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## Musical Theatre Education's Influence on High School Students' Self-Esteem

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# Walden University

College of Education

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Michael Penna

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Musical Theatre Education's Influence on High School Students' Self-Esteem

by

Michael Penna

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MA, Montclair State University, 2015

BFA, Syracuse University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

May 2021

## Abstract

Studies have shown that middle school students' involvement in performing arts classes helps to improve self-esteem, but there is a gap in understanding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of musical theatre education on students' self-esteem. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to extend research to include high school musical theatre students by examining how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. Bandura's social cognitive theory and Kolb's experiential learning theory were used as the conceptual framework. Eight students and four teachers at a private high school in the northeastern United States who participated for three months in a musical theatre production were interviewed. Data were analyzed through coding to determine emergent themes. The students reported and teachers confirmed that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes had a positive influence on self-esteem, social skills, career plans, and college goals. This research thus demonstrates positive outcomes of musical theatre education within schools, which may encourage further inquiry by researchers, educational leaders, parents, students, teachers, national, regional, local theatre art agencies, and stakeholders. Positive social change may result from understanding aspects of musical theatre that may increase self-esteem of high school students, which will contribute to the continued value of theatre arts in high school education.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing parents, who have always taught me to work hard and to fight for what I believe in. Their love and guidance have made me the scholar I am today. This dissertation is also dedicated to all the amazing teachers I have had in my life. Without all their wisdom and guidance, I would have never reached this milestone. Thank you!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Self-esteem influences learning and the emotional and social success of students (Varner, 2019), and it can be a significant determinant to teenage mental well-being and growth (Droz-Kreutinger, 2018). Without a healthy development of self-esteem, a student's difficulties may continue into adulthood, impacting relationships, financial decisions, work prospects, and causing mental health issues (Varner, 2019). High school can be a period of dramatic transition and confusion for a student due to shifts in high school configurations, including the transition from small to broad community teaching environments, academic success targets, reduced incentives for student-teacher partnerships, and social stresses (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019). But musical theatre, which has been used to inspire students to be more articulate, imaginative, and self-aware and could improve student self-esteem (Zuffianò et al., 2013). The present study will extend the research by exploring the perspective of students and teachers in a small high school where all students participate in this program rather than only studying those who self-select.

In this chapter, I present the background, research problem, purpose, and the research questions that guided this study. I also discuss the conceptual framework, nature of the study, relevant terms and definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations. The chapter concludes with a section that explains the significance of the inquiry and its potential to contribute to positive social change.

### **Background**

A student's self-esteem is essential and influences student success (Droz-

Kreutinger, 2018). Self-esteem, or the importance that a person assigns to themselves, is an integral part of healthy psychological growth (Bandura, 1986). Good self-esteem provides students with the ability to accept responsibility for their lives and make errors without the fear of rejection. However, lower self-esteem may lead students to make poor decisions that have adverse academic, mental, and social effects.

Self-efficacy is also a part of a student's self-esteem. Self-efficacy involves believing in the ability to control and execute acts that will deliver positive results (Bandura, 1986). Emerging data suggest that self-efficacy is moderated by autonomous regulation and motivational input, which influences information processing (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2020). Levels of self-efficacy influence students in several ways. Students with strong self-efficacy have higher expectations, envision completing assignments, and exhibit greater perseverance when confronted with difficulty (Curtis, 2019). However, students with low self-esteem and low self-efficacy may lack school commitment, which contributes to poor decisions such as dropping out of school, drug misuse, and adolescent pregnancy (Droz-Kreutinger, 2018). Students with low self-esteem are more likely to set smaller, more attainable goals, whereas students with high self-esteem are more likely to strive harder to reach larger goals (Curtis, 2019). But what is not understood is how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of musical theatre education on student self-esteem during performance, how this experience helps to form and advance their growth, and how this growth effects their self-esteem.

### **Problem Statement**

Research has shown a decline in student self-esteem when students move from middle school to high school (Varner, 2019), because they may question the success of their academic achievement, social roles, and identities (Atmaca & Ozen, 2019). Additionally, high school students have fewer relationship opportunities, higher academic performance goals, and increasing social pressures than in past studies ranging from 2000–2018 (Mansour et al., 2018). However, musical theatre is often an extracurricular component in high schools, which can be used to motivate students to be more self-aware and innovative (Droz-Kreutinger, 2018). Musical theatre has also been shown to develop self-esteem (Martin et al., 2013; Varner, 2019; Zuffianò et al., 2013). Though research has shown this improvement in middle school students (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019), there is a gap in understanding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals and performance as aspects of musical theatre education on students' self-esteem (Varner, 2019). Although researchers have noted that musical theatre education influences high school students' self-esteem, this study focused on the perspectives of students and teachers in a small high school where all students participate in this program rather than examining those who self-select.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. Both students and teachers were interviewed from a high school in the northeast United States. This

research may provide a better understanding of high school students' and teachers' perceptions of the influence of musical theatre education on student self-esteem after 3 months of musical theatre education in preparation for a performance.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem?

Research Question 2: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' college intentions and career goals?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory served as the conceptual framework for the study. According to Bandura, students' behaviors are influenced by their environment, social interactions, and their ability to respond emotionally to stimuli. In terms of behavioral patterns, social cognitive theory considers a number of factors that interact to influence a person's overall self-perception (Beauchamp et al., 2019). In musical theatre education, these intertwining factors can occur during rehearsals and production. According to Kolb's theory, learning is influenced by previous experiences and change.

The primary rationale for including the two theories in the conceptual framework for this study was that their combination may contribute to a better understanding of musical theatre education. The theories were used in the current study's investigation of



the relationship between musical theatre education and high school student self-efficacy because they have been previously applied in the exploration of similar themes. Thus, I used Bandura and Kolb's theory to examine the possible positive influence of musical theatre on self-esteem.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a basic qualitative study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to help provide a better understanding of the influence of a musical theatre program on student self-esteem. I had permission to access and recruit the participants from the high school principal. I collected data by conducting one-on-one interviews through Zoom. These interviews resulted in data for the research questions and provided material for data triangulation. I conducted eight student and four teacher interviews to explore how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of musical theatre rehearsals and performance on students' self-esteem and education goals. The richness of a qualitative investigation is related to the amount of detail and contextualization as well as the sample size (Guest et al., 2006). The chosen design and means of sampling and collected data as well as a plan for seeking codes and themes from interviews are explained more in Chapter 3.

### **Definitions**

*Musical theatre education*: "The study of musical theatre which is a form of theatrical performance that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting and dance" (Curtis, 2019, p. 333).

*Self-efficacy*: “refers to an individual’s belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments” (Bandura, 1986, p. 15).

*Self-esteem*: “The extent to which one values them self” (Hickson & Khemka, 2014, p. 115).

### **Assumptions**

When investigating, the researcher needs to make assumptions to approach the data collection process with an open and unbiased readiness to listen and receive new insights (Cronin & Lowes, 2016). First, there was the assumption that the participants would participate in the interview session and provide substantive data. Second, there was an assumption that the participants would feel comfortable to share any aspect of their experiences without concern for researcher judgment or need to filter their responses. Third, there was an assumption that the participants represented an appropriate and accessible sample population. These assumptions were essential for producing a credible report on the findings.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

To narrow the scope and define the boundaries of the many characteristics, I studied high school students who participated in a musical theatre production at a northeastern U.S. high school. All participants must have attended all rehearsals and performed in the show. Rationale for this sample included meeting the criteria for having participated in the activity. This study was limited to students and teachers of a small high school in the northeastern United States and therefore may not apply to other

communities. Most had a similar socioeconomic history, but the sample student to teacher ratio in this school was 13:1, far lower than the rest of the country. Furthermore, since the high school only has 100 students, the findings of this study cannot be applied to broader school districts. Transferability of the findings from this study may inform future research in musical theatre education as well as the effects on self-esteem.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study was that as a theatre arts educator, my personal biases lie toward advocating for the arts curriculum. Additionally, though the results can effect social change in the areas in which the study occurred, other geographic locations may still require an advocate to promote an understanding of musical theatre education's effects of high school student self-esteem. Results of this study may not be transferable to a similar population due to the small number of participants, though the findings may yield implications for further study. But instead of having a large number of participants, the focus instead was on the depth of data and an exhaustive analysis of the perceptions of the participants. Participants were included in the analysis of their experiences and enlisted to triangulate the findings through multiple sources.

### **Significance**

The 2002 legislation No Child Left Behind resulted in the removal of many arts and humanities classes, with curricula focused on subjects such as math and reading (Dee & Jacob, 2011). But with the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, the terminology was changed from "core curriculum" to "more well-rounded education," thus making the arts an essential part of a student's education (Tuttle, 2017, p.17). The

act often encouraged, and some schools required, students to participate in music and theatre classes. Both music and theatre courses have demonstrated that they help achieve positive results regarding student self-esteem (Zuffianò et al., 2013). The findings of this study may support positive social change by contributing to the continued effort to include the arts in educational standards, which may increase student self-esteem.

### **Summary**

Much of what is known about musical theatre education is limited to higher education and middle school, and a large knowledge gap exists in how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. Thus, I conducted this study to address this gap by interviewing teachers and students. Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of current research on musical theatre education and self-esteem that may strengthen the current context.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. There is a decline in student self-esteem when students move from middle school to high school (Varner, 2019), and high school students may question their academic achievements, social roles, and identity (Atmaca & Ozen, 2019). Additionally, high school students have fewer relationship opportunities, higher academic performance goals, and increasing social pressures than previously documented (Mansour et al., 2018). But musical theatre can be used to motivate students to be more self-aware and innovative (Droz-Kreutinger, 2018). In addition, musical theatre has been found to develop and enhance students' self-esteem throughout elementary and middle school levels (Martin et al., 2013; Varner, 2019; Zuffianò et al., 2013). The findings of this study may extend the body of literature to include high school students. Although researchers have noted that musical theatre education influences high school students' self-esteem, few have explored the perspective of students and teachers in a small high school where all students participate in this program rather than only studying those who self-select.

Chapter 2 is divided into multiple sections. In the first section I describe the literature search strategy. The conceptual framework follows the literature search strategy. I then present the evolution of recent scholarly research along with earlier research significant to the topic. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary and conclusions.

### Literature Search Strategy

The search strategy included keyword searches using scholarly and other databases and inclusion/exclusion criteria. I accessed the following databases: PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Source ProQuest, the Dissertation and Theses Database, and the Thoreau Multiple Databases tool. The sources also included reports published by the Educational Theatre Association and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Keywords were used in different databases to obtain the pertinent scholarship and included *musical theatre education, high school student, visual art, extra-curricular activities, societal and family influences, history of musical theatre education in the US, family incomes, parental education, Kolb's experiential learning, Bandura's theory, social learning theory, and psychological states*. I combined the keywords using Boolean operators to develop new search phrases and adopted an iterative research method developed by Zwakman et al. (2018). The four phases of the iterative search process are outlining the review question, creating a search strategy, justifying the search strategy, undertaking the literature search.

Reports published by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Educational Theatre Association, ERIC, and other reliable websites were identified using the following keywords and phrases: *musical theatre education, music in the US, theatre performances, talent in high school, and inadequacy of the curriculum*. Relevant publications were identified from the reference lists of reviewed studies. I conducted the backward chaining process in line with the inclusion/exclusion criteria adopted in the

selection of articles from the databases. The number of key search terms, the saturation of peer-reviewed articles and studies, and the number of databases used indicated that the literature review was exhaustive.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was drawn from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. Foundational concepts from these theories were used to ground the study. According to Bandura, students' behaviors are influenced by their environment, social interactions, and their ability to respond emotionally to stimuli. In terms of behavioral patterns, social cognitive theory addresses a number of factors that interact to influence a person's overall self-perception (Stankov et al., 2015).

Bandura's theory was augmented by Kolb's experiential learning theory (Nguyen et al., 2015; Seshadri, 2012) because according to Kolb's theory, learning is influenced by previous experiences and change. Based on Kolb's theory, high school students would increase their success in music and visual arts programs if they integrated their experiences and linked their observations to actions and maintained a continuous learning mindset (Nguyen et al., 2015). The acquisition of new behavioral traits is also moderated by memory and attention. Considering that attention and memory have a considerable influence on social learning, musical theatre competencies are influenced by the extent of a learner's attentiveness and ability to recall the lessons (Nguyen et al., 2015).

Even though the theories provide useful insights on self-efficacy in musical theatre education, the scope of these theories is limited by the underlying assumptions:

belief that humans mainly learn by observing other people's behavior and that learning is mediated by cognition. Regardless, the theories were utilized in the current examination of the connection between musical theatre training and high school student self-efficacy.

### **Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy**

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as the ability to control and initiate actions that would yield positive results. Additionally, the theory distinguishes the expectation of outcomes and effectiveness. The former is defined by individual-level estimation of the outcomes associated with certain behaviors. Bandura argued that perceived self-efficacy influences individual behaviors, thought processes, and academic achievement by influencing selection processes, motivation, and cognition. Based on Bandura's principal arguments, belief in one's ability is central to academic success. Additionally, teachers' beliefs in their capacity to promote learning and motivate students has been shown to predict students' academic achievements (Vazquez, 2014). Further, the theory describes how self-efficacy determines a learner's success. For example, self-efficacious students tend to set higher goals.

Bandura's theory was selected in place of other self-efficacy theories due to the following factors. First, it provides comprehensive insights on building self-efficacy, mainly through mastery experience, social modeling, social persuasion, and states of physiology. Second, the theory postulates that self-efficacy has an influence on cognition, motivation, decision, and emotions (Vazquez, 2014). Third, beyond the unique constructs advanced by the theory, Bandura's theory is preferred because it has been used



in the investigation of music self-efficacy beliefs in middle and primary school levels (Martin, 2012; Ritchie & Williamon, 2011).

Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy has been applied in many studies related to learning. For instance, Deaton (2015) found that the level of student engagement was higher after the integration of social media tools in learning. Bandura's theory was also applied by Vazquez (2014) to explore the relationship between musical theatre and identity, race, historical representation, social class, history, and sexuality. One of the fundamental observations was that students do not assimilate information unconditionally but rather through filtering of information, internalization, and application of the information in everyday life, which is a process moderated by identity, race, historical representation, social class, history, and sexuality. Similarly, the context influences assimilation and relevance to the audience and the learners. Musical theatre education and visual art performances can be augmented by the incorporation of themes that are relevant to the societal context such as personal actualization, nationalism, religious intolerance, gender equality, and social inequalities, especially among racial minorities (Hurwitz et al., 2015). Further, students who study musical theatre are able to experience different points of view, expanding their understanding of someone other than themselves (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2020).

Research has also used Bandura's theory and suggested that perception of the extent of self-sacrifice required, the role of music in one's life, the effort needed to achieve specific outcomes, satisfaction with the progress made so far, and evaluation of

skills and competencies influence a student's interest in music (Bernabé-Valero et al., 2019). However, Bandura's (1986) theory has a theoretical weakness (Bernabé-Valero et al., 2019). First, the theory does not take into consideration the fact that those with high self-efficacy skills might lack the prerequisite resources necessary to be successful. For instance, many school districts do not have the capacity to include theatre teachers. This claim is reinforced as the theory presumes that human behaviors arise from complex interactions between "unobservable variables which are vaguely defined and cannot be assessed" (Lee, 1989, p. 115). In a section later on in this study I will be reviewing research that will highlight other weaknesses of Bandura's theory.

Despite its potential weaknesses, Bandura's (1993) theory is relevant to the present research because it helps to illustrate that externalities influence the success of musical theatre education. A student's belief in their ability to succeed in music does not suffice because learning exists in a particular social context. Though it is outside the scope of the study that self-esteem is shaped by mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and the states of physiology, the arguments advanced by Bandura help to examine the underlying personal motivations and willingness to attempt new tasks that predict success in music.

### **Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy, Theatre Education, and Self-Esteem**

The self-efficacy theory is an additional framework that links musical theatre education to a high school student (Cayirdag, 2017). The self-efficacy theory derives its major concept from the social cognitive theory: the ability of an individual to attain their goals (Bandura, 1986). The self-efficacy theory also enables a student to determine the

kind of choice they make. The theory involves the kind of effort and initiative they make toward something, the kind of persistence and perseverance they put in when faced with a challenge, and the degree and level of their confidence in the process of engaging in different tasks (Bandura, 1986).

According to the theory, there are sets of activities that directly influence an individual's self-esteem. The most common actions include the mastery action, vicarious action, verbal and social persuasion, and the physiological and affective state of an individual (Cayirdag, 2017). The mastery action enables a high school student to attain their goals to the fullest. Applied to musical theatre education, Bandura's idea of mastery action tends to be effective in assisting students to attain their mastery skills (Sajewski, 2017). For instance, theatre students are more likely to improve their mastery action through motor-related skills such as choreography or physical stage movement. Mastery experience can also increase a person's self-esteem and has been the most significant predictor of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986).

Vicarious actions enable the high school student to model and produce positive behaviors. Students are more likely to complete a skill that they have never tried before. Vicarious action improves the student's attention level, retention level, motor reproduction, and motivational level, and the integration of all these elements brings a high school student to the level of willingness to try new and more sets of activities (Cayirdag, 2017). In musical theatre education, students are more likely to look up to other students who create notable characters and fully grow into their performance without fearing for any more rejection (Sajewski, 2017). New students tend to feel

slightly insecure acting characters in front of people. However, with the assistance of vicarious actions by observing other actors around them, they are more likely to develop their confidence in their physical and emotional connection (Cayirdag, 2017). Such linkages result in more successful performance, thus, higher self-esteem.

The self-efficacy theory also discusses the impact of verbal reinforcement from peers, teachers, and parents on high school students' self-efficacy (Alrabai, 2018). The learning atmosphere students acquire from the multiple feedback makes a considerable difference in the level of self-efficacy (Sajewski, 2017). The level of self-efficacy is determined by how easily a student is affected by either positive or negative cues that they acquire from their environment (Alrabai, 2018). Students who have higher self-efficacy are not likely to be affected by the negative feedback they receive from their peers, parents, and teachers (Bandura, 1986). The result is different from the ones who have a lower self-efficacy. In most cases, the negative cues affect self-efficacy, whereas positive cues are known to encourage the social behavior of the student. Based on the constructs advanced in the theory, it could be inferred that success in musical theatre education among students is mostly contingent on personal effort (Martin, 2012).

The constructs advanced in the self-efficacy theory are also applicable in domains beyond musical theatre and practice. For example, the theory has explained the effectiveness of exercise-based interventions among patients with severe cases of mental illnesses (Romain & Bernard, 2018; Stankov et al., 2015), illustrating support for Bandura's theory in education and beyond. Higher autonomous regulation translates to greater self-efficacy (Roman & Bernard, 2018). Additionally, motivational input is

characterized by a person's self-belief and trust or faith in their abilities concerning the pursuit of individual or communal goals. Motivational input also facilitates assessing the worthiness of a course of action based on the anticipated outcomes and the social context (Hickson & Khemka, 2014). It could be argued that the expected reward is a critical source of motivational input, which, in turn, influences self-efficacy and autonomous regulation. Rewards have the potential to augment the enrolment of high school students in musical theatre programs. The provision of personal, direct, and immediate rewards would be more fulfilling than the indirect benefits attributed to participation in musical theatre. These indirect benefits include possible improvements in students' physical health and better life outcomes if a student secures merit-based arts scholarships or sponsorships (Brown & Summerbell, 2009; Curtis, 2019).

In this section about Bandura's theory and musical theatre, the literature contained explanations of how self-efficacy theory involves the kind of effort and initiative that students make towards something. It also explained the kind of persistence and perseverance they put in when faced with a challenge. Additionally, the degree and level of their confidence was discussed in the process of engaging in different tasks.

### **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory**

Learning is the method of gaining knowledge through gaining experience (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning emphasizes the process of learning rather than the outcomes of education (Russell-Bowie, 2013). Experiential learning is the application of the theory and content of academia to real-world contexts (Li & Armstrong, 2015); it connects the gap between theory and practice. Experiential learning also contributes to developing

skills for life-long learning (Russell-Bowie, 2013). More importantly, perception, cognition, behavior, and experience are all included in experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

Similar to Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory has been applied in studies relevant to music education. The theory was used in the evaluation of attitudes and confidence among preservice music education students and the promotion of the student learning programs (Russell-Bowie, 2013). According to Russell-Bowie (2013), there are two constraints on the acquisition of musical skills in modern societies. First, families and societies delegate the responsibility of teaching music to schools. Second, music is taught by generalist teachers whose level of competence in music, dance, drama, visual arts, and media arts is questionable. Russell-Bowie used Kolb's experiential learning theory to provide practical solutions for improving musical theatre education, which included the integration of practical hands-on activities to increase motivation. Additionally, reflective observations and articulation in learning were suggested to reinforce the ability of the students to recall, conceptualize, and apply the knowledge and skills.

The nature of music instruction also validates the utility and relevance of Kolb's experiential learning theory in explaining experience/abstraction and action/reflection. Empirical evidence shows that the transfer of music skills is dependent on traditional master-apprentice understanding, common sense, and intuition (Okay, 2012). The lack of intuition and master-apprentice understanding limits reflective observation, which is central to experiential learning.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Factors**

The key factors related to the literature review for this study were (a) theatre education and high school student self-esteem, (b) the self-esteem of a high school student, (c) the influence of externalities on musical theatre, (d) Bandura's theory of self-efficacy physiology states and its weaknesses, (e) theoretical weaknesses of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, (f) Kolb's experiential learning theory, (g) Kolb's experiential learning theory in relation to music theatre education, and (h) the influence of social modeling on music theatre education. The literature review key variables are explored in detail in the following sections.

#### **Theatre Education and High School Students' Self Esteem**

According to a 2019 survey by the Educational Theatre Association, most U.S. high schools have integrated musical theatre education. An incorporated methodology permits students to investigate, accumulate, measure, refine, and present data about points they need to research without the limitations (Varner, 2019). A substantiate approach is held to more standards and does not allow a student to process and explore a topic (Varner, 2019). The increase of theatre courses was significant. In the 1970s, only 37% of high schools offered theatre courses. In contrast, 85% of high schools offered these courses in 2019 (Educational Theatre Association, 2019). Similar differences were reported in the provision of extracurricular theatre education. The adoption of an integrated musical theatre program was motivated by different factors, including enhancing students' interpersonal skills, developing student talents (interpersonal skills and creativity), mitigating school dropout rates, augmenting student learning skills, and

the ability for students to understand of the world around them (Educational Theatre Association, 2019).

However, the sustainability of theatre programs depends on the congruence between teachers' and administrators' perceptions of theatre education. Teachers and administrators have rated the development of students' talents and augmentation of learning skills and keeping students in school differently (Educational Theatre Association, 2019). Teachers have rated theatre program integration at a higher level, whereas administrators have consistently rated the integration need at a lower level (Educational Theatre Association, 2019). Theatre instruction permits students to become another person through pretend and technique acting. Indeed, even students who avoided the stage at first announced that they delighted in theatre more than they anticipated.

Curtis (2019) carried out a research study on the "influence of theatre education on the self-esteem of tertiary school students" (p.14). The research study was grounded in the pedagogical literature and focused on the fact that previous educational programs have placed greater emphasis on learning beyond the traditional classroom environment. Extracurricular activities that have been emphasized include sports, playing musical instruments, drama, and acting, which improve students' physical health (Brown & Summerbell, 2009). In Curtis's study the researcher discussed the future successes of the students which, included securing sports scholarships, sponsorships, and admission into higher educational institutions.

High school students tend to struggle with self-esteem issues in various ways. Some of the areas in which they struggle with self-esteem include identity development,



building their right social structures, and attaining academic achievement (Barnes, DeFreitas, & Grego, 2015). Self-esteem dictates high school students' performance in terms of their academic achievement, emotional strength, and social well-being. Educational institutions have gone out of their way to incorporate programs that might help the affected students curb issues related to self-esteem. One of the initiatives is musical theatre education. Musical theatre education is thought to be an essential tool to encourage high school students to go through self-esteem issues (Barnes et al., 2015). Musical theatre education tends to integrate two educational elements, which are music and theatre. There is evidence to suggest that musical theatre education supports academic excellence (Curtis, 2019). Self-esteem is an issue concerning students of interest because it moderates life outcomes. Swami et al. (2016) noted that positive self-esteem contributed to body image appreciation among women and girls.

### **The Self-Esteem of a High School Student**

The self-esteem of a high school student is perceived to be one of the contributing elements surrounding a student's success in school because self-esteem is related to the kind of values that people place in themselves. Such values bring out the kind of healthy psychological development procedures of a student (Yücesan & Şendurur, 2018). Positive self-esteem motivates people to take charge of their lives, to make mistakes, and to carry out their duties without fear of being rejected (Yücesan & Şendurur, 2018). The high school stage is regarded as an appropriate time of change and an uncertain period in a student's life (Curtis, 2019).

Several studies show a decline in the self-esteem of a student from the elementary level to the high school level of education. Decline in self-esteem is linked to the structures put in place between students and teachers, the degree of taking instructions, goals of academic achievement, the interaction between teachers and students, and the social pressure existing in the environment under which the high school student lives (Yücesan & Şendurur, 2018). Therefore, the musical theatre may be significant during this crucial time of a student's development (Barnes et al., 2015). Over the years, musical theatre education has been integrated as one of the high school extracurricular activities. Such extracurricular activities aim to make the student grow up to be more expressive, creative, and fully aware of themselves (Curtis, 2019). Different studies have been carried out to illustrate how musical theatre education can enable high school students to improve their self-esteem. However, according to the literature, no research has come out to determine whether musical theatre education is influential in improving a high school student's self-esteem.

The observations made by Yücesan and Şendurur's (2018) stated that music provided learners with an opportunity to be part of something larger than themselves through the positive exploitation of emotions and control and to work together to forge social bonds. However, key issues remained unresolved, including whether the positive benefits reported in middle school also persisted in college and universities, and whether the benefits were confined to a particular demographic group.

The findings reported by Curtis's (2019) qualitative study were augmented by Yücesan and Şendurur (2018), who explored the effect of play, theatre, music therapy,

and drama in a quantitative study on the emotional state and social skills of college students. Yücesan and Şendurur reaffirmed that a positive change in college students' self-esteem levels occurred (based on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory measure) following engagement in music therapy, poetry therapy, and creative drama. In contrast to previous research, Yücesan and Şendurur noted that music therapy had a psychosocial effect on behavior disorders; it also enabled to calm negative emotions through expression and healing. Based on the Yücesan and Şendurur's findings, it could be argued that theatre education, coupled with drama and music therapy, contributed to meeting the physical, emotional, and social needs of individuals of all ages. Therefore, there exists a consensus in the research regarding the long-term benefits of theatre education on middle school and college students (Curtis, 2019; Yücesan & Şendurur, 2018).

Even though there is a consensus in research, it is necessary to critique opposing arguments and possible moderating factors that might influence the relationship between theatre education and self-esteem or global self-concept. According to DeBettignies and Goldstein's (2019), qualitative study the determination of changes in self-esteem after-theatre education depends on self-reported measures. Such measures are subjective and might not yield reliable estimates of the improvements.

Additionally, psychological research suggests that improvements in self-esteem are moderated by multiple factors, including emotional and social intelligence (Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012), parent-child attachment (Brumariu & Kerns, 2010; Valdez, Shewakramani, Goldberg, & Padilla, 2013), personality (Duckworth & Gross,

2014; Li & Armstrong, 2015; Saksvik-Lehouillier et al., 2012), and other contributing factors. The cognitive factors could have an unmediated effect on students' learning and cognition, depending on personal interests. The research is supported by the established relationship between students' attitudes toward music learning and success in music lessons (Ho, 2009; Krause & Davidson, 2018). The relationship between theatre education and college students' self-esteem cannot be considered without taking into account the factors that moderate self-esteem. However, such factors have been mainly excluded from mainstream research or largely disregarded, which poses critical questions about the representativeness of the current scholarly discourse concerning theatre education.

