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Pedagogical approaches for the female adolescent voice in Southern Baptist youth choir rehearsal

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PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES FOR THE FEMALE ADOLESCENT VOICE IN SOUTHERN BAPTIST YOUTH CHOIR REHEARSAL

by

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ABSTRACT

Children and youth choirs in the Southern Baptist Church have historically been used as a training ground for future adult choir members. These future choristers received a musical education from music ministers utilizing a graded choral curriculum. More recently, youth choir leaders, who are often volunteers, no longer receive educational materials to aid in the musical education of the children and youth choirs. This change is of concern, given the importance of pedagogical approaches and repertoire selection to the vocal health, self-awareness, and identity of young singers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the pedagogical practices and repertoire used by youth choir directors in SBC youth choir rehearsals. Using Gackle's (2011, 2019) pedagogical framework for vocal health, I sought to identify what vocal training, repertoire selection, and rehearsal methods are used by SBC youth choir directors, as it relates to the female adolescent voice. Utilizing a collective case study approach, I conducted interviews with youth choir directors and youth choir members in SBC of Virginia churches, completed observations of female adolescents who sang in the choirs, and completed document review of repertoire used in these choirs. Interviews centered around participants' general knowledge, preparation, and perceptions regarding choral rehearsal techniques. For the

observations, I observed a performance of a song of each female adolescent participant's choice, to evaluate their vocal technique while singing. I conducted a critical analysis of the music literature used in rehearsal by the youth choirs involved in the study. I enlisted a committee of five musicians, who were either educators who had church youth choir experience or were music ministers who worked with female adolescents in youth choir, to review the repertoire utilizing a Repertoire Assessment Protocol I developed using criteria from Gackle (2011, 2019). I completed initial coding of all data to discover what vocal pedagogical concerns, if any, leaders considered and utilized during rehearsal. I then completed second cycle coding to find common themes connecting the repertoire analysis, interviews, and observations. Although the youth choir directors considered their repertoire and techniques to be appropriate for their young singers, in five out of six situations, the repertoire and rehearsal techniques did not fulfill healthful and pedagogically appropriate criteria as outlined by Gackle (2011, 2019). The female adolescents exhibited vocal tension and strain while singing but still expressed a deep respect and appreciation for their youth choir leaders. Most of the singers mentioned that they admired their youth leaders' strong walk with Christ, and the students expressed a desire to follow this example spiritually and musically.

Out of ten foundational techniques for healthy vocal production, the students and directors disagreed in their perspectives on five: tone production, breath management, important singing skills, vowels, and intonation. In general, the students stated that their directors had not addressed these items in rehearsal as often as the directors stated. Additionally, the directors' opinions of repertoire appropriateness differed from that of

the repertoire committee, who stated that the Contemporary Christian Music they examined was not conducive for female adolescent vocal development.

With many obstacles to youth choir programs in church, the future of youth choir in the SBC church is in question. In this study, pastoral lack of support, competition with youth bands, lack of qualified leadership, and lack of quality repertoire availability all appeared related to a decline in youth choir membership. Youth choir leaders may improve the pedagogy in rehearsal by increasing their knowledge of the adolescent voice, seeking out reputable publishers who have curated music that is conducive to supporting adolescent voices, and finding healthful repertoire or by adjusting current repertoire to fit the capabilities of their singers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the mid-20th century, the leaders of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest Protestant denomination in the United States (Diab, 2011) endeavored to provide music education to their congregations to cultivate worship through song[1] during services. During the 1940s, a graded choral curriculum was developed for children to encourage congregational singing through a unified expression of worship (Li, 2001; Garcia, 2013). In 1955, experienced music educators were employed by the SBC to further improve the overall quality of children's resources being offered to churches and to choir directors. The result was a comprehensive curriculum that was age-appropriate in vocal range and text, with musical concepts that were tailored to these specific age groups; 3–5, 6–8, 9–12, and 13–16 years (Rawls, 1998).

SBC production and publication of graded, or hierarchical, music for children ceased in 2002 (Kim, 2014). The absence of those resources continues to impact religious institutions today as worship pastors and choir directors may find it difficult to acquire educational sources that directly focus on religious lessons and repertoire that are applicable and age-appropriate. Currently, Contemporary Christian music publishers are one of the primary resources for choirs of all ages for these SBC churches (Brown, 2012). Music publishers who desire to make a profit often distribute music that appeals to youth in choirs, often enticing choir leaders to purchase music that might not match the director's skill level (Adams, 1973). Savvy marketing and business strategies of

[1] "Worship through song" is common vernacular in the Christian church to denote the personal or congregational expression of worship.

evangelical music publishers take precedence over the musical decisions of artists, the needs of consumers, and possible vocal health concerns of the singers (Brown, 2012; Radionoff, 2017). Despite these strategies, church youth choirs are the training grounds for future worship leaders; therefore, vocal health, teaching methods, and appropriate repertoire selection should be considerations of current music ministers[2].

Focusing directly on the pedagogical approach to healthy singing, youth choir directors are challenged to wholly develop the vocal ranges of adolescent singers and appropriately cultivate techniques to help their students reach their full vocal potential (Kempfer, 2014). Many individuals who work with adolescent voices in the Southern Baptist Church serve in a volunteer capacity, or they have a music degree with a different emphasis (e.g., performance, worship) that provides little formal vocal/choral pedagogical training in these areas. Until recently, research and vocal pedagogy has centered around the male voice change during adolescence, whereas a lack of formal training in teaching the female adolescent voice may contribute to inconsistent vocal pedagogy and vocal range identity of female choristers due to erroneous or incomplete choral coaching, as well as poor selection and subsequent perpetuation of vocally inappropriate repertoire (Lycke et al., 2012).

Current music ministers in evangelical churches (including SBC) may not value vocal pedagogy as a musical skill that is necessary for their work. When interviewed, music ministers and senior pastors ranked vocal health and vocal pedagogy in the lower

[2] Music Ministers are ordained ministers who usually have a music or related degree and a degree from a seminary. Music ministers are usually in charge of all worship music and music activities at the church where they work.

half of skills needed for maintaining their ministry (Sheeks, 2016). Hill's (2019) participants suggested that youth choir conductors often are not familiar with vocal anatomy and pedagogy of the voice. Understanding vocal health and the function and anatomy of the voice is important for suitable vocal pedagogy (Chism, 2020). Tepe et al. (2002) surveyed 129 members of youth and church choirs, and found that over half of participants experienced vocal maladies during and after rehearsal. Webb (2007) surmised that "As choral conductors, we can positively affect the voices in our choirs through our instruction. It is our job to teach the choir not only the music, but also healthy ways of singing it" (p. 26). Additionally, Hendricks (2012) discovered that only 2 out of 12 universities studied required future worship leaders to enroll in a course in vocal music education, leaving most future youth choir leaders without the proper education to support and train their singers. Sheeks (2016) found that pastors and worship leaders did not place value on learning about vocal pedagogy in comparison to university programs. Only 13.8% of the worship leaders in Neto and Meyer's (2017) research had a degree related to leading worship, and over half said they were self-taught. These results point to the possibility that people assigned to lead youth choirs may not have been trained in vocal health or trained to work with the adolescent voice. In the following section I introduce a framework for healthy vocal development that may be useful for these directors to consider.

Youth Choirs and Healthy Vocal Development

In 2011, Gackle stated that it is imperative that vocal instructors/conductors know the "physiology, acoustics, development, maintenance, and training of the voice" (p. 37).

For female singers navigating through stages of adolescent vocal development, Gackle (2000b) stated that the female adolescent voice should be treated as a light soprano and should sing repertoire written in the soprano range. However, Neto and Meyers (2017) noted that most contemporary Christian music (CCM) is written for mezzo-sopranos or altos who use a chest-mix while singing. As a result, females who desire to imitate their favorite music vocal artist (Christian or otherwise), it could possibly do harm (such as vocal tension or strain) to their voices if not given proper instruction during their adolescent years. Sweet and Parker (2019) encouraged choir teachers to have open conversations with their students regarding their singing experiences during rehearsal, while educating them about vocal technique.

Because the church may be the only place where a youth receives any vocal training, it is imperative that the youth choir directors who work with young female voices are aware of the pedagogical implications of working with this age group. Music educators who work with adolescent voices may develop vocal potential through the successful application of appropriate technique using suitable repertoire (Phillips & Aitchison, 1997; Sweet & Parker, 2019). Welch (2019) suggested that:

> At any age, development can be supported or hindered by a number of factors, such as the appropriateness of a given singing task set by an adult in relation to current singing capabilities. We need, therefore, to continue to seek optimal ways to allow children and adolescents to explore and extend their singing (p. 526).

From this literature, it can be assumed that music educators who embrace the importance of vocal health and long-term musical enjoyment allow the adolescent to develop their

voice fully and discover what the capabilities of their voice are, whether in classrooms or churches.

