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Male Participation in Secondary Choral Music

Abstract
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Dedication

What a journey! I still can't believe I did this, but it would not have been possible without many people helping along the way. The one most important person in my life that said, "You can do this," and gave me her heart and soul, is my beautiful wife Dr. Melissa Brown. She is my rock and my soulmate. She sacrificed time, energy, and knowledge while giving unconditional love. I love you and thank you so much and dedicate this dissertation to YOU. Of course, I would have to say Sophia and Nicholas also go with that. Two and a half years of every other weekend without daddy.

I would also like to thank my Dr. C. Michael Robinson (Chair) and Dr. Susan Vickers (Committee Member) who have guided me through every step of this process. I came with little to no knowledge of writing in an academic style and they showed continuous patience. While speaking about writing, I want to thank my mother-in-law Noël Jeitler for her guidance in editing many of my papers and this final dissertation. Finally, when it comes to writing, I want to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. Rachel Hendricks, who gave me sage advice, guided my writing since DEXL 701, and was Editor-in-Chief for this final dissertation.

I still can't believe I did this and can only hope these findings will help music educators for many years. I struggled with male participation in my career and have learned so much from this study and thank the 10 amazing ninth graders who shared incredible data for this study.

Finally, I want to thank my amazing mother, Nicoletta, for always giving me the power and strength to know there is nothing I can't do in my life. From the first time on stage and through multiple majors in college, you always said, follow your heart. I did two and a half years ago and thank all of the above people for bringing me to this moment. If I missed anyone know that so many have played an integral role in this journey and appreciate so many guides, assistants, advisors, and friends.

Biographical Sketch

David M. Brown is the Superintendent of Schools for the DeRuyter Central School District. He is in his second year of his superintendency. David is also the President-Elect of the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) and will assume the presidency in January 2020. David is in his 31st year of public education and has been a teacher and administrator in DeRuyter Central Schools, Herkimer Central Schools, Pittsford Mendon High School, Fayetteville-Manlius Schools, and Ithaca City Schools. He has been an Adjunct Professor at Ithaca College and Mohawk Community College.

David has an advanced degree in Public School Administration and Certification in K-12 Leadership from SUNY Brockport. He also has a Master of Music from Ithaca College in Music Education and a Bachelor of Science in Music Education and Theatre from Nazareth College in Rochester, New York. Finally, he has an Associate Degree in Business Administration from Monroe Community College, also in Rochester, New York.

David has dedicated his adult professional life to education and continues to find ways of creating systems where all children can learn and hopefully become productive members of society. The arts play an integral role in creating lifelong learners and hopes this study will open the door to many more students having the experience of an arts education and its impact on their learning. David M. Brown earned his Doctorate of Education in August, 2019.

Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated why ninth-grade boys choose to participate in high school choral music utilizing two focus groups. Focus Group 1 consisted of boys who continued choir in high school and Focus Group 2 consisted of boys who discontinued choir in high school. Research included an analysis of the state of affairs of choral music in public schools, gender identity, male participation – Why students stay or leave, and what music does for the learner. The results of the focus groups revealed four main categories including priorities, social constructs, external influences, and respect for choir. The themes that evolved from the categories included conflicts, amount of time, after school activities, family, teachers, peers, difficulty of music, no prerequisites, negative rhetoric, and financial investment. Findings indicated that the ability to prioritize choir was difficult for the ninth-grade male students. The findings also showed how the participants felt the respect they received in band and orchestra should be consistent with choir. Finally, the research study unveiled a false belief that quality vocal singing occurs naturally when in actuality, instruction is needed to master the vocal instrument. Further study of why students never start singing, when they are first afforded a choral experience, is recommended.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Male participation in secondary choral music has been and continues to be an issue throughout the United States (Elpus, 2014; Freer, 2010; Siebenaler, 2006). In order to keep a balanced choir (ratio of male singers to female singers) the role of the choir teacher had evolved to focus on recruitment and retention of male students instead of music selection and teaching notes, rhythms, and the intrinsic value of music (Hall, 2005).

In addition to music, several aspects of a student's education differ between male and female students (Siebenaler, 2006). Social identity theory is a possible lens to better understand how male students consider the choices they make (Hornsey, 2008). Human beings are driven by the perceptions of how people observe them (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity classifies a person as being in a specific group as well as how the characteristics of that group create a desire to participate or quit.

The participation rates of male students are lower than that of female students in secondary choral music (Elpus, 2014). This study examined a large sample of 25 years of data which indicated that consistently, females participated in secondary choral music at higher rates (68-73%) compared to male students (27-32%). This 25-year study revealed a systemic, national issue that has extended beyond the choral classroom and has seeped into several aspects of a child's education (Dekaney & Robinson, 2013).

Problem Statement

Male participation in New York State secondary public education choral programs varies significantly from district to district but consistently, the number of male participants is lower than that of female participants (Adler, 2002). There has been little investigation that would uncover the variables that cause low numbers of male participation (Dekaney & Robinson, 2013). Limited male participation in a choral program results in a loss of opportunity for male students to engage in learning, limits the differentiated learning styles, and affects the use of the limbic mind (Adler, 2002). The limbic mind supports a variety of functions including emotion and behavior (Alluri, Toiviainne, Burunat, Numminen, & Brattico, 2015). The research results support a connectivity between the limbic structure, imagery, and memory associations that evoke an emotional experience. The effect of the limbic brain system has a greater impact on a musician's brain compared to that of a non-musician.

Munte, Nager, Beiss, Schroeder, and Erne (2003) suggest that music education is a highly complex task that engages multiple brain systems. Differentiated learning styles are one of the strengths of music education (Foster & Jenkins, 2017). Arts education creates positive associations on intellectual development and offers different ways of teaching and learning for student growth and success (Hallam, 2017).

Separating students by gender in an educational setting continues to be an area of concern for educators (Elpus, 2014). Music teachers, and specifically choral music teachers, have had to recruit and retain young men for their programs in order for the program to be viable. In Freer's 2012 study he describes the inability to have a mixed

choir of the traditional four parts without a substantial and preferably an equal number of male students to their female counterpart.

Male students in secondary choral music are divided into tenors and basses while female students are sopranos and altos (Elpus, 2014). If there are not an equal or near equal number of male students a teacher can forego splitting the men into two parts and have them all sing baritone which can diminish or simplify the music quality compared to having them split into tenors and basses (Harrison, 2007).

The imbalance of male and female students in the choral setting creates problems for the teacher, the ensemble, and the overall experience of the group (Harrison, 2007). There are cases where the gender disparity does not play an important role in the success of the performing ensemble such as an all-female band (Elpus, 2014). Although gender disparity does not affect all performing ensembles, limited or no males participating in a mixed choir would eliminate the feasibility of the choir succeeding or possibly existing (Roulston & Misawa, 2010).

The viable success of a choral music ensemble is dependent on the balance of male and female participation (Siebenaler, 2006). There are programs where the male participation is high enough for it to be successful, and in some rare cases, the number of males is higher (Dekaney & Robinson, 2013). The norm, however, is that boys are not continuing choral music past middle school and teachers need successful recruitment and retention practices (Freer, 2009). Societal obstacles inhibiting male students from participating in the performing arts include pressure from family, friends, and community (Adler, 2002), peer pressure and bullying (Elpus, 2014), homophobia, and the curricular

demands from other required courses inclusive of graduation requirements (Siebenaler, 2006).

Charlotte Mizener (1993) details how music desires and attitudes are directly related to grade level, gender, parental involvement, self-concept, and the fundamental desire to sing. This research observed the students' perception and desire for a high school singing experience while they were in elementary schools. Students become part of the accepted group of boy singers starting in elementary school and hopefully continuing into middle and high school. The teacher's role is to convince young boys to be members of the music community of singers and hopefully continue to participate throughout their entire education.

Dekaney and Robinson (2014) describe the culture, identity, and desires of young men to be in choral programs as a problem that has been present for more than 100 years. There are continued pressures on teachers to find ways of recruitment, and more importantly retention, of young men as they progress through school. Grant and Norris's (1998) survey noted that the number of females across the country compared to males is almost two to one. Understanding the rationale of the decision-making process of young men and their desire to continue in choir is the basis for this research.

Theoretical Rationale

Social identity theory (SIT) was proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) and states that a person's sense of who they are is based on their membership in some group. Social identity theory is based on human interactions which moves from being interpersonal to intergroup. Interpersonal interactions occur when a person relates as an individual with no or minimal awareness of social categories. In contrast, intergroup

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interactions are when a person relates to the members of their group and relate in opposition to participants who are in what is termed the out-group. A person's individual characteristics and qualities are overpowered by those of the group with which they are a member and in opposition to the characteristics of the people not in their group (Hornsey, 2008).

After Tajfel died in 1982, Turner and his associates set out to refine the intellectual elements of the identity theory (Huddy, 2001). Their intent was to move from the intergroup focus of SIT and investigate the intragroup process. The additional investigation created a new theory entitled the self-categorization theory (SCT). Understandably SIT and SCT share much of the same assumptions and outcomes (Hornsey, 2008). When a category from which a person associates becomes salient, the participants lose their individuality and become part of the collective group characteristic. Hornsey calls this a prototype and suggests it is not an objective of reality but a sense of an attribute of the social category that shifts according to its context and the group mentality. The group identity is not only one characteristic of self but creates attitudes, emotions, and behaviors one should emulate as a member.

Self-categorization is the process where a person decides to which group they belong (McLeod, 2008). This primary process is usually the most basic and noncontroversial. A person is not drawn to one specific group but simply desires to belong to any single group. Social identification, however, is the process by which a person identifies with a specific group. The ideas and philosophies of that group are compatible with the person. The other people in the group are people you want to emulate. These comparisons create group norms, structures, and intergroup relations.

Once a person assigns themselves to a group it becomes their social identity. People are then drawn into an "us" versus "them" mentality. A person becomes part of the in-group and anyone not in this group (the out-group) is not part of your social identity, think differently, and discriminate against your beliefs.

In-group favoritism happens when a person gives preferential treatment to others they perceive to be in the same group (McLeod, 2008). A member of the group continues to strive to be like the others in the group and unlike those in the out-group. It is a cyclical process of improvement for one to be like the others in the group and intentionally work to be unlike those that have different values, visions, and thoughts. This creates a person's social identity especially when they are aware of their own social categorization (Foels, 2006).

As it relates to the topic of male student participation in choral activities, social identity plays an integral role for those young men who desire to be part of the in-group of performing artists. The out-group impacts whether the young men choose to participate or take a different path in their education based on the strength of the out-group versus that of the in-group in which they want to participate (Parker, 2014).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to better understand why male students make the choice whether to participate in choral music during high school. Further understanding of the reasoning behind lower male participation informs teachers of the opportunities, experiences, and impacts that are in place to encourage young men's participation. Understanding the rationale of the decision-making for young men to continue in choir is the basis of this research.

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Research Questions

This study examines the reasoning behind young men's choices to participate in choral music in their secondary education. The data that is being collected answers the following questions.

1. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir but are not participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue

2. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir and who are participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue

Potential Significance of the Study

In order for a mixed choir to exist there has to be a balance of male and female students. Without male participants in a mixed choir the choir cannot exist as defined (Elpus, 2014). The separating of male and female students in educational frameworks has been a concern and study in educational research for decades (Siebenaler, 2006). Finally, Elpus connected the reality of educational experiences being viable in almost all regards except for a mixed choral experience in secondary education.

Freer (2012) posited that the successful secondary participation of male students is based on the positive transition from middle school. Over one fifth of male students discontinued singing in high school because the changing voice rendered them unable to sing. Once these students took time to wait for the voice change to occur, they never returned. It is important to handle the changing voice and create a safe place for young men to explore the voice through this transition. Lastly, Freer noted how young men who

become immersed in the knowledge, skills, and positive social identity of singing tend to stay in the program through high school and into adulthood.

Dekaney and Robinson's (2014) research indicated that the cultural context of public school has changed in the last 20 years due to the widening demographic gap, influx of immigrants, and the continuous impact of social identity. This data shows the need for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of male participation in choral education. The practices, policies, and research inform the need for a better comprehension on how to recruit and retain young men in the choral experience. Freer (2012) stated, without an equal or near equal number of men, a choral program will struggle to succeed and will not sound as refined as a balanced choir.