### **The Influence of Externalities on Musical Theatre Education**

Beyond the factors that reduced self-esteem (for example, social intelligence, parent-child attachment, and personality), theatre education's effectiveness could also be influenced by its content as educational strategies influence life-long musical investment (Krause & Davidson, 2018). Education standards are the outline for constructing a cohesive musical theatre curriculum. John (2014) noted that when education standards are constructed to allow flexibility and musical theatre education is included, students improve their academic performance and are more inclined to participate in activities. Emerging evidence shows that the success of musical theatre students depends on factors beyond self-efficacy. However, current evidence does not indicate whether externalities had a significant or no significant effect on the preparation of student's musical

performances and self-esteem; therefore, causal relationships cannot be derived from available findings.

### **The Influence of Musical Theatre Education on High School Students' College Intentions and Career Goals**

There is limited literature concerning the impact that musical theatre education has on the students' career and college intentions. However, a few studies, such as one conducted by Parkes and Jones (2011), examined the reasons why undergraduate students who enrolled as music majors pursued a career in music performance, conducting a qualitative study on a sample of undergraduate students enrolled as music majors in seven universities from different states in the United States of America. The students reported that they viewed themselves as musicians, believed that music performance was useful, could succeed, and enjoyed playing music.

Henry (2015) sought to determine the motivating factors and musical experiences of outstanding high school musicians who demonstrated a higher likelihood of pursuing music education as a career. Whereas Parkes and Jones (2011) had a small sample, Henry (2015) conducted a quantitative study involving 1205 high school student participants who participated in music education through high school. The student musicians reported multiple varied leadership opportunities and musical experiences, which influenced their intentions and career goals in music. More than 18% considered pursuing a music education career, where 65% anticipated majoring in some field in the music discipline.

In a study exploring how students' beliefs concerning their identity related to teaching classroom music and also their identification with performance talent, teaching

talent, and music performance, Jones and Parkes (2010) examined why undergraduate students pursuing a music major chose a classroom teaching music career. Jones and Parkes employed a basic qualitative research design with a small sample size of 13 students enrolled in music education and music performance programs at seven large universities in the United States. The data were collected through the distribution of online questionnaires. Through musical education, the researchers established that the participants perceived they developed an identity with teaching music and music performance, which influenced their choice of a career in teaching music. The majority of the participants' motivation was the belief that they would be in a position to help other students by acting as role models if they became a classroom music teacher. However, the researchers noted the need to include teaching classroom music's psychological construct of identification in future research related to the topic.

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory and How It Pertains to Self-Esteem and High School Students**

In their review of social cognitive career theory as a means to explain career decision self-efficacy, Yusoff et al. (2019) noted that self-efficacy is a crucial aspect of making decisions, plans, and career choices. The approach puts more emphasis on performance, career choice, and interest aspects. In their analysis, Yusoff et al. established that social cognitive career theory play a significant role in boosting learners' self-esteem; in particular, it increases a student's ability, confidence, and trust in self. They further found that individual trust, confidence, and strength affect excellence in an individual's life and career. Through self-efficacy, the model shapes a person's behavior

practices and develops skills through personality factors such as thinking, self-confidence, and emotion. Yusoff et al. posited that confidence and trust efficacy are mediators of a person's actions and behaviors.

Contrary to Yusoff et al. (2019), who reviewed the theory in the context of self-efficacy and its role in boosting the learner's self-esteem, Rogers and Creed (2011) utilized the social cognitive career theory framework to conduct a longitudinal examination of career exploration and planning amongst the adolescents. They mainly focused on investigating the predictors of career choice actions, operationalized as career exploration, and planning. The researchers tested the model both longitudinally and cross-sectionally with a sample of 631 high school students at the time of research enrolled in Grades 10 to 12. The authors established that the high school students developed more self-confidence or self-esteem with more career exploration through studies. In particular, they found that self-efficacy in career decision-making was a consistent, unique predictor of self-confidence; this is consistent with Brown and Lent's (2019) findings, who likened self-esteem or confidence to career–decision-making self-efficacy. The authors argued that while choosing to pursue or significant in a particular subject, the decision to enter and remain in that specific major is enabled by self-esteem or confidence in an individual's ability to meet the self-efficacy (educational requirements) of that particular subject. Brown and Lent's (2019) findings are in line with Yusoff, et al.'s (2019) findings that those in Grade 12 were more extroverted and had higher career decision-making goals than the lower grades of 10 and 11 because they were older and had more support and exposure to career exploration.

The overall findings of Yusoff et al. (2019) suggested that self-esteem or confidence played a significant role in shaping the career of high-school students based on the social cognitive career theory. Students who made career decisions confidently with a motivation to set goals were more career plan mindful. Equally, the students who engaged in more career exploration were those with high career decision confidence levels. Therefore, Rogers and Creed (2011) recommended that there is a need for career counselors to design and implement interventions that strengthen students' confidence in career decision-making in their final years of high school.

### **Theoretical Weaknesses of Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory**

Published data corroborate the arguments made by Bandura (1986) regarding the influence of physiological states. Bandura postulated that self-efficacy was shaped by emotional biases, especially in the event of failure. Bandura's observations align with the 21st-century culture, which is success and result-oriented across all domains (de Carvalho, Patah, & de Souza Bido, 2015; Duckworth & Gross, 2014). In the event of failure, there is a general feeling of societal disappointment, which might exacerbate negative emotions, such as resentment towards oneself, anger, and depression (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2009; Flink, Boersma, & Linton, 2013). These negative emotions are often associated with low self-efficacy and might result in quitting or giving up. Bandura suggested that negative emotions could be mitigated by education and team effort.

Bandura's (1986) theory, however, does not take into account the role of resilience, which offers protective benefits against negative emotions (Olowokere, 2017) and stigma (Vigna, Poehlmann-Tynan, & Koenig, 2018). Bandura's worldview concerning



psychological states are inconclusive given that the physiological states of high school students in the northeastern United States and other regions are also shaped by exposure to trauma (Morrison, Bruce, & Wilson, 2018; Peltonen & Punamäki, 2010), childhood adversity (Beutel, Tibubos, Klein, Schmutzer, & Reiner, 2017), and mother to child interactions (De Falco et al., 2014).

Bernabé-Valero et al. (2019) argued that the classical approach of Bandura's (1986) theory was limited in the delineation of self-efficacy. These limitations illustrate the challenges in reconciling the perspectives advanced by Bandura and the current realities partially incongruent with Bandura's theory. Bernabé-Valero et al. observed in a qualitative study that self-efficacy was not absolute; it depended on multiple externalities, including social forces. The role of social forces should not be disregarded, given that they influence the acquisition of mastery experiences and the development of social persuasion and social modeling. For example, research on Hispanic communities affirmed that they are shaped by social forces, including language, cultural practices, poverty, criminal ideation, and marginalization (Carrilo, 2013; McWayne, Limlingan, & Schick, 2017). Limitations of Bandura's theory suggest that his worldview might not yield a representative understanding of the relationship between self-esteem and musical theatre education. However, it provides new insights and perspectives on the role of self-efficacy.

Fuentes-Tauber (2018) found in an empirical study how self-efficacy influences the learning process. Self-efficacy influences the kind of goals that students select to challenge themselves. The self-efficacy theory states that students need to believe in their

efforts strongly. Having a strong belief in their efforts enables them to work through their challenges systemically (Fuentes-Tauber, 2018). Students who have lower self-efficacy are more likely to select simple activities and tasks, while those with higher self-efficacy are more likely to choose more challenging tasks (Fuentes-Tauber, 2018). In musical theatre education, students characterized to have a lower self-efficacy may be less likely to attempt attending auditions. The students in Varghese, Norman, & Thavaraj's study believed that they were not likely to perform better, thereby failing to go to the extent of attempting the auditions, even though the audition process always turns out to be an educational experience (Varghese, Norman, & Thavaraj, n.d.).

Students with a higher degree of self-efficacy, on the other hand, see the audition process as a great learning opportunity, an opportunity to shape their life skills, and a perfect forum for gaining input on their success (Fuentes-Tauber, 2018). Self-efficacy influences a student's learning process and the degree of effort they put into their classroom work (Varghese et al., n.d.). Such students are known to work extra hard and indulge in more challenging activities as their confidence level is very high (Wang, Harrison, Cardullo, & Lin, 2018). Self-efficacy also affects the diligence and the desire of a student to attempt new sets of skills. Students who have a high level of self-efficacy are often motivated and secure in their ability to learn and complete new tasks and activities (Varghese et al., n.d.). Higher self-efficacy students are prone to push through difficult and challenging times (Fuentes-Tauber, 2018). On the other hand, the low self-efficacy high school students believe that they have little or no ability to learn and compete for

more challenging sets of activities. For this reason, they are prone to give up when challenges arise.

### **Research Using Kolb's Framework**

Kolb's experiential learning theory also explains high school students' behavior and self-esteem in connection with their experience of musical theatre education. The experiential learning theory differs from social cognitive and self-efficacy theories since it incorporates both the students' personal experience and their transformation (Ricke, 2018). Notably, skills and knowledge are gained from both grasping one's experience and transforming that experience (Kolb, 1984). The experiential learning theory is an effective conceptual framework that can be used to describe musical theatre experience through actions, reflections, and experiences (Ricke, 2018). Educational experiences designed and carried out based on experiential learning theory tend to challenge a student differently since they involve the cognitive, physical, and affective domains of a student (Ricke, 2018).

The experiential learning theory as postulated by Kolb (1984) is divided into four different stages: the, reflective concept, abstract concept, active experimentations and, concrete concept. In the reflective concept stage, a student is given feedback from their peers, parents, and teachers. In the abstract concept stage, the student is subjected to multiple options to interpret their characters and performance (Goldenberg, 2019). Active experimentation means that individuals try out their experiences and develop plans. The experimental learning theory's primary objective is to allow the student to use a useful educational framework when learning (Goldenberg, 2019).

### **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory in Relation to Music Theatre Education**

According to McCarthy (2016), musical theatre education is usually founded on learning new concepts from time to time. The continuous learning process is based on the process that brings out students' beliefs and ideas on the topic as they can undergo examination, testing, integration, and combine them with new and refined ideas (McCarthy, 2016). Differing ideas and conflicting beliefs are what drives a student to engage in a more comprehensive process. Characters that are religiously, ethically, or racially different from themselves are often encountered by high school students (McCarthy, 2016). Since musical theatre education heavily relies on the fundamentals of Kolb's experimental learning theory, students are known to learn from their setting and later on adapt to them fully. Kolb's school of thought attunes learning to become a comprehensive process of coming up with relevant knowledge and skills (McCarthy, 2016). Therefore, the learning process is perceived as a crucial learning cycle where students learn through their experience, reflection, thinking, and acting.

Students can portray the life of anyone they admire, develop their characters, and come up with choices for their specific functions and responsibilities based on their personal experiences (Ricke, 2018). High school students are known to have higher control over the development of their self-esteem than younger students have (Ricke, 2018). High school students also have control over their choices, opportunities, and freedom than younger students (Ricke, 2018). Thus, high school students are more likely to drive their self-esteem since they control their learning experience (Ricke, 2018). A student's self-esteem can be improved the moment they believe they have some element

of control over their outcomes, behaviors, and subsequent choices. According to Curtis (2019), student participation in music theatre education is regarded as one of the essential tools that enable high school students to explore and learn some of the challenging aspects of their respective lives. Some of these challenging and stressful aspects include classism, sexism-related issues, and racism (Curtis, 2019). The driving elements behind the musical theatre education are their effect on the emotional ability, physical ability, and the cognitive ability of the student.

According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is a diversified process characterized by reflective observation. Kolb's process entails (a) reviewing and reflecting on experiences; (b) abstract conceptualization, which is learning from experiences; (c) active experimentation, a process that is defined by putting into practice what one has learned; and (d) a concrete experience that involves acquiring the prerequisite learning experiences (Li & Armstrong, 2015). The four-step learning stages proposed by Kolb complements Bandura's social learning cycle argentic perspective and the four ways of building self-efficacy, namely, mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and the states of physiology (Ohland et al., 2012). Bandura's theory shows that each of the four facets has a similar effect on music theatre education. Consequently, a comparison of Bandura's concept and Kolb's theory shows that there is similarity in the theories in showing a substantial link between mastery experiences, real experience, and active experimentation as mastery experiences are based on first-hand experiences of self-efficacy.

Based on the primary constructs advanced by Kolb's (1984) theory, the acquisition of expert skills by high school students in musical theatre classes would accrue over time (Politimou et al., 2018). Considering that the first step is defined by active experimentation, it would be important for students to practice outside the standard class hours, to help them improve their performance skills. Additionally, the practice would require a team effort, as theatre practices cannot be done in isolation. Students would require preparation with musical instruments including their voice outside the school (Politimou et al., 2018). Conclusively, acquiring musical theatre skills from home is a step-by-step process that may not be effective for students who come from less privileged backgrounds (Ohland et al., 2012). Therefore, the lack of funds to purchase or make payments for musical instruments for home practice impedes processual learning.

### **The Influence of Social Modelling on Music Theatre Education**

Learning, according to Kolb (1984), is the transformation of an individual's experience into awareness. The social surroundings of a student's life influence the choices they make (Adeyera et al., 2018; Olsson et al., 2015). Social modeling can influence a student's learning and drive to improve their academic and social skills (Politimou et al., 2018). The influence of practicing musical instruments at home has been extensively and qualitatively documented by Politimou et al. (2018). There is a consensus in the research that social forces at the family or societal level and beyond have had a considerable influence on musical skills development. The findings presented by Politimou et al. (2018) align with McPherson (2009), who carried out mixed-methods research, noting that the involvement of the larger society from where a student emanates

affects their pursuit of music theatre education with particular emphasis on parent-child influence. The constructs advanced in both McPherson and Politimou studies are also in tandem with Barnes et al.'s (2015) qualitative study of students' home music environment engaged in community programs in Brazil and the United States. The empirical data are consistent with anecdotal evidence drawn from the biographies of African American artists.