Female adolescents experience voice changes in ways that are aurally less noticeable than male adolescents; however, this does not mean the experience is less stressful for female singers (Gackle, 2011). Physical and vocal change and development are different for every child (Cooksey & Welch, 1998; Manning, 2002), and "adolescence is characterized by a distinctive phase of vocal development which bridges childhood and adulthood" (Cooksey & Welch, 1998, p. 99).

Characteristics and Concerns

Young female singers may experience vocal breathiness, huskiness, voice-cracking, register breaks, unpredictable range capabilities, intonation issues, tone-quality irregularities, and possible discomfort when singing (Gackle, 2011; Sapir et. al, 1996). The voice is in flux, and singers often feel they have no control of their voice. This difference in vocal quality has been investigated by researchers including those who follow.

Gackle (2011) asserted that pre-menarcheal voices lose lower pitches and often have problems with their upper range. She found that once females transition into young adults, their voices will exhibit richness in tone, possess a larger range, have consistency between registers, acquire a natural vibrato, and achieve flexibility and decreased breathiness. Current research has brought to light how the physical transformations of female singers during adolescence can affect the voice (Sweet, 2015). Adolescent females are not only going through a physical change where their larynx is changing dimensions,

but their vocal quality becomes breathier and hoarser as the muscles supporting the larynx adjust to the changes and vocal folds elongate.

Emotions

Adolescent females experience anxiety and stress as their voices are changing, so informed teaching practices could help adolescents navigate this difficult time in their vocal life. Vocal change makes it necessary to implement suitable practices in the choral rehearsal that aid the student through the voice change without harming the fragile vocal folds (Gackle, 2011). Informed vocal pedagogy can help students navigate the significant vocal changes that are a part of adolescent growth and transformation, which can also relate to a students' feelings of success, growth, and emotional satisfaction (Gackle, 2011; Sale, 2022; Sweet, 2018).

Voice Phases

Gackle (2011, p. 28–31) crafted four phases for vocal development of female adolescents. Voices in Phase 1 – Prepubertal and unchanged have no register breaks,[3] possess a flute-like quality, and are flexible. Phase 1 singers range from age 8 to 10 or 11 and are generally soprano 1s with a comfortable vocal range from Bb3 to F5. Phase 2A – pre-menarcheal voices are beginning mutation. Adolescents in this phase lose some of their upper range and often have problems with lower pitches. Tone can be breathy, and the register break lies between F4 and A#4. The age range is 11 to 12 or 13, and the comfortable vocal range is A3 to G5. According to Gackle (2011) these singers should be assigned to sing Soprano 1 or 2 as appropriate.

[3] Register break is the term for the area of the voice where the chest voice melds into the head voice.

Phase 2B – post-menarcheal voices are in the high point of mutation (Gackle, 2011). Voices exhibit husky tone, vibrato begins to develop, breathy tone and voice cracking in common, phonation can be difficult, and lower notes become easier to sing. The register changes exist between F4 and A#4, and then again between D5 and F#5. The age range is 12 to 14 or 15, and the comfortable vocal range is A3 to F5. Singers should be assigned to sing soprano 2 or alto as appropriate. The last of Gackle's (2011) vocal classifications was Phase 3 – young adult female. Adolescent voices between the ages of 14 and 17 will exhibit richness in tone, possess a larger range, have consistency between registers, acquire a natural vibrato, and achieve flexibility and decreased breathiness. The register change exists between D5 and F#5, and the comfortable vocal range is A3 to A5. These singers can sing any of the voice parts, but finding the healthiest voice part for each singer is important in this phase as it is in all phases.

Taking care of the changing voice is of key importance for educators as the student only has the one instrument to utilize during their lifetime. As Callaghan et. al (2018) stated, "Singing differs from other musical performance in that the performer is the instrument" (p. 17). When choral teachers understand the characteristics of each stage of vocal development, they may be better able to identify the stage that young singers are currently in, while capably selecting age-appropriate repertoire that supports vocal development, allows for musical growth, and encourages self-expression through singing (Gackle, 2011; Orton & Pitts, 2019; Sale, 2020). Teaching lifelong vocal health skills facilitates best performance practices in singers.

Healthful Repertoire

Careful selection of repertoire is important to provide a positive and healthful learning experience for the adolescent singer (Sale, 2022). Concentrating on tonal considerations, text, technical concerns, interpretation, style, and form when selecting repertoire can support the educational process (Gackle, 2011, 2019). Scholars have posited that repertoire should be chosen carefully and rehearsals paced in a way to bring enthusiasm for the music and for singing (Hill, 2019; Burburan, 2020). Because choral literature is the medium through which most musical and vocal instruction occurs in the SBC, the significance of repertoire choice cannot be taken lightly (Guth, 2016). As Gackle (2000b) posited, repertoire for adolescents needs to be constructed in a way so that teachers can cultivate a student's individual developmental capabilities in a choral rehearsal. In addition, choosing music that highlights the singers' optimal vocal ranges allows the best singing tone of the performers to flourish (Gackle, 2011, 2019). This argument would extend to the need for youth choir directors to search for composers and arrangers who understand adolescent voices.

There are key elements to consider when choosing repertoire for the female adolescent voice. The first element, text appropriateness, is the vehicle through which notes are sung and emotion is relayed (Gackle, 2000b; Gackle, 2011; Gebhardt, 2016; Jung, 2010). Reflecting upon the poetry of a song is an important factor when choosing a piece for female adolescents to learn and perform. When discussing the expressive communication through text, there are seven key elements to consider when choosing repertoire; precise diction, vowels, diphthongs, vowel unification, consonants, phrases,

and nuance (Gackle, 2011). Tone and technique are taught through the poetry and notes of music, and by choosing appropriate repertoire, a teacher can help a student with range development, breath management for long phrases, unification of vowels, placement of tone, and intonation. Although these items are important when singing a text, study and analysis of the context of the words is valuable to assure that the poetry is appropriate for the emotional maturity of the singer.

Musical construction of the piece is also important, as are the musical concepts and expressive elements such as phrasing and dynamics. Notes and words of a piece can create technical struggles for female adolescents, and these nine elements are of import to consider when choosing a piece for a youth choir: onset/release, agility requirements, articulation, legato line, intonation, balance/blend, pitch accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, and harmonic accuracy (Gackle, 2011). Gebhardt (2016) classified expression in repertoire as musical, textual, and artistic. Musical expression refers to the actual music score and the dynamic and expressive markings that allow the students and teacher to discuss and experiment with volume, phrasing, and tempo. Artistic expression allows the student to convey their individual interpretation and style of the song, including vocal experimentation and color. As Gackle (2011) argued, "If we choose literature which enhances the developing voice and, most importantly, aim our teaching toward the artistic development of each singer, there is no limit to the singers' capacity for beauty and artistry" (p. 70).

Ternström et al., (2018) stated that "a knowledgeable conductor selects music that takes advantage of the individual and collective vocal strengths of the choir, rather than

fitting the voices to the music" (p. 33). Furthermore, independent part-singing, descending line intonation, intervallic intonation, and rhythmic accuracy can be improved when an age-appropriate medium is utilized in the educational process (Gackle, 2011). National Association for Music Education (NA*f*ME) (2014), American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) (Dame, 2020), and the Virginia SOLs (Board of Education, 2020) detail the importance of a sequential curriculum where repertoire is selected to enhance musical and emotional growth throughout the education of the student.

The Repertoire and Resources committee for Middle School/Junior High Choirs of the ACDA addressed the importance of repertoire choice with their report that was updated in 2020 (Dame, 2020). The report states that music should be "well-crafted and appropriate to encourage the singer to grow musically, emotionally, and socially" (p. 61). Selecting texts that are culturally responsible and in a variety of languages demonstrates a desire on the teacher's part to honor different cultures. Choosing culturally responsive repertoire shows the students that inclusivity is important and also validates these students (Lind & McKoy, 2016). When the vocal needs of individual singers are considered and repertoire is chosen carefully, female adolescents can become more self-aware and develop their self-identity in a nurturing environment (Sweet & Parker, 2019).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pedagogical practices and repertoire used by youth choir directors in SBC youth choir rehearsals. Using Gackle's (2011, 2019) pedagogical framework for vocal health, I sought to identify what vocal training, repertoire selection, and rehearsal methods are used by SBC youth choir

directors, as it relates to the female adolescent voice. To determine how and to what extent SBC youth choir directors are incorporating vocal pedagogical methods into youth choir rehearsals, the following questions guided this inquiry:

1. How and to what extent, if any, do directors of SBC youth choirs assist female adolescents in exploring their full vocal range and vocal technique?
2. How and to what extent, if any, does the repertoire used by SBC youth choirs adhere to or diverge from pedagogically appropriate practices for repertoire selection as outlined by Gackle (2011)?

These research questions not only address the pedagogical techniques utilized in rehearsal, but also provide insight into the application of vocal instruction through the repertoire purchased to facilitate vocal growth in female adolescents. Given the potential benefits to singers (both physically and emotionally) when youth choir directors apply appropriate vocal pedagogy as part of the rehearsal process (Gackle, 2011), this study may provide new insights into a variety of ways that such pedagogies might be implemented in SBC youth choir contexts. Although these findings are unique to the particular choir directors studied here, this study may offer unique insights into vocal pedagogy that may be transferable to other SBC youth choirs, and to other youth choirs more broadly.

