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Investigating the Attitudes of Adolescent Male Singers in Gender Choirs

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INVESTIGATING THE ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENT MALE SINGERS IN

GENDER CHOIRS

A Master's Thesis

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Master of Music

By

Heidi Joy Williamson

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of gender choirs within a middle school choral classroom to investigate (a) attitudes about singing, (b) confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and (c) peer perceptions of adolescent males' participation in choir. Data were obtained from 40 students, in Grades 7 or 8, who were enrolled in a male gender choir at one of the five participating middle schools. Most participants enrolled in choir because they thought choir was fun, and they were good singers. Most participants did not think that choir was "better" when the genders were separated. It was difficult to determine the "why" behind the results. The results indicated the complex nature of gender choirs and adolescence. Based on the results, the researcher concluded that there is a need for a deeper understanding of male identity in the male adolescent as well as the male adolescent perspective of gender choirs.

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I dedicate this thesis to my lovely children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

Motivating male adolescents to sing is a concern for secondary vocal music teachers (Callahan, 2016; Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2007; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Palkki, 2015; White & White, 2008; Zemek, 2010), and specifically for middle school vocal teachers (Hawkins, 2015). Freer (2007) states that middle school is when the majority of the male singers drop. Middle school begins the onset of adolescence and the male voice change. The male voice change creates challenges for the male adolescent singer which can lead to frustration (Willis & Kenny, 2008). The psychological changes that occur during middle school can affect male singers and their desire to sing (White & White, 2008). The physiological and psychological changes can cause a lack of motivation amongst male adolescents to sing. The male voice change can also affect the attitudes, perceptions, and self-concepts of male identity.

Within the profession, there are numerous thoughts on how to motivate adolescent males to sing. The first idea is to create a positive social climate within the classroom (Phillips, 2003; Shapiro, 1993). The next suggestion is to implement single-gender choirs within the middle school (Bliss, 2009; Cox, 2002; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Nycz, 2008; Zemek, 2010). Choral pedagogues, researchers, and teachers favor the gender choir classroom structure for the following main outcomes: (a) fostering a safe and nurturing environment, (b) teaching specific vocal techniques for supporting changing voice challenges, and (c) utilizing gender specific repertoire that is written for changing voices. On the other hand, implementing mixed choirs, is preferable amongst other choral pedagogues, researchers, and teachers in the profession (Demorest, 2000; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Zemek, 2010). Those

not in favor of gender choirs state these potential reasons for not implementing single sex choirs: (a) the negative perception of gender choirs within a choral program, (b) the lack of a mixed gender experience, and (c) the lack of administrative support. However, most research in this area is based on the anecdotal experiences of teachers and directors (Zemek, 2010).

While much research is available on the male changing voice, adolescent behavior, attrition, teaching strategies, gender choirs, and motivation, little is known about the attitudes of male adolescents who choose to sing (Lucas, 2011). In this study, I will examine the use of gender choirs within the choral classroom to investigate (a) attitudes about singing, (b) confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and (c) peer perception of adolescent males' participation in choir.

Statement of the Problem

One of the biggest problems in vocal music education is that male students frequently lose interest in vocal music in the middle school years (Freer, 2007). As students transition from elementary school to middle school, besides the physiological and psychological changes, changes in the structure of the school day occurs; students are able to choose elective classes with continued enrollment in music classes, normally one possibility among several options. Despite the wide support for gender choirs amongst the profession, little research examines the effect of gender choirs on the motivation of male adolescent singers or the attitudes of the adolescent males in gender choirs with the exception of a study conducted by Hawkins (2015). Some research shows that the male voice change has physiological and psychological implications on the male adolescent singer, possibly negatively affecting motivation for singing (Demorest, 2000; White & White, 2008). Research also shows that there are effective teaching

practices for motivating males to sing (Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007). Research into the use of gender choirs and how they shape the attitudes about singing, confidence and self-efficacy within the male students' own voices, and peer opinions of adolescent males' participation in choir in the middle school years would be valuable for vocal teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore how participation in a middle school male choir shapes attitudes about singing, confidence and vocal self-efficacy, and peer opinions of adolescent males' participation in choir. This study will examine the attitudes of seventh and eighth grade males enrolled in male-only choirs. The results will be used to examine the experience of gender choirs and attitudes about singing, confidence, self-efficacy, and male identity.

Research Questions

1. Which of these factors (enjoyment of class, personal ability, peers, and difficulty of class) do adolescent males perceive as influential to enroll in choir?
2. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their peers feel about male participation in choir?
3. What gendered associations do male adolescents' link to singing?
4. How do adolescent males rate their singing ability, and how do they view singing in a gendered choir?
5. What choral activities do students identify as helpful and motivating in developing their singing skills and navigating through the voice change?

Significance of the Problem

Gender choirs are very popular in secondary schools and are often suggested by vocal music teachers as a way to motivate male adolescents to sing (Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008).

However, minimal evidence-based research is found regarding the attitudes of adolescent males on singing, confidence and vocal self-efficacy, and the effect of peer opinions of adolescent males' participation of students who are in a gendered choir. This study will provide insight on how the student feels about gender choirs and its effect on motivating male adolescents to sing in choir.

Assumptions

1. The classes utilized in this study are at relatively similar ability levels.
2. The classes utilized in this study are at relatively similar socio-economic levels.
3. Students will provide accurate insights on their own limitations and perceptions.

Limitations

1. Some students will have had exposure to mixed choirs.
2. Some students have only had exposure to gender choirs.
3. Students have different experiences across schools.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are clarified.

- Gender: the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex ("Gender." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 26 June 2017).
- Sex: biologically male or female based on reproductive organs ("Sex." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 26 June 2017).
- Middle school: a school usually including grades five to eight or six to eight ("Middle School." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 26 June 2017).

Overview of the Study

The next chapter of this study serves as a review of literature pertinent to the topic.

Literature to be reviewed covers the (a) importance of a positive classroom climate, (b)

advantages and disadvantages of gender choirs, (c) the male changing voice and the physiological, psychological, and male identity implications on the male adolescent singer, (d) effective teaching practices for the male changing voice within a choral classroom, and (e) creating confidence and self-efficacy within the male adolescent singer.

Following the literature review, the next chapter details the methodology used in collecting data on the attitudes about singing, confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and peer opinions of adolescent males' participation in choir. Male students in grades seven and eight from five different schools were given a survey developed from the research questions regarding their attitudes in choir. The findings of the study are reported in results chapter, while the implications are considered in final chapter, the summary and discussion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The declining participation of males in middle and high school choirs is an ongoing challenge for vocal music educators (Hawkins, 2015). Although numerous strategies have been utilized to increase male participation, the results are mixed and contextual (Hawkins, 2015). According to Hawkins (2015), no single factor accounts for the problem of a low number of male singers. Thus, he supports a multi-dimensional approach by understanding and adjusting to the perceived barriers to male choral participation (Hawkins, 2015).

While much research is available on the male changing voice, adolescent behavior, attrition, teaching strategies, gender choirs, and motivation, less research is found on the attitudes of male adolescents who choose to sing (Lucas, 2011). Lucas (2011) focuses on the attitudes of male adolescent singers who are in choir and their perceptions of how others view their participation. He identifies four main causes why males tend to lose interest in singing. The first explanation he found was that girls tend to have more interest in choir than boys. Lucas (2011) provided three possible reasons as to why boys have less interest than girls do: (a) difficulty in singing through the male changing voice, (b) difficulty managing adolescent behavior for teachers leading to a negative experience, and (c) perception of social peer pressures.

The second explanation found by Lucas (2011) claims that how comfortable a student feels may affect attitudes about singing. He continues in stating "fun" is the most important factor in recruiting and retaining male students. Additionally, Lucas (2011) places heavy emphasis on confidence in singing, which he describes as a positive attitude towards singing for male students. Lucas (2011) continues with the third explanation for a declining male

participation is gender influences. He concludes that males lose interest in upper elementary and do not make the commitment to sing when they move to secondary levels (Lucas, 2011) as well as peer influence and a need for extrinsic motivation round out the fourth explanation.

Male attitudes within the choral classroom are affected by many factors. I begin this review with an encompassing look into all of the components that influence the experience of the student, internally and externally, from the classroom. First, I will examine the importance of positive classroom climate followed by a look into the advantages and disadvantages of gender choirs. Next, I will examine the effect of the male changing voice on adolescents, as well as, male adolescent attitudes, perceptions, and concept of male identity during the voice change. This will be followed by a review of studies focused on the effective teaching strategies for adolescent male voices; the attention will be drawn to the pedagogical repertoire, classroom environment, and vocal techniques suggested for male adolescent voices. A look into creating a culture of confidence and self-efficacy amongst male adolescent singers in the classroom will conclude the literature review.

Classroom Climate

A significant number of choral educators argue that separating choirs by gender helps to create a safe and nurturing classroom environment (Callahan, 2016; Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2007; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2008; Zemek, 2010). Gender makeup is one part of the classroom social climate; it is also about the relationships established between the teacher and students. Relationships are significant for building student confidence and resilience in singing (Zemek, 2010). Phillips (2003) writes, "Singing is a deeply personal act.

When a person sings they share their inner self, which makes them vulnerable to criticism. Any type of laughter or ridicule is bound to make a person retreat from willing participation" (p. 41).