Definitions of Terms

Baritone – In the context of this dissertation it refers to the voice part sung by a group of choir participants when there are not enough male singers to separate into two sections – tenor and bass. In this example all male singers sing one part, baritone, creating a three-part choir instead of the traditional four-part choir.

Choral Music – Music that is taught to vocal students in a large group.

Changing Voice – The time in a young man's life, typically around puberty, when the voice changes.

Limbic mind – Part of the brain that supports a variety of functions including emotion and behavior.

Octavo – A piece of choral music.

Secondary Education – Classes that are offered to students post elementary school. Depending on the institution, this can be grades 6-12 or 7-12.

Solfeggio – This is the language taught by choral directors to help students learn to read octavos.

Treble Choir – A choir made up of upper register voices. This has been changed from the historic title of Women's Choir due to the involvement of transgender singers into the treble idiom.

Chapter Summary

Numerous quantitative studies, regarding choral music, exist comparing male and female music participation (Elpus, 2014). There is limited research involving the phenomenon behind the reasoning male students are not choosing to participate in high school choral music. Chapter 1 investigated studies in which boys were not participating at the same rate as female students. The studies also uncovered multiple impacts of an unbalanced choir and the importance of an arts education (Elpus, 2014; Hornsey, 2008; Mizener, 1993; Siebenaler, 2006.) A review of the literature on participation, social identity, and choral teaching is presented in Chapter 2. The research design, methodology, and analysis are covered in Chapter 3. The results of the qualitative focus groups will be shared in Chapter 4, and the implications of the findings and possible recommendations will be shared in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to better understand why male students discontinue music participation in high school. In addition, this study will add to the literature and inform music teachers how to create programs where male students feel welcomed and have a desire to continue. The intention of this study is to give choral directors the tools to recruit and retain male singers in their choral programs. A literature review examining male participation in choral music in secondary education leads to the categorization of the following elements: the state of affairs of choral music in public schools, gender identity of young men, male participation, and what music does for the learner. All these factors help further the understanding of this phenomena and offer support to the ideas, concepts, and facts that relate to the dissertation topic.

Research Problem

Male participation in New York State secondary public education choral programs is lower than female participation (Adler, 2002). The limited male participation in choral programs results in a loss of opportunity for male students to affectively use the limbic mind (Kreutz, Bongard, & Grebe, 2003), engage in learning (Foster, 2010), provide opportunities for learning outside of music (Munte et al., 2003), and limits differentiated learning styles (Larson, 2000).

From the turn of the 19th century male participation has been a continuous issue for choral directors because low male participation creates an imbalance to the ensemble.

(Harrison, 2007). Viggiano's (1941) study discovered ways of reaching the adolescent who thinks it is effeminate to sing. Green (1997) concluded that both boys and girls restricted themselves to certain musical activities for fear of musical transvestism (the act of dressing or acting like the opposite sex).   A timeline, from 1916 to today, shows how teachers have historically and continually faced barriers in their attempt to recruit young men (Harrison, 2007).

The success of a choral music ensemble is dependent on successful recruitment of young boys by the teaching professionals (Siebenaler, 2006). Teachers need recruitment procedures to increase the number of male singers (Freer, 2010). Societal obstacles inhibiting male students from participating in the performing arts are pressure from family, friends, and community (Adler, 2002), peer pressure and bullying (Elpus, 2014), homophobia, and the curricular demands from other required courses inclusive of graduation requirements (Siebenaler, 2006).

Mizener's (1993) research describes how music desires and attitudes are directly related to grade level, gender, parental involvement, self-concept, and a fundamental desire to sing. Mizener's study examined students' perceptions and desires for a high school singing experience while they were in elementary schools. Students become part of the accepted group of boy singers through elementary school and hopefully continue through middle and high school. According to Mizener's (1993) research, almost all students participate in elementary vocal programs but only 23% continue singing in middle school and an alarming 12% remain in 11th and 12th grade.

Siebenaler (2006) supports this data with his research which shows only an average of 4% to 8% of high school singers are male. The teacher's role is to convince

young boys to be members of the music community of singers and hopefully continue to participate through their entire public-school education (McBride, 2016).

Having enough male singers in a high school choir has been a constant struggle for educators for more than 100 years (Harrison, 2007). Having the tools for successful recruitment and retention is paramount for a viable high school choir as it relates to the balance of singers (Freer, 2012; Mizener, 1993; Siebenaler, 2006).

Reviews of Literature

The literature review establishes a strong foundation for support of the study. The following components were examined:

1. The state of affairs of choral music in public schools

2. Gender identity of young men

3. Male participation: Why students stay or leave

4. What music does for the learner

The state of affairs of choral music in public schools. In December 2015, with bipartisan support, President Barack Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA reauthorized the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which was signed into law in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson (Neel, 2017). ESEA was reauthorized in 2001 by President George W. Bush with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

NCLB was best known for its categorizations of core subjects like math, science, and history, leaving music education in the background (Neel, 2017). ESSA put music back in the forefront of educating the whole child supporting the fundamental premise of the law. ESSA defines a well-rounded education as providing courses, activities, and

programming in subjects such as English, reading, writing, science, technology, arts, history, geography, music, physical education, and any other subjects as determined by the state or local educational agency (Asah, 2016). Music not only is part of the education of the whole-child but stands alone outside of the other arts (Neel, 2017).

A component of the new law is the impact it has on Title 1 funds. Title 1 is the largest source of federal funds allocated to education (Neel, 2017). It is the government program which provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) with high numbers or high percentages of low-income families. The Department of Education describes the program as one that supports financial assistance to ensure that all children meet the challenging state academic standards (Darrow, 2016).

In addition to the elimination of core subjects, the ESSA law refers to time spent teaching music as "protected time" (Darrow, 2016). According to Darrow, "protected time" refers to time spent in music class as an important component of educating the well-rounded child and districts must not cut it from the curriculum. This is in part through the collaboration of state education departments and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). Together the ESSA law and its collaborators have worked on language to develop plans to reduce bullying and harassment in the classroom and possibly in the workplace (Neel, 2017). One component of the law is to enable teachers to support music education as an integral part of a child's education and that music is part of the well-rounded education that the Every Student Succeeds Act stipulates (Darrow, 2016).

Teachers have been challenging the NCLB law since its inception in 2001 (Siebenaler, 2006). Music classes were not part of the core subjects described in the law

of 2001 and were subsequently second place, or worse, in relation to mandated and

approved courses (Foster & Jenkins, 2017). The importance of music education and its

impact on a child's learning process has been used as a defense for saving programs for

many years instead of focusing on the intrinsic and curricular aspects of music itself

(Freer, 2012).

In addition to education laws and policies, there are financial realities that affect

arts education. Gregory (2017) studied the continued impact of the recession of 2008

upon arts programs across the country. The quantitative study revealed that multiple

districts were forced to eliminate their arts programs to save the core subjects (Hawkins,

2012). Over 80% of districts faced budget cuts nationwide. NCLB, Common Core, and

the need to prioritize math and science drove the decisions for fiscal priority.

Even though the economy has improved since the recession, there has not been a

comparative reinstatement of music programs to their previous levels (Gregory, 2017).

More startling in the data is the magnitude of cuts to arts educators. Between 2008 and

2012 over one third of arts teachers were eliminated. Laird (2013) looked at the return of

curricular programs when school districts started to reinvest into their programs after the

recession. The arts, however, did not return to their original programmatic levels and in

many cases, did not change at all.

Shaw (2018) confirmed these fears and programmatic realities in his qualitative

study that showed several districts across the country reduced their music programs to

better facilitate the core subjects and increase student outcomes. This study interviewed

18 people with a purposeful sampling of current teachers, instructional support staff,

administrators and board members, and music and art specialists who retired, moved to a

new district, or were terminated after the decision to cut all arts educators. While the interview transcripts were the main data source, Shaw also studied additional documents such as board transcripts, Monday morning memos to the staff, human resources documents, and other pertinent data. The study revealed the harsh impact on the departments from the recession leaving most without work or teaching multiple music disciplines.

In addition to the laws and financial realities that have created barriers to music education, the teachers themselves can sometimes inhibit students' participation (Cogdill, 2014). Cogdill revealed how teachers are unaware of the numerous activities that compete with the students' attention in today's school, home, and social environments, and laid out a 5-step plan to aide teachers in battling the competition:

1. Identify current research theories and models most applicable to music teaching and learning,

2. Consider the unique aspects of music and music teaching that make them different from other school subjects,

3. Discuss the characteristics of children and adolescents that may account for the different motivational patterns they display,

4. Provide examples of current practices of school music considered to be successful models, and

5. Review current practices that can be modified to be more efficient and effective.

When adolescent goals are misaligned with school-based choral goals the singers will forego singing in high school (Freer, 2012). Choral music recruitment has been a

major component of a teacher's responsibility throughout the centuries and continues to be a problem for conductors (Harrison, 2007). Teachers seldom have the tools to counteract the social identity that has been built in young singers and especially male singers (Freer, 2010). Cogdill (2014) described the impact of curricular and extracurricular activities that compete with music opportunities and infringed on the goal to sing in high school.

In a 2011 BBC report (Foster & Jenkins, 2017), conductors were concerned that schools were simplifying choral music education and not teaching fundamental skills in fear of losing students. Students wanted to be challenged, however, and were turned away by the lack of rigor in the programs (Freer, 2012). Freer (2010) concluded that young men are not attracted to what is simplified but strive for challenging experiences.

Lucas (2011), in his quantitative study, looked at the participation of boys in choir over the last century. He surveyed over 100 students on the factors that influence adolescent males to enroll in school choir. One group of students detailed how they received a lot of support from their principal, teachers, and peers but did not get support from their athletic coaches. Family was a strong proponent for their participation. One student did however speak about their father's fear of the femininity of the choral experience (Adler, 2002).

The lower number of men in performing arts, and specifically choral music, has created the need for imaginative ways to recruit boys (Elpus, 2014). While outside influences contribute to the lack of male participation, a student's desire to experience different aspects of educational offerings inside the institution has also been a reason for students exiting music (Siebenaler, 2006). According to Elpus' (2014) study, one

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conflict for boys is whether they should be musicians or athletes. However, with an understanding that there does not need to be an "all or nothing" mentality, boys chose to do only athletics (Freer 2012), athletics and music (Elpus, 2014), or music exclusively (Siebenaler, 2006).

Many of these factors show a strong concern for the success of music programs. Vander Ark, Nolin, and Newman (1980), Freer (2010), and Elorriaga (2011) saw the decline happening slowly at each grade level with girls generally having a more favorable attitude than boys. When a student succeeds, and is good at the craft of singing, they are more likely to continue (Freer, 2010). Freer continued to show how the attitudes toward singing are related to grade level, gender, parental involvement, out of school experiences, self-concept, and self-esteem.

Gender identity of young men. Ever since boys and girls shared an educational setting, their desires and differences have been the focus of research (Vantieghem et al., 2014). Several authors have investigated the impact of gender on aspects of a young man's experiences through adolescence (Elorriaga, 2011). Hall (2005) described the education of boys as one of the great interests of Western societies. He went on to show how girls are outperforming boys in almost every area of education and the achievement gap is widening. Roulston and Misawa (2010) discovered that the gender disparity is happening as early as elementary school and, in some cases, before they enter kindergarten.

Vantieghem et al. (2014) discussed how the gender gap related to the low achievement of girls in math and science but in the 1990s shifted to a male problem where girls started to outperform the boys. Bundra (2006) looked at several studies

which tried to explain the gender gap in education. Too many explanations were given that remained linked to gender categorizations and distinctions.

McGregor & Mills (2006) confirmed Vantieghem et al.'s (2014) research which showed that music curriculum continues to be created to support masculine concepts. Paechter (2000) discovered how several working-class boys, who had been exposed to a milieu of sports figures, had difficulty accepting music as a masculine identity. However, they prefer to be challenged in comparison to a simplified curriculum. Music teachers try to adapt their pedagogies to attract boys to the program trying to perceive the interests and learning styles of boys (McGregor & Mills, 2006).