Rationale

In 2012, I left my position as Choral Director at a local high school to become the Director of Worship and Music at the large, Southern Baptist Church I attended. One of my first responsibilities in my new position was to restart the youth choir and to oversee

the children's choir program. As I perused repertoire samples from the three music publishers recommended by the worship pastor, I concluded that the vocal ranges of the youth and children's choir music were considerably lower than the music I utilized as a public-school vocal music educator. The youth repertoire contained vocal lines where the soprano line was pitched in a traditional alto range, and the alto line was pitched in a traditional tenor range. The children's choir unison vocal lines were pitched in the alto range. I explored pieces from other publishers and discovered youth and children's choral music in more familiar vocal ranges, but these publishers did not provide arrangements of the contemporary Christian repertoire similar to what my church was using in worship.

As I prepared for the first rehearsal of youth choir, I modified the repertoire available to me to meet the vocal needs of the students at our initial meeting. I changed keys, added vocal lines, and adjusted some harmonies to optimize the arrangements available—as Sweet and Parker (2019) suggested that teachers select repertoire that is appropriate for the singers' voices, and if it is not, they suggested that the song be revoiced to fit the singer. In doing so, I contemplated what other choir directors were doing with their youth choirs. This was my first experience in questioning the usefulness of available choral literature arranged for youth voices.

Teachers who encourage their female singers to become self-aware as they navigate adolescence can help their students gain confidence in their singing (Sweet, 2018). As a part of this, teachers can help students negotiate their vocal change through education and support. As I navigated through my first three years as Director of Worship and Music, I was fortunate to have a very talented young singer in the alto section. Before

working with her in my new position, I had heard her sing alto solos on many occasions, and she always performed with energy and passion. As I worked with her voice as her new choir director, both of us were surprised to discover that she could sing higher than we originally thought, and I was able to determine that she was indeed a soprano. She had sung in the alto range her entire life, and I was the first person who had helped her explore her upper range. I immediately moved her to the soprano section for the rest of her time singing in the church youth choir.

Assigning female adolescents to the correct vocal part is not only important for their vocal health and comfort in singing, but it is also essential for them to develop their entire range (Wolverton, 1985). The 15-year-old student had only been using her chest voice, and after we worked together, she discovered her head voice. She told me that she desired to major in music, so I suggested that she enroll in voice lessons to further develop her talent. Thankfully, I was able to work with this young soprano, help her develop good technique, and curtail possible vocal issues she might have developed from singing outside of what she discovered was her comfortable vocal range. The young soprano received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and just completed her Master of Music in Vocal Performance.

Coupled with the above experience, as a church youth choir director, I discovered that contemporary Christian music can be pitched in ranges that encourage extending the chest voice into an unhealthy range for some singers. My experiences as a youth choir director further piqued my interest to learn how youth choir directors in the SBC teach female vocalists in their choirs to develop their voice while learning to worship. Before I

began this study, I was familiar with the youth choirs at churches from other denominations, but I was unaware of what other SBC churches were doing. Because of my experiences as a youth choir director at my own church, I felt a need to research the impact of repertoire and pedagogical practices on female adolescents in youth choir rehearsals in Southern Baptist Churches.

Conclusion

The job of a youth choir director could be daunting, especially to someone who was not knowledgeable in ways to support the female adolescent voice change. As Gackle (2011) stated, "Within each rehearsal, the conductor must strive to encourage healthy vocal development, develop individual musicianship, encourage expressive skills, and provide an historic, poetic, and stylistic understanding of the music" (p. 37). This study aimed to discover how youth choir leaders in SBC churches utilize healthy practices in rehearsal in order to help their young female singers be successful as they experience vocal changes. A study of adolescents who sing in youth choirs in SBC churches may help inform the practices of youth choir leaders in the SBC and other similar settings.

This chapter has addressed the phenomenon of female adolescent voice change and the need for healthful training during formative years. Because the voice is in flux during adolescence, choral music educators who do not provide a healthful vocal training regimen could unintentionally allow their singers to do harm to their voices. This study may be helpful for choral directors, especially those who work with youth in SBC choirs. Understanding the many facets of pedagogy and music selection could aid in developing

successful choral techniques encompassing the goals and expectations of SBC church music performance. By investigating the SBC youth choir rehearsals, the results of this research study may inform the pedagogy used in youth choirs and the training of female adolescent voices.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pedagogical practices and repertoire used by youth choir directors in SBC youth choir rehearsals. Using Gackle's (2011, 2019) pedagogical framework for vocal health, I sought to identify what vocal training, repertoire selection, and rehearsal methods are used by SBC youth choir directors, as it relates to the female adolescent voice. To determine how and to what extent SBC youth choir directors are incorporating vocal pedagogical methods into youth choir rehearsals, the following questions guided this inquiry:

1. How and to what extent, if any, do directors of SBC youth choirs assist female adolescents in exploring their full vocal range and vocal technique?
2. How and to what extent, if any, does the repertoire used by SBC youth choirs adhere to or diverge from pedagogically appropriate practices for repertoire selection as outlined by Gackle (2011)?

Research on this topic is relatively new; therefore, for this literature review I have provided extended abstracts for 16 of the most relevant and recent studies on this topic. They are organized below in chronological order by publication date. For additional resources not addressed in this literature review, please see "Other Sources Consulted" following the reference list.

A Pilot Survey of Vocal Health in Young Singers (Tepe et al., 2002).

The purpose of this study was to determine what connection, if any, existed between the vocal problems of young singers and their demographics and behavior. In order to discover connections, a carefully developed questionnaire was developed to be given to

amateur youth singers of choirs familiar to the researchers in the Wilmington, Delaware area. Questions covered vocal health, habits, and concerns related to the pubertal standing of the respondents. The researchers requested that choir directors distribute the questionnaire to anyone 25 years of age and younger who sang at least once a week; 571 were distributed and 129 were returned. Respondents were aged 3 to 25 with 34 identifying as male, 94 identifying as female, and one reported as unspecified. Because some of the respondents were too young to read or write, a parent filled out the questionnaire on their behalf. The adult read the question to the participant and filled out the appropriate answer based on their response.

Respondents were grouped according to whether or not they had experienced vocal problems and also whether or not they had received voice lessons. The researchers analyzed demographic and behavioral information using Pearson's chi-squared and Fisher's exact test to discover how factors might affect the prevalence of vocal difficulties. Vocal issues reported included hoarseness (42.6%), fatigue (24%), tickling/choking (17%), volume disturbance (16.3%), breathiness (15.5%), and other (12.4%). Thirty-one percent of respondents stated that they had over-sung in the past and 43% stated they had experienced vocal strain while singing.

The researchers reported no statistically significant differences between the survey results of those who took lessons and those who did not take lessons. They did find a statistically significant difference between the responses of the older singers versus the younger singers (older singers reported more vocal issues than their younger counterparts); however, the researchers determined that to not be clinically significant.

Two of the 23 questions regarding behavior had statistically significant results. Ninety-seven percent of participants with chronic fatigue stated they had experienced vocal issues, while only 43% of participants without chronic fatigue stated they had. Eighty-five percent of participants that experienced weak morning voice also reported vocal issues, while only 40% of those who did not experience weak morning voice reported vocal issues. Even though 89% of the singers drank less than the recommended amount of water per day, there was no statistical difference between those who drank water and those who did not in regard to vocal issues. Of the female singers taking voice lessons, 74.6 % who had reached puberty reported vocal difficulties and only 17.2% who had not reached puberty reported vocal issues. There was no difference in males taking voice lessons.

Researchers did not break down responses based on the age of the singers. Parents helped the youngest fill out their forms, and lack of knowledge regarding the voice on the child's part, or even the parent, could have skewed the results. This difference in life experience would most likely cross over into the perception of vocal experiences and the ability to articulate these experiences. For example, Punch (2002) stated that the limited vocabulary of children, shorter attention span, and limited experience in the world make research with children inherently different than research with adults, and even adolescents.

The questionnaire did not address whether the students sought out voice lessons because of voice problems, so the results may appear to show that voice lessons are not helpful. Students in their research gained knowledge about their personal vocal health

from voice lessons and, as a result, developed a positive self-image about their singing. It should be noted that the researchers did not consider the length and quality of the lesson, the education of the teacher, or the purpose of the lessons. And, ultimately, the researcher concluded that children taking voice lessons are not guaranteed to receive a good vocal education. Additionally, taking voice lessons will not necessarily decrease the occurrence of vocal difficulties. If teachers have the tools to understand if and when a student starts exhibiting symptoms of vocal difficulties (strain, breathiness, hoarseness), they might be able to address the issue quickly and help the singer work through the problem. The important factor is the knowledge of the educator and their ability to relay this knowledge to their pupils.

The Impact of Singing Styles on Tension in the Adolescent Voice (Smith-Vaughan, 2007).

