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Aspects of Ensemble Participation and Feelings of Belonging Among New Horizons Members

The purpose of this study was to determine what routine aspects of ensemble participation, if any, activated New Horizons members' feelings of belonging. Members of two New Horizons ensembles responded to an anonymous-online questionnaire in which they indicated the degree with which they agreed with statements that linked specific aspects of ensemble participation with their feelings of belonging. Participants' ($N = 31$) responses indicated that playing in performances, attending rehearsals, being included in group emails, receiving written and verbal recognition, and participating in ensemble-related social media activated their feelings of belonging. Exclusion from group emails and lack of recognition were most frequently reported as negatively affecting participants' feelings of belonging. Handling these routine aspects of ensemble participation with care and attention may provide opportunities to support New Horizons members' feelings of belonging. Recommendations for supporting feelings of belonging are discussed.

Keywords: adult music education, community music, New Horizons, belongingness

Introduction

Forming and maintaining positive social relationships has been recognized as an essential component of mental health. In particular, researchers have identified the need to belong as a compelling, fundamental, and prevalent motivator of human behaviors (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The presence or absence of this type of social connectedness has been linked to multiple quality of life factors. Individuals who experienced feelings of belonging indicated that they felt decreases in negative moods (Began & Turner-Cobb, 2015), higher self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), and reported fewer symptoms of poor physical health (Hale et al., 2005). Conversely, the absence of feelings of belonging has been linked to lower self-esteem (Leary & Downs, 1995), loneliness, alienation, and hopelessness (Hagerty et al., 1992).

People of a wide variety of ages have reported negative experiences associated with absent or thwarted feelings of belongingness. Older adults appear to be particularly susceptible to feelings of social isolation and loneliness resulting from a lack of belonging (Dury, 2014). One reason for this increased vulnerability may be related to changes in their daily lives. Individuals who have entered older adulthood may experience the departure of adult children from the home, the death of a spouse, and the onset of retirement (Lipman et al., 1995). As older adults experienced these changes, they may also experience declines in their interpersonal relationships, societal roles, and perceived social status (Segal et al., 2011).

Cornwell, Laumann, and Schumm (2008) reported an inverse relationship between increases in the age of older Americans and the size of their social networks. Those researchers also reported that, when compared with younger adults, older Americans were more likely to socialize with neighbors, participate in religious communities, and volunteer. Those findings indicate that older adults who experience major life changes seek opportunities to experience social connectedness. Additional research has shown that older adults can experience beneficial social connections and feelings of belonging through participation in church congregations (Krause & Wulff, 2005), socializing with friends and family (Rajulton et al. 2007), and through participation in social activities (Dare et al., 2018).

Older adults have also found opportunities to develop a sense of belonging and community through participation in group music-making. Pike (2011) observed the musical efforts and experiences of older adults who participated in a MIDI piano ensemble over a six-year period. Results indicated that participants developed a strong sense of community with other ensemble members as well as notable feelings of belonging. Researchers also found that community orchestras offer older individuals opportunities to experience feelings of connectedness and belonging. Gembris (2008) recruited from 48 seniors' orchestras located in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Those participants responded to questionnaire items concerning their experiences in their respective ensembles. Results showed that the respondents experienced feelings of community and belonging as a result of their participation.

Previous research has shown that feelings of belonging are closely related to self-esteem (Knowles et al., 2010). Kruse (2012) investigated older adults' musical self-esteem in the context of community-based bands, community-choruses, and church choruses. Results showed that the participants' musical self-esteem was only moderately influenced by the opinions of their friends, members of their family, and peers who were part of their respective ensembles. Interestingly, results also showed that the participants valued receiving support from their directors.

Due to the close link between belongingness and self-esteem, and the reported importance of director support, it is logical to include member-director interactions in this investigation of feelings of belonging.