Elorriaga (2011), Hall (2005), and Roulston and Misawa's (2010) findings stated that boys are not performing at the same rate as girls. In some results there was more than a 50% gap in comparison (Hall, 2005). In addition to gaps between performance levels, Hall suggested that male students participate in a narrower range of subjects. Girls are more apt to search for more opportunities and find a niche while boys are conditioned to try less and only search for what their male friends are selecting.

In contrast, Connell (2002) rejected the notion of gender within the confines of its common usage. He suggested that the focus on gender should be on relations and to highlight gender as a social structure. He explained:

Gender involves a specific relationship with bodies. This is recognized in the common-sense definition of gender as an expression of natural difference, the bodily difference of male from female. What is wrong with this formula is not the attention to bodies, nor the concern with sexual reproduction, but the idea that cultural patterns simply 'express' bodily difference (p. 9).

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Connell (2002) challenged the perceptions of gender based on a biologically fixed binary position. By considering the social relations instead of the fixed biology, there can be better understanding of the implications of gender bias. Western society treats masculine and feminine characteristics as opposites (Hall, 2005). While men dominate many aspects of adult life, boys are struggling to take the lead in adolescence, whether it be on the athletic field (Hall, 2005), the student council (Elorriaga, 2011), or in the brass section of the band (Roulston & Misawa, 2010).

Forcucci's (1957) survey of sexism in music education noted that sex stereotyping was two-dimensional and discriminated against both boys and girls. The boys were discouraged from playing the violin while the girls were discouraged from playing the trombone. The same stereotypes are present in schools all over the country when examined 50 years later (Harrison, 2007). Abeles and Porter (1978) established that the association of gender and music choices was socially impacted as early as age 8.

Pickering and Repacholi (2001) confirmed the findings of Abeles and Porter (1978) in their study describing how children as young as five had shown gender preference in music selection. Even in the 21st century, the first choice for boys was the drum and the first choice for girls was the flute. These choices were influenced, by societal pressure, music teacher's advice, and the availability of the instrument in the school or home. Finally, the research showed how gender played a role in the boys' construction of musical identity at the youngest ages (as early as 5).

Hall (2005) discussed a strong presence of males in the adult music world and terms it as male domination in rock, rap, and jazz. Male singing when applied to rock, rap, and jazz supports the male cultural hegemony. Elorriaga (2011) supported this in his

qualitative study in which young boys thrive to be like a popular idol but get frustrated when the program requirements are not teaching the styles they are striving to attain. Music education and specifically choral music in public schools is not teaching the popular idioms desired by both male and female students (Freer, 2010).

A young male will make decisions based on his gender (Abeles & Porter, 1978), his relationships surrounding his gender (Elorriaga, 2011), and the decisions of the people with whom he associates (Hall, 2005). While Hall spoke about the specific impacts that gender has on male participation in choral music, the foundation of the research is in the self-concept of young men and correlates with the findings of Elorriaga (2011) and Roulston and Misawa (2010).

Powell (2017) investigated the idea of *possible self* and that impact on choral participation. The notion of *possible self* was first conceptualized by Markus and Nurius (1986) and is defined as a future-oriented identity. It comes with three distinct yet connected strands: what a person desires or hopes to become, what a person expects to become, and what a person fears they will become. Likewise, Carroll, Shepperd, and Arkin (2009) defined possible selves as mental representations of one's aspirations and fears.

Possible self-theory directly impacts a child's desire to be a member of a choir or the choice not to participate (Powell, 2017). In her qualitative study, Powell uncovered how the socially constructed meaning of gender can be interpreted for musicians as a sociocultural factor that has the power to influence and shape a young person's possible self. Like Freer (2009) and Lucas (2011), Powell showed how this identity relates to gender and creates the possible self as early as age 5. The role of the music teacher is to

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alter the concept of gender identity and give the child an opportunity to create a new future self.

Elmore and Oyserman (2012) spoke of gender as a core identity that is established early in life. Children interpret their lives in terms of what is acceptable or not acceptable based on their gender. Males learn to conform to what is socially assigned to their gender at an early age and more importantly what is not assigned or acceptable. Connell (2008) confirmed this taking it further by saying assigned, acceptable, or expected. Elmore and Ovserman (2012) also described gender identity as being highly influenced by family members and specifically, fathers on sons, and mothers on daughters.

Findings from the research of Elmore and Oyserman (2012) and Powell (2017) strongly suggest that the past, the present, and the future are connected and that a positive experience in choir has a significant influence on future participation. However, the strong impact of genderfication from an early age has been shown to keep children, especially boys, from signing up for chorus in the first place (Powell, 2017). Freer (2010) confirmed this in his research and discovered that once a young male is participating and enjoying the experience of choral music, it is more probable for them to stay in choruses within public education and beyond. The struggle is that first recruitment into a choral group.

Male participation: Why students stay or leave. Music is an important aspect to most high school age boys, but public school music is a marginalized area of school curricula and decreases in popularity for young men each year as they approach graduation (McGregor & Mills, 2006). As boys transition from middle school they succumb to the pressure to choose subjects considered more useful in the "real world."

Freer's (2014) research demonstrates how social impact can negatively inform young men to continue or leave the arts subjects.

Adolescence is an important stage in a student musician's life when their social identity informs their decision-making process (Parker, 2017). The strength of the in-group and its comparison to the out-group will serve as indicators of whether boys participate in their high school choirs. Parker described the in-group as an exclusive, typically small, group of people with a shared interest or identity. The out-group is made up of people who share a different interest or identity. Harrison (2007) confirmed that a strong in-group choral experience will have higher male participation.

A survey of 542 male students was conducted to investigate their desire to participate in school music when they enter high school (Siebenaler, 2006). Several criteria influenced the students' desire to continue. The first influence was whether music was important in their homes. Of those participating in an ensemble, 72.4% reported that music was important in their homes, while only 49.5% of those not participating in an ensemble said it was important in their homes. In this study 52.3% of students who participated in music had parents who also participated while those that quit music only had 33.9% of parents who participated. Finally, 82.4% of students who said they enjoyed their elementary experience continued in music education while only 38.2% of those that discontinued said they had a favorable experience in elementary music classes. The logistic regression analysis confirmed peer support, parental involvement at home, and a positive elementary music experience contribute to participation success. Likewise, the lack of these positive influences creates the desire for students to quit, or more likely, never join.

Parker (2014) created a temporal matrix of adolescent development in her grounded theory on social identity and the high school choral singer. The matrix is broken down into the following categories: (a) choosing to audition, (b) being chosen, and (c) singing with others. Students had different reasons to audition and received different levels of support for their decisions. The findings also showed that important people, such as parents, teachers, and friends play a significant role in the child's identity development as a singer.

There are several different methods for teachers to recruit and retain students to their choruses (Freer, 2009). In order for teachers to better understand the reasoning behind young men not participating, many qualitative studies have asked the young men what made them stay in their choruses (Parker, 2014) or more importantly, what made them never join (Harrison, 2007).

If there is not an issue with male participation, curricular strategies for recruitment focus on producing an interest in the ensemble. For example, the selection of repertoire, which produces a passion for music and a drive for success, is the process of getting students excited about singing (Elpus, 2014). Another important aspect to male singers is navigating the changing voice so the singer feels successful and wants to continue (McBride, 2016). Most teachers cannot get to this level of recruitment because they are spending their time counteracting the notion that if the male child sings, he must be homosexual or will become homosexual (Roulston & Misawa, 2010). Similar to the McBride (2016) study, the reduction of higher-level thinking skills, within the rehearsal, creates its own negative impact resulting in young boys quitting because they are not motivated or challenged. Once a teacher has recruited young men, they must have

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programs that keep boys motivated and challenged and then communicate that to other boys with whom they associate (Freer, 2012). This becomes a cyclical process which generates higher participation as the recruitment becomes exponential (McBride, 2016).

Consistent success models for male participation are linked to an acceptable identity of singing as it relates to other masculine opportunities in the school (Parker, 2014). In some cases, teachers actively recruited athletes like football players to become part of the choir to dispel the social stigma of singing (Freer, 2010). This creates strong in-group distinctiveness and invites more young boys to participate in the program giving them a strong social identity (Harrison, 2007). A teacher can use a positive social identity group paradigm to invite young men into the choral program and dissuade negativity toward their choice (Mizener, 1993).

McGregor and Mills (2008) identified the errors that occur when teachers create an atmosphere less feminine to reduce the negative perceptions of male students. They go on to show how teachers adapt their teaching to what they perceive is the boys' interests and learning styles. Unfortunately, music teachers' attempts to engage boys in this curriculum process accommodates, reinforces, and reproduces hegemonic constructions of masculinity (Freer, 2012).

A contradictory problem noted in the McGregor and Mills (2008) study was that teachers work tirelessly to masculinize their teaching and provide that perception to the class. This conflicts with the reality that boys perceive choir as a feminized subject. Choral directors need to continue to make choral music more attractive and acceptable to boys without masculinizing it or better stated, defeminizing it (Freer, 2012).

Skelton (2002) spoke of the term feminized as being defined in different ways than the norm. To accept that choral music is automatically feminized is inaccurate since feminized relates to how something is perceived to be not masculine (Chapman, 2001). The issue lies in the understanding of social norms and learned bias that is taught from a young age (Elorriaga, 2011).

Chapman (2001) separated masculinity and femininity into curriculum in the humanities. The focus of humanity classes is on people, communication, and feelings and considered feminine while non-humanity classes employ the masculinized skills of analysis, proof, and the ability to argue. Of all the humanities, Green (1997) classified music education as the most feminized. Chapman (2001) claimed that attracting more boys to music, and specifically choral music, must contain the understanding of the gendered aspects of the music curriculum and challenge the masculinized characteristics of music rather than trying to defeminize it.

Many attempts to masculinize young men as members of chorus are misguided in recruitment measures (McGregor & Mills, 2008). Tackling gender issues should be handled by the entire community/school and not left to responsibilities of humanities teachers enticing young men to participate (Green, 1997). If teachers do not embrace and understand the male gender characteristics in a school setting, music faculty will continue to struggle to attract and retain boys (McGregor & Mills, 2008). Music must be taught, recruited, and sustained for the importance, enjoyment, and abilities of the genre not perpetuating gender models of male dominance (Chapman, 2001).

The focus on male participation and their desire to stay or leave is best understood by understanding the male himself and why he makes these choices (Bennetts, 2013).

McGregor and Mills (2006) contended that music, and especially choral music, revolves around feminine attributes. To create systems where boys feel their masculinity is accepted and supported can create increases in participation. Therefore, studying why boys are inhibited can better facilitate programmatic shifts in which boys' social identity is not an issue with recruitment and retention.

   What music does for the learner. Since the time of Plato, musicians and scientists have researched the relationship between music and the brain (Kreutz et al., 2003). Research indicates how the link between music, health, and the brain is not new but has seen exponential increases and improvements in the last 50 years (Skanland, 2013). This relationship has been studied by music therapists (Tomasi, 1972), medicinal musicians (Skanland, 2013), and music as self-care in everyday life (Bonde, 2011).

   According to Levman (2000), the Greek philosophers were the first in Western culture to speculate effects of music on bodily chemistry and emotions. Bruhn (2000) confirmed this in his empirical research of the Greeks who were convinced that music benefited health and that music should be used as a therapy against mental and physical illnesses. Nettle (2000) who also studied Greek history and the power music had on the people of this time, discovered how singing was the only musical activity utilized in this culture for many centuries. Many musical ideas, like orchestra and band, were not created for another thousand years (Bruhn, 2000). Using the voice as an instrument was how philosophers spoke about the impact of music on thinking and learning (Levman, 2000). Levman detailed how Plato felt that music's purpose was for defense, persuasion, and social harmony. The voice was the instrument that produced purposeful music.

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One purpose of music, since the first Homo sapiens appeared, was to provide communication (Levman, 2000). Everyday communication requires a complex linguistic and musical system (Krause & Slater, 2016). Evidence suggests the processes involved overlap between speech and music. Levman (2000) showed how the ease of this process is dependent on the prior experience and frequency with sound. Livesey, Morrison, Clift, and Camic (2003) supported these theories in their process of thematic analysis of exploring music's impact on speech impediments of elementary age children. The findings showed marked improvements of the sample group compared to the control group.