The purpose of the study was to examine the vocal folds of adolescents while singing to determine if various singing styles are harmful to the voice and whether vocal fold damage can begin during adolescence. The researcher examined the potential of stress placed on the vocal mechanism and musculature by different singing styles to determine if tension developed while singing.

Thirteen female and seven male adolescents from North Carolina were evaluated for vocal tension while singing in three different styles: classical choral, musical theater, and gospel.. Four instruments were used to obtain data while the students sang and spoke. The first was a Kay Elementrics Computerized Speech Lab (CSL), and the second was the Electroglottograph (EGG). The CSL helped the researcher create speech profiles for

the singers through the use of a microphone that recorded speech samples. The EGG collected data [4]on the variations and changes in the opening and closing of the vocal folds while singing with electrodes in a Velcro strip placed around the participants' necks. The KayPentax Digital Video Stroboscopy System (LVES), Model 9295 recorded vocal fold vibrations and a Welch Allen flexible rhinolaryngoscope, Model RL-250, collected images of the folds.

Upon arriving to be tested, students completed a questionnaire regarding their vocal history. The students proceeded to the next step where they spoke four vowels for six seconds each to determine their vocal acoustic parameters via the CSL. Students were then asked to read the first two paragraphs of the "Rainbow Passage," a text that includes all sounds of American English. Student voices were also tested for jitter, shimmer, and fundamental frequency, while researchers sought to determine each student's habitual pitch.

After completing the speech portion of the study, students were given a saline solution in the nasal area in preparation for the fiberoptic scope to be used. Once in position, the scope allowed images to be taken while the students sang three pieces, "Pueri Concinite," "Tomorrow," and "He Never Failed Me Yet." Each session was recorded digitally for the video and audio to be examined at a later date.

Trained investigators utilized Likert scales to rate the results of the tests. Nine characteristics were rated in regard to speech and singing: supraglottic activity, vertical

[4] The EGG did not work properly for all participants, so the data collected were ultimately not utilized; however, the investigators argued that the LVES had provided sufficient data to provide results.

level of vocal fold approximation, amplitude, vocal fold edge, mucosal wave, nonvibrating position of the vocal folds, phase symmetry, phase closure, and glottic closure. The LVES video recordings were rated by the researcher, a speech-language pathologist, and a speech pathology student who observed 57 vocal fold motions. The singing recordings were rated with a Likert scale by eight judges who were all vocally trained and familiar with working with the adolescent voice. The judges evaluated individual performances to determine if they could hear vocal tension in the voice while each student sang. Because of considerable disagreement between judges' ratings, the researcher chose to use only two of the judges' scores in the final analysis. Results were presented according to and in order of the research questions.

Research Question 1: Did the adolescent singers engage in behaviors that are detrimental to good vocal health? The majority of students participated in behaviors that could be harmful to their vocal health. Fifty percent of the students reported that they were stressed, and 25% lived in a smoke-filled household. Three students were cheerleaders, and the investigators noticed the beginning of nodes on their vocal cords; however, 75% of the singers admitted to yelling frequently. Of the respondents, 70% stated they cleared their throat continuously.

Research Question 2: What is the fundamental frequency of the adolescent's speaking voice? The thirteen females in this study fell into the normal range (180–250 Hz) at 218.98 Hz. The seven males averaged 164.10 Hz, which is well out of the normal range (100–150 Hz). The researcher determined that the elevation in the fundamental frequency was due to the subjects being in the middle of vocal mutation.

Research Questions 3 and 4: Do any significant differences in laryngeal tension exist in the adolescent voice during the singing of three different styles of music, and if so, were there any significant differences in the abduction/adduction of the vocal cords during the singing of these three differing musical styles? The Stroboscopy found more tension when students sang in the musical theater style. Supraglottic activity revealed significant compression differences when students sang in the gospel and musical theater styles. Singing in the classical style created the least amount of tension. All subjects were rated as normal in the vertical level of vocal fold approximation. There were no differences between the singing styles in regard to glottic closure and phase closure. All subjects were rated as normal for phase symmetry, non-vibrating portion, mucosal wave, and amplitude.

Research Question 5: Did any significant differences exist in the degree of tension perceived by trained vocal musicians when listening to adolescents sing in three different musical styles ($p < .05$). Because the results were so significantly different, the answer was no. There was disagreement in the musically trained judges listening to the adolescent singing performances. The researcher decided to use the two judges whose results agreed with each other as the deciding factor; however, the disagreement between the other judges who were evaluators could point to a bigger problem in education (teacher lack of training in vocal technique and student potential vocal harm because of the lack of training of the teacher), or it could be as simple as they heard different things. Assuming that everyone heard the same recordings in the same situation, the results point to the need for more training in recognizing vocal tension when listening to adolescents

singing in order to recognize and address vocal tension.

Judges observed vocal tension while subjects sang in the musical theater style on the song “Tomorrow.” This piece was written in a range that encourages students to use their belt voice, or if they do not know how to belt, their chest voice. This researcher used the term “belt” for the singing of musical theater and gospel pieces. They stated, “Belting in music means using the chest voice in the high part of the voice, rather than using the head voice (Thurman & Klitzke, 1994). The belt vocal style has been described in various ways such as dynamic, powerful, and yelling.” More current literature has determined chest and belt voice are not the same, and that there is a lack of understanding regarding the belt voice (Kempfer, 2014).

Student Voice Use and Vocal Health During an All-State Chorus Event (Daugherty et al., 2011).

The purpose of this study involving 256 students at a three-day All-State choir event was to record student vocal use through four different processes. The first was through daily student self-reporting of sleep hours and singing quality. The second involved two students, one male and one female, who wore ambulatory monitors that recorded their individual phonation during the event. The third was identifying vocal behaviors during use and rest times through analysis of rehearsal recordings. The final process involved field notes that tracked rehearsal times, sitting versus standing, rehearsal seating arrangement, and time spent on each composition.

Participants in the study were 256 high school singers in the mixed choir (SATB) of a Midwestern state’s all-state event. There were 128 females and 128 males. Two

participants (Susan and Roger, pseudonyms) were outfitted with ambulatory phonation monitors for the researchers to collect more detailed data on the voice during singing and breaks.

The event was spread over three days, beginning on Thursday and culminating with a concert on Saturday afternoon. A total of 15 ½ hours was devoted to rehearsal, 8 ¾ hours was given for non-rehearsal events (i.e. concert attendance, dance, etc.), and 6 ¾ hours was allocated to meals. The choir rehearsed in a banquet hall of a hotel. The chairs were placed one inch from each other and were the type commonly used in hotels for large banquets. The chairs are the type considered to potentially create less than efficient breath control as cited in literature.

Researchers gave a brief survey to the choir members once each day. The survey consisted of two sections, one required demographic info and the other asked for the students to rate their agreement or disagreement about statements and rate their voice quality from very poor to excellent. All surveys were anonymous except for those completed by Susan and Roger.

The phonation monitors, or APM, were attached to Susan's and Roger's neck directly above the sternum. The monitors were valued at $5000 per machine making them cost-prohibitive to use on multiple students. The students were given access to the device before the event so they could become comfortable with it, and so that it would not impede their natural singing. The students wore the monitors all day, and they removed them when they became tired of wearing them or were ready for bed. The researchers collected data once a day, near the end of the day.

Rehearsals were recorded for analysis after the fact. Using Scribe 4.06 software, the following behaviors were coded: full ensemble singing, full ensemble speaking, SA singing, TB singing, conductor speaking, off-task chatting, instruments playing alone, sections singing alone, and others, i.e., the sopranos and tenors singing together. Field notes were used to create written observations which might inform the research, especially regarding the amount of time dedicated to each piece, the quality of student voice use, and student posture, as well as sitting versus standing during rehearsal. Once all data were collected, the researchers addressed the research questions using findings from the surveys, phonation monitors, rehearsal recordings, and field notes.

From Thursday through Saturday, researchers discovered a significant change in the following ways: Appreciably fewer students felt they could hit the higher notes of their vocal range, significantly more students answered that they felt like they were straining, that their voice felt tired, that their throat hut, and that their voice was hoarse. Significant declining changes occurred Thursday to Friday. From Friday to Saturday, five of the seven indicator statements showed no significant declining change. The “tired voice” indicator was the only statement to show significant declining change from Friday to Saturday. Moreover, students included statements on their surveys that pointed to possible physiological misunderstandings. For example, statements indicating that students had an “excellent voice no matter what” (p. 362) may show a lack of understanding regarding vocal fatigue. Furthermore, students may start to consider vocal fatigue as normal and as a part of the experience.

Susan and Roger used their voice equally in rehearsal and in down-times of break

and meals. Susan and Roger both phonated excessively in the hours leading up to the first rehearsal. This included a bus ride and free time before the first rehearsal. Excessive phonation before rehearsal began could have contributed to the vocal fatigue experienced by the singers, thus affecting their results. Both students rated their voice quality higher on Thursday than on Saturday. Susan rated herself as excellent on Thursday and average on Saturday. Roger rated himself as good on Thursday and poor on Saturday.