Previous research concerning community ensembles affiliated with the New Horizons International Music Association (NHIMA) has shown the potential of these ensembles to offer members opportunities to experience feelings of social connectedness (Coffman, 2008; Coffman & Adamek, 2001; Jutras 2011). The NHIMA was established in the early 1990s to provide adults opportunities to learn or to relearn to play musical instruments in an ensemble setting. The groups have been guided by a music education philosophy that prioritizes a positive atmosphere and inclusivity (New Horizons International Music Association, 2021)

New Horizons members' accounts of their personal experiences have shown that participating in these ensembles provided them with valuable opportunities to experience feelings of belonging. Coffman and Adamek (2001) surveyed New Horizons band members to determine if participants experienced levels of social support along the belonging, bonding, and binding continuum. These three levels of social support were defined as follows: (a) belonging – a community-based network in which an individual's membership provides a sense of belonging, (b) bonding – specific relationships in which two or more participants experience mutual enjoyment and a sense of bonding, and (c) binding – a relationship in two or more individuals experience a strong or intimate connection (Lin, 1986). Coffman and Adamek's results indicated that New Horizons participants experienced the belonging and bonding portions of the social support continuum.

In a large-scale survey, Coffman (2008) provided further evidence that New Horizons members experienced feelings of belonging as a result of their ensemble participation. Members of 120 ensembles located in the United States and Canada provided information about their musical backgrounds, self-reported physical health, and emotional well-being. Participants responded to open-ended questionnaire items concerning (a) reasons for joining, (b) accounts of interesting experiences that resulted from joining, (c) accounts of any undesirable experiences that resulted from joining, (d) reports of any surprising aspects of participating in their ensembles, (e) listing of any physical adaptations needed for participation, and (f) whether or not they believed that playing an instrument in their New Horizons ensembles had affected their health. Although comments concerning social and mental health benefits were not specifically requested, 18.2% of participants stated that social benefits, including feelings of belonging, were an important part of their experiences with their respective ensembles.

Jutras (2011) also conducted an extensive survey of North American New Horizons ensembles in which participants reported whether or not they had experienced various types of benefits while participating in their respective ensembles. Participants were asked to indicate if they had or had not experienced 42 potential benefits of ensemble participation. When participants reported that they had experienced a particular benefit, they were asked to rate its importance on a 10-point scale. Results showed that 94.8% of the participants believed that feelings of belonging were among the benefits that they experienced through participation in their respective ensembles.

The importance of feelings of belonging to the health of older adults and the potential for those feelings to be experienced through New Horizons ensembles indicated that it may be beneficial to examine this aspect of membership more closely. As such, the purpose of this study was to determine what aspects of ensemble participation, if any, activated New Horizons members' feelings of belonging. Specifically, I sought to determine the degree to which participants agreed with statements that linked specific aspects of ensemble participation with feelings of belonging. These aspects included: (a) attendance/participation in rehearsals and concerts, (b) electronic communication and social media, (c) praise and recognition, and (d) prominence of musical contributions.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 31$) were recruited from a convenience sample of two New Horizons bands located in a southern state. The average age of the participants was 63.74 ($SD = 13.56$) with a median age of 63 and a reported age range of 44-90 years old. All of the participants chose to identify themselves as either male ($n = 16$) or female ($n = 15$). Participants also reported the number of years of participation in their respective New Horizons ensembles. By the conclusion of the study, all of the participants had been a member of their ensemble for at least one year and no more than seven years. The average number of years was 3.52 ($SD = 2.06$) with a median of 3 years.

Questionnaire Construction

Due to my role as an ensemble assistant, I chose to collect data through an online questionnaire to prioritize participants' anonymity. Prior to constructing the questionnaire, I consulted best-practices literature on New Horizons ensembles (Coffman & Levy, 1997; Ernst, 2001; Ernst & Emmons, 1992) and reviewed re-

ports of older adults' internet use (Pew Research Study, 2018). I also observed the selected ensembles for three months. During that time, I generated field notes to document activities that appeared to be common occurrences in both ensembles. That information allowed me to closely align questionnaire items to the routine aspects of ensemble participation.

I also used the Sense of Belonging Instrument created by Hagerty and Patusky (1995) to guide the wording of the questionnaire items. In this instrument "belonging" was defined as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment." (Hagerty et al., 1992, p. 173). To strengthen content validity, 50 potential items, the purpose statement, and a summary of the proposed study were sent to two music educators with experience in directing New Horizons ensembles. Those individuals commented on the relevance and clarity of each item and suggested deletions and additions. Feedback was used to select and refine 27 items, which were transferred to Qualtrics. Each item was accompanied by a six-point Likert-type scale response, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*.