Sweet (1986) concluded, from a large national high school sampling, that a significant relationship existed between the participation in extracurricular activities and the overall grade point average (GPA) of a student. Specifically relating to music, McNeal (1995) saw music having the highest impact on GPA compared to other extracurricular activities. Broh (2002) confirmed this in his study showing that music and athletics were the only activities that consistently increased student's test scores and overall GPA.

Kreutz et al. (2003) investigated the effects of choir music on secretory immunoglobulin A (S-IgA), cortisol, and the emotional impact in members of a multi-gender choir. S-IgA is a protein the body uses as a defense against bacterial and viral infections of the upper respiratory pathway (Tomasi, 1972). Rein and McCraty (1995) showed how S-IgA responds to an individual's emotional state and Martin and Dobbin (1988) showed how S-IgA increases during a positive and/or relaxing experience and decreases during stressful events.

Choral participants had saliva samples taken before and after two rehearsals to test their levels of S-IgA (Kreutz et al., 2003). Participants were tested after singing for 50 minutes one week and then tested after 50 minutes of listening to the same music the second week. The data showed a higher increase in S-IgA after singing for 50 minutes compared to a slight increase of S-IgA after listening the following week. The physiological act of phonation during the choral rehearsal had a higher impact on S-IgA than listening (Rein & McCarty, 1995). However, both experiences showed increases in this defensive protein. A decrease in cortisol occurred, but only while listening.

The results from the saliva samples support the theory that choir singing has a positive influence on emotions as well as a positive immune function in humans (Kreutz, et al., 2003). These findings confirm previous data from Unwin, Kenny, and Davis (2002) which showed a positive defense in the immune system. Both studies corroborate the notion that music has a positive impact on S-IgA which is mediated by your subjective mood.

Garrett (2013) examined the relationship of performing in choirs and critical thinking skills. The purpose of the study was to examine the connection of performance and critical thinking and the impact one has on the other. The quantitative study referenced two similar studies (Watkins, 1993) and (Taylor, 1993) in which the research examined critical thinking from the perspective of nonperformance activities in a performance rehearsal.

While many theorists investigate increases in learning outcomes and other educational benchmarks by students who study music, Feltz and Weiss (1984) detailed emotional negative feelings decreasing or becoming non-existent during music study.

Garrett (2013) observed how behavioral depression decreased during choral rehearsals and Alluri et al. (2015) discovered that greater connectivity of the regions in the bilateral orbitofrontal regions decreased negative moods.

The three limbic regions, namely the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the nucleus accumbens are the areas for musical emotion (Alluri et al., 2015). Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), 18 non-musicians and 21 musicians were imaged while they listened to three, 8-minute-long musical pieces from different musical styles. Functional connectivity maps were obtained for each participant. Group level *t*-tests revealed musicians showed enhanced connectivity in contrast to the non-musicians. While listening to music there is more perception and motoric knowledge shown in the three limbic regions for musicians compared to non-musicians.

In many cultures music has been considered a health benefit (Gouk, 2000). Livesey et al. (2012) showed how singing uses the body to produce sound in a synchronized and coordinated way with other people. They explained how singing results in higher levels of positive feelings and decreased negativity as it compares to just listening to music. Singing has also been found to lower or erase anxiety and depression (Kreutz et al., 2003), and boost confidence (Rein & McCarty, 1995).

For many youths, listening to music is a method of coping in a world of stressors (White, 1985). Depression affects more than 30% of the adolescent population (Lewinsohn, Hops, Roberts, Seeley, & Andrew, 1993). White's (1985) study did show that the type of music that students listened to did impact the positive or negative response to listening. The increasing rates of depression and the rising costs of mental health care for adults creates the need for school-based interventions (Forrest, 1983).

Although many interventions have been found in schools, up to this point, no music techniques have been created.

In a meta-analysis of 33 published articles by Foster and Jenkins (2017), the association of music and the brain are challenged as causal. There is not enough evidence to show that the exposure to music, or other arts opportunities, will have a measurable increase on a child's development in math or reading compared to students who were not exposed. The issue according to Hallam (2017) is the possible random assignment of the sample. Hallam probed with these two questions: Are the students in the sample at the same level as the students who did not participate? Is the historical physical and emotional representation comparable between both groups?

Foster and Jenkins (2017) stated that the body of empirical studies on the effects of music on the child development and the outcomes from their studies showed a mix of positive and null findings. Another example of causal claims is the possibility of exchangeability. The outcomes of children who do not participate in music lessons (the untreated sample) would come to the lesson with the same backgrounds (socioeconomic, race, learning disabilities, etc.). Is there an assumption that the children are similar in every way except that some took lessons and others did not?

Hallam (2017) noted that one of the issues with the Foster and Jenkins (2017) research is that participating in music may be related to other factors that promote academic success. Examples could be supportive parents, home environments that support a strong study habit, or even a home where parents are present. Low socioeconomic children are more apt to have parents who are not regularly in the house

when children are home and not providing the same support as middle- and upper-class children (Foster & Jenkins, 2017).

Even if an arts education did not impact academic performance, psychologists, theorists, and education specialists all agree that the arts promote positive youth development (Larson, 2000). They go on to show how music creates social awareness, forms identity, expresses talents, and steers adolescents away from risky behaviors. Deci and Ryan (2008) posit that when children have a passion for music, the purpose and direction allow them to contribute to their society.

Chapter Summary

The role of society, social identity, status of choral music in public schools, and impact of music on the learner all contribute to male participation in high school choral programs (Freer, 2010; McGregor & Mills, 2008; Siebenaler, 2006). To better understand the reasoning behind a male student's decision to participate in secondary choral music is informative to the choral director's ability to recruit and retain male students (Adler, 2002). The review of literature in Chapter 2 suggests there is limited data in qualitative reasoning behind young male students choosing to participate in secondary choral music.

This proposed study intent is to understand why secondary male students choose to participate or cease membership in high school choir. Chapter 3 will discuss the research design and methodology of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

  Male participation in secondary choral music has been, and continues to be, an issue in public education (Adler, 2002; Elpus, 2014; Freer, 2010). Siebenaler's (2006) research demonstrated that female students participated at a higher rate than males across public schools. To increase participation, teachers need to understand the reasoning young men drop out of their ensembles (Sweet, 2010). The role of the choir teacher has become much less about the selection of music, teaching of notes and rhythms, and the intrinsic value of music, and more about the recruitment and retention of male students (Hall, 2005; Lucas, 2011; Roulston & Misawa, 2010). Utilizing student focus groups, the study investigated barriers that are present in young males who choose to participate in high school choral music or choose a new path and discontinue in chorus.

  This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological design. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is the study of a phenomenon in its natural setting and attempts to make sense of that phenomenon. Creswell further explains how the interpretations of the phenomenon can unveil the meaning of the choices a person makes which is informed from their personal experiences. Alase (2017) explained how using focus groups can help participants feel comfortable in a group setting to share their decision-making process.

  Uncovering the reasons why young men chose not to continue in music education, specifically choral music, is a common thread throughout the research (Freer, 2009).

Utilizing focus groups of ninth grade boys in high school choral programs, this study uncovered why students chose to continue, or why they decided to discontinue.

Research Context

This study took place in a small city school district in New York State and involved 10 ninth graders from the only district high school. The students came from two different middle schools with different choral directors. This is a city school which is small compared to other city schools but medium-sized compared to all 950 New York State districts. The school has 1,500 students in the high school, 700 in middle school A, and 800 students in middle school B. The participation levels at one middle school had more male students compared to the other middle school, but most young men did not continue singing in high school from either middle school. According to data from the counselling office at the high school, enrollment and graduation rates have been climbing for the last 10 years but male participation in choral music has remained stagnant. A new high school choir teacher was hired in 2014 and agreed to have the study done in her school to better understand the needs and desires of the young musicians.

Research Participants

Creswell (1998) recommended that phenomenological studies use five to 12 participants while Morse (2008) suggest having at least six as a minimum. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) proposed that saturation often occurs with 12 participants in homogeneous groups. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) studies require small sample sizes since it is the quality, rather than the quantity of the data, that permits insightful analysis to be developed (Neel, 2017). Appropriate numbers of participants

will vary according to the aims, level, context, time, and resources of the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

Krueger and Casey (2009) explained how focus group composition should be characterized by homogeneity since the participants will have something in common. Commonality could be age, program participation, or an occupation. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the desired results of a study (Patton, 2002). Welman and Kruger (1999) stated that purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting participants who are knowledgeable or experienced with the study phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Patton (2002) described purposive sampling as a method that selects individuals or groups of individuals that are knowledgeable and have experience with a specific phenomenon and have the ability and willingness to participate.

The selection of focus group students, for this study, was aided by the high school and middle school choir teachers. There were two focus groups. One group had males that continued in high school, and the second focus group had males that did not continue. The two focus groups each had five participants.

The recruitment process included working with the two middle school choir teachers and one high school choir teacher. Male students who had participated in middle school and continued in the high school chorus were asked to participate. Additionally, students who had moved away from the chorus were sought for the second focus group. The middle school teachers looked through the list of male students who were not in the high school choir and gave the list to the researcher. Purposive sampling of the male students was used to choose the participants.

The high school teacher contacted each student to ask if they would like to be part of the research. The teacher explained the purpose of the research and gave the students information and release forms to share with their parents if they were interested in participating in the focus group. The consent form (Appendix A) and an informed consent form for minors (Appendix B) were given to the students and their caregivers. Permission for the study was sought by the district via their online study proposal portal. The research request approval letter (Appendix E) was provided by the school district.

It was important that the students and parents understand that pseudonyms were used, and actual names were never used or written anywhere. Students were instructed not to share the names of the participants in the focus groups. During the actual focus group questioning, a student could leave at any time. The researcher shared with the participants the importance of anonymity and that the focus group was a place they should feel safe. A confidentiality form (Appendix C) was signed by all participants and is secured in the researcher's office.

As part of the protection of students, a district counselor was available during the process if a student wanted or needed to speak to someone about the experience. As of July 2019, no student requested assistance during, after, or since the focus groups occurred.

Instruments to be Used in Data Collection

Focus groups are a tool used by social and behavioral theorists to better comprehend the opinions, motivations, attitudes, and thought processes that create people's choices (Winke, 2017). Ho (2012) has confirmed this in his research describing a focus group as a special type of interactive group discussion to better understand a

phenomenon. DeKeyser (2014) explains how this method of qualitative inquiry has expanded in recent history, specifically as it relates to the impact a phenomenon has on behaviors.

The focus group protocol questions (see Appendix D) were similar for each of the two student groups to better facilitate the findings and create a comprehensive coding procedure for congruent results (Saldaña, 2016). During the process the interviewer asked semi-structured questions, probed, and follow-up questions (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. The first couple of words that each respondent shared were typed out to keep track of which student responded. Utilizing their designated letter, the letter of the respondent was typed followed by their first few words so it could be notated in the transcription.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Groenewald (2004) described the collection of data, through focus groups, not to exceed a saturation point of 10 participants. He further described the data collection using focus groups, as a system by which procedures identify essential relationships. This process of collecting data within the parameters of IPA studies creates rapport, empathy, flexibility, and a production of rich data (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

Smith and Osborn (2009) described the flow of the interview happening naturally. The interviewer's role is to facilitate and guide, not dictate. If the questions need to be altered or rearranged that is acceptable and productive for the process because it is important for the process to happen naturally. The interview was scheduled to last no more than 45 minutes and each interview lasted 40 minutes (the exact time for a complete school period). At any point during the focus group a student was given permission to

leave the group if they were no longer comfortable with the conversations or the content. The focus group procedures, given to the students 2 weeks before the focus group date, informed all members that they were not required to speak unless they felt comfortable. All students involved in the focus groups responded to questions and no students chose to leave the focus group. However, two students did not participate in the first focus group and one student chose not to participate in the second group. Due to the lack of a signed permission form, one student was not allowed to participate in the first focus group.

In qualitative research, data analysis involves organizing data, reviewing the transcripts multiple times, coding and grouping themes, using tables when appropriate, and then forming rational outcomes (Creswell, 2013). Coding involves creating short words or phrases that group or give similarity to the data and looking for patterns (Saldaña, 2013).