Students sat for 72% of the rehearsal time, and this could have impeded proper breathing technique. Also, the chairs were placed less than an inch from each other, and this could have been the cause of louder singing for the singer to hear themselves. Based on the findings of this study, it appears plausible that many adolescents lack understanding of how their voice works, especially as it pertains to vocal health and overuse of the voice. Educators who are aware of students' lack of understanding can educate their young singers about using their voice in a healthy manner. This includes making sure that the students utilize their voice correctly in rehearsal, that the repertoire is appropriate for their voices, and that the singers recognize the signs of vocal fatigue. However, the possibility exists that educators may not be fully aware of vocal health concerns for students, especially in the context of extended rehearsal time.

Contemporary Commercial Music Pedagogy: Selective Exercises for Developing Healthy Technique in Adolescent Singers (Kempfer, 2014).

The purpose of the study was to create vocal exercises for educators to teach belt voice to adolescent singers through Contemporary Commercial Music (jazz, pop, rock, musical theatre, gospel) and traditional classical music, observing experts, and through

research on the technique involved in singing. Three research questions guided the study (p. 4): 1. What are the differences between CCM and classical pedagogy? 2. What is the "belt" voice and how is it used in CCM? 3. What exercises can be used with adolescents to develop healthy CCM technique? An online survey helped Kempfer identify schools that had choral groups that performed CCM and subsequently invited them to participate in the study. Four teachers who utilized CCM in their high school program ultimately agreed to participate in the study, along with two undergraduate voice students who had experience performing CCM. The researcher also sought out a respected CCM vocal expert to help develop vocal exercises that could be utilized by music educators when working with young singers.

Kempfer used qualitative methods (surveys, interviews, and field notes) to collect data on the CCM practices utilized by vocal teachers and singers. They observed choral rehearsals and also interviewed the choral music educators after the observations had taken place. The two undergraduate voice students (one male and one female) were observed in lessons and then interviewed. The participant, Rebecca, was chosen because of her struggle with technique and vocal health issues as she transitioned from high school into college while singing CCM. The other participant, Nate, was chosen because he transitioned easily from classical to CCM singing. Tanya Kruse Ruck was chosen as the vocal expert because she had taught classical and CCM vocal technique for most of her career.

Rebecca used her belt voice all through high school. She thought the tension she felt was normal but came to the realization that she was approaching singing with

incorrect technique. She developed a polyp on one of her cords and had to have it removed. Following surgery, Rebecca maintained six months of vocal rest. Lessons with Tanya Kruse Ruck taught her how to sing with correct technique.

Nate articulated his thoughts regarding the difference in CCM and classical singing through descriptive language. He stated that classical singing is a bigger sound that requires more breath, while CCM is more slowed and requires less air. He went on to say that understanding the difference in the technique required for breathing in the two different styles was paramount for the singer to sing healthily.

Choral music educator participants did not address physiological differences that occur in the vocal instrument when singing CCM versus classical music. They discussed vowel shaping as a way to create a more appropriate sound for each style. The researcher surmised that either the directors did not realize that a physiological difference existed or that the directors did not want to address it with their students because their voices had not developed fully, and the students did not have complete control over their voices. There might have been a fear of doing harm to the young voices in transition. The researcher advocated for understanding differences in vocal technique when singing classical and CCM styles because it is "important to creating a healthy production and stylistically accurate performances" (p. 53).

Kempfer reported confusion and disagreement about the terms *chest, belt, mix, head*, and *falsetto*. There is also confusion about the use of mix voice; some experts stating that the musculature of singing does not create transitional mixed voice (Herbst, 2021; Roubeau & Castellengo, 2008). According to Kempfer, directors are using

classical vocal technique to teach the CCM style of singing while being unaware that this can be unhealthy for the young singer. The researcher pointed to the need for continuing education opportunities to be available to allow teachers to hone their skills and improve their knowledge regarding vocal pedagogy. Further education must come on their own through further classes, lessons, conventions, and in-service opportunities. The issue remains that if a teacher doesn't seek out these opportunities or if these opportunities are not available then students will continue to receive incorrect instruction while singing CCM repertoire.

"Becoming aware of deficiencies in teaching pedagogy, and remediating the issue, should be a number one concern for all educators based on the health and welfare of our students" (p. 79). Learning the healthiest way to teach students in all styles they will encounter in a choral classroom is important for educators who strive to give their students a solid singing foundation. This can be accomplished though repertoire selection that is appropriate for the age of the singer, understanding the capabilities of the singers in the choir, and being skilled in the pedagogy of all styles one might teach, including CCM. All genres of music can be taught in a healthful manner if the pedagogy is competently taught.

The Adolescent Singing Voice in the 21st Century:

Vocal Health and Pedagogy Promoting Vocal Health (Gebhardt, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding about 21st century vocal health and pedagogy with aims to develop a guide for music educators about strategies towards good vocal health and hygiene. The guide was intended to encourage habits

during adolescence that then carried into adulthood. Gebhardt pointed to the need for this study because of pop culture's influence on singing style, the lack of healthy vocal models for adolescents to model, singing competition shows that tempt singers to sing in styles in a way that might not be healthy, and parents pushing their children into singing situations for which they are not ready.

After reviewing literature in vocal health and hygiene, Gebhardt assessed pedagogical techniques intended for instruction of the adolescent singer. The researcher then identified vocal pathologies that they considered the most prevalent in the adolescent singer and offered suggestions for prevention. Part of this was description of the role and importance of a Voice Care Team, a phrase coined by Karen Wicklund (2012) to describe the people in the singer's life who provide support for their healthy singing (p. 411). The researcher also provided suggestions in the training of young voices in vocal technique and physiological understanding. Following the models of John Cooksey with the male adolescent voice and Lynne Gackle with the female adolescent voice, the researcher provided recommendations for solo repertoire for the different stages of vocal development.

Gebhardt advocated that music educators remain informed of the special needs of the adolescent voice, including its limitations, to better prepare students develop healthy technique. Music educators who make range and tessitura an important factor when choosing repertoire are on the right path to having their students be more successful when singing. Music educators who are not informed of the appropriate pedagogy in working with the adolescent voice could offer inappropriate advice that,

when followed, may lead to detrimental concerns for the voice and the student. In addition, adolescent voice teachers who are aware of fundamental vocal physiology have a better understanding of the changes in the adolescent voice and can educate their students more thoroughly. “Music educators must proceed with great caution and understanding when working with the adolescent singing voice (p. 88).”

Gebhardt’s dissertation included appendices that could be used to help discover how well a student is keeping their voice healthy. An educator who wants to get more information from a student about their voice in a non-threatening way might find this useful. The researcher detailed some of the popular pedagogical techniques available to music educators and outlined it in a clear and concise manner that makes it an easily accessible resource for educators. ranges and tessituras could possibly develop unhealthy singing habits and technique.

A Joyful Noise: The Vocal Health of Worship Leaders and Contemporary Christian Singers (Neto & Meyer, 2017).

The purpose of the study was to internationally investigate vocal issues experienced by worship leaders and contemporary Christian singers. The researchers designed the study to discover symptoms singers experienced, whether symptoms were diagnosed by a physician, and what level of awareness the singers had regarding good vocal hygiene to reduce vocal issues.

The participants completed a self-reported online questionnaire (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese) from August 16, 2012, through October 28, 2012. Participants were originally contacted via email by Neto, who was familiar with many worship

leaders and contemporary Christian singers. The researchers then solicited additional participants through social media and websites, including contacting Christian artists and bands. Researchers sent emails to educational institutions that offered a degree in worship. All 614 participants were age 18 or older with 66.1% (*n* = 408) being male and 33.4% (*n* = 206) female. Participants represented the United States, Canada, Brazil, South America, Central America, Mexico, Europe, Australia, Japan, and Korea.

Through sections one and two of the questionnaire, Neto and Meyer gathered information about each participant, including age, country, professional experience, training, rehearsal routine, voice type, and performing artist they emulated. Fifty-three point five percent of participants (*n* = 329) were either part-time of full-time worship leaders/singers. The researcher identified the participants as CCSs/WLs (Contemporary Christian Singers/Worship Leaders), and 91.7% (*n* = 566) stated they performed mainly in churches. Over half were self-taught, and only 85 (13.8%) had a degree in worship.

Section three of the questionnaire determined the level of awareness participants possessed regarding vocal health. Using a five-point Likert scale to measure the occurrence of vocal issues (laryngitis, nodes, edema, paralysis, polyp, dysphonia, granuloma, and hemorrhage), participants rated their symptoms as “always, almost always, sometimes, almost never, never” (p. 250.e18). A summary was created by analyzing data with descriptive statistics. When describing their happiness with their voice quality, 55% of respondents said they were either always or almost always pleased with their voice with 73.9% (*n* = 456) describing their voice as normal. Some self-reported vocal issues included vocal fatigue (34.7%), tickling/choking (24.3%), loss of

upper range (28%), laryngitis (10.7%), and nodules (4.4%). One hundred and ninety participants (30.8%) drank water only when thirsty, and 106 (17.2%) reported that they clear their throats often. The majority of the CCSs/WLs reported eating dinner within three hours of going to sleep which raised a concern. This behavior can cause acid reflux (laryngopharyngeal reflux), and many of the respondents said they exhibited symptoms of acid reflux but did not state they were experiencing acid reflux.