Societal perception towards music or musical theatre may be variable. An acceptable level of societal interest could also predict social modeling and social persuasion (McPherson, 2009). The variability of social interest in music and theatre education is validated by statistics on the population of adults engaged in musical/theatre programs found in a cross-sectional survey by the National Endowment for the Arts. According to the National Association for Music Education (2020), the proportion of U.S. adults who have some form of interest in music is below 10%. In particular, interest in performing and visual arts has been as low as 4.1% (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015). Even though there is a relationship between the larger society tends to influence and a student's self-efficacy in musical education, it is difficult to establish causality. The focus on parental and social forces does not explain outlier scenarios. For example, Adele (one of the leading musicians in the United Kingdom) emerged from a nonmusical family and contends with multiple and negative social influences to achieve success. Adele's case is a microcosm of musicians' unique trajectories towards success and the role of self-efficacy and self-esteem in the absence of positive social modeling. Thus, social

modeling is not an absolute measure of success or failure in the pursuit of a musical theatre career.

There are multiple factors with an equal or more significant influence on self-efficacy and self-esteem than social modeling or parental influences (Adeyera et al., 2018; Olsson et al., 2015). However, such factors have been primarily disregarded in mainstream research except for general research on resilience (Adeyera et al., 2018; Olsson et al., 2015). However, the concept of resilience in the face of adversity has not been explored from the perspective of musical theatre education. Beyond parental influences and social forces, musical instruments (e.g., piano, guitar, and violin) are integral to students' engagement in musical activities outside the school environment. Based on the primary constructs advanced in a study by Politimou et al. (2018), it could be argued that parental influences and the availability of musical instruments could have similar effects on high school students' musical theatre performance. Most specialists announced a positive relationship between music, theatre, and musical theatre training and expanded student confidence. (Adeyera et al., 2018; Olsson et al., 2015; Politimou et al., 2018). In multiple studies, evidence supporting positive student self-esteem has been found in theatre education research (Politimou et al., 2018).

### **Literature Review Related to Qualitative Methodologies**

In this section, the research studies I will concentrate on are the groundwork upon which I will build my research. I will describe how the researchers in these studies informed and shaped their research through their foundation and methodology choices. All the studies are qualitative and include Andvig and Hummelvoll (2016), Antonelli et



al. (2014) and DeBettignies and Goldstein (2019). This section's researchers look at the influence of musical theatre education on students' self-esteem.

DeBettignies and Goldstein (2019) examined the influence of "drama education on social interaction as an aspect of self-esteem among middle school students" (p.25). The findings of this research suggest that drama and art education are essential components that affect students' communication, tolerance, flexibility, and empathy. The research was conducted in two schools in Ontario, Canada. One of the schools conducted drama classes with many audiences, while the other institution only houses a small-carpeted room with a small stage. The students in these schools mainly came from working-class families, with most being from the white ethnic origin. A small number of the students were from minority ethnicities.

DeBettignies and Goldstein (2019) used open-ended interviews as the dominant strategy for collecting data from the participants. The designed interview guide contained six questions related to the influence that drama had on the participants' ability to relate. Further, the study also involved non-participant observation, which encompassed personal reflection outlining the researcher's responses to the data and note describing an event that took place during drama performance. DeBettignies and Goldstein (2019) used comparative analysis identifying patterns that were either similar or different in the participants' experiences and responses. The transcripts were subjected to context and content analysis, which encompassed recognizing and coding patterns and shared ideas that existed in the information in both observations and interviews. A case study analysis

was conducted for each participant's responses followed by cross-case analysis leading to the grouping of data on the same topics or issues (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019).

Some of the primary themes that emerged from DeBettignies and Goldstein's (2019) study included self-confidence and communication. The majority of the participants indicated that drama education improved their self-confidence. Interview responses showed that teachers felt drama education boosted students' self-confidence as participants became more open to their emotions and feelings (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019). Enhanced communication was another theme that students and teachers highlighted as the benefit of drama education. Most of the students pointed out that they were able to express themselves adequately. Communication is an essential tool for acceptance, tolerance, and self-esteem. Students who are open to discussions through effective modes of communication build their confidence and are therefore more likely to succeed in art-based performances. Teachers describe drama education was necessary for enhanced communication since the students had to listen and speak to others (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019). The findings of this research suggest that the self-esteem of a student greatly impacts their ability to pursue musical theatre education and succeed. Overall, these are critical elements that help the student improve their self-esteem. Because most of the small number of participants included in the study were from white ethnicity generalizability of the conclusion and findings to other populations is tentative

Antonelli et al. (2014) conducted qualitative research exploring how drama and culture-based performances affect dyslexic students' self-esteem. The researchers stated

that self-esteem influences learning, quality of life, performance, and self-worth, particularly for students with special learning needs. In the study, a conceptual model that blended drama experience and performance auto ethnography was created to enhance enrichment and empowerment. The data was collected from individuals who participated in a series of workshops. The participants were young persons aged between 12 and 15 years with dyslexic profiles. The participants' parents were also involved in the study. The study utilized open-ended questions that were sent to the participant through email at 2 and 12 months following the workshop. The questions were related to the influence of the workshop on the participants' emotional and physical health. The study coordinator, one of the workshop coordinators, collected the data. Antonelli et al. used thematic analysis to develop answers to the research objective. Primary data sets were transcribed and coded after the researcher read the responses.

Three major themes emerged from the study: self-worth, resilience, and empowerment. Before the study, the participants perceived school as a negative experience. However, after the workshop, the participants could utilize the role played in their real school life (Antonelli et al., 2014). Participants who participated in the workshop became more expressive and empowered and understood their self-worth better. They also felt that the workshop motivated them to try and explain their need for teachers (Antonelli et al., 2014).

The participants' pride and success in performing before others influenced their determination and salience positively. The study outcomes suggested that drama and art performance have a positive experience at school for those with learning disabilities, as

this has long-lasting influence related to self-esteem, self-concept, and quality of life. The findings of Antonelli et al. (2014) demonstrated that participants had an initial negative perception towards music theatre education, terming it as negative. The exposure offered to the students through the mentorship program changed their attitude and even boosted their morale. The propositions of Antonelli et al. (2014) instill a sense of hope and resilience among students who aspire to pursue music theatre education. Further, the postulates of Antonelli et al. (2014) act as an eye-opener to parents and teachers in the music theatre scene, creating a desire to recruit willing students into the industry.

Andvig and Hummelvoll (2016) carried out a qualitative study to explore the experience of students who took part in a 1-year inclusive-theatre project. The participants were required to outline their experiences concerning self-image and self-esteem and how theatre affects their social participation and belonging. The study utilized multi-stage focus groups, a method involving exploration of the same group, phenomenon, theme, and focused problem. Andvig and Hummelvoll (2016) carried out multi-stage focused interviews with three actors with all the meetings taking place in the project's localities. At the beginning of the project, the researchers had problems with isolation, loneliness, and anxiety and experienced little meaning and hope in life. Twelve out of the 13 actors completed the project. One of the participants quit at the last stage of participation. There were three meetings, 11 participants attended the first and second, and the third was attended by all 12. Each focused group interview lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes (Andvig & Hummelvoll, 2016). The researchers adopted qualitative content analysis for analyzing the data, which was carried out in a stepwise manner. The first step

involved condensing the transcribed text from the first group and initial analysis performed before the second and third meetings. The second interview focused on the topic initiated in the first interview. Finally, significant codes, themes, and subthemes were generated based on the data collected from all the three focus groups. Analytical traces and codes were also identified. Statements from the participants were also systematized through gathering accounts that fitted together under different codes (Andvig & Hummelvoll, 2016).

The identified categories and subcategories were named and validated through examples of statements. Finally, Andvig and Hummelvoll (2016) presented a draft of the analysis to two of the participants and discussed as well as revised it based on their opinions. Participant anonymity and data confidentiality were the critical ethical issues that were important for the study. The research was mainly concerned with informed consent, respect for personal integrity, right to privacy, beneficence, and non-maleficence (Andvig & Hummelvoll, 2016). All the participants received informed consent and were allowed to withdraw at any step of the study without negative consequences. One of the primary themes that emerged from Andvig and Hummelvoll's study is that the participants showed increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Through participation in the theatre, the project made the respondents realize they were capable persons (Andvig & Hummelvoll, 2016). They also became aware that they had far more resources than they had previously imagined when joining the study. Their self-esteem increased because they felt valued according to their standards (Andvig & Hummelvoll, 2016).

The notable increase in self-esteem was related to the respect and appreciation they received from the professionals. The research finding agrees with the propositions of Antonelli et al. (2014) as the participants made themselves more visible as they confidently revealed their capabilities through dancing, singing, and taking part in art projects and performing on stage (Andvig & Hummelvoll, 2016). Therefore, through their increased self-esteem, the respondents could explore opportunities for their development and find ways to pursue their goals. In their study, Andvig and Hummelvoll stated that inclusive theatre leads to empowerment by expanding participants' positive sense of self at the group and individual levels. In conclusion, the study showed that theatre and other several forms of exhibitions and art seem to work well as a strategy for social work with young people at risk.

John (2014) conducted a study that examined how taking part in a high school musical theatre show shaped a network of training, which would affect students' self-awareness. The research demonstrated that high school is one of the challenging stages for adolescents because their "self-esteem may decrease due to differences in school structure." (John, p.12, 2014). The study further points out that music and theatre are fundamental in assisting students in attaining a "higher sense of self-esteem, accomplishment, and self-efficacy" (John, p. 12, 2014). John used a qualitative study approach as the overall research method, using case study research, the primary strategy. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to develop a conclusion based on the students' experiences and multiple perspectives.

Qualitative studies enable the development of themes related to the question under investigation. Additionally, flexible qualitative study formats allow researchers to use open-ended interviews to reveal a situation's reality. Specifically, with a case study, researchers can explore the participants' experiences and perspectives at length, leading to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (John, 2014). Additionally, the case study results in reliable data as the researcher cannot manipulate the participants' behaviors. Therefore, a case study is a useful approach for exploring phenomena or issues occurring within a bound system, a study that evaluates specific experience. In John's study, data was bound within high school learners who took part in a musical theatre production.

The target population for John's (2014) study consisted of five high school students who participated in a musical theatre production. Purposive sampling was the primary approach used to select the participants. The case study respondents participated in interviews conducted after the musical production. The interview questions were open-ended, which enabled the students to describe changes social interactions, behaviors, and family relationships that became apparent as a result of the students' participation in musical theatre production (John, 2014). John reported that the approach enabled the respondents to share their experiences and perspectives honestly. The interviews allowed the participants to discuss issues related to social interaction, academic achievement. Observations of performances, the performance program and informal anecdotes were collected (John, 2014). Similarly, to observe any change in behaviors, academic projects were collected.

John (2014) used thematic analysis to analyze the collected data. Upon completion of the data collection process, the transcripts were read. The data presentation included a narrative vignette that helped to provide a rich description. Pre-structured case analysis aligned the findings with elements of communities or practice, practice and identity. A pattern coding analysis showed themes of family and work (John, 2014).

One of the main findings from the John (2014) research is that high school musical theatre productions help to bring to light positive social and personal development in high school students through the formation of community of practice. There is a need to note that arts-based performances require that artists are versatile and can adapt to changes rapidly. The music and theatre industries are prone to changes from time to time and thus instilling the ability to detect changes and move by them is a skill that aspiring performers should develop while building their career paths. John further revealed that students also earn the skill of resilience and develop a daring spirit of innovation. Notably, the findings of John complement the propositions of Antonelli et al. (2014), offering students a better understanding of the musical theatre education in general.

### **Summary**

The review of literature was designed to affirm Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory in elucidating the role of musical theatre education on high school students' self-esteem. Bandura and Kolb noted that self-esteem is shaped by mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and the states of physiology. Empirical and anecdotal evidence reinforces the observations made by Bandura and Kolb about the lifelong effect of mastery experiences and social



modeling. The research showed that social modeling by either parents or teachers had an immense influence on self-efficacy and the acquisition of self-esteem. A selected number of studies showed that musical theatre skills were dependent on social forces; such forces were either within or outside one's control (DeBettignies & Goldstein, 2019; John, 2014). The findings of this study may extend the body of literature to include high school students. Although researchers have noted that musical theatre education influences high school students' self-esteem, few have explored students' and teachers' perspectives in a small high school where all students participate in this program rather than only studying those who self-select. In Chapter 3, I present the research methodology used in study, including the rationale and strategies behind the decisions.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. This chapter's topics are the initial demonstration of the research design and rationale, where the research questions are also restated. I also detail my role as the researcher, including any ethical considerations or biases, and the methodology for this study with information on instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, and a data analysis plan. Additionally, I address issues of trustworthiness, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I also describe the ethical procedures I followed in the research process.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

A qualitative research question does not include a hypothesis; however, it is specific enough to establish boundaries surrounding a topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A qualitative research question focuses on a topic and simultaneously is the lens through which the researcher captures the experiences and perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research questions for this study were:

Research Question 1: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem?

Research Question 2: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on student's college intentions and career goals?

The methodological approach for this research was a basic qualitative inquiry that was chosen to explore how rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes influence students' self-esteem, student's college intentions, and career goals. Basic inquiry is a way to understand and interpret the meaning of the experiences of the people (Cronin & Lowes, 2016). A basic qualitative inquiry entails field research investigations in real-world settings and inquiries with open-ended questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). My study was not guided by an established set of philosophic assumptions and traditions, so a basic qualitative inquiry was chosen as the research method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This design yielded data necessary to describe the perceptions of the students and teachers of the influence of musical theatre education on students' self-esteem, college intentions, and career goals after 3 months of musical theatre education in preparation for a performance.

In choosing a methodology for conducting my investigation, I also considered the following approaches. Phenomenology is the study of the significance that a group of people assigns to their lived experiences of a phenomenon and is used to investigate the essence of a topic or subject (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The objective of the study was to describe the perceptions of the students and teachers of the influence of musical theatre education on students' self-esteem, college intentions, and career goals. This pragmatic

objective focused on aspects of the experiences chosen by me, the researcher, so I did not choose a phenomenological research study design.

Additionally, narrative inquiry is concerned with the stories of a person's life experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The participants' stories are told by the researcher and are the product of a joint effort between the researcher and the investigation's participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The purpose of the research study was not telling the stories of students and teachers in a high school rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre class; therefore, I did not choose this design.