Creating a positive classroom climate begins with the teacher. Teaching does not begin with content; it begins with developing a positive classroom social climate (Shapiro, 1993). Vacha (as cited in Shapiro, 1993) states that a positive classroom environment can only be established if these four aspects are present: (a) values, (b) expectations, (c) leadership, and (d) cohesion. In the classroom, what the teacher exudes as important, personally and professionally, paired with the behavior expectations of their students creates established values (Shapiro, 1993). A value system by definition is the establishment of norms and goals in a society (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Shapiro (1993) states that every time individuals work together, they must establish expectations for both themselves and other members. Ideally, expectations lead to shared goals amongst the group (Shapiro, 1993). Teachers communicate values and expectations as the leader of the classroom; and when values, expectations, and leadership have been established, then cohesion can exist within the classroom (Shapiro, 1993). Moreover, when a positive social climate is intact, the climate supports individual diversity, differences, similarity, social support and encouragement (Shapiro, 1993).

Creating a positive classroom climate in a choral classroom requires more deliberate attention to boundaries and individual risks from the student perspective (Phillips, 2003). Phillips (2003) outlines five goals for the choral teacher for the purpose of creating a positive classroom climate: (a) discuss the voice change early, (b) allow no permittance of negative laughter or ridicule, (c) sing individually, (d) teach students to sing in the treble voice, and (e) teach singing as a learned behavior. Discussing the voice change early not only takes the mystery out of the voice change, but it also provides students with the mental and physical techniques they need for

8

the voice change before it happens (Phillips, 2003). Students will feel at ease and willing to take risks when the classroom environment applauds and encourages this behavior while discouraging ridicule (Phillips, 2003). Phillips (2003) is very adamant that teachers utilize modeling when teaching students to sing individually. He states that singing individually is the only way to give personal feedback to students, so it is crucial that they learn and feel that it is safe to do that in the choral classroom. Teaching singing as a learned behavior focuses on the fact that most students can sing. Phillips (2003) challenges choral teachers to establish norms that produce healthy singing and speaking through proper psychological (ear training, audiation) and physical (posture, breathing) training through which, the majority of students can accomplish.

Based on the studies in this section of the review, creating a positive classroom social climate influences the attitudes of students in the classroom. Shapiro (1993) suggests that a classroom climate that establishes values, expectations, leadership, and cohesion would increase a student's buy-in, willingness to participate, and ownership. Phillips (2003) states that a safe classroom must be cultivated by the teacher and is fundamental for successful choral participation and retention (Phillips, 2003). These studies emphasize the importance of teacher-student relationships in affecting the learning and attitudes of students (Barresi, 2000; Callahan, 2016; Phillips, 2003; Shapiro, 1993; Zemek, 2010). In the next section, the classroom environment is looked at through the lenses of gender choirs.

Gender Choirs

Choral directors and music education researchers overwhelmingly recommend gender choirs during the adolescent years for these reasons: (a) conducive for a positive social climate classroom (Callahan, 2016; Cox, 2002; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist,

1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2008), (b) better behavior and more focus (Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001), and (c) catering instruction and teaching styles (Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Palkki, 2015; Zemek, 2010). Those who are not in favor of gender choirs focus on the (a) negative perception of gender choirs within a choral program (Palkki, 2015), (b) lack of mixed gender choral experience (Jorgenson & Pfeiler, 2008; Nycz, 2008), (c) lack of administrative support (Demorest, 2000; Zemek, 2010), and (d) lack of uniformity of gender choirs (Palkki, 2015; Zemek, 2010). In this review, gender choirs will be examined through an in-depth look at the advantages and disadvantages of this classroom approach.

The first advantage of gender choirs is that it provides a logistical foundation for creating a safe and nurturing environment to learn (Cox, 2002; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001). For the purposes of this paper, a safe environment is defined as social-psychological support free of intimidation and encouraging of risk taking (Parrett & Budge, 2012). Jorgensen and Pfeiler (2008), Nycz (2008), and White and White (2001) found that separating genders promotes a sense of camaraderie, common purpose and well-being among students. They found that the teacher establishes a safe environment through expectations of behavior and team-building activities. Both males and females experience a voice change. Gender isolation provides additional support in recognizing the voice change as a normal part of development and learning (Fryling, 2015). Furthermore, learning in a single-gendered environment promotes a relaxed atmosphere (Dilworth, 2012; White & White, 2001) and creates a comfort level that encourages students to take risks that otherwise may not happen in a mixed gender set-up (Cox, 2002; Dilworth, 2012; Jorgensen &

Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001). Those who are not in favor of gender choirs argue that separation is a disadvantage because these students will not experience singing with the opposite sex (Nycz, 2008) or be exposed to the standard literature for mixed voices within gender choirs (Jorgenson & Pfeiler, 2008).

The second advantage of gender choirs is that they tend to have better behavior (Cox, 2002; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001). Without the opposite sex in the classroom, the behaviors that occur as a result of acting out or trying to impress the opposite gender are reduced (Freer, 2007). This leads to more efficient classroom management, which in turn leads to better teaching and learning opportunities that is not disrupted by poor behavior (Cox, 2002; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001).

Opponents of gender choirs claim that gender choirs are perceived as inferior within a choral program (Palkki, 2015; Zemek, 2010). Specifically, gender choirs are viewed as beginning or novice choirs that lead to more substantial learning experiences in mixed choirs. Furthermore, there is often substantial competition among females for positions in mixed choirs due to the under enrollment of males in choral programs (Palkki, 2015).

Proponents of gender choirs place heavy emphasis on the ability of teachers to cater the instruction to the male or female voice specifically (Cox, 2002; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Nycz, 2008; White & White, 2001) and male or female adolescent learning styles (Freer, 2007; Hawkins, 2015). According to Zemek (2010), gender choirs allow voice changes to be addressed with gender-specific vocal techniques taught while not expecting the opposite gender to wait for their specific teaching of vocal techniques. Gender choirs also

allow for male or female specific literature to be chosen and more attention given to the gender-specific developmental voice changes that students are experiencing by teaching vocal techniques accordingly (Zemek, 2010). Zemek (2010) continues that this is beneficial for both males and females since they are less likely to be neglected during teaching that does not pertain to them. Specific vocal instruction can be catered to gendered considerations and provide students with strategies for effectively singing while undergoing voice change (Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; White & White, 2001). The structure of gender choirs enables the differences in learning styles and maturity to be addressed. According to Freer (2007), adolescent males and females learn differently from each other; Hawkins (2015) refers to males and females learning and maturing at different rates.

In general, middle schools are not unified in structure; the lack of uniformity stems from a marked difference in the arrangement of grades, classes offered, and schedules across middle schools. Thus, middle schools rarely offer equivalent classes to other middle schools, including music classes. Those who are not in favor of gender choirs emphasize that gender choirs play into the lack of uniformity (Demorest, 2000; Zemek, 2010). Additionally, some teachers prefer gender choirs, while others prefer mixed choirs at the middle school level (Demorest, 2000; Zemek, 2010). Notably, these conclusions are justified on the basis of personal experience rather than evidence-based conclusions. Moreover, gender choirs are difficult to gain administrative support due to the complexity of the school scheduling and music staffing support needed (Demorest, 2000; Zemek, 2010).

Although gender choirs have been highly suggested and supported from music educators and advocates of gender specific education (Callahan, 2016; Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Freer, 2007; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler,

2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001; Zemek, 2010), the research reveals mixed findings on the success of gender choirs directly (Demorest, 2000; Jorgenson & Pfeiler, 2008; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Zemek, 2010). Notably, the primary source of most research is based on the personal experiences of directors and conductors. Objectivity is a challenge in this line of research, given that class organization overlaps with the administrative organization, philosophy and instructional effectiveness. The next section will expand on the implications of the male voice change and development of male identity in adolescent singers.

Male Voice Change & Male Identity

The male voice change and the development of male identity are substantial and foregrounded issues for teaching adolescent aged students; they can cause damaging physiological and psychological problems if not properly addressed and evolved. Knowledge of the voice change and how it affects the student, both physiologically and psychologically, are crucial to understanding the induced dilemma in male adolescent singing (White & White, 2001). The development of male identity also plays an impactful role. The societal and cultural norms for males bear much weight on how an adolescent male views his masculine role in society. In this section, the physiological and psychological effects of the voice change on singing and male identity is considered.

The male voice change can be a very abrupt and impressionable event for the male student and teacher because the timing, length, or severity of the voice change cannot be predicted. During adolescence, the larynx, also known as the voice box, is growing just like the rest of the body during puberty. When the larynx grows, the vocal cords stretch and become

longer and thicker nearly doubling in length, making for a significant physiological change (Thurman & Welch, 1997).

Thurman & Welch (1997) studied the physiological voice change amongst adolescent males. They identified three major stages that occur during the male voice change beginning around age thirteen and ending around age fifteen that can vary from student to student: (a) pre-mutational (unchanged), (b) mutational (changing), and (c) post-mutational (changed). In the pre-mutational stage, the unchanged voice has not yet altered in any way; (Freer, 2008) the unchanged voice most resembles a female voice in range and quality (Thurman & Welch, 1997). The changing voice is the most unpredictable and unreliable (Freer, 2008). The changing voice is doing precisely what its title declares -- changing, at different rates and different times (Freer, 2008). The student will have a breathy quality and a range that is constantly changing and inconsistent (Freer, 2008; Thurman & Welch, 1997). The changed voice is settled into his new register and improved tone quality (Thurman & Welch, 1997). The student will have a clearer quality and a comfortable range that has shifted much lower than before the voice change; however, the voice will most likely continue to evolve as the student gets older and the voice improves in its strength, stability, range, and tone (Freer, 2008).

As described in Cooksey's study (Thurman & Welch, 1997), the male voice change drastically affects how the male voice functions. Cooksey describes a loss of control or manipulation, loss of range and changing range, reduced power, and even struggling to matching pitch (Freer, 2008; Thurman & Welch, 1997). The physiological changes in the voice can lead to discouragement amongst the adolescent males and may also cause a stoppage of singing (Freer, 2008). Singing becomes more difficult and unpredictable. This can cause a sense of unreliableness and possible embarrassment for the male singer (Willis & Kenny, 2008).