The large number of CCSs/WLs included in the study provided insight into the world of adults singing in this style. With the vocal health concerns discovered in this study, a study of adolescents who sing in this style might help discover if youth experience similar vocal health concerns. The CCSs/WLs role elsewhere in the church was not identified in this study.

Skills Necessary for Evangelical Church Music Ministry: A Comparative Study of Perceptions by Selected University Programs and Church Leaders (Sheeks, 2016).

The purpose of the study was to compare university curricula with the viewpoint of professors and church leaders to determine what skills are deemed compulsory for leaders in music ministry at American evangelical churches. Sheeks gathered curriculum data from nine evangelical universities while surveying professors from those universities and 129 pastors and ministers of music regarding their perceptions of skills necessary for leadership in music ministry.

The survey questions were administered via SurveyMonkey and were divided accordingly: Musical Skills (Foundational Musical Skills, Popular and Commercial

Theory, Songwriting and Arranging, Vocal Health, Vocal Pedagogy, Secondary Applied Study, Piano, Choral Conducting, Instrumental Conducting, Contemporary Band Leadership, Vocal Team Leadership), Christian Worship in Evangelical Tradition (Biblical and Theological Study of Worship, History of Music in Worship, Current Models of Corporate Worship, Historical Liturgies, Worship Planning and Design, Leadership in Corporate Singing), Technological, Organizational, and Leadership (Sound Systems, Video Projection, Stage Lighting, Projection Software, Stage Design, Music Administrative Software, Church Music Administration and Planning, Vision Casting, Recruitment, Communication Skills, Creativity in Worship Planning, Teamwork, Money/Budget Management), and Relational (Devotional Life, Pastoral Abilities, Interpersonal Relationships, Integrity, Adherence to a Christian Lifestyle).

To determine which universities to utilize, the researcher contacted the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and asked for the names of the universities with the highest enrollment in undergraduate church music degree programs. After contacting leadership at the universities, the list was narrowed down to nine programs that identified as evangelical and were willing to participate in the study. Leaders at the universities provided the researcher with a list of student-identified denominations to be contacted for individual church information. The churches in the study were required to have a fulltime pastor and music minister to be included. 69 pastors and 60 music ministers completed the survey, rating items on a Likert scale from one to four.

After data collection, Sheeks compared demographic and degree profiles of each university and presented the data in figures and tables to show common themes that

developed. Universities placed the most importance on these skills: foundational/traditional music theory (music literacy, harmony, and aural skills), performance excellence (primary applied lessons, vocal or instrumental proficiency, secondary lessons), understanding of the history of music and church music and worship, leadership skills (organizational, pastoral, music ministry), practical experience (internships, leading singing, worship planning, relationships), ensemble experience (teamwork, leadership, bands, vocal teams), worship planning and design, and relational skills. Pastors and music ministers placed the most importance on these skills: personal devotion to Christ (integrity, devotional life, lifestyle), teamwork (partnership), recruitment and leadership, worship leadership (corporate worship, singing), worship planning (biblical design and understanding, worship design), relational skills (connections, interpersonal, working, fostering), communication (verbal, written, effective), CCM leadership (band, vocal team, CCM theory).

Based on the results, Sheeks proposed eight suggestions for university programs to improve training of future music ministers: increased training in popular/commercial theory, training in both choral conducting and contemporary band leadership, intentional education to develop effective communication skills, training in teamwork, both in leadership and ensemble member, increased emphasis on spiritual and devotional leadership, intentional instruction on applying biblical and theological studies to the music ministry, framing music history instruction to cover the history of music and worship so that the instruction is more applicable (review NASM guidelines), and further development of worship leading skills.

From one standpoint, the results of the study showed that universities considered vocal pedagogy to be one of the most important musical skills needed for future music ministers. However, the music ministers and pastors did not include it in their top rankings of important skills. In this context, one cannot ascertain whether the music ministers and pastors do not place value on vocal pedagogy because their church does not have a choir in which to share vocal pedagogy or if they just do not see the value in understanding vocal pedagogy. The findings point to music ministers receiving training in vocal pedagogy; however, it is unclear if they utilize the training in their current position.

Mapping of Vocal Risk in Amateur Choir (Rosa & Behlau, 2017).

The purpose of the study was to examine contributing factors of vocal risk for amateur singers. After inviting 38 choirs to take part in the study (university, school, church, companies, hospitals, foundations, institutions, and private), 35 choirs agreed to participate. It was required that the 526 participants (340 females and 183 males) within these choirs had to be older than 18 years, fill out the questionnaires correctly, and have been a member of the choir for at least six months. The singers in the study were members of choirs in São Paulo, and filled out three questionnaires including; the Voice Symptom Scale, the Modern Singing Handicap Index, and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The researchers collected data from September 2013 and January 2014. Each participant provided personal and health information and completed a vocal self-assessment. The researchers divided the participants into seven categories based on the vocal demand of their profession. The three main questionnaires (VoiSS, MSHI, and the GAD-7) were answered on a 5-point scale: 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3

= almost always, and 4 = always. The higher the score, the greater the perceived voice handicap. Anxiety was ranked from 0 to 3 using the frequency of occurrence: not at all, several days, more than half the days, and nearly every day. Individuals who scored 10 points or higher were considered to have anxiety symptoms. The results showed that 51.5% of the choristers were at vocal risk. The results of the choristers found at risk were analyzed separately from the 48.5% scored as healthy.

The subjects found to be at risk had an occupation in the category of informant. This included teachers, lecturers, speech language pathologists, and advertising people. This group also had higher anxiety scores. Women were more likely to be found at vocal risk than men and also had higher levels of anxiety. They reported higher occurrences of vocal disorders, and further reported higher instances of chronic disorders. The three main vocal issues of this group were coughing or throat clearing, difficulty speaking loudly, and difficulty being heard. Though some choristers experienced anxiety, the results pointed to singing in a choir as being a positive event for the individuals because it contributed to their general well-being and good health.

Correlation between vocal strain and singer occupation provided evidence of an increase of vocal issues for singers with vocally demanding jobs. Community choir leaders might want to keep the demands of the occupations of their singers in mind when planning rehearsal strategies. Allowing a good warm-up, multiple breaks for hydration and vocal rest could help their singers maintain better vocal health during rehearsal. While students may not have jobs requiring them to tax their voices, they may still overuse their voices at pep rallies, sporting events, and weekend concerts.

A Grounded Theory of Adolescent High School Women's Choir Singers' Process of Social Identity Development (Parker, 2018).

The purpose of the study was to ascertain how singers in a high school women's choir develop their social identity. Participants were 40 members across the three choirs (2 unselect and 1 select) who chose to participate in the one-on-one interviews, of which a total of 54 were given. Interviewees included 10 each from the two schools with unselect choirs, and 20 from the school with the larger select choir. Interviews lasted around 30 to 40 minutes and were conducted in three "waves." The first wave included a total of 20 participants who were asked about their experiences and interactions in choir and how others outside of choir perceived the program. The second wave included another 20 participants who were asked the same questions plus a few questions that were created based on responses received in the first wave. During the third wave, the researcher chose 14 of the 40 participants to be interviewed a second time because their initial responses had been rich in detail.

Parker coded and compared responses to form categories to ultimately discover the major theme of the study. She utilized a temporal matrix to ascertain the connection between categories to discover the theory based on relationships grounded in data. Participants reported these positive reactions to being a member of a women's choir: personal growth, increased confidence, feelings of togetherness, broadening acceptance of new musical styles, strengthened social identity, improved intergroup and interpersonal connections (p. 453).

Adolescent females can gain confidence in a women's choir when musical

excellence is encouraged and relationships are fostered. Younger singers in the groups looked up to the older singers, and often based their self-worth on how they felt perceived by the older students. Older singers were more confident, were able to receive critiques more easily, and were not obsessed by classroom drama. Ensemble hierarchy structures are often utilized in performing groups. The comments of participants point to the need for teachers to establish student leadership that will lift up younger singers, as younger students may base self-worth on interactions with older students.

Students stated singing diverse repertoire changed their listening preferences in real life. They became more open to learning a wider range of music and more open to singing a wider variety of music. Repertoire that empowered female singers was especially meaningful to the students. Unique and unusual repertoire might encourage students to grow musically and socio-emotionally through exploration of unfamiliar music and genres.

Voice Change and Singing Experiences of Adolescent Females (Sweet, 2018).

The purpose of the study was to discover how voice change impacted the choral singing experiences of undergraduate and graduate female choir members during their adolescence. Participants included members of two Women's groups (one general enrollment and one select choir) at a large midwestern university, both. non-music majors and music majors.