Finally, ethnography is a complex definition of a culture-sharing group's beliefs and behaviors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Ethnographic research entails not only observation but also involvement (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researcher participation was not incorporated into this study. The option of an ethnographic study would have required extended time in a specific setting that was beyond the scope of this research and difficult to do during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as the researcher was to conduct the interviews of high school students and teachers and to gain their perceptions of the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. Contact that I have had with students or teachers prior to the study would have been incidental or indirect as I am a theatre educator and am involved in many local education groups. I expected that some of the students and teachers would know of my position as an educator or my affiliations within education in the state as the information is public

record. As the interviewer, I first sent a letter of cooperation to the principal of the school to gain access to invite students and teachers to participate. I contacted the participants and explained that my study was limited to my academic endeavors. I planned to conduct this study with transparency and objectivity. I conducted all the interviews and did the analysis of the data.

### **Methodology**

For this study, I collected data through individual interviews from a total of 12 participants—eight students and four teachers—from a private high school in the northeastern United States. In this section, a description of the participant selection logic, the use of instrumentation, the procedures for recruitment and participation, and the procedures for data collection are presented. At the end of this section, I explain the data analysis plan for the study.

#### **Participant Selection Logic**

The participants for this study were from a private high school in the northeastern United States. The student population is approximately 100 students and 32 teachers, predominantly White and upper-middle class. Convenience sampling was used in choosing the participants from the entire ninth- through 12th-grade population. Students from these grade levels all participate in the school productions and would give a clear perspective of the school population and ages.

The main criterion for selection of student participants was based on students having at least 2 years' participation in musical theatre education in Grades 9 through 12. Students in the ninth and 10th grade could have met this criterion as they may have had

experiences with musical theatre classes in middle school or performed in their middle school production. The reason for seeking those with 2 years of experience was to obtain participants who might provide quality information based on their experiences and perceptions. The goal was 12 participants: eight students and four teachers. The logic for selecting this number was that the smaller sample was likely to produce quality data over a shorter period. It also made it more effective to elucidate and interpret the participants' responses. The number of teacher-participants was half that of students because the research was focused on giving the students more opportunity to make their perceptions known rather than the instructors. Saturation was reached by the 12th interview. Saturation approximately occurs when the participants provide sufficient data and additional participants will not lead to additional information or perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection source was a set of interview questions, which were flexible and semi structured with open-ended interview questions. I did practice interviews with colleagues and had my dissertation committee review the questions to be asked. The interview protocols (Appendices A & B) were based on both the conceptual framework and the findings of the reviewed literature.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Upon receiving approval from the institutional review board (IRB; #01-14-21-0605372) I sought permission to conduct the research and access to possible participants to participate in the study from the principal of the high school of interest. Convenience

sampling was used in choosing the student participants from the entire 9th through 12th-grade population, totaling eight students. Students from all grade levels participate in the school productions. Each study participant must have had at least 2 years' participation in musical theatre education. All four theatre teachers were invited. The goal was 12 participants: eight students and four teachers. A letter of consent was sent out by me to the teachers, parents of students under 18 years of age and students who would be possible participants in the study because the students met the single criterion. The consent form stated that participation was voluntary. To those participants who first volunteered, I sent the consent form, which included the IRB chair and dissertation chair's contact information in case they had any concerns. One-on-one interviews were scheduled and took place after school. All interviews were conducted during non-school hours and off school property to protect the identity of participants. The participants and the researcher conducted their interviews over Zoom from their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The one-on-one interviews, conducted on Zoom, were audio recorded with a digital device and on a secondary device as a backup measure. I made field notes from my observations of voice tone and facial expressions. The musical theatre production had taken place in the fall, before data collection, and was performed outside due to COVID-19 protocols. Student interviews and theatre instructor interviews were conducted after the musical production. The interviews lasted approximately 60-70 minutes unless a participant requested to go beyond the time allocated.

As the researcher, I used casual conversation to establish a rapport before the interview to alleviate apprehension and encourage the participants to be comfortable during the process. The comfort of the participants was respected to encourage openness and in-depth responses and to help provide a better understanding of their experiences. At the end of each interview, I told the participants how much they are appreciated and reminded that they have the choice of withdrawing from the research if they desired.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

After each interview I transcribed each participants' response. I cross-checked the transcripts to ensure accuracy by listening to every audio file and conducting line-by-line verification. Transcripts of the interviews were shared with the participants as a means of ensuring accuracy. For the initial coding process, I used open coding. The first round of coding presented patterns in the data that allowed the creation of categories. The second round of coding was an analysis method of reorganizing and recategorizing data from the first round. In the second round, I viewed the data through a different lens to diminish the number of codes. I used Merriam and Tisdell's (2015) assertion that coding by paragraph is possible for capturing responses from different respondents to a specific question. This coding cycle was repeated until the themes related to the research questions had emerged. As a result, the themes showed insights from the participants.

The confidentiality of each participant was insured through the use of gender free pseudonyms and the deletion of definable characteristics from the transcripts and excerpts used in the results. For instance, conspicuous data, such as grade levels and ages



of the students, were removed as these could be used to identify the participants due to the small size of the school setting.

### **Trustworthiness**

According to Zahavi and Martiny (2019), demonstrating trustworthiness is an attempt to ensure the evidence can support the conclusions; so expert advice is needed to ensure the consistency of both the description of the data and interpretation of the evidence. I have used four strategies to ensure the evidence is strong enough to support the conclusions credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

Information obtained from the participants was analyzed to establish a comprehensive description of their perceptions and experiences. Credibility was increased through rich descriptions used in describing the findings. Triangulation among the interviews and transcript checking of interviews by the participants was used to increase the credibility of the data. The interview transcripts were reviewed by the participants to clarify and validate the accuracy of the data increasing the study's credibility through their clarifications and input regarding their interview responses and interpretations.

### **Transferability**

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) defined transferability as the ability to which the results of the research can be applicable beyond the study's boundaries. To obtain a comprehensive description, my method of data collection was face-to-face interview sessions. The method of collecting data for this study included 60-70 minute one on one

interviews, which helped to obtain the detailed descriptions. Detailed descriptions obtained from the interviews establish transferability. The descriptions of the participants' perceptions were written in themes that reflected the findings in a way that the reader will be able to determine the transferability. The readers on my research will determine the transferability of my research.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the presentation of study results that are consistent and reproducible by other researchers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Every recording was transcribed verbatim, and participants were invited to do transcript checking. I maintained comprehensive records of how and when data collection occurred to ensure transparency and study duplication. Similarly, I utilized a database that was secure for coding, managing, and storing data helped ensure data integrity. I achieved dependability by participant transcript checking, peer review and detailed descriptions. I provided a copy of the interview transcripts to every participant for confirmation.

### **Confirmability**

There are several ways of establishing assurance when conducting a qualitative study. According to Zahavi and Martiny (2019), assurance is the same as where study results are never the outcomes of the biases of the researcher but informed by the study context. Confirmability can be accomplished by keeping a study journal, which notes any biases or feelings that occur during the interview phase. I reviewed my notes throughout the process and as new themes emerged.

## **Ethical Procedures**

Permission to conduct the research and access to the participants was obtained from the principal of the high school of interest. A letter of cooperation was sent to the school. I received Walden's IRB approval (#01-14-21-0605372) before conducting research. I sent emails of invitation and asked for a response within a week to students, teachers, and parents of students under the age of 18. After the students and teachers agreed to the study, every participant received a copy of the consent form, which included a description of the scope of the study, and my contact information, and Walden's IRB chair information in case they had concerns or wished to leave the study.

All information collected was electronically stored in an encrypted file on an external hard drive and will be destroyed after 5 years of this study's completion. The paper transcripts used in the data entry and analysis will be safely stored and shredded after 5 years. The participants' consent forms will also be kept and protected in a data file. No outside party will have access to the personal details of the research to maintain privacy.

## **Summary**

This chapter was a presentation and discussion of the methodology process for my research study. I explained the chosen methodology to conduct the study, and the rationale for the approach. I explained the methods of data collection and the planned analysis of the data. I reflected on the ethical considerations in order to reinforce the validity and reliability of the research. Steps to increase qualitative research trustworthiness and how they were maintained and established, using detailed and

rigorous processes throughout the study, were described. In order to allow researchers to build upon this work, the plan was organized in a manner consistent with a qualitative approach, including provision for the selection and treatment of participants. The themes resulting from the analysis of the data collected are reported in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative inquiry was to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals, which two research questions were designed to address. This chapter includes the research process outlined as setting, demographics, data collection, data interpretation, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The analysis of the data collected through interviews led to themes related to how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. A summary of the findings and a conclusion complete the chapter.

### **Setting**

The setting for this study was at a private high school in the northeastern United States. The population of the school is approximately 100 students and 32 teachers, predominantly White and upper-middle class. The study participants were students and teachers from this high school. All participants met the main criteria for selection, which was based on at least 2 years' participation in musical theatre education in Grades 9 through 12. After permission to conduct the research from the principal of the high school of interest was gained, I reached out to students, parents of students under 18 years of age, and teachers who might be participants in the study. I initially reached out to 12 possible participants—eight students and four teachers—and I received all positive responses. I asked these potential participants or parents for students under 18 to fill out

consent forms before data collection. All 12 possible participants completed their forms and agreed to be a part of the study.

### **Demographics**

The participants selected for this study were from a private high school in New Jersey. The volunteers for interviews were eight students and four teachers. Pseudonyms are used for all 12 participants. See Table 1 for listing of the participants, their gender, and their relationship to the school. Other details about each participant are included in short sketches following Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Relationship with school
Candice	Female	Student
Maria	Female	Student
Dan	Male	Student
Susan	Female	Student
Shane	Male	Student
Vinny	Male	Student
Kate	Female	Student
Chris	Male	Student
Joanne	Female	Teacher
Robert	Male	Teacher
Dena	Female	Teacher
Andrew	Male	Teacher

Following is the background of each of the potential participants at the time of the data collection:

- Candice is a 10th grader, and this is her second production with the high school.

- Maria, a 12th grader has been doing shows at the high school since ninth grade. She has always been in leading roles.
- Dan, a 12th grader has been doing shows since ninth grade. He has been playing leading roles for the last 2 years.
- Susan, a 10th grader has been involved in the shows since ninth grade. She was part of the ensemble of the show.
- Shane, a 11th grader has been involved in the shows since ninth grade. He was part of the tenor section.
- Vinny is a ninth grader, and this is his first show at the high school. He played leading roles in middle school.
- Kate, a 12th grader has been in shows since her 10th grade year. She has played leading roles for the last 3 years.
- Chris, a 11th grader has been in the shows since ninth grade. He plays mostly leading roles.
- Joanne, a teacher at the high school, has a bachelor's in education. She teaches in a related field in the Performing Arts Department.
- Robert, a teacher at the high school, has bachelor's in education. He has been involved with the shows for more than 5 years.
- Dena, a teacher at the high school, has a master's in education. She has been involved in the shows for the more than 10 years.
- Andrew, a teacher at the high school, has a master's in education. He has been involved in the shows for several years.

The participants reported this information as we negotiated the time for the initial interviews. All the participants met the main criteria for selection, which was based on at least 2 years' participation in musical theatre education in Grades 9 through 12. In the next section, I will describe the strategies and procedures for the data collection.

### **Data Collection**

To collect data, I followed the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. Steps for data collection including recruitment, gaining consent, and conducting individual interviews were kept as planned in Chapter 3. With the approval from Walden's IRB, I asked for permission to access and recruit the participants from the high school principal. I sent emails of invitation and asked for a response within a week. I sent 12 emails to students and teachers, and I received 12 answers within the specified time. One-on-one interviews were conducted using Zoom after discussing the best times for conducting the interviews. Student interviews were conducted after the musical production, which took place in the fall outside due to COVID-19 protocols. The instructor participants also engaged in the interview process after the production. All the interviewees met the criteria, and the 12 participants signed a consent form. There were five students who were under the age of 18 who had to have a consent form signed by their parents. The consent forms, created according to the recommendations from the IRB, included an explanation about the study and the participant's part in the study.

The interviews took place during January 2020 with a 3-day interval between each interview to allow time for transcription. Before each interview began, I reviewed the consent forms, the information regarding confidentiality, the recording procedures,



and the withdrawal options with the participants. All interviews were conducted during non-school hours and off school property to protect the identity of participants.

Interviews were done over Zoom from students' homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interviews all lasted approximately 60-70 minutes. During the interviews I spoke clearly and made sure to make the participants feel comfortable at all times. All the interviews were concluded and transcribed within the planned period. Each interview began following the order of questions revised and approved by my committee (see Appendices A & B for interview questions). The one-on-one interviews were recorded with a digital device (iPhone) and on a secondary device (hand recorder) as a backup measure. I made field notes from my observations of voice tone or facial expressions and reflections during the interviews. Immediately after each interview I transcribed the interview. After completing the transcription, I sent a copy of the respective transcription to each participant for revision and confirmation. The interview process also gave me an opportunity to start the interpretation of the data using the interviewees' responses, which created chances for interpreting and generating more probing questions.

When the information from answers to more probing questions started to be repeated by my 12th interview, I considered that I had reached data saturation. At the time that I was interviewing, I was also beginning to analyze the data through my experience and my prior knowledge to guide the use of probing or follow-up questions. The review of the transcripts by each participant contributed to the clarity of my interpretation. The interviews were transcribed verbatim using brackets to indicate pauses, inaudible remarks, and extraneous sounds. The transcripts were saved as

password-protected Word documents on my computer. The analysis of the data collected led to the development of four major themes. The process for this analysis is described in the next section.

### **Data Analysis**

It is essential to have a plan to begin collecting and analyzing data simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To code the transcribed data, I coded by paragraph to capture responses from different respondents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For the initial coding process, I used open coding. I transcribed and coded data from each participant. Through the coding process, I organized and found patterns and categories of codes from the transcripts. The themes that evolved from the codes and categories are presented by using quotations from the participants. The process used to move from coded units to themes is described in the following paragraphs.

