocol deviations.
- Notifying OPRS of the completion of the study.

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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Background Information

- What is your primary instrument? (Is it the same instrument you play in The Fiddle Group?)
- When did you start playing your primary instrument?
- Tell me about yourself as a musician?
- Why did you choose your instrument?
- What types of musics do you like to listen to?
- Tell me about your musical experiences outside of school?
- How do you think you'll continue to be musical post high school?
- If you pulled out your phone right now, what music would play?
 - Have you experimented with that on your own instrument?

Possible Questions Guided by Research Questions

- Why did you join The Fiddle Group?
- What are some of your favorite memories participating in the group?
- If you were to try and convince a student to join a group like The Fiddle Group, what aspects would you highlight?
- If you were to try and convince another teacher to start a group like The Fiddle Group, what would you tell them?
- How do you explain Orchestra to your friends?
 - What about The Fiddle Group?
- What are some traditions that you appreciate as a member of The Fiddle Group?
- What have you learned about yourself playing in The Fiddle Group?
- What have you learned about music from playing in The Fiddle Group?
- How do you feel doing community performances?
- Has it changed how you view the community?
- What are your favorite memories of orchestra class?
- Take me through how you learn a song in The Fiddle Group?
- Take me through how you learn a song in Orchestra?
- Do you think you listen to music differently because of your experience in The Fiddle Group?