The focus group data was clustered into various themes and comparative analysis was used to classify different subjects that emerged from the interview coding (Alderson, 2008). Saldaña (2016) describes structural and pattern coding as a means for data analysis. Structural coding is a process by which a word or phrase is used to create a topic based on the research questions. Pattern coding is the repetition and consistent occurrence of action or data that happens two or more times. Pattern coding, according to Saldaña (2016), is a more in-depth method that pulls out the main themes from the structural coding results.

The data analysis utilized transcripts from the recordings of the focus group interviews. An analysis of the field notes was also part of the procedure. Groenewald (2004) explained how the process should have five steps to include: bracketing,

delineating, clustering, summarizing, and extraction of general themes. The recordings were transcribed to better understand the findings and create and understanding for comprehensive coding. Originally the design was to have it coded by a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), but the researcher felt more connected to the results by transcribing himself. Multilevel coding was also created to better understand the feelings of the participants.

Groenewald (2004) grouped the first three processes together. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction was coined by Husserl and relates to the idea that a position is neither taken for or against but must be kept neutral. Delineating is the act of extracting illuminated relevant research phenomenon. Clustering happens when units of meaning are grouped together (Creswell, 1988). Significant topics were identified, and the recorded focus groups were reviewed multiple times to create the most usable and highest yield of clusters (Groenewald, 2004). The data resulted in three categories with several themes for each category and one category that is presented without any themes.

After the bracketing, delineating, and clustering, the data was put together to summarize the findings. Moustakas (1994) captured this as a method for phenomenological analysis to construct the feelings and understandings of the subjects. The coding process has multiple steps to gather the data, create groupings, and find the newly understood phenomenon (Saldaña, 2016).

The final stage was to create a composite summary which reflected the everyday expressions and ideas of the respondents which supported the research. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) emphasized that good research is not created by rigorous data alone but going further to develop ideas.

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Pietkiewicz (2012) recommended listening to the audio recording several times to become familiar with the words of the focus group(s). This can help develop a holistic sense that can emphasis the uniqueness of the person's experiences. Having these tools in place before, during, and after the interview process was important to the interview's success and more importantly to the validity of the data collection (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

The purpose of the research study was to understand the rationale of young men and their decision whether to participate in their high school choir. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to investigate the reasons young men chose to participate or chose not to join chorus in high school. The study had two focus groups of ninth-grade boys. The participants were chosen by purposive sampling and a music educator in the district was the contact person throughout the process. A non-music staff member was available during the focus groups so the young men felt comfortable with the interviewer and felt the support of the district. The staff member was an administrator for the school district.

Chapter 4 will cover the results of the study and Chapter 5 describes the findings, limitations, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the decision-making process of young men participating in high school choral music. The viability of a high school mixed choral experience is dependent on the participation of males in the ensemble (Siebenaler, 2006). Understanding this phenomenon will inform school choral teachers why young men make these decisions and create systems where teachers can have successful recruitment and retention practices. The qualitative data was collected through two focus groups consisting of five ninth grade boys who continued choir in high school and a second focus group of five ninth grade boys who did not continue in high school. All boys in the focus groups were members of their mixed choirs in middle school.

Research Questions

The study examined why young males (ninth grade) chose to continue or discontinue participation in secondary choral music and the collected data answered the following research questions:

1. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir but are not participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue?

2. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir and who are participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue?

Data Analysis and Findings

Four central categories emerged from each of the focus groups with several themes for each category. The categories and themes will be investigated on their own merit and then compared to one another. The four central categories are: prioritization, social constructs, external influence, and respect for choir.

Focus Group 1 will be referenced as FG 1 and Focus Group 2 will be referenced as FG 2. Each student participant will be designated with a letter from A through E.

The first category that emerged from the data was the struggle of prioritization for each young man. All 10 participants discussed how difficult it was making choir a priority in high school even when they were passionate about the subject. The themes for this category are conflicts, time, and after school activities (see Table 4.1).

The second category that emerged from each of the focus groups was the social constructs around choir membership. Participants from each focus group discussed several instances and experiences around the social constructs associated with being a musician generally and being a choir member specifically.

The external influences on the young men and their decision-making process of whether to participate in chorus or not was the third category that emerged from the data. The themes for this category are teachers, families, and peers.

The fourth and final category that emerged from the two focus groups was the respect for the voice and choir compared to other music instruments and ensembles like

band and orchestra. The themes that emerged from the coding under this category, are

the difficulty of the music, prerequisites, negative rhetoric, and the financial investment

of choral music compared to other musical experiences.

Table 4.1

Summary of Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes	Focus Group 1 or 2
Prioritization	Conflicts	Focus Group 2
	Amount of Time	Focus Group 1 and 2
	After School Activities	Focus Group 1 and 2
Social Constructs		Focus Group 1 and 2
External Influence	Teachers	Focus Group 1 and 2
	Family	Focus Group 1 and 2
	Peers	Focus Group 2
Respect for Choir	Difficulty of Music	Focus Group 2
	No Prerequisite	Focus Group 1 and 2
	Negative Rhetoric	Focus Group 2
	Financial Investment	Focus Group 2

Category 1: Prioritization. The first category, prioritization, developed from the participants sharing their struggles to stay in choir or their reasoning to leave choir after eighth grade. The themes under this category are: (a) conflicts, (b) amount of time, and (c) after school activities.

Conflicts became a frequent response from both focus groups. The students from FG 2 discussed how difficult it was to choose chorus going into ninth grade due to the conflicts with other opportunities both inside and outside the music department. Participant A from FG 2 stated, "It was either that or band and I chose to do band, and I wanted to have a lunch as well." This was supported by Participant E who stated, "I had a busy schedule. Orchestra and band, orchestra and choir sorry, wouldn't fit and I always had more friends in orchestra."

Students from FG 1 also discussed the difficulty to choose chorus with so many conflicts. These students did work around these conflicts and have enjoyed chorus and hope to continue next year but still talked about the tough choices that are ahead of them. FG 1, Participant A stated:

> At this point since we are going into sophomore year and its more work, so we are afraid of scheduling. Especially going into sophomore year, we are given a lot more offerings and we can't take everything, and we have to pick and choose what we want to do.

Amount of time was the second theme under the category of prioritization. These young men are students in a high school with only eight periods in their schedule. Even if it is something they truly want to participate in, participants find it difficult to add choir in their schedule given all the state requirements. In the participants' 4 years of high

school they are only required to take one credit in the arts. Many of these participants were also members of other musical ensembles like orchestra or band, theatre class, or visual arts which created more conflicts and already met the state requirement. Further conflicts emerged in curricula outside of music and the arts. With only two possible openings in their schedule for non-required classes the participants found it difficult to take multiple music classes. FG 1, Participant D stated, "The people who are doing chorus in eighth grade, were also doing band or orchestra and they chose to do band or orchestra because they didn't want to not have a lunch." FG 2, Participant C said, "I am dropping next year so I can take the thing after Design and Drawing for Production (DDP) which is Project Lead the Way (PLTW)."

The boys also explained that the school allows them to skip a lunch if they want to fill all eight periods. Several students from the first focus group talked about giving up their lunch in order to be in chorus. FG 2 Participant B however said, "I wanted to keep up singing in chorus cuz I enjoyed it, but I didn't really want to give up my lunch."

Participants from FG 1 discussed the possibility of using an available period before school starts called zero-period. Students have a limited number of classes available in zero-period, none of which are music. The participants did say that if they used zero-period for something else it could open another slot for choir but that would make the day extra-long. FG 2, Participant A stated:

> Kids going into HS have limited electives to take and if we want to take more
> than one fine art or tech class that means giving up our lunch or go before school
> in zero-period which a lot of kids are prepared to do.

In addition to music there are many other opportunities for students. FG 1, Participant C said, "I am dropping chorus next year so I can take DDP." FG 2, Participant C said, "I personally always wanted to continue with choir in high school, but I didn't want to give up my lunch and I similarly had to choose between orchestra and choir."

After-school activities is the third theme in the prioritization category. Conflicts with after school activities came up several times since there were after-school choirs that conflict with athletics, other curricular studies, and personal needs like employment. The young men from FG 1 who continued in choir, talked positively about the opportunities while the other focus group participants stressed how they wish they could sing in the after-school choirs, but the choirs conflicted with sports, studying, and their jobs. FG 1, Participant E said, "There is an after-school choir, but we play soccer and other sports." Participant C followed up with, "We have practices and games right after school so we can't go to rehearsal, so we have to make a choice," to which Participant E replied, "I enjoy soccer more." Participant A added, "I actually did the extra thing at the beginning of the year but had to stop because of basketball and track."

There was a clear relationship between the decision not to sing and its prioritization. Each of the boys discussed how difficult it was to fit choir in their schedules but those who did continue in high school made sacrifices in their schedules and lives to fit it in. For example, many gave up their lunch to accommodate conflicts or took a class during zero-period to open a space in their schedule during the regular school day. The boys from FG 2 who did not continue, did not find it important enough to make those sacrifices.

Category 2: Social construct. The second category, social construct, developed

from the participants sharing their experiences about social identity and the personal

impact they felt from what people said to them. A person's identity through their social

construct and the decisions they make are described. Social identity is the process by

which a person considers themselves part of one group and not part of an "out-group"

(Parker, 2014).

Social identity was a recurring theme from both focus groups. Participant E from

FG 1 said, "I feel like there can be an image of femininity. People saying oh that's gay

you are in choir." Participant A immediately replied to that by stating, "I remember we

had a seventh and eighth grade combined choir and none of the eighth grade boys wanted

to be tenors because they thought it was more of a feminine to have a higher voice so

they all wanted to be a baritone which I didn't get because all I wanted to be was a tenor

and I still do Participant D from FG 1 defended his choice by stating, "At the beginning

of the year someone said, why would you ever do choirs? I just wanted to, and they

dropped it, and nothing needed to be said more."

Social identity describes how being in an in-group or out-group creates a

decision-making process for someone who wants to be in a specific group (Tajfel &

Turner, 1979). The young men in FG 1 described being in choir with their friends as

rationale for choosing to participate while several of the boys in FG 2 repeatedly

commented how their friends were not in choir so they chose not to continue in high

school. The participants indicated that they did not want to be part of the out-group. One

student actually used similar terms when he said, "My friend said, you are one of the

boys in chorus. That never bothered me or factored it is just different like school and

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different friend groups." The pressures from friends played an integral role in their decision-making process between eighth grade and high school. McBride (2016) described this phenomenon amongst young men in a choral program and the bullying that occurs from other male students who consider it effeminate to sing.

All five students in FG 1 gave examples of students giving them grief, making fun of them, or not understanding why they would want to spend time in a music class. They all seemed to find comfort that they had friends in the program. FG 1, Participant E stated, "Well I mostly did it because my friends were doing it." FG 1, Participant B said, "This was my first year in choir and because I saw my friends doing it last year, I thought it was really cool." Focus Group 2, Participant D expressed his feelings toward social identity when he said:

> So, I think I can speak for all of us we had a wonderful experience and we
> enjoyed it a lot. And a lot of my friends, I play soccer with, are together, and
> because of our other commitments, it forms our social group. We have all kind of
> been forced to pick and choose and we have all picked against choir.

The impact of the social constructs which young men experience played an important role toward the decision whether to participate in choir. The responses from both focus groups described the social and emotional influence the social constructs have on them. Each participant expressed how they were influenced by others but also insisted that it did not impact their final decision. Both focus groups described several instances where students used derogatory language toward them, but they felt strongly about their convictions. FG 1, Participant A stated, "I blocked this out of my head. I played football in the fall . . . there is a stereotype that those that sing are gay and weak." The

overwhelming impact socially, was the desire to be with their friends, enjoy singing, and ignore what a few others say or think. A Roulston and Misawa (2011) case study participant described the process of educating young men on how to handle derogatory stimuli from other boys who are not part of the choral program.

Category 3: External influence. The third category, external influence, developed through the responses from both focus groups. The themes that emerged for this category are (a) family, (b) teachers, and (c) peers. Each of these theme groups had a major impact on the students' decisions whether to participate in choir. The influence was much higher for the members of FG 1 and not as impactful for the five boys from FG 2.

Family impacted the FG 1 boys' decisions to be in the choral program. Each of the five boys talked about the importance of music in their homes and several had parents who still participated in music or even made music their career. Participant C stated:

Neither of my parents are musicians as their profession but they both have done a lot of music in their lives. They are both very exposed to it. My mom sings in a local choir at one of the local colleges. My dad is in a clarinet ensemble and they both encourage music and my singing.