Immediately after each interview, I began the analysis of the transcripts and ensured accuracy by listening to every audio file and conducting line-by-line verification of the transcript. Transcripts of the interviews were shared with the participants as a means of ensuring accuracy. For the initial coding process, I used open coding. The first round of coding presented patterns in the data that allowed the creation of categories. The second round of coding involved reorganizing and recategorizing data from the first round. In the second round, I viewed the data through a different lens to diminish the number of codes. I further checked the coded data and categories of codes to determine themes. I repeated this process until the themes related to the research questions had emerged. As a result, the themes showed insights from the participants. The process to

reach the themes was guided by the conceptual framework and my experience of what I learned during the literature review in Chapter 2, which helped to align them with the research questions.

After coding the transcripts, the words and expressions like *joy*, *confidence*, *fun*, *praise*, *achievement*, *creativity*, and *goals* suggested the first theme: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced self-confidence. The second theme—Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced social skills—emerged from the codes *strict*, *guidelines*, *judgment*, *feedback*, *theatre education*, *self-esteem*, and *peers*. Words and expressions like *expectations*, *group work*, *demands*, *career*, *goals*, *organization*, and *fundamentals* suggested the third theme: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced career plans. Finally, the fourth theme—Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced college goals—emerged from the codes *university*, *education*, *deadlines*, *applications*, *tests*, *studying*, *higher goals*, and *acting*. The codes and their frequency in interviews with students and teachers and their relationship with the themes are listed in Table 2. The themes will be discussed in the Results section of this chapter.

**Table 2***Frequency Count of the Codes Leading to Four Themes*

Key codes	Students	Teachers	Total	Themes
Confidence	37	25	62	Rehearsals, performance, and musical Theatre education classes influenced self-confidence
Self-esteem	23	18	41	
Praise	24	10	34	
Fun	10	8	18	
Achievement	6	4	10	
Creativity	15	10	25	
Goals	9	15	24	
Social skills	22	18	40	Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced social skills
Guidelines	6	9	15	
Judgment	10	15	25	
Feedback	20	10	30	
Theatre	20	11	31	
Peers	17	10	27	
Self-esteem	21	15	36	
Career	40	35	75	Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced career plans
Expectations	33	25	58	
Demands	21	18	39	
Group work	18	10	28	
Organization	15	9	24	
Goals	10	13	23	
Fundamentals	9	16	25	
College	38	29	67	Rehearsals, performance, and musical Theatre education classes influenced college goals
Goals	30	21	51	
University	25	17	42	
Education	23	16	39	
Deadlines	18	20	38	
Higher goals	24	13	37	
Studying	15	7	22	

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

In Chapter 3, I described the planned strategies for providing evidence of trustworthiness. Data analysis included triangulation of the response to the research questions from the individual interviews of both the students and the teachers. Following statements on sample size (Cronin & Lowes, 2016), I believed that 12 participants with differing viewpoints would heighten the trustworthiness of the data for this basic qualitative inquiry.

### **Credibility**

To gain credibility, I chose the method for the interviews and data analysis carefully to make sure that the interpretation of the participants responses were clear. I asked the participants for their input on whether my descriptions represented their thoughts as they expressed them. I also asked fellow peers in the Drama department where I work to look at my analysis and the interpretation of the data known as peer debriefing. However, I believe that having previous knowledge and experience in theatre gave me a clear understanding of the meaning behind the knowledge being shared by the participants. Second, each participant was sent an email with a copy of the transcribed interview for them to review and verify for accuracy, which may have helped to validate and establish the data. All the participants approved the individual interview transcripts, and there were no revisions or clarifications that needed addressing. The last step was to provide credibility by revising the analysis of the data and ultimately reaching saturation of the data.

**Transferability**

Transferability is the ability to which the results of the research can be applicable beyond the study's boundaries (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To address transferability, a broad description of the procedure in conducting this research was provided. The participants in this study all reported similar experiences and feelings related to how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. The rehearsals and performances' influence on social skills and self-confidence and musical theatre education class's influence on preparation and college goals are in alignment with the findings and concepts discussed in the conceptual framework. Detailed descriptions obtained from the interviews helped establish transferability. These findings allow for further examination of the evidence, which may apply to other research contexts, demonstrating transferability.

**Dependability**

Comprehensive records of how and when data collection occurred were kept and stored to ensure transparency and study duplication. The central database was secure for coding, managing, and storing data that helped to ensure data integrity. I achieved dependability by participant transcript checking, peer debriefing, and detailed descriptions. I provided a copy of my interpretations to every one of the participants for confirmation. The descriptions of the participants' perceptions were written in a way that the reader will be able to determine the transferability.

## **Conformability**

In Chapter 3, I outlined the collecting and analyzing of data in order to establish conformability of my study. While performing the research I made sure to follow the conceptual framework and the research design and I was guided by my chair and methodology faculty. I was careful when collecting and analyzing the data to avoid any bias and to describe my methodology so that the results of this study may be replicated or analyzed by another researcher. All research was conducted with an aspect of neutrality. Throughout the process I was of course aware of my bias towards Theatre Education, but I made sure to control this bias during the data collection by recording all interviews and having every participant check the interview transcript. The data for this study will be available for 5 years per the Walden University IRB policy and at the end of that time period they will be deleted from my device.

## **Results**

Aligned with the research questions for this study, the data collected from interviews with eight students and four teachers, with a total of 12 participants, resulted in four themes confirmed during the analysis. Descriptions of the themes were captured in detailed responses of the participants regarding their perceptions. The first research question regarding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem produced the first two themes: Theme 1: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced self-confidence and Theme 2: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced social skills.

The second research question regarding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on student's college intentions and career goals produced the third and fourth themes: Theme 3: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced career plans and Theme 4: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced college goals.

All three settings rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes had somewhat different influences within each theme. During the interview process for both the students and the teachers I did not ask the participants if one learning setting was more important than the other. Thus, the evidence does not support saying that one setting is more influential than the other. The four themes are presented in the next segment with a detailed description of the participants' perceptions. In each section I will begin with the students' perceptions first, followed by the perceptions of the teachers.

### **Theme 1: Rehearsals, Performance, and Musical Theatre Education Classes Influenced Self-Confidence**

Theme one is based on the data analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the students and teachers on the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on the self-esteem of high school students. When both students and teachers were asked about the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education class's influence on self-esteem, they responded using the word *self-confidence* instead of *self-esteem*. Perhaps this is because self-confidence is a word that people involved in the theatrical word use more than self-esteem. As noted by all the students



and all of the teachers, the rehearsals process was most often mentioned as providing them help with self-confidence. As Dan put it, “Though the process was hard and sometimes made me feel down, the process of working on the production and fighting through those issues, gave me a renewed energy to succeed.” The eight student participants explained that the rehearsals made the musical more enjoyable and that the process gave them opportunities to create more friends, which also enhanced their self-confidence. Creating or meeting more friends became an important factor in the student’s explanations. Maria focused on confidence gained from focusing on her characters in rehearsals: “In rehearsals I learned a lot about my character that I haven’t already figured out on my own and this influenced my overall performance and self-confidence.”

All eight students affirmed that rehearsals and theatre classes offered them their first experience in musical theatre, and this enabled them not only to build self-confidence but also to understand that they could be a player in the world musical world. As explained by Vinny,

So, when I first began the rehearsal process, or rather, when I first auditioned, I had no prior experience in musical theatre or theatre at all...But I started to find connections with these new people. And it made me feel a lot better about myself in that situation.

Chris stated “The theatre classes definitely taught me a lot about what actually goes into a musical. And I feel that I can carry that experience.” Shane felt very strongly that “If we didn’t have all these rehearsals and theatre classes, I genuinely don’t think that my confidence in acting and in general, would be as it is right now.”

As with rehearsals and theatre classes, the students affirmed that performances also helped build their self-confidence. As Dan explained, “To be more able to put myself out there. It absolutely helped with my self- confidence.” Vinny stated,

I’ve always had a sense of stage fright. I’ve never been good, getting up and just talking to people, or especially a crowd. And whenever I speak in front of a group, it’s never people that I’m really friends with. And when it came to the actual performance, I didn’t find myself scared at all; I was excited to do what I was going to do.

Shane also explained “It gave me self- confidence because one of the main things that I still struggle with today is self-confidence. It’s primarily stage confidence.” Kate stated, “I feel like being in a musical can help people with their self-confidence.”

Asked how they feel working on a musical production had helped their students’ self-esteem, the four teachers acknowledged that by getting more involved in rehearsals and performance, the students demonstrated greater self-confidence as well as a greater understanding of respect for others. According to teacher Joanne

I think that it helped them believe, that they had self-confidence. They knew that they were capable prior to, but then they developed their skills even more, and when they saw that other people also appreciated it, I think it allowed them to really believe that they could achieve self-confidence.

Teacher Dena explained working on the musical production improved the students’ level of self-confidence. Teacher Robert said something similar,

Not only does rehearsals and performance create a sense of heightened self-confidence, but it also creates a sense of ownership over the process and leads to mentorship for other students involved. And that gives the student a sense of purpose. It's not just about the moment, but it's about how they can impact others.

As a result of improved self-confidence, teacher Joanne reported that students were more focused on the classes during the rehearsal process and "took the course more seriously." Teacher Andrew said something similar regarding one of his students, "In particular, this student was definitely one of the best students I had in the classroom, especially after doing the live performances."

The students also suggested that the experience of being in rehearsals and performance could benefit other students who are thinking about getting involved in one way or another. For instance, Maria explained that the experience could definitely benefit others' self-confidence and their general wellbeing in life. Dan stated,

You also know the discipline of the rehearsal process is good for someone who would have never been in something that has that. So strict, like a military or anything, this is as close as an outcome to working on a strict schedule, having specific processes like this. It's immensely beneficial to have that experience. The connections you form, the skills you'll take away. It's really such a positive experience.

The sentiments were supported by all the teachers who argued that students' experiences helped to build confidence among other students. Teacher Andrew explained,

I love to see their confidence at the end of a performance. And all of a sudden, even if it's only for a little while after production, they walk around their chest is puffed out a little more, and their heads up. They're excited to see people; they're eager to tell people about what they just did. And that's what I try and convey to people. If you can make the commitment to be involved in a musical, you will be proud of yourself in the end, and you will be a better person by the end of it.

## **Theme 2: Rehearsals, Performance, and Musical Theatre Education Classes**

### **Influenced Social Skills**

Theme two is based on the data analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the students and teachers on the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on the social skills of high school students. When asked the question on how rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced their interaction with others, all eight students agreed that rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes helped give them better social skills. Maria explained,

I think it's improved my social skills. Because with each production that I've been involved in so far in my life, different challenges come with it. Sometimes, I think; "how am I going to be able to do that?" And with each challenge that comes, I seem to conquer those challenges or adapt to them in the best way that I can.

The enhancement of social skills overlap with gaining friends, which was an outcome of self-esteem as was pointed out in the previous theme. It also emerged that rehearsals had helped all students accept corrections during the performance. Candice explained "I think

rehearsing, in general, helps you realize that it's okay to fail sometimes... So, I think it benefited me, I learned to accept critique better".

The eight students also noted that working in rehearsals helped them expand the circle of their friends as Candice explained, "I think working on the musical really helped my friendships because the group I was with mostly was my musical theatre group." The students noted that the rehearsals kept them from bad company and other forms of peer influence, and it also enabled them to acquire new friends and build peer relations. Maria stated,

I think working on the musical really helped my friendships because the group I was with mostly was my musical theatre group. And I didn't feel welcomed by my peers at my high school until I met my other peers in musical theatre.

Susan, a 10th grader at the high school who had been involved in the shows since 9th grade, stated,

The rehearsal process has kept me from bad company. I would say, personally, it kept me out of a lot of trouble...They just were getting into all different types of things like vaping, and weed and all of those, you know, just not good things...

Vinny also stated, "I don't think I would have had the same experience with my peers and had been more comfortable with people if I wasn't involved in musical theatre." Dan explained,

Until they really brought me under their wing, and I would sit with them and talk with them, then we became friends. And that introduced me to other peers outside of musical theatre who I would eventually be closer with.

All eight students also agreed that social skills improved through performance.

When asked about how being in a musical performance furthered their social skills

Candice said,

You are kind of forced into some friendships during a musical. If you're continually seeing the same people all the time, you either make friends with them, don't talk to them, or you hate them. And there's not really an in-between.

Shane stated, "But it does teach you a lot about peer resolution, and peer conflict resolution. But outside of that, I think musical theatre allowed me to make more friendships, and more stable friendships that I could maintain easier."

All eight students acknowledged that taking musical theatre classes has benefited their experiences working with others as it made them more confident in their social skills. Kate stated, "I feel like being in a musical theatre classes helped me with my social skills." Theatre classes exposed the students to real-life events and friends from all categories of life. Maria explained, "I got to know new people, primarily through the drama program, a lot of my friends were in the arts, the drama program, especially."

Susan stated,

It definitely taught me to not care what others have to say, you know, you're never going to be able to please everyone, and you're never going to be everyone's favorite. And that's okay; you do what you got to do. And at the end of the day, if you're proud of yourself, then that's what matters. You know, I worked my tail off in this class, and I accomplished something that I never thought would be possible. So, it definitely teaches independence.

Dan explained that,

Through my experiences in theatre classes, I have pushed myself to the point where I can access my social skills much easier. I am able to prepare myself for what is to come, and I feel more able to meet the challenges that will be put upon me.

Maria also supported this sentiment by stating that, “Working in theatre classes has helped my communication skills because I have had experiences in the theatre classroom where I’ve struggled more there than in a rehearsal process.” Candice stated that theatre classes pushed her to get over specific barriers that she had in life. Chris explained,

At times, especially when I wouldn’t have a line down pat, or I would forget a verse in a song, I would be tough on myself and not ask for help. But, in classes I would work on improving that issue. The work in the classes helped to boost my social skills and ultimately my self-esteem. The skills that I learned in musical theatre classes were also transferred into my personal life and helped me become a better person.