Fifty-three members of the University Women's group completed a screening survey, after which 29 volunteered to participate. Seven of those volunteers were ultimately chosen for interviews. In the Women's Chorale, 31 members completed the

survey, and 28 agreed to participate. A total of 10 singers were selected for one-on-one interviews with the researcher, while 7 participated in a focus group interview/discussion. The interview included 18 questions regarding the singer's adolescent singing experiences. Sweet recorded, transcribed, and coded the interviews, and also considered field notes in the final conclusions.

After coding the transcriptions of the interviews, the researcher discovered three themes: perceptions of vocal development, teacher influence, and emotion. Sweet verified the accuracy of her work by consulting with a colleague who is an authority in qualitative research methodology. Sweet used Roulston's "features of talk" (p. 139) to further gain insight into the singers' experiences. She observed how the students expressed themselves through their facial expressions and how they spoke and took turns speaking. After each interview she documented the "features of talk" in her notes.

Overall, findings showed that not all choral experiences for the 17 participants were positive during adolescence. Vocal challenges (phonation issues including cracks, breaks, weakness, unpredictability, volume control, blending with others, lack of flexibility, loss of color or brilliance, air flow efficiency, tension, and vibrato), fear, and insecurity were the primary perceptions that negatively lingered for the singers even with the passing of time. Participants expressed growing frustration as singers during adolescence (middle and high school) and stated it caused a frantic response.

Choir teachers held great power in the singing lives of the participants and decisions for the larger choir can have short- and long-term effects on the individual vocal development of singers. Some teachers classified participants' female adolescent

voice; those who lost higher notes during their voice change were limited to only singing alto and, conversely, students who experienced loss of lower notes were assigned to higher parts only. Choral directors' decisions were often choir-centric and did not address vocal needs of the individual singer. Participants said they wished they had advocated for themselves better when they were younger. Participants credited their college voice teachers with navigating vocal habits and helping them to developing their full singing voice.

Singers overall expressed more negative than positive emotions regarding their singing during adolescence. Emotions like fear, sadness, self-doubt, insecurity, and self-deprecation were identified. Participants stated that they wished they had more confidence as adolescents; if possible, they would encourage their younger selves to persevere through vocal difficulties. Participants stated that they trusted their middle and high school choir directors to make the best decisions regarding their voices; however, many participants felt like that trust was misplaced because the good of the choral ensemble was placed over the good of the individual singer. They expressed fear about asking questions when they were feeling vocal discomfort or experiencing vocal issues because they did not want to appear to be questioning the teacher's expertise or appearing to put their needs above the needs of the group.

Sweet found that teachers should encourage their female singers to be self-aware as they navigate adolescence. It is important that teachers help students negotiate their vocal change through education and vocal support. It may also be helpful for choir teachers to consider adolescent voice placement with their ensembles. As music educators

prepare their choirs for major events like concerts and assessment, choosing music that their entire choir can sing in their best voice creates a learning environment where individual students are given the opportunity to be their best singing self. Allowing students to discover their most comfortable range and allowing them to sing in that range provides an atmosphere of support and understanding throughout their entire time of vocal change. Sweet posed questions in response to the findings to further discussion regarding females in choir. Questions included exploring the role of teachers in the music ensemble, investigating how female adolescents are treated in ensembles, how they are respected as musicians, and how they are developing their own identity (p. 146–147).

Implications from this study suggest that teachers who encourage their female singers to be self-aware as they navigate adolescence, can help their students gain confidence in their singing. It is important that teachers help students negotiate their vocal change through education and vocal support.

Female Vocal Identity Development: A Phenomenology (Sweet & Parker, 2019).

The purpose of the study was to discover how the lived experiences of females from two universities influenced participants' futures as musicians and educators through the investigation of their experiences in vocal identity development. Using phenomenology to fully understand the participants' conscious experience, the researchers sought to examine the events (the "what") and the participants' perceptions of those events (the "how"). The researchers also identified their own personal experiences and understandings as adolescent female singers that shaped their vocal identity and who they are as music educators today.

The 39 participants were females who were enrolled in undergraduate or graduate vocal music education, vocal performance, or choral conducting programs at two large universities. Participants began with a written account of their experiences that informed the interviews that followed to gain the richest information regarding participant experiences. Sweet completed data analysis on two transcripts descriptively briefing words or phrases, while Parker coded revealing groupings of experiences with vocal identity; the researchers then switched roles on the remaining two transcripts. The researchers met weekly to determine the most significant findings using horizontalization. They used the similarities and differences of the participant experiences to create the structure to best frame and explain the participants' overall experiences.

The varying types of singing experiences of the participants challenged the researchers as they compressed data to remove redundancies and repetition. Both researchers sought to frame similarities and differences in each of the participant experiences in order to accurately describe the "what" and "how." Inter and intrapersonal relationships influenced the singers' view of their voice and often garnered an emotional response from the singer. A singer's vocal identity develops throughout their lifetime and include the singer's own perception of their voice. The singer is also affected by the public perception of their voice, and she will often react physically or emotionally to these interpersonal interactions. Singers often described a negative connection between emotion and performing. Singers expressed feelings of "fear, insecurity, pressure, and anxiety," (p. 72) when speaking about singing. Experiences with and between voice teachers and choral directors regarding voice classification influenced decisions in their

lives and sometimes created tension regarding their voices.

Four themes were reported:

Others as powerful influences: Most singers stated that their middle and high school teachers maintained a unified vision regarding their voice; however, that changed when they entered college. The university choral director and voice teacher asked for different sounds, so the singers described having to create two singing voices, one for choir, and one for private lessons. Often this dispute between teachers caused vocal strain or fatigue. Oppositely, friends and family with encouraging words were positive influences in the lives of singers.

Voice Classification: As young singers, participants put great value in their voice classification, which became part of their identity and was often solidified at a young age. A small number did not identify as a soprano or alto, and they were okay with it. Participants mentioned stereotypes about sopranos being better than altos because the best singers go in the soprano section, or only sopranos get solos created competition between the sections. Voice classification issues occurred outside of the classroom also: community choir, musical theatre groups, church ensembles, etc.

Omnipresent Emotion: Emotion complicated matters of vocal identity. Participants had a desire to please others, but singers sometimes experienced fear, anxiety, pressure as a result of their singing experiences. Some participants risked vocal health to support the ensemble (singing a different part than their assigned voice, altering their sound to blend, etc.) because they felt pressured or obligated to do so to help the group. Some felt pride over their ranges (both high and low) and described that their

voices helped them feel powerful.

Perceptions of Future Involvement: Positive influential individuals and experiences with vocal classification influenced many to pursue a career in music, for some as early as middle school. Some participants had negative experiences with music teachers and desired to teach better for their students. Participants considered vocal health education and vocal classification as important part of their current education and topics to consider with future students. Participants stated that teachers of adolescents should give their female student opportunities to sing more than one part and not limit them to singing a single vocal part.

Parker and Sweet's study informs and supports current research regarding the female adolescent singer and her experiences in choir as an ensemble member and as an individual. Informed music educators seek to learn ways to educate, encourage and support the singer in both roles. This means considering the individual members of the ensemble equally as a teacher considers the ensemble. By nurturing the individual member's vocal experience, the ensemble grows stronger. Open lines of communication are encouraged between the student and teacher. Relationships that are nourished so that students feel comfortable opening up to share concerns regarding their vocal experiences during rehearsal allow singers to flourish.

Participants expressed frustration in trying to work with both a choir teacher and vocal teacher who did not communicate with each other. Teachers who give private voice lessons and choir teachers who teach singers in ensembles could further enhance learning and singer confidence if they communicated with each other regarding the

singer's vocal growth, vocal challenges, and overall experience the singer is having with her own voice.

Vocal Health of Choral Singers from Kenya and the United States: Dysphonia and Vocal Fatigue in Relation to Musical Genres (Burburan, 2020).

The purpose of the study was to establish what effect genre (classical choral, traditional Kenyan folk music, and Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) had on the vocal health of singers from Kenya and the United States. Particular attention was given to vocal fatigue. A secondary purpose was to determine how music educators who were members of the ensembles "addressed vocal technique and repertoire selection as they related to genre, vocal health, and fatigue" (p. 112).

Participants were members of the Nairobi Chamber Chorus from Kenya and the Festival Singers of Florida, two semi-professional choirs. Data included questionnaire responses about vocal and medical history, as well as demographic information, and vocal assessment. As part of the secondary purpose of the study, four music educators from each ensemble agreed to be interviewed and have their voices analyzed using the CAPE-V analysis. Burburan gathered and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and determined the results. The choir director of each ensemble selected music from the three genres: classical choral, traditional Kenyan folk music, and Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM). The first rehearsal of each ensemble followed this plan: 10-minute warm-up, 10-question pre-test: Ability to Sing Easily (EASE), 32-minute rehearsal of western classical music, 10-question EASE test, 32-minute rehearsal of traditional Kenyan folk music, 10-question EASE test, 32-minute rehearsal of western CCM music, 10-question

EASE test to measure fatigue, EASE test to measure vocal pathology. The second rehearsal of each ensemble followed the same plan but switched the CCM and folk music in the rehearsal order. Each participant had their voice analyzed by the VoxMetria either after the first or second rehearsal, depending on their availability.