The impact of older siblings also played a role in students participating in the choir program. FG 1, S Participant C said, "Both of my sisters did choir and chorale. They really loved it and basically, they had a great experience there." Participant A from FG 1 said, "My brother done choir and stuff. He liked it. It wasn't like he was super passionate but said you have to do this."

The five boys from FG 2 have a large support system in the home but it did not impact their desire to sing. They talked about how their parents wanted them to focus more on their academics. FG 2, Participant B stated:

> For me music is constantly in my house. My dad was on course to becoming a classical guitarist. He, both of my parents grew up in Israel and my dad was part of the School of Performing Arts in Israel. But he had a wrist injury and pretty much ended his playing career. Yeah, my mom has always wanted to join a choir and recently she has joined one here at Opus. There is always music playing at my house. I have grown up around classical music and every kind of music.

This same student (FG 2, Participant B) later said, "I would love to choose choir over something else but don't regret my decision picking something else. I love singing but I just don't have time."

Many of the FG 2 boys enjoy music but did not put participation in music as an important aspect of their high school plan. FG 2, Participant D said:

> This is I don't think this is, I think this is reflective. I don't regret taking choir at all and I don't know if I ever would want to again. I think it shows in high school you have to choose your commitments wisely and for me I don't think I would or will choose it again.

Teachers was a theme that recurred throughout both focus group sessions. The boys described their love of music in middle school, the excitement of working with the high school teacher, and listening to the high school choir as reasons they chose to continue. Even the young men that did not continue talked about the teachers being a strong influence and how disappointed they were that they did not get a chance to work

with the high school teacher. FG 2, Participant C stated, "I really enjoyed my middle

school class and the teacher was a really really good person to teach choir in middle

school but in HS there are only eight periods."

Each spring the high school choir would visit both middle schools and perform

for the eighth graders which left a strong impression and desire to be part of the choir.

FG 1, Participant C stated, "I saw that and wanted to be a part of that. And I wanted to be

part of that music in terms of the actual repertoire." Participant B added, "I met the high

school teacher once or twice and she left an impression I really wanted to do it again."

There were examples of students from FG 2 that did not have a positive

experience with their middle school teachers which impacted their decision to continue in

high school. FG 2, Participant D said:

> In sixth grade the teacher did not handle the students' well-being like discipline
>
> and what he was teaching was incredibly dull. Every day we go *ah* and *oh*. But it
>
> was the most simple things we already learned in elementary school.

Each of the other boys agreed with this assessment and gave similar examples of their

experience and how it made them not enjoy singing as much. The participants discussed

how they considered stopping but gave the next teacher a chance because they wanted to

keep singing with their friends from middle school. Once their friends decided to quit in

high school and they realized how many other opportunities they had, they did not sign

up for choir in high school.

Peers was an important decision-making factor and would impact each focus

group member differently. Those that continued with choir did so to be with their peers

and were not dissuaded based on any negative rhetoric from their non-participating peers.

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Focus group 2 participants were more apt to use their peer influence when they decided not to continue. FG 1, Participant E said, "Well I mostly did it because most of my friends were doing it. And it was ok in the elementary school and I heard that general music was boring." FG 1, Participant B stated, "I saw my friend in a concert last year and I thought it was really cool. They did a theme concert and I thought it would be cool to be a part of that." FG 1, Participant E stated that, "One thing is I have a lot of friends who quit choir and its really that their parents made them do it in eighth grade so they quit but I did it in eighth grade because I liked it."

Family, teachers, and peers all played an important role in the decision-making process of both focus groups. From the data it is evident that the influences of family, teachers, and peers did influence them in the decisions they made. One important outcome was the desire to be with their friends in the choir or in another elective class. The strength of the teacher did influence the student but if their friends were not in the ensemble, they were more likely not to continue in high school.

Category 4: Respect for choir. The final category, respect for choir and vocal music, developed from both focus groups. This concept evolved around the idea that singers do not feel that the choral idiom is respected in comparison to band and orchestra. There is a false belief that quality vocal singing occurs naturally when in actuality, instruction is needed to master the vocal instrument (Freer, 2010). The themes for category 4 are (a) the difficulty of music, (b) the lack of prerequisites to participate in choral music, (c) the rhetoric from others, and (d) the financial investment for band and orchestra compared to choir.

Difficulty of music refers to the capability of the non-musicians to read and understand choral music. The conductor must select easier music for the ensemble and students who are musically literate have a sense of neglect and at times, boredom. This feeling was expressed by both focus groups. FG 2, Participant C stated, "I think it moves very slowly," and FG 2, Participant E said, "A lot of people can't really sing and for me that is a little bothering I would like class to go quicker. Anybody can join choir even if they can't read."

Participant E's statement, "That anybody can join choir even if they can't read," references the second theme, (b) lacking prerequisites. A student needs to have learned to play a violin to join orchestra or a trumpet for band, but a student can have no background in singing and still join choir. Students were very frustrated with the large differentiation of ability in the choral program. Many of the students in FG 2 commented that one factor for not singing was that students did not take it seriously like they did in band and orchestra. FG 2, Participant C stated, "When you're in band or orchestra rehearsal or a concert it is more formal, and you are actually trying to work on something." FG 2, Participant B confirmed this when he said:

> A stereotype we associate orchestra and band with higher level students and choral students with lower level students and I know for me I prioritize academics and sports and stuff over choir, and I wouldn't want to invest the time.

FG 1, Participant D stated, "It would make more sense to have more teaching of the actual sheet music in seventh and eighth grade. This is a note, and this is how you read a key signature, and this is how you find Do." Participant C agreed and said, "teach

solfeggio earlier." One solution suggested by Participant C was to have different levels of choir. He said:

> One chorus for students who do not have the background and knowledge where the fundamentals can be taught. Then an alternative choir that has a prerequisite for reading music and voice lessons where the music can be more difficult and challenging. It should be more like the band and orchestra programs.

The third theme in this category was (c) negative rhetoric. The students described many instances where people treated them like they weren't real musicians because they were singers. Anyone can be a singer and there does not need to be instruction to be a singer is a common misnomer (Freer, 2012). Participant C from FG 2 is not in choir but is a student in band. He said:

> When we went on the NYC trip there was a running joke about how the band director would whistle. Hey musicians and singers she would say, but people complained that choir students weren't included in the musicians. This is mainly because choir people don't have to read music. There is definitely a feeling that choir music isn't as hard and that is one of the contributing reasons why I choose not to participate.

Statistically, many schools offer orchestra and band rotating lessons but do not offer singing lessons (Siebenaler, 2006). There is a perception that you can be in a chorus without formal lessons but could not succeed in a band or orchestra without lessons on your instrument. Once it is understood that the voice is an instrument it can better facilitate the need for singing lessons equal to the need of violin or tuba lessons (Elpus, 2014).

The final theme of the fourth category is (d) the financial impact of choral music. Interestingly, the participants responded that choral music was not expensive but that their parents had spent so much money on their other instruments that when they had to choose between chorus or band/orchestra they were encouraged to stay in band or orchestra due to the dollars invested in their musical instrument. Since instrumental lessons started in third grade, the students felt they had learned more musically in this realm. Voice lessons begin in ninth grade, so students come into chorus with a variety of ability. FG 2, Participant D said, "I have to take private lessons because they were not offered in school. I have never understood why I get a trombone lesson but never received a voice lesson."

Comparison of the Two Focus Groups

There were several similarities and differences between the two different focus groups. Students from both groups agreed that prioritization played an important role and was one of the reasons the members of FG 2 did not participate in high school. Four out of five male students in FG 1 said it was difficult to make the schedule work, but singing was important enough to them, so they found a way to fit it in.

The social construct theme was shared by all 10 participants. None of the male students said that the social comments from family or peers, even when derogatory, made them not sign up for choir. Several male students shared examples of people making comments about being in choir but did not let that influence them. They felt strong in their convictions.

The influence of teachers, family, and peers was a strong component of both groups of young men. They were all influenced by each of these groups. All students in

FG 1 discussed how teachers, family, and peers helped them decide to continue including music being important in their home, wanting to work with the high school choir teacher, and the desire to be with their friends. Each of the FG 2 participants also shared similar impacts but did not find them strong enough to continue singing.

The respect for choir theme was most impactful by the members of FG 2. The desire to be in an ensemble that works at a high level of musicianship ultimately influenced these young men not to participate. The time, dedication, and money that was spent in their other musical experiences outweighed their desire to be in the choral program.

Each of these focus group participants shared data that described the reasoning behind whether they remained in choir in ninth grade or whether they chose to discontinue. Some categories and themes were shared by both focus groups while some themes were present in only one focus group. All data were catalysts for participation.

Summary of Results

The 10 focus group participants' responses created several themes under the framework of four strong categories namely prioritization, social construct, external influences, and respect for choral music. Each of these categories emerged multiple times in the responses by both focus groups. In addition to these categories and themes, other responses created multiple themes that did not fit as a congruence. Those responses can be utilized by future theorists building upon this research.

The first phase of coding allowed for general data to be collected. These data points helped in understanding the fundamental feelings of the participant and to create a foundation for secondary coding (Saldaña, 2016).

Second level coding allowed for patterns to emerge from the participant responses. Themes emerged from this second phase of coding and additional defining of themes emerged. The data was analyzed to uncover similarities and differences to better understand the rationale of answers by both focus groups. These coding, categories, and themes are better understood and identified into specific themes under categories creating convergence and congruence (Saldaña, 2016).

Chapter 5 will investigate the implications of the findings from this qualitative phenomenological study and includes limitations and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Results.

Introduction

Low male participation in secondary choral music has been a consistent hindrance for choral directors over the last 50 years (Dekaney & Robinson, 2014). Research has shown that males participate at a much lower number than females thereby impacting the balance of the choir and diminishing its success and viability (Grant & Norris, 1998). This qualitative study examined why young men choose to participate in choir compared to the males who do not participate. These implications and recommendations are intended to give choral music educators, administrators, college music programs, and other music educators, the tools to improve the recruitment and retention of their high school choirs.

This qualitative study answered the following two research questions:

1. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir but are not participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue?

2. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir and who are participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue?

Two focus groups were created to better understand the rationale of this phenomenon. All members of the focus groups were participants in middle school choir

(sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders). Five ninth grade boys who continued in high

school made up the first focus group and five ninth grade boys, who did not continue

singing in high school, made up the second focus group.   Each focus group received the

same questions except for two specific questions (questions 5 and 6) which asked probing

questions about the decision to continue or not continue (see Appendix D).

Data was transcribed by the researcher to better understand the communication

between the participants. Familiarity with the transcribed data aided in producing and
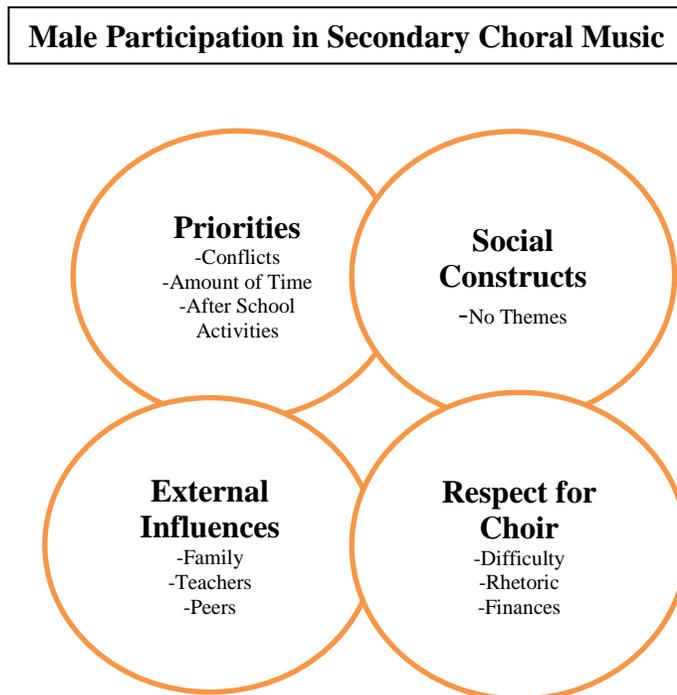
comprehending categories and themes.