Vinny also acknowledged that his social skills were greatly improved courtesy of musical theatre classes. Shane also reported “It really shined a light onto a lot of stuff in my life.” Kate stated that being in a musical theatre classes helped her with confidence in reading. “But it also helped me with my confidence and speaking in front of people, and just using my voice because I’m not afraid to speak up for myself now and to communicate with others,” she explained further. Shane stated,

Social skills is something that I struggle with a lot. Doing musical theatre classes truly made me break out of my shell. It truly changed my social skills. And I know, for a fact that it's like that for a lot of other people. You see, it's really good to do something that you think you never really would be able to do. Like, I said, I never thought I'd be interested in drama ever. And then I joined the musical theatre classes and now I have been in three shows, almost four. I am in the thespian society and I love acting. It has really helped me with social skills. I think it does better you as a person. Because well, one, it just gives you something to do honestly, it's really an escape from everyday life.

The four teachers agreed with the students that rehearsals, in particular, helped to improve their students' social skills. Teacher Joanne affirmed that through interactive participation in rehearsals, one particular student of hers learned to help others whenever they made mistakes. As she explained, "Before that they would shut people down or be really irritated if somebody made a mistake." Teacher Dena stated about one student,

I think that they found that they could have friends. During this participation, I believe that they came in as kind of an outsider and just did their job. But along the way, I think they learned that they really could have better interaction and more participation with other students.

All four teachers agreed that by being involved in the musical performance the students improved their social skills. Teacher Joanne said about one student,

One specific thing that I do remember was seeing them in the lunchroom; this is a student that would maybe previously want to work during lunch or be in the



library doing something independently. But when I saw the student, they were sitting with a group of students. I watched them laugh and joke, and be a part of inside jokes and feel this powerful sense of community that they were enveloped in. That just always stands out to me, as a concrete visual example of what was happening for them.

Teacher Dena echoed that sentiment and said,

But once they went through the musical performance experience, I think it really taught them about what the meaning of working together with a group means. Developing, an end product that requires individuals giving their own strengths. So, honestly, on an intellectual level, I think it taught them something about how to relate to others that they just maybe didn't know before.

All four teachers also had the opinion that musical theatre classes have benefited their students by building a high level of social skills. For instance, teacher Robert reported that the musical theatre classes provided a good vehicle for the student to use the actual communicative abilities when addressing the audience and their peers. Teacher Joanne stated,

I think that the classes made them feel like they belonged. And I think that the classes showed them what it means to discipline their talent and their natural abilities and helped them shine brighter because it really forced them to work on things that weren't easy for them to work like, social skills.

Teacher Andrew reported, "the classes help them have a sense of hope and a goal to reach for when communicating on stage and within their communities" while

teacher Dena stated, “The classes helped the students’ find their voice. They always had a great voice, but it helped to improve that skill and to have the confidence to communicate with others.”

As reported by teacher Andrew, the classes defiantly helped the students’ social skills, which in turn helped their self-esteem. Teacher Robert stated,

I think it’s the life lesson that they learn no matter if it’s dancing, acting, or singing, however you want to look at it. There is a five-letter word that I always go with. The word *rigor*. They have to be able to have the rigor to go through experiences. They have to be able to go through the rigor of what arts demands of them. This work definitely helps the students have rigor and to understand what they need and the challenges they need to meet in a social environment. Their social skills were improved through their work in the classroom.

According to teacher Dena,

The classes helped to make them a person who could communicate with other people. I feel like they came a long, long way. From being someone who would really just be in their own space, not really interacting with other + people at all unless they had to, to being more social, it made them more socialized. Theatre definitely socialized them and helped to empower their social skills.

### **Theme 3: Rehearsals, Performance, and Musical Theatre Education Classes**

#### **Influenced Career Plans**

Theme three is based on the data analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the students and teachers on the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre

education classes on the career plans of high school students. All eight students and teachers reported that rehearsals and performance has made them either change or rethink their career plans. Dan explained that his career plans have continuously changed over time following his involvement in rehearsals and performance. "I feel it has given me a renewed appreciation for the art of directing, which I will take with me when I plan on going on and trying to do that," Dan explained. Maria also confirmed that rehearsals and performance have helped her keep track of the organization of her career plans. Susan stated, "And just having that moment on stage and that ability to sing on stage and see, you know, you're part of the story and making a difference that really encouraged me to chase my dream of just being a vocalist." Vinny stated,

Yes, I mean, before this show, I've been very adamant about doing movies, I didn't want to do anything else. I still want to do movies, but I also want to do TV shows, where there's, a lot of set rehearsals. I would also like to be in plays. I want to be able to do those as well. I want to be well rounded in this acting career, I want to do as many things as I can, I don't want to just be set to just one thing. I want to go for everything. Yes, the rehearsals and performances helped me to organize my thoughts and ultimately my career plans.

Four of the students stated they had to change their career plans following their involvement in rehearsals and performance. For instance, Kate stated that before she took part in the musical, she really wanted to be a doctor or a psychiatrist, but this changed after she participated in the rehearsals and performance process. Shane said,

It definitely has changed my mind. Being an actor is still in the back of my mind. I have other more realistic ideas currently but because my experience in the musical was so significant, I still think about it. Because it's still there in my head. It's still an option. It's important. It was very impactful.

Candice stated,

I think so. I think I started wanting to be an actor. I thought that's what I really wanted to do. I think my perspective changed after I participated in the rehearsals and performance. And it just wasn't for me. And I believe taking part in the process, and knowing I could retain a lot of information, because that's something that theatre also taught me, I realized I wanted to go into political science and to become a lawyer later on, which is my hope to do.

All eight students noted that they were motivated to learn more about the art of theatre through the musical theatre classes, which, influenced their career plans. As Dan puts it, "Yes, I was able to learn a lot more about the art of theatre. But also, we went through different plays and indeed other acting techniques which were enjoyable, which helped guide our thoughts about careers." Maria explained "It taught me so much about theatre that still inspires me to this day." Susan confirmed the statements made by both Maria and Dan by stating that,

Definitely learning how to act; I was not good at acting; I still wouldn't say I'm great at it. But it taught me how to communicate clearly and made me think about what I might do for a career, even if it wasn't acting.

Chris explained that musical theatre classes helped him learn how to maintain contact with other performers during the performance he said,

I learned how to maintain, better composure when I'm up in a performance space. And I learned better ways to keep in character and to communicate with my scene partner and the audience. So, improvisation has always been an obstacle for me. I've always been a, cross your T's dot you're I's very by the book kind of person. So, I would still find it difficult to forget a line and need to improvise something on the spot. Theatre classes have helped to sort of improve that skill. With that knowledge and ability to not always be perfect, I started to think that maybe theatre could be a career for me.

On the same note, Shane acknowledged that the musical theatre classes were highly beneficial. He explained, "In classes, we learned the essentials of being an actor and how to communicate with others. Also, what it takes to take a show from beginning to the end."

All four teachers also supported that rehearsals, performance, and theatre classes influenced the career plans of their students. As teacher Robert put it, "Absolutely. Because it teaches a person how to think about a process in an emotionally invested way." Teacher Andrew explained,

Of course. I think any job that you're going to get in the future will involve some type of team effort and organization. And if you're getting that team mentality ahead of time, and you're finding out some people are leaders, I think that's only

going to benefit them when they do either go directly to the work world or take some college courses.

Teacher Joanne stated, “I think it helped them decide not only what they could do, but I think what also they are capable of doing.” Teacher Dena explained,

Yes, I believe it has. Being able to successfully manage rehearsal schedules and things of that nature. And I wouldn't be surprised if they choose to do theatre as a career. Being involved in the musicals at school really showed them that even if things are really challenging, they have done challenging things before. And if there not good the first time, they can get better because they know that the rehearsals and performance helped. Sometimes practice make perfect, and it doesn't come on the first run. And so, learning how to communicate with their teachers in an appropriate way and advocate for themselves, those were all skills they developed by working with others in productions. They will use those skills throughout their life and challenge them to grow and push themselves in a career that will challenge them.

#### **Theme 4: Rehearsals, Performance, and Musical Theatre Education Classes**

##### **Influenced College Goals**

Theme four is based on the data analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the students and teachers on the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on the college goals of high school students. All eight students reported that rehearsals, performance, and theatre education classes influenced their thinking on college goals. Dan said, "The rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes were

very strict and regimented. Which I believe is more like a college” Maria also said, “Oh, it is definitely influenced what I’ve been thinking about doing in college.” Candice stated,

I think my musical theatre classes prepared me for college more than any of my other classes did. In my musical theatre classes, I had to prepare for very hard tests; and a lot of note taking. And because, you know, you really couldn’t procrastinate in those classes, it really taught me how vital prioritization was. You’re like the only person that can do your work on a schedule. And it’s really important not to procrastinate. It definitely taught me that. But I think it also taught me to be confident in my work. And to not doubt my work. Because once you have that, like the seed of doubt in your brain, the rest of your work goes downhill. We did do some writing in those classes, but it wasn’t like a whole lot. But we did a whole bunch of, monologues, which I do think helped me. It helped me retain knowledge better now and it will help me as I go on to college.

Susan said “I believe rehearsals and performance actually prepared me for the collegiate environment because when I go to college I’m paying for my education. And I will be there for a specific reason...” Shane stated,

It does. If I decide to go to college, and I want to take acting or drama courses in college, I can. I would feel comfortable taking them because of the knowledge and experience I currently have from taking the musical theatre classes and participating in rehearsals and performance.

Vinny noted that rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes seriously affected him as it taught him to be responsible and to be prepared. Kate explained,

When I first started rehearsals and taking musical theatre classes, I didn't think that I would be wanting to do this in college; I thought I want to do this as hobby, but I didn't think I wanted to do it in real life, not necessarily real life but in the future. But as time went on, I indeed developed my passion. In my theatre classes, I would say I was very challenged; you had to write a lot of notes, take tests, and memorize every single question and every single answer on the test. And I think that was challenging for me because I wasn't used to taking tests a lot or preparing at all. And I wasn't used to writing either. I did not like to write; I hated writing because I felt like I was so terrible at it. And I mean, it may not be my favorite subject now. But I still like to write more after being in musical theatre classes. I believe it was preparing me for college writing, in a sense and to be prepared for the challenges that college will bring. Rehearsals, performance, and theatre classes defiantly effected my college goals and what I thought I was able to achieve.

All four teachers agreed with the students that rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes helped the students to see that they needed to prepare more, which ultimately gave them the drive to proceed to college and undertake the challenges ahead.

Teacher Joanne stated,

Yes, I think the students' success in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes and feeling like they belong is directly impacting their motivation to apply



to college. The rigor of rehearsals, performance, and the musical theatre classroom helped them prepare and pushed them to go beyond where they thought they could go.

Teacher Andrew said that by the students being able to handle the rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes, they can handle college classes too. “I think that all goes hand in hand with self-confidence. The student is gaining more and more self-esteem,” he explained further. Teacher Dena explained,

Yes, because in rehearsals, performance, and the musical theatre classes the students really get the vigor of what it’s like in a college classroom. Can you handle this? Or can you not take it? And we have many students who complain about it at first, and then they handle it. And then that’s why I think we see a lot of our students going on to four-year institutions.

Teacher Robert stated about one of his students,

Absolutely, the student as, far as I know definitely wants to go to college for the arts. The rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes helped them see that they can achieve anything. Which ultimately is giving them the drive to go on to college and to take on the challenges ahead. Without rehearsals, performance, and the musical theatre classes, I do not think this student would be thinking about going on to any post-secondary schooling.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on the study results and included a description of the data analysis process done through coding, from which four themes emerged. The first

research question regarding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem? produced the first and second themes: Theme 1: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced self-confidence and Theme 2: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced social skills.

The second research question regarding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on student's college intentions and career goals produced the third and fourth themes: Theme 3: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced career plans and Theme 4: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced college goals.

These themes highlighted the significance of how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. The first and second themes data demonstrated that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical education classes lead to higher self-esteem in the high school students. Whereas the third and fourth themes data demonstrated that their participation ultimately influenced their education goals. Perceptions from the teachers also reported an increase in students' willingness to attempt new tasks and be creative. Many of these students started the study with already higher self-esteem than most so, it is unknown if the same results would have happened studying students with lower self-esteem. From the description of perceptions of both

students and teachers, it was possible to answer the research questions that guided the study.

The analysis and description of the perceptions of students and teachers could allow for a better understanding of how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. An in-depth discussion of the implications, contributions to social change, and recommendations for practices will be described as a conclusion of Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. I investigated the perceptions of 12 participants (eight high school students in Grades 9–12 and four high school teachers) who had at least 2 years' participation in musical theatre education through one-on-one interviews. Key findings of the study were that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes had a positive influence on students' self-esteem, social skills, and career and college goals. A total of four themes emerged from the interview responses provided by the participants:

- Theme 1: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced self-confidence.
- Theme 2: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced social skills.
- Theme 3: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced career plans.
- Theme 4: Rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes influenced college goals.

The chapter begins with my interpretation of the findings as related to the literature review from Chapter 2. I will then discuss my understanding of the results in light of the conceptual framework. I also make recommendations for future research and

discuss the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with possible implications of the findings for positive social change and knowledge in the field.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of this research aligned with the two conceptual frameworks: Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning. Additionally, my interpretation of the findings of this research study confirm and extend the results of previous research. In this section, I interpret the findings of the study, in detail, as they are related to the literature review and conceptual framework.

### **Findings Related to Reviewed Literature**

The first theme showed that rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes were perceived to have an influence on the self-esteem of the students, which the participants spoke of as "self-confidence." The rehearsals and performance helped the students improve their self-esteem not only within the theatre rehearsals, performance, and theatre classes but within the school community. It also emerged that students who took part in rehearsals and performance perceived their self-esteem increased as they experienced a greater understanding of the musical theatre world. These findings confirmed similar results of prior research, including Varner's (2019) and the Educational Theatre Association's (2019) that concluded participation in theatre was a positive influence on students' self-esteem, which may have supported an increase of schools offering theatre courses from only 37% in the 70s to 85% in 2019. Overall, there was unanimous agreement among both the students and teachers in this study that taking part in musical theatre classes improves self-esteem and the willingness to have their

theatre work corrected and critiqued. In addition to being important in the development of high school students, theatre education played a role in improving students' self-esteem in tertiary education (Curtis, 2019). The high self-esteem acquired at the high school level may be maintained through more advanced theatre programs at the tertiary level where the level of critique of work likely increases.