Psychological changes invoked by the male voice change are tied to self-identity. The development of the identity begins during adolescence (Solarz, 2002). Solarz (2002) describes identity this way:

> Identity includes two concepts. First is self-concept: the set of beliefs one has about oneself. This includes beliefs about one's attributes (e.g., tall, intelligent), roles and goals (e.g., occupation one wants to have when grown), and interests, values, and beliefs (e.g., religious, political). Second is self-esteem, which involves evaluating how one feels about one's self-concept. 'Global' self-esteem refers to how much we like or approve of our perceived selves as a whole. 'Specific' self-esteem refers to how much we feel about certain parts of ourselves (e.g., as an athlete or student, how one looks, etc.). Self-esteem develops uniquely for each adolescent, and there are many different trajectories of self-esteem possible over the course of adolescence (Zimmerman, Copeland, Shope, & Dielman, 1997). Thus, self-esteem, whether high or low, may remain relatively stable during adolescence or may steadily improve or worsen (p. 19).

Understanding the development of male identity is a crucial part of understanding and acknowledging the child to adolescent transition.

Burke (1989) claims that social structures frame expectations for behavior with respect to various roles and positions in society. Societal and cultural norms regarding gender identity and gender roles have a heavy influence on what is deemed masculine or feminine (Hawkins, 2015). According to Kimmel & Bridges (2011), "masculinity is defined as to referring to the behaviors, social roles, and relations of men within a given society as well as the meanings attributed to them. The term masculinity stresses gender, unlike male, which stresses biological sex" (p. 1). Singing in choirs used to be perceived as a highly masculine activity during the colonial time period (Hawkins, 2015); however, the gradual shift of feminizing choral activities has had a huge effect on the participation of singing activities by males (Hawkins, 2015).

The male identity is created by combining societal norms with how one views himself (Solarz, 2002). The male identity may assume various roles within society. However, how the male perception is formed from the various roles within society paired with the role of self-

identity creates what he would deem as masculine and appropriate (Solarz, 2002). The role of self-identity is crucial to identifying who you are as a person (Solarz, 2002). Thus, if a student does not perceive himself as a singer or perceive singing as masculine, then more than likely, he will not be inclined to sing in choirs (Hawkins, 2015; White & White, 2001).

White and White (2001) describe the psychological changes amongst adolescent males. As children, the sense of self-confidence, eagerness, and curiosity to learn fades during adolescence (White & White, 2001). Music educators have observed that adolescent boys are sensitive to pubertal changes, which is one reason why voice change results in self-consciousness and uncertainty (Freer, 2008; White & White, 2001). The adolescent male is on a mission of self-discovery, identifying and valuing male attributes (White & White, 2001). He also selects male role models and associates with peer groups who share common interests and values (White & White, 2001). The choice to continue singing at this age is affected by how singing fits into his male attributes, including how his male role models view singing and more importantly, how his peer group views singing (Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2008; White & White, 2001). White and White (2001) further state that adolescent males may enjoy and be good at, singing, but if it is not prized by his peer group, then he will be discouraged to continue his singing at this level.

Although the physiological and psychological changes may seem daunting, many teachers have seen this as a time when students can deeply commit to music, finding that they need and love singing (Freer, 2008). Alice Rodgers wrote, "The adolescent child is especially impressionable, and properly directed, can be awakened to beauty through music, and led to love to express himself in singing ... boys especially need help and encouragement at this time, and a chance to become acquainted with their new voices" (Rodgers, 1926, p. 27). Karl Gehrkens claims "when he once gets over the fear of being called a 'sissy' for liking the tonal art, he is

likely to become an even more loyal and ardent devotee of his musical organization than is the girl" (Gehrkens, 1935, p. 18). These changes, the physiological and psychological, are unavoidable but can be met with success when we meet the students where they are and give them what they need (Freer, 2007). The research is lacking on information regarding how the students feel about puberty, the voice change, and identity. Student perspective would give valuable insight for teaching. In the next section, research on teaching strategies specifically aimed at the supporting the physiological and psychological needs of male prepubescents and adolescents will be explored.

Teaching Practices

Effective teaching practices in a classroom support a climate for learning, growth and development. Choral music educators recommend particular teaching practices to address the physiological characteristics, psychological changes, and learning approaches associated with the male adolescent voice (Barresi, 2000; Callahan, 2016; Collins, 2012; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Freer, 2008; Freer, 2009; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Harris, 2006; Hawkins, 2015; Palkki, 2015; White & White, 2001; Zemek, 2010). Due to the rapid growth of the voice and body, this age is difficult to teach but adjusting teaching practices to accommodate the learning styles of the male adolescent is necessary (Freer, 2007). According to Freer (2007, p. 31), adolescent boys do sing--just maybe not in a choir setting. In this section of the review, the best teaching practices for the male adolescent student will be identified.

The first and most frequently suggested teaching practice is the judicious selection of repertoire for a men's choir; choral educators suggest two primary considerations: repertoire that is appropriate in tessitura and ability and repertoire that is lyrically appropriate (Barresi, 2000;

Callahan, 2016; Collins, 2012; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Freer, 2008; Freer, 2009; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Harris, 2006; Palkki, 2015). Choosing repertoire within the range of the male changing voice allows students to actively participate within the vocal limitations during voice change (Demorest, 2000). While the literature chosen must be flexible and accessible for changing voices (Friar, 1999), teachers must prioritize technique development over song learning (Demorest, 2000). Freer (2007) suggests that literature should be high quality and challenging yet accessible. He also suggests including wide variety of music that is attractive for students. He says, "A boy faced with choral repertoire he doesn't like, a changing voice he doesn't understand, and instruction he finds boring will become a boy who proclaims he hates school music and disengages from choral music. Forever" (Freer, 2007, p. 32). Callahan (2016, p. 99) agrees, "If boys don't like it or understand it--they won't sing it."

The other consideration in choosing repertoire is the depth and relevance of the text. While men's choir music is often perceived as being only about sailors, pirates and girls, Freer (2007) argues that the text needs to reflect real-world issues to be relevant for students. Appropriate repertoire will interest and motivate students (Barresi, 2000). According to Callahan (2016), choosing literature that represents, discusses, and celebrates the emotions of life can promote caring behaviors and emotional development (Callahan, 2016).

The second theme found in the literature on best teaching practices is the fostering of a safe and nurturing classroom environment (Callahan, 2016; Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Fryling, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001). Creating a safe and nurturing classroom environment requires intentionality and recognition of three components on the part of choral teachers in order to meet the basic human need of feeling safe (Barresi, 2000; Callahan, 2016;

Freer, 2009; Fryling, 2015; McLeod, 2016). The first component of creating a climate is the establishment of psychologically safe boundaries. Barresi (2000) says that setting boundaries for behavior creates an environment for learning. The next component is the establishment of academic goals (Barresi, 2000). Freer (2009) recommends to build on what they know and need to know, and challenge them in ways that will match their skill level (Freer, 2009). Teachers should celebrate all ranges and all notes; it is crucial to communicate and de-stigmatize the hierarchy of notes within ranges (Fryling, 2015). A third component in fostering a safe and nurturing environment is building relationships within the classroom (Callahan, 2016). Students need to know that you care (Callahan, 2016). Callahan (2016) emphasizes that teachers should take boys seriously and let them be themselves. All types of boys should feel safe and accepted (Fryling, 2015). Having fun is a must for boys and the environment must allow for it (Freer, 2007; Callahan, 2016).

The third best teaching practice is to utilize knowledge on the ways that boys learn and provide experiences that reflect sex and gender stereotypical traits (Freer, 2007). Adolescent boys are slower than girls in their emotional response and act out physically rather than verbally; the implications for teaching are to incorporate more movement in instruction and high energy full of focus (Freer, 2007; Freer, 2008). Dilworth (2012) and Freer (2007) state that a change in activity, focus, or location every twelve to thirteen minutes is important for engagement. Stress enhances boy learning; using strategies such as student choice, experimentation, competition and rewards can enhance and motivate learning (Callahan, 2016; Freer, 2007; Freer, 2009). This can be incorporated through warmups, improvisational activities, and group work (Freer, 2007; Freer, 2009).

The fourth best teaching practice is to build vocal technique as male voices change (Freer, 2007; Fryling, 2015). Vocal educators recommend acknowledging and demystifying the male voice change in order to help boys to become comfortable and knowledgeable about their changing voices (Barresi, 2000; Freer, 2007; Freer, 2009; Fryling, 2015). Fryling (2015) suggests that the students should sing through the change, and the teacher should consistently move through the change with patience and consistency. According to Collins (2012), Dilworth (2012), and Fryling (2015), boys should continue to sing with their head voice even as the voice is dropping. They suggest to start in the head voice and work towards a top-down mix. Collins (2012), Dilworth (2012), and Fryling (2015) also suggest self-assessing the voice frequently by using recording equipment, and having the students reflect on the changes. Freer (2009) suggests to start with warm-ups that are non-pitched or non-pitch specific. This allows for the boys to experiment with the changing voice without the restraints of matching pitch. He also suggests to begin with warmups that meet the students where they are and then build on where they are into a logical sequence with structure and consistency (Freer, 2009).