Social identity theory served as a framework for the study. The lens provides an

understanding of the social impact on young men and their decision-making processes.

The purpose of this study is to better understand why young men make the choice to

participate in choral music and what influences those decisions. This chapter discusses

the implications of the research. The coding results are divided into four categories with

multiple themes for each category.

Implications of Findings

This study expands on several other studies that have explored the quantitative

data showing more females, than males, are participating in high school choirs across the

U.S. (Elpus, 2014). This phenomenological qualitative study explores the reasoning

young men choose to continue, or alternatively quit participating, in high school choir.

The study included two different focus groups of ninth grade boys who all participated in

middle school choir. One focus group (five participants) continued in high school and

the other focus group (five participants) did not continue choir. Several categories and

themes emerged which can aid in choral music educators' understanding the decision-making process of young men as they approach high school choir.

Four main categories emerged from the coding. They align and add to the literature about male participation in secondary choral music. The categories are prioritization, social constructs, external influences, and respect for choir. The themes are created from the multiple responses of the 10 young men who participated in the focus groups and strongly convey the reasoning behind boys' decisions to participate or not. A model depicting these categories and themes are represented in Figure 5.1.

Male Participation in Secondary Choral Music

Priorities
-Conflicts
-Amount of Time
-After School Activities

Social Constructs
-No Themes

External Influences
-Family
-Teachers
-Peers

Respect for Choir
-Difficulty
-Rhetoric
-Finances

Figure 5.1. Male participation in secondary choral music: Categories and Themes.

Priorities. The ability to prioritize and fit choir into schedules was an obstacle the focus group participants shared. The conflicts that made it difficult to fit choir into the students' schedule was a recurring theme of the focus group participants. Many described the lack of space in their schedules and the need to give up lunch or take a class before first period (zero-period) to open their schedule if they had a strong enough desire to participate in choir.

In addition to scheduling conflicts during the day, there are after school conflicts including athletics, other academic responsibilities, and employment. Cogdill (2015) described the negative impact on the numerous activities that compete with students' ability to be in a music experience.

The final prioritization theme that emerged in the study was the amount of time the participants have in the school day to enroll in choir. Zero-period was referenced several times by the focus group participants to alleviate the stress on the daily schedule, but music classes were not offered. There were examples by the participants, where they enrolled in a zero-period class like health to create a space in the eight-period day for choir.

Prioritizing choir music, as it relates to a student's schedule, was a strong response from both focus groups. The desire to sing was not strong enough from the participants of FG 2 who did not desire to give up lunch or use zero-period. Some participants in FG 2 did not know what scheduling choices were available to them when they were signing up for classes in eighth grade which created fewer scholastic opportunities.

FG 2 participants were unable or unwilling to participate in the curricular choirs because of the conflicts with other desired classes and did not prioritize choir. This impacts the programs, teachers, and communities since the low numbers of male participants has a negative influence on the success or viability of the choir (Siebenaler, 2006).

FG 1 participants were willing to make choir a priority but discussed how the schedule concerned them in future years and feared they would not be able to continue in choir because of the conflicts and requirements for graduation.

Social constructs. Social constructs continue to influence young men in the decision-making processes as it relates to signing up for choir in high school. Freer (2012) describes a successful transition to high school chorus being based on the positive transition from middle school. Freer continued to show how young men who become immersed in the knowledge, skills, and positive social identity of singing tend to stay in the program through high school and often into adulthood.

There are negative influences that cause the cessation of choir participation. McLeod (2008) describes social identification as the process by which a person categorizes with a specific group. The ideas of the group are something someone wants to emulate. The students shared their desires to be in the ensemble because their friends were in the group but there were other students who chose not to continue because their friends were not participating. The influence of others played an integral role in the decision-making process of the male students.

Research shows that being part of the in-group has a strong correlation with retention in the program (Siebenaler, 2006). Parker (2017) described adolescence as an

important stage in a student's life regarding music and the impact of their social identity. This as an exclusive, typically small group of people, with a similar interest or identity. Once a person is part of this grouping they commonly continue to participate (Harrison, 2007).

Dekaney and Robinson (2014) describe how the cultural context of public schools has changed in the last 20 years given the widening demographic gap, influx of immigrants, and the continuous impact of social identity. The participants did not describe their experiences with social identity as something that caused them not to participate.

Each of the participants in both focus groups spent the least amount of time in reference to social pressures as they related to their desire to be in choir. While they all gave examples of social constructs, they all said it did not motivate them to quit but empowered them to stay. This study's participants were all participating in one or more music ensembles and the focus groups did not consist of any students that totally left the music program.

External influences. The impact of others has been highly researched in many studies and has emerged as a theme in this qualitative study. Both focus groups describe how the positive influences by parents, peers, and teachers encouraged them to participate or have a desire to participate in choir.

An interesting data point was by the young men who said music was an important part of their home life but still did not choose to participate. FG 2 participants shared that music was present in their homes, but it did not have any impact on their desires whether

to participate. They loved music and it was often present in the home but the FG 2 participants did not respond as favorably as FG 1.

Although the participants in FG 2 were not swayed by family and music, family played an important role influencing the participation in music for the boys of FG 1. The males discussed that positive influence. Each of the five participants from FG 1 shared how one or both of their parents encouraged them to participate in some kind of music because it had a positive influence on them while they were in high school. The boys shared many examples from their parents and how it did influence them to choose choir in ninth grade.

The teacher is also an important catalyst in attracting the young men to continue singing. Several of the boys said they were uncertain if they would continue until they met the high school teacher and listened to the high school choir. Once the participants heard the choir there was a desire to be part of that community.

What their friends decide to do inside and outside of the school day played an integral role in their decision to participate. Many students discussed the choice to sing because other friends were in choir and similarly decided not to sing because their friends chose to discontinue. In both focus groups the idea of being with their friends was integral to their decision making process. FG 2 participants sadly admitted they wanted to sing but they chose to take other classes their friends also chose.

Each student described multiple outside influences that helped shape them as musicians and aided in their desires to stay or leave the choir program. While parents, teachers, and community influenced them, the decisions of their closest peers were the most important aspect.

Respect for choir. A recurring issue that emerged from the focus groups but was not part of the literature reviewed was the respect for choir. Students described several instances where the choral rigor, rhetoric, and experiences were inferior compared to band and orchestra.

Students consistently commented how they had to practice and learn instruments to enroll in band and orchestra while anyone can join choir. A student does not need to understand how to use the voice or have the ability to sing in order to register and participate in choral music which diminished the importance of the choral ensemble. Each of the participants described how they have to take lessons, improve on their band and orchestra instruments, and take assessments in these classes. Comparatively, they commented on how there was no structure to the requirements and assessments in the choral program. They wished they had been required to take voice lessons in middle school. Especially as it relates to the need to understand the changing voice.

Voice lessons in this small city school started in ninth grade. Orchestra and band lessons started in third and fourth grade, respectively. Focus group participants felt strongly that the respect of the choir would be increased if students had a background in the function of singing and reading music.

Each of these categories explores different rationales to why young men choose or do not choose to participate in high school choral music. The choir director can use these data points to better facilitate the recruitment and retention strategies to hopefully encourage more young men to be part of the choral programs.

Unanticipated outcomes. There were interesting outcomes from this study that were unanticipated. Looking through the lens of social identity one would think that

social constructs would be a primary theme, but it lagged in comparison with other factors. One unanticipated outcome was the influence of general music as a negative stimulus resulting in the desire to sing in middle school choir. In this city school program students can choose between classroom (general music) and choir and many students chose choir in middle school and then discontinued in high school when the requirement was no longer in place.

A final unanticipated outcome of the focus groups was the impact of school lessons on their decision to discontinue in ninth grade. Students in high school music ensembles take one group lesson a week. Students were excited to finally learn how to use the voice as an instrument but students in both focus groups were concerned with the amount of time that they are pulled from their other academic classes. These students were in multiple ensembles so they are pulled once a week for a band lesson and another time per week for a choir lesson. The students discussed how they didn't sign up because of this conflict and several students from FG 1 said they may not continue in 10th grade in both ensembles. They did not say from which ensemble they would withdraw.

Limitations

A qualitative phenomenological study provides an opportunity for a conversation that creates structure and purpose (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Qualitative studies also can create processes and phenomena that are descriptive before they are theorized and quantified. Limitations of this study are reviewed so researchers can utilize these limitations in future studies (Alase, 2017). Understanding the rationale of young men's participation in choral music has been a struggle for choral teachers for over 100 years (Dekaney & Robinson, 2014).

A limitation, from this study, is the characteristics of the participants in both focus groups. All students involved in the study were participating in a music class at the high school level. Students who were in middle school choral programs and not in any high school music program did not volunteer for the study. Two students, who were not in any music classes in high school, were signed up to participate but withdrew before the focus group occurred. Future studies should interview students who were never in choral music and students who participated in middle school but did not participant in any music in high school.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are shared to facilitate recruitment and retention of young men as they age into high school in hopes of participating in choir. The recommendations section is divided into recommendations for further research, recommendations for policy development, recommendations for best practice, and recommendations for social justice.

Recommendations for further research. Future research should be investigated to understand the rationale of young men before they maturate to high school. In order to better understand the boys' decision-making process, a qualitative study of young men in elementary school as they approach middle school could be utilized to uncover this phenomenon.

Additionally, a qualitative study, with focus groups should be created consisting of young men who discontinued in high school who did not participate in any music class. All participants in this focus group were strong musicians and did continue in either band, orchestra, or music theory. This type of study would inform teachers how to

recruit students who are not in any music ensembles by understanding what intrigues non-musicians and creating systems that are of interest.

A further recommendation for research would be to investigate why young men never start singing at all. What are the stimuli that create a process by which students do not want to sing from the first opportunities to participate? This study was to better understand why young men do not continue in high school, but the future studies could investigate why they never chose to sing in middle school or even sooner in elementary school. Through the lens of social identity, the researcher may develop an understanding why young boys are influenced by social constructs (Hall, 2005).

Another area for future research would be to study young musicians in an elementary school who are flourishing to observe if they continue through high school and beyond. This could be a longitudinal quantitative study examining participation continuation rates from elementary choir through high school choir.

A study of single gender institutions and their exploration of music ensembles within the limitations of one gender is a recommendation for future study to understand how they manage and create strong choral experiences.

This research and study was done through understanding why students participated or quit choir in high school. A future study could be to research the practices, experiences, and processes of the educators in the choral systems and how they overcome this gender discrepancy.

A final recommendation is to research the race and socioeconomic status of young men participating in choral music. Looking quantitatively, at the comparisons between male students in relation to race and socioeconomic status is an important possibility for

future study. If data shows there is a deficiency, a qualitative study can be utilized to understand why this phenomenon exists.

Recommendations for policy development. School districts should dedicate resources to understand the impact of schedules on student opportunities and choice. New York State Education requires many credits for each year of study in secondary public education (Darrow, 2016). If a student wants an opportunity to pursue multiple fields of study, the requirements need to accommodate exploration.

In this study students from each focus group expressed frustration over their inability to fit the academic opportunities that they desired into their schedules. Specifically, for most of these participants that included choir. Zero-period was an option to take a required class in order to open their schedule for an elective like choir. Consideration should be explored to offer music classes during this zero-period offering.

Another option for a policy shift is to create extracurricular choir offerings before the school day to offset the conflicts with athletics, study, and employment. Many participants shared their desire to participate in choir after school but had too many conflicts outside of the music department.

The Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) was created to give school age children opportunities that the component school districts could not provide because of the size of the smaller districts. New York State is made up of many small schools and this organization allows component schools within one or more counties to pool their resources to provide opportunities they could not in their home districts. The majority of offerings are in practical arts (career and technical education).

In addition to the career and technical education, BOCES could offer performing arts programs that would provide opportunities for smaller districts that would normally not have enough students to create programs. An example is to build an orchestra program that many component districts do not offer because of their size. If male participation numbers are consistently low, they could also offer secondary choral music for the component districts.

One suggestion for successful policy change is to enlist a collaborative team of advocates. Parent organizations, boards of education, administration, music staff, and the community can work together to educate those in charge of policy of the importance of a music education and the loss of opportunity for young men who decide not to participate.