Questionnaire items were grouped into four sections to facilitate the administration of items in the software and to aid in the organization and discussion of results. These groupings were not intended to represent subscales. In section one, participants were asked to indicate to what extent they had experienced feelings of belonging in the context of their respective New Horizons ensembles. The purpose of that section was to avoid the assumption that all participants experienced feelings of belonging in the context of their New Horizons ensemble. In section two, participants were asked to respond to items concerning specific aspects of ensemble participation including: (a) performing in concerts, (b) attending rehearsals, (c) receiving group emails, (d) socializing with other members, (e) receiving praise and recognition, and (f) perceptions of the musical parts. In section three, participants were asked to respond to items concerning events that occurred outside of scheduled rehearsals. Specifically, participants responded to statements concerning their interactions with their ensemble's Facebook page and initiating email exchanges with an ensemble director or assistant. Participants were provided with a response option that allowed them to indicate that they had no previous experience with those aspects of ensemble participation. When a participant selected that response option, skip logic was employed so that no further items pertaining to that experience were presented. In section four, participants were asked to provide demographic information including age, gender, and the number of years that they had been a member of their New Horizons ensemble.

Procedure

With the permission of the ensemble directors, I emailed members of the two New Horizons ensembles a link to the anonymous online questionnaire. After seven days, I sent a reminder email to the same members. The questionnaire was available online for 14 days. During the same two-week period, I made paper copies of the questionnaire available at two regularly scheduled rehearsals and provided instructions for obtaining and returning those questionnaires anonymously. No ensemble member elected to take a paper copy of the questionnaire.

Results

At the end of the data collection period, I downloaded the responses and checked each participant's submission for completeness. Thirty-one participants submitted complete questionnaires which resulted in a response rate of 74%. I then computed means and standards deviations for each questionnaire item. The internal consistency reliability (Chronbach's alpha) was calculated and found to be 0.87, which provided evidence of an acceptable level of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

All participants ($N = 31$) were presented with and responded to the section one items. The highest rated section one item was "New Horizons is a place where I feel like I belong" ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 0.63$), followed by "What I have to offer the New Horizons ensemble is valued" ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 0.65$), and "People in New Horizons accept me" ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.82$). The participants also responded to negatively worded section one items. The highest rated item was "When I attend New Horizons rehearsals, I sometimes wonder if I fit in" ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.59$), followed by "I do not feel like I am a valued member of the New Horizons ensemble" ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 0.84$), and "I feel like an outsider when I am with other New Horizons members" ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 0.62$).

In section two of the questionnaire, all participants ($N = 31$) were presented with 15 items in which routine aspects of ensemble participation were linked to feelings of belonging. Eight of the items were positively worded while seven were negatively worded. The participants indicated the degree to which they agreed with each statement. Performing in concerts ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 0.62$) and attending rehearsals ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 0.62$) were the positively worded items that received the highest ratings, while being part of a section that received a compliment ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.94$) was the positively worded item that received the lowest rating. Exclusion from group emails ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.15$) was the negatively worded item that received the highest rating while playing musical parts that were not

prominent ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.96$) was the negatively worded item that received the lowest rating. Means and standard deviations for the positive and negatively worded items that were presented to all participants are listed in Table 1.

Participants who were connected to their ensembles' Facebook page ($n = 18$) indicated the degree to which the following items activated their feelings of belonging: seeing themselves in pictures posted to the Facebook group ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 0.81$), reading posts from the Facebook page ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 0.67$), and "liking" or commenting on posts from the Facebook page ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.64$). Some of those participants indicated that being excluded from pictures posted to their ensemble's Facebook page elicited negative feelings associated with belonging ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.14$).

Participants who reported that they had emailed an ensemble director or facilitator ($n = 26$) indicated that receiving responses to their emails activated their feelings of belonging ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 0.58$). Nine of those participants also indicated that, at some point, they had emailed a director but failed to receive a response. Those nine participants indicated the degree to which failing to receive a response detracted from their feelings of belonging ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.83$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine what aspects of ensemble participation, if any, activated New Horizons members' feelings of belonging. When considering the results of this investigation, it is important to note that the purpose of this study was not to quantify the amount of belongingness experienced by members or to establish the origins of members' feelings of belonging. Instead, I sought to determine the degree to which participants agreed with statements that linked specific routine aspects of ensemble participation with feelings of belonging. It is also important to note that results were taken from a convenience sample of 31 participants, and are not generalizable.