The fifth best practice for teaching adolescent males is to provide socialization support for singing as an identifiable male activity (Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2007; Palkki, 2016; White & White, 2001; Zemek, 2010). According to Zemek (2010), White and White (2001), and Hawkins (2015), male gender roles are challenged when adolescent boys decide to sing in a choir. This can be found in the opinions that masculinity means being athletic, popular, or strong and silent and that masculine males don't sing in choir. Some choral educators make men's choir hyper-masculine as a strategy to combat this gender stereotype, such as only singing songs with upbeat tempos and referring to pirates, war, and women. However, the hyper-masculine mentality will not provide authentic or realistic support for all male students (Demorest, 2000; Palkki, 2016;

Zemek, 2010). It is crucial that boys are exposed to choral singing as a male activity rather than simply a masculine activity. Freer (2010) states, "perceived psychological barriers are the most difficult to change because they are tied to socio-cultural values that are embedded in children over long periods of time." It should be emphasized through instruction that producing sound through mastering music elements creates the masculine activity because it is males who are singing (Demorest, 2000; White & White, 2001). This neutralizes the challenged gender roles by not proclaiming a masculinity due to a tempo, genre, text or more importantly, a stereotype. It also creates a more welcoming atmosphere as the only requirement is to be male, not to be masculine (Demorest, 2000; Palkki, 2016). Demorest (2000) goes on to say that it is important that the male identification with singing comes from the boys themselves. He continues by suggesting that young boys need opportunities to interact with other males who sing (Demorest, 2000; White & White, 2001). Bringing male guests into the classroom (Callahan, 2016), listening and watching recordings of a variety of male singers (Callahan, 2016), creating a male singing workshop (Demorest, 2000), bringing male groups to elementary and middle schools (Demorest, 2000), will help boys perceive singing as a male activity. It also helps boys who are going through the voice change see the natural progression of the voice change--that it is normal and temporary (Fryling, 2015).

As described, there is a wealth of information regarding effective teaching practices and strategies for addressing the needs of the voice change and male adolescent learning styles (Barresi, 2000; Callahan, 2016; Collins, 2012; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Freer, 2008; Freer, 2009; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Harris, 2006; Hawkins, 2015; Palkki, 2015; White & White, 2001; Zemek, 2010). How these teaching practices affect confidence, efficacy, and identity within the student are significant considerations for choral teachers (Fryling, 2015).

Teachers recognize and see an increase in confidence and efficacy in students as they develop a broader male identity (Demorest, 2000; Fryling, 2015; White & White, 2001); however, there is a lack of evidence-based research on how these strategies impact confidence, efficacy, and identity from the student's perspective (Lucas, 2011).

Creating Confidence and Self-Efficacy in the Male Adolescent Singer

Creating confidence and self-efficacy in the male adolescent singer is highly tied to the creation of a safe and nurturing classroom environment (Oakes, 2008). According to Zemek (2010), confidence is one of the key attributes of male singers who stick with choir. The voice change is a personal and influential experience for every male. Therefore, experiencing confidence and self-efficacy as personal musicians is crucial for adolescent boys (Demorest, 2000; Fryling, 2015). However, there is little evidence-based research, with the exception of Hawkins' study in 2015, on the impact of gender choirs on creating confidence and self-efficacy.

Proponents of gender choirs claim that the environment created by gender choirs supports the growth of confidence in the adolescent singer (Bliss, 2009; Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Fryling, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Zemek, 2010). Music educators believe that once males feel safe in the classroom, instructional training and encouragement can provide the support needed to overcome the adversity of the male voice change and instill confidence (Bliss, 2009; Cox, 2002; Dilworth, 2012; Fryling, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Oakes, 2008; Zemek, 2010).

Creating musicians who are confident and autonomous may stimulate future participation in singing and enliven how one perceives their own potential. (Freer, 2007; Fryling, 2015). According to Demorest (2000), when boys gain confidence, they increase their commitment to

singing and ownership of their musicianship. Zemek (2010) argues that confidence in musical ability resulting from improving one's musical skills supports motivation for continuing to sing in choirs (Zemek, 2010). Oakes (2008) identifies four components of intrinsic confidence in the developing male voice that are useful for teachers: (a) confidence in the individual nature of the voice change, (b) confidence in the vocal registration and range, (c) confidence to avoid unnecessary effort, and (d) confidence in their role and contribution in the choir.

Due to the personal and vulnerable nature of the voice change, Oakes (2008) emphasizes the need to develop intrinsic confidence in the singer. The first component is to help boys recognize that singing is a process. Helping boys understand the process of singing while the voice is changing is more than fixing one problem in one instance (Oakes, 2008). Fryling (2015) builds on this concept suggesting that their self-efficacy will increase if the students know how to solve problems throughout the voice change rather than a single instance. Each instance gives the teacher the opportunity to discuss a process rather than a one-time fix. Building on instances and experiencing success through this learning style will help students problem-solve on their own while increasing self-efficacy. Recognizing that singing is a process supports the development of healthy singing habits, social perception, and identity (Oakes, 2008). The second component focuses on emphasizing a need for using and extending the entire range (Oakes, 2008). Oakes (2008) and Freer (2009) suggest exploring the entire range during warm-ups to help students feel and memorize the difference between high and low notes using unpitched exercises, such as yawns, sirens, and sighs to help the students explore his new range. Building confidence in warm-ups will transfer to confidence in repertoire (Oakes, 2008). The third component is to facilitate efficient singing that avoids tension. As the voice is changing, male students use unnecessary effort to produce sounds that are no longer a physical possibility

(Oakes, 2008). Tension most commonly results from the muscles of the neck and jaw (Oakes, 2008). This tension does not help the student navigate through the voice change and can cause additional problems if not addressed (Oakes, 2008). Oakes (2008) recommends explaining to students that working harder with the voice actually means keeping things free and light, working hard with breath support instead of tension. He reiterates the need for nonpitched exercises so the students have the opportunity to freely produce light, unforced sounds (Oakes, 2008; Freer, 2009). The fourth component is supporting students' need for approval (Oakes, 2008). Students may experience feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and disappointment over their voice change. Fryling (2015) advises discussing strengths and weaknesses with the students to encourage and help set efficacy goals. Oakes (2008) suggests that re-writing parts are one of the practical ways the teacher can help with the lack of range (Oakes, 2008). Oakes (2008) emphasizes that although voice changes are beyond students' control, they can always give attention to diction, phrasing, or articulation, which will increase their self-efficacy as a singer.

Oakes (2008) argues that the primary goal is to create healthy singers through the voice change while creating men who are comfortable with their own vocal ability and confidently prepared for a lifetime of music making. Fryling (2015) emphasizes building vocal technique which will in turn build self-efficacy beliefs. Numerous vocal educators argue that creating confidence and self-efficacy can be addressed within the gendered choir; however few researchers have examined the attitudes of the students within the gendered choir regarding creating confidence and self-efficacy (Lucas, 2011). A known study addressing this topic is discussed in the next section.

Adolescent Male Attitudes about Singing in Choir

In his study of literature on the lack of male adolescent participation in choir, Lucas (2011) recognized that the student perspective is largely lacking in the research. The research conducted has been focused on what adolescents need from the adult perspective; therefore, Lucas explored the barriers to male participation from the student's perspective. He investigated the attitudes that influenced males to enroll in choir and assessed their attitudes about singing, self-concept of their own voices, and perception of others' view of adolescent males' participation in choir. In his study, Lucas (2011) explored the attitudes of students who were already enrolled in choir. Schools were selected based on the range of population, geographical area, and the researcher was acquainted with the teachers at the selected schools. He received data from 101 7th and 8th grade students in six different schools across Kansas and Oklahoma.

He (Lucas, 2001) developed a survey consisting of two sections: (a) demographic information consisting of age, grade level, playing a musical instrument, and playing in band; and (b) perceptual survey to measure the choral experience. The survey included 24 statements that utilized a Likert scale intended to examine enrollment factors and how choir participation is perceived by themselves and significant others. Research questions that guided the development of the survey included:

1. Which of these factors do adolescent males perceive as influential to enroll in choir? (Nine survey items)
2. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their peers feel about guys singing in choir? (Four survey items)
3. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their teachers, coaches, and administration feel about guys singing in choir? (Three survey items)
4. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their families feel about singing in choir? (Four survey items)
5. How do adolescent males view their singing ability, and how do they view singing in choir? (Four survey items)

The results of this study reported descriptive data on participant perceptions disaggregated by grade level and participation in band: (a) grade 7, (b) grade 8, (c) band member, (d) non-band member. The two highest scoring reasons for choosing to sing in choir were (1) "fun" and (2) participant's perceived ability. The two lowest scoring reasons for choosing to sing in choir were (1) family influence and (2) peer influence.

Based upon Lucas's (2011) conclusions from the quantitative items, the students claimed to have not lost any friends from singing but also acknowledged that the most popular students were in choir. The students reported that they received positive support from the administration and non-music teachers. The students felt adequate support from coaches but scored the support as being less supportive than from administration or other teachers. The students also reported that they receive positive support from their families.

Lucas (2011) claims that the biggest takeaways from his study speak to why students choose to sing. The majority of the students said they chose to sing because they enjoyed it and thought it was "fun." The participants believed they were good singers, and they enjoyed singing. He concluded that students developed confidence in choir because they experienced a feeling of success. Moreover, these findings support what many researchers have claimed regarding confidence (Svengalis, 1978) and positive self-concepts and their role in retention (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998; Klinedinst, 1991).

Discussion

Many educators and researchers suggest daily instruction through gender choirs in order to nurture students, induce positive behaviors, cater literature to student needs, address learning style differences and instill confidence (Callahan, 2016; Cox, 2002; Demorest, 2000; Freer,

26

2007; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2008; Zemek, 2010). However, the research behind gender choirs is predominantly based on anecdotal accounts from teachers and directors. Additional research that is objective and evidence-based would provide more insight into the authenticity of teacher perspectives.