The second theme showed that rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes were perceived to lead to a higher level of social skills in high school students. Students and teachers reported that the students became motivated to learn more about art and theatre through the rehearsals and performance as they became aware of how to maintain eye contact with their audience as well as communication with their peers and teachers. Participation in rehearsals and performance activities also helped the learners experience new groups of friends. This finding is strongly supported by research that indicated theatre education allowed students to exploit their emotions and face their fears in a social setting (Barnes et al., 2015; Curtis, 2019; Swami et al., 2016; Yücesan & Şendurur, 2018).

The findings presented under the third theme showed that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes is associated with four different outcomes in career plans. The first outcome was that some students change their career plans, and the second outcome was that those with an interest in working in theatre found that their participation helped to deepen their career plans and discover their specific strengths and weaknesses. A third outcome for two students was that participation developed an interest in pursuing performing arts instead of their initial

careers of choice. This finding is consistent with research that showed that participation in musical theatre education significantly increased students' interest in pursuing music as a career (Henry, 2015; Parkes & Jones, 2011). The fourth outcome, which was reported by only one student, was that participation would help them in their careers despite them not being interested in pursuing professions aligned with performing arts. However, the fourth outcome is unique to this study and was not reported in prior literature.

The final theme showed, that rehearsals, performance, and theatre education classes was perceived to prepare the students for college education, also enabling students to realize their individual self-worth, which they perceive gave them the drive to proceed to college and undertake music theatre related courses. The sources evaluated in the Chapter 2 literature review did not provide any information in line with this theme. However, other research findings have shown that participation in musical theatre classes has an influence on students' career goals (Henry, 2015; Parkes & Jones, 2011). The findings of this present study suggest that students that take theatre education in high school would be more willing to join colleges that offer courses aligned with performing arts than students that do not take theatre classes in high school.

### **Findings Interpreted in Light of Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this research study included Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. First, according to Bandura, the concept of self-efficacy is concerned with the level of self-belief people have in their abilities. High self-efficacy improves the cognition, emotions, and

motivation of individuals (Vazquez, 2014). All four themes in this study showed that engagement in theatre education is perceived with high levels of confidence among students. Regarding Theme 1, many of the respondents perceived that they had higher levels of motivation to try different activities due to the self-confidence they gained through rehearsals and performance. The element of motivation was also identified in this study as one of the crucial outcomes among students taking musical theatre education in influencing their social skills, as identified in Theme 2. Although research did not explicitly describe how theatre education influences motivation, many of the respondents in this study suggested that their general confidence that motivated them to participate in school activities was improved through improvement in self-confidence, which leads to better social skills. The respondents in this study suggested that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes helped to enhance their social skills and self-confidence within the classroom.

Other research has supported that social interaction in the learning process positively influences student engagement in music classes (Martin, 2012; Deaton, 2015; Ritchie & Williamon, 2011). A number of the respondents also reported that theatre education is enjoyable as a result of close contact with other students and the audience. There are strong similarities between the findings of this study and the assertions made by Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory. However, though studies evaluated the links between Bandura's theory and other elements such as culture, race, religion, and social status (Hurwitz et al., 2015; Vazquez, 2014), these additional elements are beyond the scope of this study and did not emerge in the findings.



According to Kolb (1984), people learn through experience. In their responses, the study participants indicated that one of the factors that makes rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes essential in the development of students' self-esteem is its practical nature. As a result of engaging in performances, students they can learn skills and gain abilities. The study participants stated that continued practice made them more confident in such performances, thus leading to the development of self-esteem. However, given that Russell-Bowie (2013) found that although musical theatre education was observed to lead to the development of useful knowledge among students, the overall outcome was dependent on the level of competence of the teachers that provided in this field, it could be the particular skills of the teachers in this unique school setting influenced the outcomes.

In the specific context of rehearsals, performance, and music theatre education, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory suggests that learning through practical approaches plays a role in improving the confidence and self-esteem of students. The confidence in this research is observed because a number of students in this study reported that the experience and skills gained within rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre classes made them more inclined to pursue courses related to performance arts in college.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The main limitation of this study was that it relied on data from only a single school where all students participate in theatre and the students do not self-select. Since the student participants did not self-select to take part in theatre because all students in

the school participated, the learning environment may have been shifted, so that everyone felt a boost in their self-esteem, which led them to feel less competitive. Even though the number of participants was sufficient to give in-depth details on the research questions, the narrow scope of data collection exposes this research to limitations of experiences held by students and teachers in the chosen school. It is impossible to tell whether the responses provided to the research questions would be answered similarly if the study was conducted in another school.

Another limitation of this research study is that it took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The setting of the production and the conducted interviews may have influenced the results of this study and may have limited the applicability to more elaborate inside theaters and programs. Perhaps if the study was done during non-COVID-19 restriction times the findings may have been stronger, or perhaps the fact that the students and teachers had to overcome COVID-19 restrictions the results of self-esteem may have been even greater.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

From the first limitation presented above, it is evident that more generalizable data can be achieved if such studies were to be conducted across numerous schools in various school districts. Future researchers should expand the scope of the study by selecting schools from different districts from which to choose the participants of the study. Data drawn from different school contexts may provide differing opinions, especially concerning how theatre education influences students' career goals. Different perspectives should show whether there are variations in the musical theatre education

programs of different schools. As a result, the research will be best positioned to recommend a better approach to implement musical education in high schools.

Future researchers could consider employing a case study research approach. For example, while the qualitative details presented in this study show that rehearsals and performance improve self-esteem, they do not specifically show, for instance, how increasing the number of hours spent in rehearsals and performance may influence students' self-esteem and career interests. Perhaps by using a case study approach and conducting focus groups this information may have been explored. Since I chose a basic qualitative method for this study and I chose not to use focus groups, I was not able to observe behaviors that might have reflected self-esteem to triangulate with student and teacher perceptions. By adopting a case study approach in future researchers may be able to gain even better insights into how musical theatre education affects student outcomes.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The findings have shown that rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes were perceived in the setting of a single school with a focus on theatre education to have had a positive influence on students' self-esteem, social skills, and education goals. The perceived positive outcomes associated with the program at the high school level might indicate that similar results may be realized at lower educational levels such as elementary school and middle school. This research may provide new perspectives that demonstrate positive outcomes of musical theatre education within schools and may activate further inquiry by researchers, educational leaders, parents, students, teachers, national, regional, local theatre art agencies, and stakeholders. Positive

social change may result from understanding aspects of musical theatre that may increase self-esteem of high school students, which may contribute to the continued value of theatre arts in high school education. The findings from this research, if applied to elementary, middle school, and at the high school level, may also support positive social change by contributing to the continued effort to include the arts in educational standards, which may increase student self-esteem and education goals.

### **Conclusion**

A basic qualitative inquiry was used to analyze, interpret, and describe how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. Although numerous studies link musical theatre education with an improvement in self-esteem in students, this study identified a gap in understanding how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem and education goals. Since student self-esteem is one of the essential determinants of overall student achievement (Varner, 2019), it was important to establish the role musical theatre education can play in its enhancement of high school students according to teachers and students.

The conceptual framework for this study was Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. The participants' interview responses were found to provide insights concerning each of the two research questions. All the participants reported that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes were perceived to have a positive influence on students' self-

esteem and social skills. This finding was corroborated by research studies evaluated in the literature review. The findings also indicate that participation in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes were perceived to have an influence on students' college plans and career goals. The findings showed that by participating in theatre education, some students perceived they change their career preferences and choose to pursue performing arts instead. Others reported that the skills acquired through theatre are critical in assisting them to achieve in their future careers. Previous studies evaluated in the literature review are found to corroborate the findings of the present research. For that reason, the general observation is that taking part in rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes may improve high school student self-esteem and influences their education goals.

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## Appendix A: Student Interview Questions

**Student Interview Questions**

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to share your experience with musical theatre education. With your permission, I will be recording the interview on a digital device, as well as taking notes. I plan to take no more than approximately 60 minutes of your time. This qualitative study seeks to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of musical theatre rehearsals and performance on students' self-esteem and education goals. I will be using open-ended questions, which will allow you the opportunity to interject ideas or thoughts that you may have as we talk. When the transcription of the recording is completed, I will send you copies for making corrections as needed or for approval.

Research Question 1: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem?

Research Question 2: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on student's college intentions and career goals?

1. You have just finished production on your musical for the year. You had an extensive rehearsal process leading up to your performances. Tell me about your rehearsal experience?

- a. What stood out to you about the rehearsal process?
- b. How do you think the rehearsal process has benefited you and in what ways?
- c. More probing and extending questions will follow.

2. The culmination of all your hard work is the performances. Tell me about your experience performing this musical?

- a. What stood out to you about performing in this musical?
- b. How do you think the performances have benefited you and in what ways?
- c. More probing and extending questions will follow.

3. Musical theatre education is a part of the program in your school. You have been involved in theatre education classes for at least 2 years. Tell me about your experience in your musical theatre classes.

- a. What stood out to you about your classes?
- b. How do you think your musical theatre classes have benefited you and in what ways?
- c. more probing and extending questions will follow.

4. Rehearsing and performing in a musical is a group activity and event. It involves working with others and collaborating to make an art form coming to life. Tell me about your experiences working with others? What is your relationship with your peers in your school?

- a. What stands out to you about working with others and your peer relationships?
- b. How do you think working on the musical and taking musical theatre classes have benefited your experiences working with others and in what ways?
- c. How do you think working on the musical and taking musical theatre classes have benefited your relationships with your peers in school and in what ways?
- d. more probing and extending questions will follow.

5. For some students, self-esteem is something that comes easily. For many others, it does not come easily.

a. How would you describe your self-esteem?

b. How do you feel working on a musical production has improved or hindered your self-esteem in any way or hindered it? How has it evolved during this process?

c. How has working in a musical theatre classroom helped your self-esteem in any way? How has it changed during this process?

d. More probing and extending questions will follow.

6. Many students take theatre classes or participate in musical productions because they want to develop their talent. That talent can be acting, singing, or dancing. What would you say is your purpose for being in a theatre class and a musical production?

a. What stands out to you about the classes or productions that helps this purpose?

b. Overall, how do you think your musical theatre classes have benefited you and in what ways?

c. More probing and extending questions will follow.

7. Participating in a school musical takes a lot of time and energy. What would you tell another student who was thinking about participating in the school musical?

a. Overall, what was it about the experience that stands out to you?

b. How might the experience for another student benefit them and in what ways?

c. More probing and extending questions will follow.

8. Are there any ways your experience in musical theatre education classes, rehearsals and performances have influenced how you think about going on to college?

a. How do you think this experience has influenced your thinking about your career plans?

b. More probing and extending questions will follow.

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience in both musical theatre classes and the musical production?

Closing: Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Once this interview has been transcribed, it will be made available to share with you.

## Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

**Teacher Interview Questions**

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to share your experience with musical theatre education. With your permission, I will be recording the interview on a digital device, as well as taking notes. I plan to take no more than 60 minutes of your time. This qualitative study seeks to examine how high school students and teachers perceive the influence of musical theatre rehearsals and performance on students' self-esteem and education goals. I will be using open-ended questions, which will allow you the opportunity to interject ideas or thoughts that you may have as we talk. When the transcription of the recording is completed, I will send you copies for making corrections as needed or for approval.

Research Question 1: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on students' self-esteem?

Research Question 2: How do high school students and teachers perceive the influence of rehearsals, performance, and musical theatre education classes on student's college intentions and career goals?

1. You have the student that is involved in this study in your class. Can you describe to me the individual students' participation in your class?
  - a. What has changed about the students' participation in class through the past 3 months?
  - b. How has there been a beneficial change in the students' participation in your class and what is it?
  - c. More probing and extending questions will follow.

2. Describe the individual students' relationships with their peers?
  - a. What has changed about the students' relationship with their peers through the past 3 months?
  - b. How do you think there has been a beneficial change in students' relationship with their peers in your class and what is it?
  - c. More probing and extending questions will follow.
3. The student has been involved in the musical production this year. They are also involved in the musical theatre class. How would you describe the individual students' performance talent?
  - a. What are the key talents that the student exhibits in the classroom and within the school setting?
  - b. How do you believe the student has or has not benefited their talent with their involvement in the school musical and what is it?
  - c. More probing and extending questions will follow.
4. Rehearsing and performing in a musical is a group activity and group event. In involves working with others and collaborating to make an art form coming to life. Tell me how this student works with others in your classroom?
  - a. What stands out to you about how this student works with others and their peer relationships?
  - b. How do you think working on the musical and taking musical theatre classes have benefited their experiences working with others and in what ways?



c. How do you think working on the musical and taking musical theatre classes have benefited their relationships with their peers in school and in what ways?

d. More probing and extending questions will follow.

5. For many students' self-esteem is something that comes easily, and for many others, it does not come easily. What is your understanding of the idea of self-esteem?

a. How would you describe this students' self-esteem?

b. How do you feel working on a musical production has helped this students' self-esteem in any way? How has it changed during this process?

c. How do you feel working in a musical theatre classroom has helped the students' self-esteem in any way? How has it changed during this process?

d. More probing and extending questions will follow.

6. Many students take theatre classes or participate in musical production because they have a talent and want to expand on that talent after they have gained experience. That talent can be acting, singing or dancing. What would you say is the purpose for this student for being in a theatre class and a musical production?

a. How do you think the musical theatre classes have benefited the student and in what ways?

b. More probing and extending questions will follow.

7. Participating in a school musical is a big decision and takes a lot of time and energy. What would you tell another student who was thinking about participating in the school musical?

a. What was it about the experience on a student that stands out to you?

b. How would the experience for another student benefit them and in what ways?

c. More probing and extending questions will follow.

8. Are there any ways the students' experience in musical theatre education classes, rehearsals and performances have influenced how this student thinks about going on to college?

a. How do you think this experience has influenced the students' thinking about their career plans?

b. More probing and extending questions will follow.

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience in both musical theatre classes and the musical production?

Closing: Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Once this interview has been transcribed, it will be made available to share with you.