By examining responses to items in section one of the questionnaire, I attempted to verify if the participants had experienced feelings of belonging in the context of their New Horizons ensembles. Their strongly positive responses indicated that they had experienced those feelings through participating in their respective bands. These findings aligned with previous research in which members reported feeling a sense of belonging as a result of participating in their New Horizons ensembles (Coffman, 2008; Coffman & Adamek, 2001; Jutras 2011). Given the fundamental nature of the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the results of previous research conducted with New Horizons members (Coffman, 2008; Coffman & Adamek, 2001; Jutras 2011), and the results of this study,

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians for Items Concerning Performances, Rehearsal Events, and Group Emails

| Questionnaire Item | M | SD |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Performing in New Horizons concerts makes me feel like I am a valued member of the ensemble. | 5.42 | 0.62 |
| Attending rehearsals regularly increases my sense of belonging to the New Horizons ensemble. | 5.42 ^a | 0.62 ^b |
| I feel fully part of the group when I receive emails sent to all NH ensemble | 5.13 | 0.67 |
| Socializing with other members before or after rehearsals makes me feel accepted. | 4.87 | 0.88 |
| I feel like a valued member of the ensemble when I receive a compliment about my playing | 4.77 | 0.76 |
| I feel like I am really part of the ensemble when I see my name printed in the concert program. | 4.74 | 0.86 |
| When the part I play is important or prominent in the music, I feel that I am fully part of the group. | 4.74 | 1.18 |
| I feel like a valued member of the ensemble when my section receives a compliment about our playing. | 4.68 | 0.94 |
| When I am not included in emails sent to all members of the ensemble, I feel like I am not fully part of the group. | 3.87 | 1.15 |
| I feel like I am not really part of the ensemble when my name is not included in printed concert programs. | 3.26 | 1.12 |
| When I miss rehearsals, I feel less like I belong. | 3.10 | 1.19 |
| Being unable to perform on NH concerts makes me feel like I am not a valued member of the ensemble. | 2.68 | .91 |
| When my part is very difficult, I sometimes wonder if I fit in with the ensemble. | 2.65 | 0.95 |
| When the part I play is not important or prominent in the music, I don't feel that I am fully part of the group. | 2.48 | 1.03 |
| When my part is too easy, I sometimes wonder if I fit in with the ensemble. | 2.45 | 0.96 |

^a Analysis of participants responses showed that the first two items listed in Table 1 resulted in the same mean rating.

^b Analysis of participant responses showed that the first two items listed in Table 1 resulted in the same standard deviation.

music educators working with these types ensembles are encouraged to celebrate and support this social benefit of New Horizons membership.

Participants' responses to items in sections two and three indicated that music educators may be able to support ensemble member's feelings of belonging by thoughtfully implementing several routine aspects of ensemble participation. For example, 100% of the participants reported that performing in concerts and regularly attending rehearsals elicited feelings of belonging. Jutras (2011) observed that New Horizons rehearsals and performances require group interaction and contribute to the social nature of the organization. By extension, attending these scheduled meetings and events may offer members important social contexts in which they may experience feelings of belonging. Clear communication of scheduled rehearsals and concerts may help members to be able to regularly attend these events and therefore may help to support New Horizons members' feelings of belonging. Additionally, music educators may consider the accessibility of the facilities used in these events to support attendance by as many members as possible.

While the opportunity to experience feelings of belonging through rehearsal attendance may be offered on a weekly basis, access to feelings of belonging through public performance may be offered less frequently. Members may experience considerable gaps in time between concerts and therefore may only have intermittent access to feelings of belonging generated through group performance. Increasing the number and frequency of performances could provide ensemble members with more opportunities to experience feelings of belonging through group performance. This suggestion is similar to the call to action stated by Ernst and Emmons (1992) in which music educators were encouraged to offer more opportunities for older adults to learn and to perform music. In the event that it is not possible to schedule additional large-group performances, it may be beneficial to encourage members to form smaller groups. Coffman and Levy (1997) noted that some band members elected to play in small ensembles. Through those small ensembles, the members engaged in a greater number of public performances. Music educators seeking to support older adults' feelings of belonging through performance may encourage ensemble members to form and perform in similar smaller groups.