The male changing voice is a physiological and psychological issue within the choral classroom. Thurman & Welch (1997) provide a description of the stages of the male changing voice. Freer (2007), Hawkins (2015), and White and White (2001) demonstrate the psychological ramifications of the male changing voice, including the robustness of male identity. Oakes (2008) provides a framework for the development of competence through building confidence and self-efficacy by addressing the voice change with transparent and attainable goals. This knowledge base provides choral educators with direction on how to approach the male changing voice physiologically and psychologically and use this information in instruction. The Lucas study did find that student confidence plays a huge role in participation and retention. What is less known is why some students integrate singing into their personal, identity, but others do not. The Lucas study did not address the concept of male identity and its role in male participation in choir. Male identity is described as how one defines himself. The male adolescent is constantly developing and broadening or narrowing his male identity depending on contextual factors, as well as, internal and external feelings.

The teaching practices that are advocated for male adolescent choirs include: (a) choosing appropriate repertoire, (b) creating a safe and nurturing classroom environment, (c) building vocal technique through the voice change, (d) understanding how boys learn and what they need, (e) emphasizing that singing is a male activity as opposed to a masculine activity, and (f)

creating confidence and self-efficacy in singing. Many studies regarding effective teaching practices have been conducted and shown success from the teacher's viewpoint (Callahan, 2016; Fryling, 2015; Jorgenson & Pfeiler, 2008; Nycz, 2008; White & White, 2001); however, few studies have been conducted on how students perceive the success of these practices or their attitudes regarding these practices (Hawkins, 2015; Lucas, 2011). Regarding these teaching practices, a student perspective would provide an authenticity in examining the psychological factors affecting the male participation in choir.

This study was a modified replication of Lucas (2011). Lucas' (2011) study addressed student perspectives and the alignment of those perspective with developmental considerations that are informed on research regarding adolescents. The survey questions were reported to be valid and reliable providing insight into students' authentic perspectives. The non-invasive and anonymous nature of the survey allowed for honest responses and objectivity; however, his study provides little insight into non-choir students who cease to continue or never join and the role of male identity on participation. His study is limited to the geographical area surveyed. Research that incorporates more diversity in geographical regions, student experience, examines perceptions of male identity, and future expectations of participation would provide deeper insight into the perceptions of students in middle school choir. In addition to his study, I will also examine how participation in a junior high male choir shapes the attitudes about singing, confidence and self-efficacy of their own voice, and influence of peer opinions of adolescent males' participation in choir and the implications on motivating male adolescents to sing in choir. In summary, I plan to investigate the attitudes of male singers within single-gendered choirs.

I plan to follow the framework, method, and procedure of Lucas's study (2011) to explore student perspectives. The questions from the survey will be directly correlated to the research questions of my study. There will be five research questions in my study: three of the research questions used in Lucas' study and the remaining two questions will provide research in new areas including gender choirs and male identity. Addressing the effect of male identity on male participation in choir is a significant issue for choral music education (Demorest, 2000; Freer, 2007; Palkki, 2015; White & White, 2001; Zemek, 2010); the male identity is a fluid and changeable concept (Freer, 2008; Palkki, 2015; White & White, 2001). While the transitional nature of identity is necessarily elusive, student perceptions have the potential to provide insight on the ever-evolving concept of male identity within adolescents, despite the limitations of surveying students at one point in time.

The next chapter will discuss the design of the study and the research methods used to collect and analyze data toward that goal.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Although a large amount of research is available on the male changing voice, adolescent behavior, attrition, teaching strategies, gender choirs, and motivation, little is known about the attitudes of male adolescents who choose to sing (Lucas, 2011). Lucas (2011) focused his study on the attitudes of male adolescent singers who are in choir and their perceptions of how others view their participation in choir. This project attempted to expand the research conducted by Lucas (2011) by exploring the attitudes of male adolescent singers who are in a gender-specific choir. This project will examine perceptions of the use of gender choirs within the choral classroom to explore (a) attitudes about singing, (b) confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and (c) peer perceptions of adolescent males' participation in choir.

Participants

I contacted middle school choir teachers from Missouri on a social media platform, Facebook, to identify an interest for participating in this study. Through this platform, I was able to use personal email to discuss the study with the teachers. I chose middle schools for this study because these are the key grades for changing voice and social factors to influence singing. Schools were selected based on their teacher's and principal's willingness to participate and a marked gender choir in the choir program. This proved to be difficult because some teachers or principals did not want to participate and most middle schools do not have gender choirs. Teachers from five schools agreed to participate.

The study took place in five different schools across Missouri. The schools selected were all middle schools ranging from grades 6-8 or grades 7-8 or grades 8-9. Only 7th and 8th grade students were selected for the study as these grades were found in every school. The full population of the 7th and 8th graders in the five classes in all schools was 40 students, comprised of sixteen 7th graders and twenty-four 8th graders. Five different instructors delivered oral and written instructions from the uniform script. The survey was distributed to the students via google form. Results were anonymous and sent directly to the researcher.

Survey Development

The intent of the study was to assess adolescent males in a gender choir regarding their attitudes about singing, confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and perception of others' view of adolescent males' participation in choir using a Likert-style survey given to students. The survey (Appendix A) was developed from expanding on the Likert-style model that was used in Lucas' (2011) study. The survey was comprised of two sections. The first section contained four questions covering age, grade, sex of teacher, and name of teacher. The second section consisted of twenty statements in a 4-point Likert-type scale. These twenty statements, written specifically to address the five research questions, were placed randomly throughout this portion of the survey in order to avoid a response set.

Data Collection and Analysis

The proposal was submitted to the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board for approval. Approval was granted on February 25, 2018, and the study was assigned number IRB-FY2018-220 (Appendix B). All classes were given the same oral and written instructions

31

but delivered by five different instructors. The survey was distributed to the students via a google form. Results were anonymous and sent directly to the researcher. Informed consent was required and collected from the students (Appendix C). However, some of the students completed the survey without informed consent. Teacher participants were provided with informed consent forms to be signed by parents or guardians and a link to the survey to be completed. Some teacher participants provided the informed consent form and survey to student simultaneously. Since informed consent was required for the study, that data could not be used. Thus, some of the students completed the survey twice after the informed consent was collected. The students' responses were sent digitally to the researcher with the researcher only knowing the age, grade, sex of the student, and name of the teacher. The responses were scored using an expanded Likert-style model from Lucas' (2011) study of adolescent male attitudes about singing in choir.

The responses of the surveys from all schools were collated across schools for analysis purposes. The responses of the surveys were analyzed descriptively using the mean and standard deviation to determine the results of each question. The results will indicate the perceptions of the male attitude in a gender choir. In the next chapter, the results of the study will be discussed.

RESULTS

Introduction

A total of 40 seventh and eighth grade male students from five different middle schools in Missouri participated in this study. All 40 students answered every survey question making the response rate for every question 100%. The results are shown via the tables by grade and overall total and by gender of the teacher and overall total. Each table shows the means and standard deviations for the survey statements according to the results.

The intent of the study was to assess adolescent males in a gender choir regarding their attitudes about singing, confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and perception of others' view of adolescent males' participation in choir using a Likert-style survey given to students. The survey comprised of two sections. The first section contained four questions covering age, grade, sex of teacher, and name of teacher. The second section consisted of twenty statements in a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4; 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. These twenty statements, written specifically to address the five research questions, were placed randomly throughout this portion of the survey in order to avoid a response set.

Influential Factors for Enrolling in Choir

Table 1 contains the results of items designed to gather data on participant motivations for enrolling in choir based on grade level. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.1 (disagree) and peak at 3.4 (agree). These data for Table 1 are in the middle of the range of possible responses.

Overall, the results in Table 1 show that the two statements with the highest means are distinguished by the statements of choir being "fun" and the participant's perceived ability. The two statements with the lowest means are found to be in the categories of perceived influences of friends and that choir is an "easy class." These data also reveal the same results across the grade levels for the statements.

Table 1. Which of these factors do adolescent males perceive as influential to enroll in choir based on grade level? (Four Survey Items)

	Grade				All	
	7		8			
n = number of students	16		24		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
5. I am in choir because it is fun.	3.4	0.7	3.4	0.7	3.4	0.7
1. I am in choir because I am good at singing.	3.0	0.7	3.3	0.7	3.1	0.7
11. Most of my friends are in choir.	3.0	0.9	2.6	0.8	2.7	0.8
19. I am in choir because it is an easy class.	2.1	0.9	2.5	1.0	2.4	1.0

Table 2 contains the results of items designed to gather data on participant motivations for enrolling in choir based on the gender of the teacher. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.4 (disagree) and the highest at 3.7 (agree). These data for this table are in the middle of the range of possible responses.

The results in Table 2 show that the statement with the highest mean, "I am in choir because it is fun," is higher for the students under female teachers. The other statements are very similar between the genders of teachers.

Table 2. Which of these factors do adolescent males perceive as influential to enroll in choir based on teacher gender? (Four Survey Items)

	Gender of Teacher				All	
	Female		Male			
n = number of students	19		21		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
5. I am in choir because it is fun.	3.7	0.5	3.1	0.7	3.4	0.7
1. I am in choir because I am good at singing.	3.2	0.8	3.1	0.6	3.1	0.7
11. Most of my friends are in choir.	2.9	0.9	2.7	0.8	2.7	0.8
19. I am in choir because it is an easy class.	2.4	0.9	2.4	1.1	2.4	1.0

Perceptions of Peers Regarding Enrollment in Choir

Table 3 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the adolescent males' perceptions of peers regarding enrollment in choir based on grade level. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.2 (disagree) and peak at 3.1 (agree). These data for this table are mainly in the 2 (disagree) range of possible responses.