Lastly, another policy shift to be considered by the New York State Education Department is to reduce the requirements for graduation in the 4-year cycle. The new law, ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) specifically speaks to the need to educate the well-rounded child inclusive of music and the arts (Darrow, 2016). Given the new requirements of the law, the Education Department should consider the impact of the present requirements as they relate to the needs of the new law. Further study and understanding of the law, the New York State graduation requirements, the omission of core subjects, and the need to educate the well-rounded child should be considered and researched (Darrow, 2016; Neel, 2007).

Recommendations for best practice. Communication with middle school students as it relates to their possible offerings is paramount to the success of recruiting young men into the choir program. The students need to understand that they can forego their lunch which gives them an extra class period to fit non-required classes.

Students also need to be informed on the zero-period offerings and the process by which zero-period works for them. Several of the participants did not understand the opportunities that were available to them if they used zero-period. There were student participants who did not even know it existed until they started ninth grade. Changing their schedules to utilize zero period would mean leaving their friends and so they chose not to switch.

A recommendation, based on the results of the study, is to create a program, starting in elementary school, where everyone feels a strong bond with the music departments. The data from this study indicates that if a student feels connected to the program from the beginning, they will want to continue. Their social identity will be with choir music.

Recommendations for success, as it relates to respect for choir, is to teach choral music like band and orchestra.   Reading music was an integral part of the success that was shared by participants of the focus groups. Students in the band and orchestra classes take weekly lessons in addition to an ensemble rehearsal. They learn the importance of ensemble work as a large group while also learning to play the musical instrument in small group lessons. To create the respect the focus group participants are describing, the voice should be similarly taught.

Recommendations for social justice. Through the lens of social identity, it is important to research the impact on student participation as it related to biases on young men. These biases could include gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Powell (2107) uncovers how the socially constructed meaning of gender can be interpreted for musicians as a sociocultural factor that has the power to influence and shape a young

person's possible self. Low socioeconomic students do not have the same support systems as colleagues who have higher socioeconomic caregivers and tend to participate less in activities outside of the curricular requirements (Foster & Jenkins, 2017). Low socioeconomic students turn away from music education because of the financial hardship that is perceived with an elite program. Even singers have financial responsibilities like clothes, music, and festival fees (Abril & Gault, 2008).

Race is another factor as it pertains to male participation and choir music. Male students of color have been encouraged to be more athletic than artistic in hopes for college scholarships (Dekaney & Robinson, 2013). Dekaney and Robinson also explored how students were drawn to music programs that adopted culturally relevant pedagogies.

A recommendation for course creation, as it relates to diversity, could be a music history class. This class would review the lineage of musicians of color in hopes to show all students that music is not just available and centered around upper-class White and Asian communities. This could provide a lens of inclusion and understanding for underrepresented students and would be most successful if taught by a person of color. DiAngelo (2016) describes successful programs being inclusive and welcoming and are best taught by teachers who understand the plight of the students and has had a similar journey.

Conclusion

The results of this qualitative study, involving ninth grade boys in two different focus groups (10 participants), provides further understanding about the boys' decisions whether to participate in high school choir. In this study, all boys were choral

participants in middle school. This study adds to the body of knowledge as it relates to young men's participation in choir as they start high school.

Without male participation the viability of the mixed choir will not survive (Adler, 2002). Adler uncovered that without male participation the choir does not have a chance of continuing. This limits differentiated learning styles and a reduction of the limbic mind usage.

The imbalance (ratio of male to female participation) of the choir creates problems for the teacher, the ensemble, and the overall experience of the group (Harrison, 2007). Elpus (2014) explains that choral music education can still exist in an all treble choir (a choir made up of female voices) but the opportunities for male students to sing and experience the positive influences from choral studies would be lost.

Dekaney and Robinson (2014) describe how the culture, identity, and desires of young men to be in choral programs are a problem that has been present for over 100 years. Their research points to continued pressures on teachers to find ways of recruitment and retention instead of teaching and creating music. Understanding the rationale of the decision-making process of young men, and their desire to sing in choir, was the basis for this research and created two research questions:

1. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir but are not participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue?

2. From the perspective of ninth grade male students who participated in middle school choir and who are participating in high school choir, what barriers impede male students to continue?

Social identity theory (SIT) proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) describes the membership of a person into a specific group or groups creates a sense of self as it relates to others in that group. In addition to being a part of the in-group, this membership creates a strong negative feeling toward the alternative groups. Hornsey (2008) researched how a person's personal qualities become similar to others within the same group and in opposition to people not in their group.

Music students have continually felt the stresses of being in the out-group while participating in choral music (Carrol et al., 2009). Children as young as five show gender preferences in their music selection with regard to vocal or instrumental music as well as to the specific instruments (Pickering & Repacholi, 2001). The influence of male role models, including fathers and brothers, created social identities and educated younger males on the correct gender groups to which they should be members in order to be the most masculine.

This research was conducted to increase the understanding of why young men make the choice whether to participate in high school choir music or discontinue. The significance of the phenomenological study was to provide resources to music educators, specifically choral teachers, on best practices for recruitment and retention. Further understanding of the barriers that are present inhibiting male participation are provided.

The research for investigation was divided into four different categories:

1. The state of affairs of choral music in public schools

2. Gender identity of young men

3. Male participation – Why students stay or leave

4. What music does for the learner

The method used to investigate this phenomenon was qualitative focus groups. Krueger and Casey (2009) describe focus group composition as homogenous since participants should have something in common. All participants in this study were members of their middle school choirs.

The focus group participants were students from a small city school district in New York State. There were 10 ninth grade students from two different middle schools. The district is comprised of 12 buildings (eight elementary schools, two middle schools, one alternative school, and one large high school). The study was assisted by the high school choral teacher who was hired in 2015 in hopes to understand the reasoning behind a large percentage of young men who sing in middle school but elect to cease study in high school.

The findings of the research were divided into four different categories with multiple themes which are shared in Figure 5.1. The categories are prioritization, social constructs, external influence, and respect for choir. The themes are conflicts, amount of time, after school activities, teachers, family, peers, difficulty of music, prerequisites, negative rhetoric, and financial investment.

Recommendations from the study are broken into four different parts including recommendations for further research, recommendations for policy development, recommendations for best practice, and recommendations for social justice. A recommendation for further research is to study the reasoning of elementary boys and their perceptions and decisions as they approach middle school. Also, to create a focus group of ninth grade boys who did not participate in high school and were not in any music classes. A recommendation for policy development would be to create a new

framework of 4-year high school requirements and additionally, the impact of schedules on the student choice outside of the requirements. An example of a recommendation for best practice is to guarantee that eighth grade students understand the impact of the high school schedule before they sign up for choir or choose to quit. The students need to understand they can use lunch as an extra period or use the zero-period toward a required class which will create an additional class period. Finally, an example of a recommendation for social justice is to study the participation rates of high school choir students in regard to race and socioeconomic status.

In conclusion, an educator can utilize these findings to build recruitment and retention strategies. This can create systems where the balance of the choir is more congruent between male and female students, and mixed-choir programs can succeed. Further studies can use this data and build upon the research.

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St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Male Participation in Secondary Choral Music

Name(s) of researcher(s):_____David M. Brown

Faculty Supervisor:___C. Michael Robinson Ed. D._ Phone for further information: 315-480-3536

Purpose of study: To better understand why young men (9th Graders) choose whether to

participate in high school choral music after participating in middle school. To inform teachers

what reasonings are present that inform young men in their decision making.

Place of study: ___Ithaca City School District/Ithaca High School_ Length of participation: 30-45 minutes.

Method(s) of data collection: Focus Group

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

There are minimal risks and participants will likely not experience any negative or adverse relations. The benefits are to inform reasoning of young men's decisions on participation in high school choral music.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of subjects: Pseudonyms will be used and students can elect to stop participation at any time during the process of the research.

PLEASE INCLUDE: Your information may be shared with appropriate governmental authorities ONLY if you or someone else is in danger, or if we are required to do so by law.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected: No real names will be used and all data will be kept locked and nothing will be written in the dissertation to reveal names and places of the study.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Participant)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher(s) listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your personal health care provider or an appropriate crisis service provider (*Provide the number of a local crisis service referral center here).

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact Jill Rathbun by phone during normal business hours at (585) 385-8012 or irb@sjfc.edu. She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

If using audio recordings of interviews, please include this addendum:

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of five years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for five years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of five years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be

kept for five years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.

Appendix B

St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(for use with minors)

Title of study: <u>Male Participation in Secondary Choral Music</u>

Name(s) of researcher(s): David M. Brown

Faculty Supervisor: <u>C. Michael Robinson Ed. D</u>.   Phone for further information:<u>315-480-3536</u>

Purpose of study: <u>To better understand why young men (9th Graders) choose whether to participate in high school choral music after participating in middle school. To inform teachers what reasonings are present that inform young men in their decision making.</u>

Place of study: <u>Ithaca City Schools</u>   Length of participation: <u>45 minutes</u>

Method(s) of data collection: <u>Focus Group</u>
_____

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

There are minimal risks and participants will likely not experience any negative or adverse relations. The benefits are to inform reasoning of young men's decisions on participation in high school choral music.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of subjects: No real names will be used and all data will be kept locked and nothing will be written in the dissertation to reveal names and places of the study.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected:
_____

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to your or your minor child.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I, the parent or guardian of _____, a minor _____ years of age, consent to his/her participation in the above-named study. I have received a copy of this form.

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Parent/Guardian)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher(s) listed above. If you or your child experiences emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study contact the Office of Academic Affairs at 585-385-8034 or the Health & Wellness Center at 585-385-8280 for appropriate referrels.

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding confidentiality, please contact Jill Rathbun at (585) 385-8012 or irb@sjfc.edu. She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

Appendix C

St. John Fisher College
CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

Title of study: <u>Male Participation in Secondary Choral Music</u>

Name(s) of researcher(s): David M. Brown

Faculty Supervisor: <u>C. Michael Robinson Ed. D</u>.   Phone for further information:<u>315-480-3536</u>

Purpose of study: <u>To better understand why young men (9th Graders) choose whether to participate in high school choral music after participating in middle school. To inform teachers what reasonings are present that inform young men in their decision making.</u>

Place of study: <u>Ithaca City Schools</u>   Length of participation: <u>45 minutes</u>

Method(s) of data collection: <u>Focus Group</u>
_____

I, _____, agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all of the participants in the focus group for the above study.

_____
Student Signature

Appendix D

St. John Fisher College
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. To begin our process, I want you to thank you for participating in this focus group. My name is Mr. Brown and I am a Doctoral Student at St. John Fisher College and am excited to talk with you today about your participation in middle school chorus. The goal is to develop an understanding why boys choose to join and stay in chorus or why they may choose to stop singing. Throughout this process I want you to feel comfortable and are always free to leave. This will be a conversation with no right or wrong answers. Please ask me if you don't understand what I am asking. Finally, I want to remind you that you signed a confidentiality agreement so everyone can feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Your names will never be shared in this study. **(Opening).**

2. What made you sign up for chorus in 6th grade? (You might remember one of the music teachers coming to your elementary school describing your choices of chorus or general music). **(Introductory).**

3. What made you continue singing through 8th grade? (Everyone in this study sang up until 8th grade). **(Transition)**

4. (For those that continued which from here will be the number followed by an alpha a.). Why did you choose to continue participating in chorus while in high school? What encouraged you to continue?

4. (For those that discontinued which from here will be the number followed by an alpha b.). Why did you choose to not join chorus in high school? **(Key Questions)**

5a. Several of your friends have not continued in chorus. Why do you think they chose not to continue? **(Key Questions)**

5b. Is there something the teacher could do differently that would entice you to rejoin chorus? Would you ever consider coming back? **(Key Questions)**

6a. What is your favorite part of being a member of chorus? **(Key Questions)**

6b. Do you miss any aspects of being in chorus? **(Key Questions)**

7a. Do any of your friends speak to you about being in chorus? **(Key Questions)**

7b. Do you participate in any other music classes or opportunities in or out of school? **(Key Questions)**

8. If you could change something about High School chorus what would it be and why. **(Ending Questions).**

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with us today? **(Ending Questions).**