Music educators may also be able to help New Horizons members experience feelings of belonging outside of rehearsals and performances. One way in which this may be accomplished is by using an accurate and up to date email list for communicating with ensemble members. In this study, 100% of the participants indicated that being included in group emails activated their feelings of belonging. Additionally, the item concerning exclusion from group emails received one of the

highest mean ratings of the negatively worded items. Previous research has shown that feeling excluded or rejected lessened feelings of belonging and negatively impacted self-esteem (Leary & Downs, 1995). With that information in mind, individuals charged with managing member email lists are encouraged to take care to be as inclusive as possible. Attending to this routine aspect of ensemble participation may help directors to support members' feelings of belonging and avoid creating feelings of exclusion. The need for an accurate and inclusive email list may provide members with an opportunity to become further involved in their ensembles. The challenge of maintaining an up to date email list may be a task that could be accomplished by a willing ensemble member.

The high mean scores associated with positive and negatively worded items concerning member-initiated emails suggested that those instances provided ensemble directors with important opportunities to support feelings of belonging. Member-initiated emails also showed a need to take action to avoid creating negative situations through a lack of response. Although only nine participants reported experiencing that situation, all nine of those participants indicated that failing to receive an email response negatively impacted their feelings of belonging. Additionally, that occurrence received a higher mean rating than any other negatively worded item. When managing responses to emails sent by ensemble members, it may be helpful to provide members with a set of expectations. Creating an email policy and sharing that information with ensemble members would allow individuals to anticipate response behaviors from their directors, and may preemptively encourage individuals to resubmit emails that did not receive a response. Directors who elect to create and enact this type of policy may also find the practice helpful in attending to this important opportunity to support members' feelings of belonging.

Although not all members of the two bands included in this study were connected with their ensemble's Facebook page, older adults have been increasing their use of social media. In recent years, older adults' use of Facebook has become more prevalent, and this trend is expected to continue as more current Facebook users enter older adulthood (Pew Research Center, 2018). In this study, over half of the participants ($n = 17$) reported that their feelings of belonging were activated when they interacted with their ensemble's Facebook page. These results suggested that providing members with an ensemble-focused Facebook page or a similar social media platform may be another way in which music educators can support feelings of belonging outside of rehearsals and performances. The participants' responses also suggested that care should be taken to include as many members as possible in posted pictures. Individuals charged with maintaining these types of

pages may consider posting pictures of the ensemble from different rehearsals and performances to ensure that all members have the opportunity to see themselves included in this way.

Several music educators and researchers have described benefits related to the social nature of New Horizons ensembles (Coffman, 2008; Coffman & Adameck, 2001; Coffman & Levy, 1997; Ernst & Emmons, 1992; Jutras, 2011). Similarly, the results of this study showed that in-person social interactions between ensemble members supported feelings of belonging. This information aligns with the importance Ernst and Emmons (1992) place on offering time for members to socialize as part of a weekly rehearsal schedule. Those authors indicated that social interactions may be one reason that New Horizons ensembles have the potential to “give [members] a feeling of attachment to a group that is important to a person’s wellbeing” (p.32). New Horizons directors endeavoring to support members’ feelings of belonging may consider incorporating opportunities to socialize into regularly rehearsal schedules and may overtly invite members to participate. It is notable that the ensembles included in this study did not have a mid-rehearsal break, and their socializing was conducted before and after rehearsals. Polling ensemble members to gauge their preferences for the timing of opportunities to socialize may be informative and helpful when planning to offer these experiences as a way to support feelings of belonging.