The results in Table 3 show an overall low perception of how their peers feel about male participation in choir. The statements with the highest means are shown in the categories that singing is something that is acceptable and beneficial. The two lowest means reveal that the

perception of popularity or friends in choir is low among male participants. There is a large gap across grade levels on the second and third statements. The seventh grade participants ranked these statements higher than their eighth grade peers. The other two statements reveal similar data across grade levels.

Table 3. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their peers feel about male participation in choir based on grade level? (Four Survey Items)

	Grade				All	
	7		8			
n = number of students	16		24		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
14. Singing is something that guys do.	2.9	0.6	2.8	0.8	2.9	0.7
2. The guys in my school think it's good for guys to be in choir.	3.0	0.6	2.4	0.9	2.6	0.9
7. The most popular guys in my school sing in choir.	3.1	0.9	2.2	0.9	2.5	1.0
16. The people I hang out with think it is cool to be in choir.	2.6	0.8	2.3	0.9	2.4	0.9

Table 4 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the adolescent males' perceptions of peers regarding enrollment in choir based on the gender of the teacher. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.3 (disagree) and the highest at 2.9 (disagree). These data for this table are all in the 2 (disagree) range.

The results in Table 4 show on overall higher mean for the top three out of the four statements for the students under the direction of male teachers. The last statement regarding how "cool" it is to be in choir, has a higher mean for the students under female teachers.

Table 4. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their peers feel about male participation in choir based on teacher gender? (Four Survey Items)

	Gender of Teacher				All	
	Female		Male			
n = number of students	19		21		40	
Item	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
14. Singing is something that guys do.	2.7	0.7	2.9	0.8	2.9	0.7
2. The guys in my school think it's good for guys to be in choir.	2.5	1.0	2.7	0.7	2.6	0.9
7. The most popular guys in my school sing in choir.	2.5	1.1	2.6	0.9	2.5	1.0
16. The people I hang out with think it is cool to be in choir.	2.6	0.8	2.3	0.9	2.4	0.9

Gendered Associations Prescribed to Singing

Table 5 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the gendered associations adolescent males have prescribed to singing in general. These data are based on grade level. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.5 (disagree) and peak at 3.2 (agree). These data for this table are mainly in the middle of the range of possible responses.

The results in Table 5 distinguish an overall perception that males are "good" at singing. The third and fourth statement shows the same overall mean but reveals an opposite response

according to grade levels. For the third statement, these seventh grade data show a low (2.5)

score regarding knowing high school guys who sing in choir; whereas, these eighth grade data

show a high (3.1) score. This could be caused by the age of the participants as it would be more

likely that an eighth grader would know high school students since high school is only one grade

higher than eighth grade as opposed to a seventh grader which is two grades away. For the fourth

statement, these seventh grade data show a high (3.1) score regarding liking to sing with my guy

friends; whereas, these data for the eighth grade participants reveal a lower (2.7) score.

Table 5. What gendered associations do male adolescents' prescribe to singing based on grade level? (Four Survey Items)

	Grade				All	
	7		8			
n = number of students	16		24		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
17. Guys are good at singing.	3.2	0.5	3.0	0.6	3.1	0.6
6. One of my male family members likes to sing.	3.1	0.8	2.8	1.2	2.9	1.0
8. I know high school guys who sing in choir.	2.5	0.8	3.1	0.9	2.8	0.9
12. I like to sing with my guy friends.	3.1	0.6	2.7	0.8	2.8	0.7

Table 6 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the gendered

associations adolescent males have prescribed to singing in general. These data are based on the

gender of the teacher. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.6 (disagree)

and peak at 3.1 (agree). These data for this table are mainly in the middle of the range of possible

responses.

The results in Table 6 reveal the same marks from the students for both genders of teachers for the highest statement, "guys are good at singing." The lowest mean statement regarding knowing high school guy singers is very similar between both teacher genders. The main differences between the teacher genders come from the second and third highest mean statement. The students under the direction of male teachers scored higher on the statement of male family members singing. The students under the direction of female teachers scored higher on the statement of singing with my guy friends.

Table 6. What gendered associations do male adolescents' prescribe to singing based on teacher gender? (Four Survey Items)

	Gender of Teacher				All	
	Female		Male			
n = number of students	19		21		40	
Item	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
17. Guys are good at singing.	3.1	0.5	3.1	0.6	3.1	0.6
6. One of my male family members likes to sing.	2.7	1.3	3.0	0.8	2.9	1.0
12. I like to sing with my guy friends.	3.1	0.7	2.6	0.7	2.8	0.7
8. I know high school guys who sing in choir.	2.8	0.9	2.9	0.9	2.8	0.9

Perception of Singing Ability and Singing in a Gendered Choir

Table 7 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the perception of the adolescent males' singing ability and singing in a gendered choir. These data are based on grade

39

level. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.1 (disagree) and peak at 3.5 (agree). These data for this table contain one of the highest responses and the lowest responses.

The results in Table 7 reveal that being told by a teacher that one is a good singer shows the highest mean; thus, the perception of the singer is highly affected by what a teacher has told them. The next two highest statements received the same overall score in the mean. By grade level, seventh grade data reveal a lower mean for the second statement and a higher means for the third statement; whereas, the eighth grade data distinguish themselves as being opposite to the seventh grade data. The statement with the lowest mean reveals that the students do not agree that choir should be separated by gender. The data show that both grade levels give a low mean for this statement.

Table 7. How do adolescent males rate their singing ability, and how do they view singing in a gendered choir based on grade level? (Four Survey Items)

	Grade				All	
	7		8			
n = number of students	16		24		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
9. A teacher has told me that I am a good singer.	3.3	0.9	3.5	0.8	3.4	0.8
18. My friends tell me that I am a good singer.	2.7	1.1	3.0	0.9	2.8	1.0
3. When I sing, I can only hit certain notes.	3.0	0.9	2.5	0.8	2.8	0.9
13. It is better when guys and girls have separate choir classes.	2.4	1.1	2.1	1.0	2.3	1.0

Table 8 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the perception of the adolescent males' singing ability and singing in a gendered choir. These data are based on the gender of the teacher. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.1 (disagree) and peak at 3.6 (agree). The data for this table are mainly in the middle of the range of possible responses.

The results in Table 8 show that the first and second highest mean statements also show a higher score for the students under the male teachers. The two lowest mean statements show a higher score for the students under the female teachers.

Table 8. How do adolescent males rate their singing ability, and how do they view singing in a gendered choir based on teacher gender? (Four Survey Items)

	Gender of Teacher				All	
	Female		Male			
n = number of students	19		21		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
9. A teacher has told me that I am a good singer.	3.2	1.0	3.6	0.5	3.4	0.8
18. My friends tell me that I am a good singer.	2.8	1.1	2.9	0.9	2.8	1.0
3. When I sing, I can only hit certain notes.	2.9	0.8	2.6	0.9	2.8	0.9
13. It is better when guys and girls have separate choir classes.	2.5	1.1	2.1	1.0	2.3	1.0

Motivating Choral Activities for Developing Singing Skills

Table 9 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the perception of the adolescent males on which choral activities are motivating for developing singing skills.

These data are based on grade level. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.2 (disagree) and peak at 3.3 (agree). The data for this table are mainly in the middle of the range of possible responses.

The results in Table 9 show that most of the students feel comfortable singing even though his voice is changing. The second highest mean is shown in the statement of feeling confident singing in front of both girls and guys. The grade level data reveal similar data for the first and second highest overall means. The two lowest means are showing that the males do not perceive being distracted or more confident if there are not any girls in the room. The seventh grade level means for the third and fourth statements show a slightly higher mean than the eighth grade level data.

Table 9. What choral activities do students identify as helpful and motivating in developing their singing skills and navigating through voice change based on grade level? (Four Survey Items)

	Grade				All	
	7		8			
n = number of students	16		24		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
10. I feel comfortable singing even though my voice is changing.	3.1	0.6	3.3	0.6	3.2	0.6
15. I am more confident singing in front of girls and guys.	2.5	1.1	2.6	1.0	2.5	1.0
20. It is less distracting for me to learn how to sing in choir when there are no girls in the room.	2.6	1.0	2.3	0.8	2.4	0.9
4. I am more confident singing in front of guys only.	2.6	1.0	2.2	0.9	2.4	0.9

Table 10 contains the results of items designed to gather data from the perception of the adolescent males on which choral activities are motivating for developing singing skills. These data are based on the gender of the teacher. The range of the mean responses of the table are lowest at 2.3 (disagree) and peak at 3.3 (agree). The data for this table are mainly in the middle of the range of possible responses.

The results in Table 10 show a very similar mean score for all four of the statements for both gender of teachers. The scores are also very closely aligned with the overall results for all four statements.

Table 10. What choral activities do students identify as helpful and motivating in developing their singing skills and navigating through voice change based on teacher gender? (Four Survey Items)

	Gender of Teacher				All	
	Female		Male			
n = number of students	19		21		40	
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
10. I feel comfortable singing even though my voice is changing.	3.3	0.6	3.2	0.7	3.2	0.6
15. I am more confident singing in front of girls and guys.	2.6	1.2	2.5	0.9	2.5	1.0
20. It is less distracting for me to learn how to sing in choir when there are no girls in the room.	2.4	0.9	2.4	0.9	2.4	0.9
4. I am more confident singing in front of guys only.	2.4	1.0	2.3	1.0	2.4	0.9

Research Questions

1. *Which of these factors do adolescent males perceive as influential to enroll in choir?*
   These data distinguish the factor of choir being "fun" as the highest motivator to be in choir. These data are even higher amongst students under the director of female teachers. These data also show a relationship between a perception of ability and being in choir. These data show a low influence regarding joining choir because it is an easy class.

2. *What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their peers feel about male participation in choir?*
   These data show an overall low perception of how their peers feel about male participation in choir. However, the statement with the highest means was "Singing is something that guys do," which marks a beginning tolerance into singing being acceptable for males. These data are lower from the 8th grade participants compared to the 7th grade participants. These data are inconclusive regarding the differences between the genders of teachers due to the data being so close.

3. *What gendered associations do male adolescents' prescribe to singing?*
   Across all data, the statement with the highest means was "Guys are good at singing." This reveals a perception amongst adolescent males that they believe males have the ability and are good singers. These data show a more limited range than the other survey statements.

4. *How do adolescent males rate their singing ability, and how do they view singing in a gendered choir?*
   These data reveal that being told by a teacher that one is a good singer shows the highest mean; the scores were higher for this statement for students under the director of male teachers. These data also display a disagreement from the students about singing in a gendered choir. These data are clear that the students do not think that singing in a gendered choir is helpful to them.

5. *What choral activities do students identify as helpful and motivating in developing their singing skills and navigating through voice change?*
   These data reveal that the statement with the highest mean score was "I feel comfortable singing even though my voice is changing." These data show a lower score for being comfortable singing in front of guys only compared to singing in front of guys and girls. These data do not seem to agree with itself because all of the students who were surveyed are currently in a gendered choir. Thus, they recognize that they feel comfortable singing even through their voice change; however, they do not correlate that their comfort may be related to not having females in their class.

The potential implications of these data for teachers, as well as possibilities for future research, will be discussed in the final chapter, Summary and Discussions.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of gender choirs within a middle school choral classroom to investigate (a) attitudes about singing, (b) confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and (c) peer perceptions of adolescent males' participation in choir. This chapter will include conclusions from the study, suggestions for future research on the topic, as well as the potential implications for music educators.

Summary

I attempted to expand the research conducted by Lucas (2011) by exploring the attitudes of male adolescent singers enrolled in a gender-specific choir. Lucas (2011) focused his study on the attitudes of male adolescent singers who are in choir and their perceptions of how others view their participation in choir. For this study, male students, in 7th and 8th grades, from five different middle school districts participated in a survey regarding their perceptions about singing. The survey consisted of twenty statements, aimed to gather data from their answers to help respond to the research questions.

The study examined five research questions:

1. Which of these factors (enjoyment of class, personal ability, peers, and difficulty of class) do adolescent males perceive as influential for enrolling in choir?
2. What are adolescent males' perceptions of how their peers feel about male participation in choir?
3. What gendered associations do male adolescents' link with singing?
4. How do adolescent males rate their singing ability, and how do they view singing in a gendered choir?
5. What choral activities do students identify as helpful and motivating in developing their singing skills and navigating through voice change?

Overall, the results of the data are in the mid ranges of the spectrum, avoiding extreme scores of 1 (strongly disagree) and 4 (strongly agree). The highest score (3.4) of the data was equal from two survey statements: choir is fun and a teacher has told me that I am a good singer. The lowest score (2.3) among these data came from the survey statement: It is better when guys and girls have separate choir classes. Based upon the data analysis, I concluded that when adolescent males perceive choir as being fun, they will join choir. I also concluded that when students have been recognized as a good singer by a teacher, then they will join choir. I also concluded that adolescent males do not perceive choir to be "better" when the genders are separated.

Conclusions

Influential factors for enrolling in choir. A purpose of this paper was to determine which factors adolescent males considered influential to enroll in choir. The factors evaluated were enjoyment of class, personal ability, peers, and difficulty of class. The results indicate that having fun in choir ranked highest among students, which was previously found in studies by Lucas (2011), Freer (2007), and Callahan (2016). Also same as Lucas (2011), the results indicate that adolescents believe high perception of one's singing ability influences males to join choir. Demorest (2000) and Zemek (2010) who agree that when boys gain confidence, they increase their commitment to singing and ownership of their musicianship. Furthermore, the results indicate that students do not join choir because it is an "easy" class which supports previous findings by Lucas (2011) and Freer (2007).

Perceptions of peers regarding enrollment in choir. One of the objectives of this paper was to determine the perceptions of peers regarding being enrolled in a choir class. The

perceptions that were self-evaluated included singing as a male activity, a popular activity, and a good activity. According to the results from the survey, the peers generally did not view enrolling in choir positively. Although the students reported an overall negative perception of peers regarding enrollment in choir, I found that the results were vague. The survey did not allow for any explanation to the survey statements. The survey statements are straightforward but too general to analyze the rationale underlying adolescents' perceptions.

Gendered associations prescribed to singing. Another intention of this paper was to assess how or if male adolescents prescribe gendered associations to singing. The participants in this study rated males' singing abilities highly. Rating singing abilities highly is a positive association to singing; however, it does not indicate any specific masculine association to singing. If the students view singing as masculine, one possible explanation is that they associate it as part of his male identity. Solarz (2002) theorizes that male perception is formed from the various roles within society and is assimilated into self-identity, creating what he would deem as masculine. Hawkins (2015), Solarz (2002), and White & White (2001) agreed that the role of self-identity is crucial to identifying who you are as a person. They believe that if a student does not perceive himself as a singer or perceive singing as masculine, then more than likely, he will not be inclined to sing in choirs (Hawkins, 2015; Solarz, 2002; White & White, 2001).

The other survey statements in this section speak to the students' relationships with other males in their lives who may or may not like to sing. Overall, I found that the results from the data were not clear concerning how these relationships influence the students' perception of gender in singing. Again, the results have indicated that this subject is more complex and the survey statements do not allow for more in-depth analysis.

Perception of singing ability and singing in a gendered choir. Two purposes of this paper were to evaluate how students perceived their own singing ability and how students felt about having choir classes separated by gender. The results indicated that most students had experienced being told by a teacher that they are a good singer. While this study was not designed to provide a more extensive analysis, complimentary feedback from a teacher can help boost confidence, commitment and persistence (Zemek, 2010).

The students did not exhibit a preference regarding if they think it is better when guys and girls have separate choir classes. The survey was not designed to allow students to expand upon their answers. This is a glance into the perception of gender choirs from the adolescent male perspective that coincides with student perception on sex-segregated activities at this age level.

Motivating choral activities for developing singing skills. A goal of this paper was to discover which choral activities proved to be motivating for developing singing skills. The choral activities that were evaluated through the survey included singing through the voice change and singing with one sex versus both sexes. The survey statement, "I feel comfortable singing even though my voice is changing," received the third overall highest marks. Mostly likely, instructional modifications designed to support students during the process of the voice change, the instructional environment of gender choirs, as well as the relationship with the teacher may have assisted the students to feel comfortable singing through the voice change. Choral educators argue that learning in a single-gendered environment promotes a relaxed atmosphere (Dilworth, 2012; White & White, 2001) and creates a comfort level that encourages students to take risks that might not occur in a mixed gender class (Cox, 2002; Dilworth, 2012; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2001). Moreover, in my

experience as a middle school choral instructor, I have found that a relationship of trust is needed

for students to take risks with their voices. Although I cannot speak to the relationships of the

students that were surveyed and their teachers directly, the implication may be that there is a

relationship of trust that lends to the students feeling comfortable singing even through the voice

change.

Regarding the survey results about singing in front of one sex as opposed to both sexes,

these results are more ambiguous. The results of the statement, "I am more confident singing in

front of girls and guys" versus the statement, "I am more confident singing in front of guys

only," were approximately even. I found this revealing as I was expecting the results to lean to

one side or the other from a gender bias. I think this points to the complexity of confidence in

singing as well as to the uniqueness of adolescents and in which environment they perceive as

being more confident. The diversity of the student opinion could imply that students have

different preferences for the type of environment. The type of environment is a powerful variable

that can affect a student in many ways. The confidence of a student can change from one

environment to the next depending on the student's experience or background. Family

background and dynamics, performance background, personal feelings, social dynamics and

history, and personality are all contributing factors into one's confidence and one's outlook on

certain environments. Certain environments may seem more appealing to a student based on

these factors rather than simply one sex or both. It is also possible that this could be an

individualistic variable that by its nature is likely to have discrepancies. Thus, this survey was

too narrow to reveal confidence in a single sex singing environment.

Limitations of the Study

This study is very limited due to the relatively small size of this study sample -- 40 students total from five different middle schools and school districts. The sample was developed from the schools who had gender choirs in the choir program and the teachers who were willing to help facilitate the participation of the students. The sample is derived from one small private school, one medium sized public school, three large public schools, and one very large public school. Thus, the larger schools comprised more of the sample because they had larger populations in the choirs; this could have skewed the results in favor of larger schools. The time frame of the study could have also been a limitation. The study was administered during the spring semester, which is typically when choirs are preparing for contests and end of the year concerts. This could have put a limitation on the attention and time given to the study and the size of the sample. Also, this study did not include the "why" of a student response regarding the perceptions in a gender choir. Further research utilizing open-ended perceptions could prove helpful in evaluating gender choirs for adolescent males. The IRB requirements may have also affected the results of this study. A large limitation to this study was questioning and measuring student responses due to the fact that students are a protected class, requiring parent permission to take the survey. This added a challenge in recruiting student participants, thus affecting the sample size of data. Another limitation of the study was that it was impossible to disaggregate these data to investigate factors that may have been contextual due to the survey being anonymous.