Previous research concerning musical self-esteem showed that older adult community musicians valued receiving support from their ensemble directors (Kruse, 2012). The results of the current study aligned with those findings and expanded understandings of the importance of director support. Participants’ feelings of belonging were activated when they personally received a compliment from their director. Directors also appeared to have the ability to activate those feelings by complimenting an entire section of the ensemble. These results also echoed the view of Ernst (2001) who emphasized the importance of the role of the director in creating a positive and enjoyable environment for adult learners. Music educators seeking to support feelings of belonging may thoughtfully look for opportunities to comment on desirable musical contributions and musical progress made by individuals and by specific sections of the ensemble.

Many New Horizons groups have successfully engaged older adults in music making and learning despite the wide range of musical abilities that may be demonstrated by members of a single ensemble. That success has been attributed, in part, to an emphasis on inclusivity (Ernst & Emmons, 1992). One simple and clear way to communicate a spirit of inclusion is to list members by name in printed concert programs. Participants involved in this study reported that see-

ing their names printed in concert programs activated their feelings of belonging. Printed concert programs that accurately list the names of ensemble members may provide individuals with a physical artifact that affirms their inclusion in the ensemble, and, by extension, their feelings of belonging. Some participants also indicated that noticing that their name had been left off of the program made them feel that they were not truly part of the group. The tangible and public nature of this demonstration of inclusion or exclusion may account for its potential to activate positive and negative feelings associated with belonging. As with email lists and social media pages, individuals charged with creating concert programs are encouraged to be as inclusive as possible when creating member lists for use in those documents.

In their definition of belonging, Hagerty et al. (1992) stated that, to experience feelings of belonging, an individual must be involved with a group or setting in such a way that they feel that they are an integral part of that group or setting. In an ensemble, one of the ways in which individuals contribute to the group is through the musical sounds that they produce during rehearsals and performances. In some ways, the results of this study aligned with that definition. Participants' indicated that when they played parts that were prominent or important in the musical whole, they experienced feelings of belonging. Creating opportunities for various sections to fulfill this type of musical role may offer participants ways to experience those positive feelings through their musical contributions. In practice, it may be impractical for New Horizons directors to create opportunities for each section to routinely contribute prominent lines to the overall sound. Drawing members' attention to the musical contributions provided by seemingly less prominent parts may help broaden their perceptions of important musical contributions. Fortunately, participants also indicated that playing musical parts they perceived to be less important was generally not associated with lessened feelings of belonging.

Participants also indicated that their sense of belonging was not compromised by playing musical parts that they considered to be particularly difficult or that were noticeably below their skill levels. Due to the wide range of skill levels that are often present in New Horizons ensembles (Ernst, 2001), it is possible that the participants were accustomed to playing musical works of varying difficulties. That inclusive practice could explain why these participants were not adversely affected by encountering music somewhat above or below their current musical skills.

The participants of this study reported that routine aspects of ensemble participation activated positive and negative feelings associated with belonging. These findings may encourage directors to consider the relative importance of several commonplace events and interactions that may already be part of the ensemble

experiences they lead. Such considerations may help music educators to focus their efforts to support New Horizons members' feelings of belonging and to prioritize aspects that appear to have the most potential to generate that support. As previously mentioned, it is important to note that these results were taken from a convenience sample that included two ensembles located in a single state. As suggested by Dabback (2005), the nature of adult music education indicates that its exact structure and focus will vary from group to group. The varied nature of adult and community music groups indicates further investigation "at the local level" is needed to expand the insights generated by this study (p. 19).

Continued investigation of feelings of belonging experienced by New Horizons members may assist music educators in understanding how best to support this important social attribute of personal wellbeing. For example, a similar investigation conducted with a national or international participant group could provide researchers with the ability to compare responses across different ages, genders, locations, and in additional types of community-based ensembles. Thoughtful construction and use of open-ended questions could assist future researchers in collecting additional details that may aid directors' understandings of members' feelings of belonging. Alternatively, a qualitative investigation could be launched to construct a richly detailed account of the experiences that lead members to form a sense of belonging in the context of their New Horizons ensembles. Future research could also investigate the usefulness of online resources to support members' feelings of belonging during times when rehearsal attendance is not possible. Social media platforms, live streaming rehearsals, and the use of virtual meeting spaces could all potentially provide ways for members to remain connected during those times. These potential avenues for additional research, along with the findings of the current study, may assist music educators in working to maximize the social benefits that community ensemble participation may offer older adults.

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