Future Research

      The results of this study provide consideration for additional research. Almost all of the literature regarding gender choirs is written from the perspective of teachers, thus creating a gap in the existing research--the adolescent perspective (Hawkins, 2015; Lucas, 2011). This is a considerable research gap which means that further study would be meaningful. The adolescent perspective involves many aspects, such as motivational factors, adolescent interests, physiological changes, and the predominance of teacher-centered decision making. Therefore, the possibilities for further research is substantial. In this study, the sample size was relatively small and unique. Reproducing the study with a larger sample could produce broader and more reliable results. It would also be helpful to include a larger sample in the study that encompassed more schools in Missouri and other states. In order to increase the population and expand the scope of the results across a large audience, it would help to include different types of school districts: small, medium, and large, public and private, suburban, rural, and urban. Every choral instructor is different and expanding the participation will also provide perspective from adolescents who will represent a vast number of choral instructors.

      Future research on male choirs should explore the "why" behind the data by including open-ended responses for the students to explain their perspective. This could also be achieved by adding a place for responses on the existing survey, interviewing students one-on-one or in small groups or creating a panel. By interviewing students, I think the research could reveal a more intricate perspective of adolescents and could lead to a deeper understanding of why they think the way they do. I also think that if a relationship of trust is created by the researcher with the students, then meaningful data could be obtained through these interviews. Moreover, more in-depth interviews over an extended period of time could provide insight on the changeable

nature of these variables. The adolescent experience throughout the school year is a variable that changes as the students become more comfortable in class, the body continues to change, social aspects continue to evolve, and opinions continue to form. A group or panel discussion with students could also be useful for exploring the effect of male only classes on motivation for singing.

Another aspect of adolescence is the development of masculinity. This study attempted to explain male identity within a gender choir. However, the results of the survey did not give clarity into the male identity in which students would associate with in regards to being in a male gendered choir. A survey may not be the most effective approach to explore identity given the personal uniqueness of each person's identity. Future research should explore male identity in gender choirs through in-depth interviews over extended periods in order to gain insight into how the choral experience is integrated into personal identity.

Implications for Choral Teaching

With the widespread use of gender choirs in secondary schools as a means for motivating male adolescents to sing, it is clear that there may be limitations to using separated gender choirs that have not previously been considered based on the perceptions of the students. All of the survey statements that related directly to splitting the class by gender were answered with a negative response. However, this study did not offer the students the option to explain why they felt this way.

Although the students responded unfavorably to splitting classes by gender, the students perceived a positive classroom environment and a strong and confident singing ability perception, even through the voice change. This could reveal two possibilities for the choral

teacher to consider. The first being that all of these positive perceptions would be similar to a mixed choir setting and that these perceptions are all tied to instruction, relationship-building, school culture, and not classroom set-up. The second, is that adolescent males do not associate their positive perceptions of the classroom environment, singing ability, and confidence and comfort singing to the fact of being in a single-sex choir.

Why might single-sex choirs look negative from the perspective of the male adolescent? Two ideas are logical: (a) the structure of choral programs in schools and (b) the academic and social dynamics of being separated by sex during adolescence. The structure of choral programs in school typically uses gender choirs in the bottom tier of the choir program. After the students have spent a year or so in a gender choir, they will then be given the opportunity to audition for a higher-level mixed gender choir. With this kind of structure, gender choirs are likely to be perceived as inferior within a choral program (Palkki, 2015; Zemek, 2010). This could be a reason why male adolescents do not perceive single-sex choirs positively. Restructuring choral programs to position gendered choirs as having a broader purpose than facilitating male vocal change may promote more positive perceptions.

The academic and social dynamics of peers is at the forefront of the mind during adolescence (Solarz, 2002). It may seem unnatural to ask a male during adolescence to perceive a classroom as being positive when he knows there will not be any members of the opposite sex in the class. This could be tied to romantic feelings or aspirations and social dynamics that can occur with the opposite sex (Solarz, 2002). This could also be tied to competition, achievement and academic focus and responsibility that can occur with the opposite sex in the classroom (Freer, 2007). The male adolescent may feel that these aspects of the classroom are not there when the opposite sex is not present. These reactions seem logical and natural of what an

adolescent would perceive. From my experience as a middle school choir teacher, these are the reasons that have been expressed to me by adolescent male students.

So, where do we go from here? Gender choirs have made their way into the secondary classroom and it is not by accident. Numerous teachers have relied on their personal anecdotal accounts of why gender choirs have been successful for their schools, choir program, teaching style, and students (Callahan, 2016; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2008; Zemek, 2010). Teachers can incorporate fun in the classroom through building relationships, and use humor as an effective strategy in teaching. Students respond well to light-hearted competitions such as a highest-note singing contest, lowest-note singing contest, longest-note singing contest, or memorization contests between sections of the choir. Incorporating these light-hearted competitions in class establishes not only a fun atmosphere, but a culture that celebrates musicality. Catering instruction to male or female voices allows the teacher and the student to adjust for the voice change--to work in it and through it. Significant learning can occur through catering instruction which leads to creating confidence and comfort in the adolescent male singer. Confidence and comfort can make the adolescent male singer into a lifelong male singer.

The choral instructor should acknowledge that the male adolescent may not want to be separated from the opposite sex and consider the afore-mentioned possible reasons as to why he feels this way. The choral instructor should also consider that the results indicated a variety of perceptions of confidence and comfort in singing with the opposite sex in the room. Some suggestions to encourage males to be in gender choir could be involving social activities outside of class with the female gender choir, creating mixed ensembles that meet outside of class, or

singing a joint song on the concert with both gender choirs together. Being together with the opposite sex, in limited social or music experiences, may broaden the perspective of the male adolescent towards gender choirs.

Motivating male adolescents to sing will continue to be an ongoing struggle for the choral instructor. Although many teachers have found great success with the implementation of gender choirs and consider it a way to motivate male adolescent students to sing (Callahan, 2016; Demorest, 2000; Dilworth, 2012; Freer, 2007; Friar, 1999; Fryling, 2015; Hawkins, 2015; Jorgensen & Pfeiler, 2008; Newquist, 1997; Nycz, 2008; Palkki, 2015; Sharpe, 2008; White & White, 2008; Zemek, 2010), the adolescent male perspective found in this study suggests that the effect of gender choirs is far more complex than isolating boys during a time of voice change. I recommend that choral instructors become cognizant of the complexities and better understand how adolescents experience gender choirs. Choral instructors who are aware of how adolescents experience their classroom and use this knowledge judiciously can provide students with a strong means of support for learning to sing and learning to love to sing.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey

INVESTIGATING THE ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENT MALE SINGERS IN GENDER CHOIRS

I.   Please circle the appropriate answer:
- a. Age   12 13 14 15
- b. Grade   7   8
- c. My music teacher is   male   female
- d. What is the name of my music teacher?

II.   Please select how you feel about the following statements.
1 = Strongly Disagree   4 = Strongly Agree

#	Statement				
1.	I am in choir because I am good at singing.	1	2	3	4
2.	The guys in my school think it's good for guys to be in choir.	1	2	3	4
3.	When I sing, I can only hit certain notes.	1	2	3	4
4.	I am more confident singing in front of guys only.	1	2	3	4
5.	I am in choir because it is fun.	1	2	3	4
6.	One of my male family members likes to sing.	1	2	3	4
7.	The most popular guys in my school sing in choir.	1	2	3	4
8.	I know high school guys who sing in choir.	1	2	3	4
9.	A teacher has told me that I am a good singer.	1	2	3	4
10.	I feel comfortable singing even though my voice is changing.	1	2	3	4
11.	Most of my friends are in choir.	1	2	3	4
12.	I like to sing with my guy friends.	1	2	3	4
13.	It is better when guys and girls have separate choir classes.	1	2	3	4
14.	Singing is something that guys do.	1	2	3	4
15.	I am more confident singing in front of girls and guys.	1	2	3	4
16.	The people I hang out with think it is cool to be in choir.	1	2	3	4
17.	Guys are good at singing.	1	2	3	4
18.	My friends tell me that I am a good singer.	1	2	3	4
19.	I am in choir because it is an easy class.	1	2	3	4
20.	It is less distracting for me to learn how to sing in choir when there are no girls in the room.	1	2	3	4

Appendix B: Human Subjects IRB Approval

RE: Notice of IRB Approval
Submission Type: Initial
Study #: IRB-FY2018-220
Study Title: INVESTIGATING THE ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENT MALE SINGERS IN GENDER CHOIRS
Decision: Approved

Approval Date: February 25, 2018
Expiration Date: February 24, 2019

This submission has been approved by the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the period indicated.

_____

_____
Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Researchers Associated with this Project:
PI: Daniel Hellman
Co-PI:
Primary Contact: Heidi Williamson
Other Investigators: Heidi Williamson

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

INVESTIGATING THE ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENT MALE SINGERS IN GENDER
CHOIRS

By: Heidi Williamson, Graduate Student of Missouri State University

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore how participation in a middle school male choir
shapes attitudes about singing, confidence and self-efficacy of their own voices, and peer
opinions of adolescent males' participation in choir.
How: I am asking your student to fill out a digital short survey regarding how he feels about
being in a male gender choir. This should take no more than 20 minutes of time.
Benefits: This survey will offer insight into the perceptions of male students who are in a gender
choir and will help future music educators develop effective teaching methods for adolescent
male students.
Voluntary Participation: You understand that your consent for your student to participate in
this research is entirely voluntary, and that your refusal to participate will involve no prejudice,
penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.
Risks Associated: There are minimal risks associated with this study. You may contact Dr.
Daniel Hellman for questions regarding this study at danielhellman@missouristate.edu.
Withdrawal: If you consent for your student to participate in this study, you are free to stop
your participation in the study at any time without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which
you would otherwise be entitled.
Privacy: The researcher seeks to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated
with your participation in this research. This study does not use personally identifiable data.

Printed Name of Child_____
Signature of Parent/Guardian_____
Date _____
Investigator's Signature_____
Date_____