Members of the Nairobi Chamber Chorus were aware of vocal health concerns regarding strain on the voice and considered characteristics of healthy singing to be ease, comfortable, register adjustment, rich, power. Physicality of healthy singing was described as maintaining good posture. Training and knowledge for "proper" use included correct technique, classical technique, sing in good health, warm-up, proper protocol, taking care of the voice, using the voice well, monitoring range, and monitoring time spent singing. Manifestations of voice issues, if singing incorrectly, included strain, throat pain, overworked voice, vocal cracks or breaks, pain, hoarseness, and sore throat. Musical results of healthy singing were characterized as including range expansion, diction, dynamics, and proper key signatures (p. 118).

Members of the Festival Singers of Florida stated they were confident in their knowledge of tension-free singing founded in classical western technique. Characteristics of healthy singing were described as free, highly resonant, relaxed, focused, balance of light and dark timbe, lifted soft palate, natural, open, effortless, forward, flexible, clear, vibrant, age appropriate, round, rich, warm, and easy. The physicality of healthy singing included supported, low and free breath, sustained and steady airflow, breath support, tension free, on the breath, relaxed jaw, neck, face, and throat, good posture, breath pressure ratio, diaphragmatic and intercostal breathing, and an engaged core. Training

and knowledge for “proper” use involved drinking water, cords working together, musculature, low larynx, vocal folds, glottal closure, proper/appropriate/good/correct technique, consistent, foundation, and a strong understanding. Manifestations of voice issues if singing incorrectly were over singing, pushing, pain, fatigue, discomfort, tightness, force, damage, pressure, strain, pinch, stress, and struggle. Musical results of healthy singing were expression, range, vowel placement, and intonation (p. 119).

The Nairobi Chamber Choir results showed an increase in vocal fatigue while singing CCM followed by a significant decrease when singing folk music. The Festival Singers Of Florida results showed decreasing fatigue from classical choral music to CCM, and then again from CCM to folk. While the Festival Singers of Florida did not experience more fatigue when singing CCM, the group was sight-reading music on the rehearsals where the test was done, while the Nairobi Chamber Choir was actively working on music they were familiar with. Also, the FSOF rehearsals were at the beginning of the day, and the NCC were in the evening. These differences could have skewed the results found in the study.

The singers expressed a need to alter their technique when singing different genres. Music educators working with adolescents could create a more authentic experience when choosing music in different genres by helping their students develop proper singing technique that would enable their young singers to sing tension free through all styles of music. There might be a need to alter the accepted “classical” sound when singing a variety of styles; however, if the students have been given a solid foundation in vocal technique, the students could have success singing healthily in these

styles. Burburan stated, “By becoming more relevant and incorporating vocal best practices specific to genre, choral music educators may help ensemble members have a foundation of healthy singing regardless of genre, so that upon graduation they have the ability to make music for life, regardless of genre” (p. 215).

Voice Disorders and Voice Knowledge in Choir Singers (Ravall & Simberg, 2020)

The purpose of Ravall and Simberg’s (2020) study was to discover vocal difficulties adult singers who participate in choir endure and to determine factors contributing to problems singers might experience. The researchers also hoped to ascertain what knowledge singers possessed about anatomy and physiology of the voice. Participants were members of choirs that were part of Finland’s Swedish Song and Music Association and Finland’s Swedish Church Song Association. 315 adult choir singers (65.4% female, 34.6% male) completed a web questionnaire regarding vocal symptoms, determining factors for disorders, vocal habits, and vocal knowledge. Questions regarding demographics were also included. The participants were 19 to 82 years old, with only 8 considering themselves professional singers. 48.6% had no history of singing education.

Questions regarding vocal symptoms were designed to determine whether participants experienced throat clearing/coughing, strained or tired voice, pain or lump in their throat, hoarseness, difficulty being heard, or breaks in their voice while speaking. Participants responded by determining if these maladies occurred daily/weekly or rarely/not at all. Background questions were designed to gather information on sex, age, gender, and to ascertain whether any participants had been diagnosed with a vocal

disorder in the past. Researchers also desired to determine if any participant might have risk factors like an inhalant allergy, asthma, or smoking. Before having participants answer questions regarding vocal habits and voice knowledge, the researchers crafted multiple choice and true/false questions to be administered to a panel of experts. After receiving feedback from the experts, the researchers edited some questions to improve their clarity.

The researchers utilized the IBM SPSS Statistics software platform to analyze data. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test determined the normality of the scores of the knowledge-based questions. New variables and a smaller number of groups were created once data were decoded and combined. Chi-square tests determined the relationships between variables, and independent samples t-test examined the scoring of the knowledge-based questions. The tests examined the connection between vocal symptoms and risk factors and also the relationship of factors such as gender.

Twenty-one percent of the respondents reported experiencing two or more vocal symptoms that occurred frequently. Choir singers who also worked at a vocally demanding occupation were twice as likely to experience vocal symptoms. Of those who had a vocally demanding job, 33.9% reported two or more vocal issues a week, compared to only 18.1% of those who did not have a vocally demanding job.

Inhalant allergy and asthma were significant risk factors for the occurrence of vocal symptoms. Singers in the study were limited in their knowledge of vocal anatomy and physiology. Participants experienced similar vocal symptoms regardless of age and gender. 28.9% experienced daily or weekly throat clearing, 17.5% had a strained/tired

voice, 13.7% felt pain or a lump in their throat, and 12.7% developed hoarseness.

Thirty-four percent of singers who worked in an environment with excessive background noise reported experiencing two or more vocal issues each week compared to 19.1% of those who did not work in a loud environment. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents possessed little knowledge about vocal health and physiology, whereas 55.9% had fundamental knowledge. Women scored higher than men on the knowledge-based questions, and younger singers were more knowledgeable than older singers. Generalizations regarding the difference in the knowledge base of genders and age were not rendered because of lack of information and the possibility of coincidence. The participants' knowledge regarding vocal health and physiology bore no relation to their singing experience, but rather their educational experience concerning the voice.

The majority of singers in this study (80%) desired to learn more about vocal anatomy and factors contributing to good vocal health. Questionnaire data revealed that knowledge of vocal anatomy and physiology, and awareness of risk factors contributing to vocal issues, was not based on years of experience in singing, but in education of the voice. This discovery points to the importance of education on vocal health because years of singing experience do not determine whether a singer has developed good vocal habits.

Implications from this research suggest that singers who work a vocally demanding job need to be diligent about protecting their voice. For example, student singers who must speak loudly to be heard in hallways and lunchrooms could benefit from knowing vocal health tips so they can not only maintain their singing voice but learn lifelong techniques for a healthy voice. More research is needed to discover how

and if teachers are sharing vocal health techniques with their students. Teachers who are not currently educating their students in vocal health could benefit from this research by learning the best ways to incorporate the discussion into their lessons, and as a result support their adolescent singers by teaching them lifelong skills towards vocal health.

A Survey of Vocal Health in Church Choir Singers (Sharma & Devadas, 2021).

The purpose of the study was to examine vocal problems of choral singers in Christian worship and discover variables associated with vocal health issues. The researchers sought to determine the knowledge base of the singers involved regarding vocal health concerns.

The first researcher, Sharma, asked twelve choir leaders of worship choirs in India for permission to approach their singers. Out of the singers contacted, 146 (61 male and 85 female) between the ages of 18 and 70 filled out the questionnaire completely; fifty percent of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30. To make sure the questions would be clear, the questionnaire was developed with the help of five speech language pathologists and five choir singers. The questions focused on the singing experiences of each singer, including vocal issues and their knowledge of risk factors that could possible negatively affect vocal health.

The researchers completed analysis with the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) by IBM. They obtained a 95% confidence interval by using Pearson's Chi-square test and comparing factors between those participants with voice problems and those without. The singers in this study had limited knowledge when it came to the risk factors

that could contribute to vocal issues, and 88.44% (n = 129) of them reported experiencing two or more vocal issues while or after singing.

The most common vocal symptoms experienced by participants included difficulty hitting or singing higher notes, hoarseness, throat discomfort, pitch breaks/loss of voice, and dryness. Singers who reported experiencing vocal problems (88.4%) had a higher rate of vocal tract infections, visited the doctor more frequently, and received treatment more often than those who reported having no vocal problems (11.6%). A larger number of female singers reported having vocal issues than the male singers.

The study supports efforts of educators to teach their singers about vocal health so they have a better understanding on how to take care of their voice. Singers in this study recognized that behaviors like yelling, talking loudly, smoking, and talking with a sore throat as detrimental to vocal health; however, singers did not understand the negative influence of stress, whispering, clearing the throat, and acid reflux on the voice. Hydration (intake of water) is an important factor for keeping the vocal folds lubricated. With long rehearsals in school and community choirs, it is important for singers to have water during rehearsal to enable efficient vocal fold oscillation. Though the study did not discuss what type of vocal training singers had received, 87% of the singers who had received training reported having vocal symptoms.

Of note, participants responded to the question, “Have you had formal musical training for choral singing?” (p. 2914). In other research, a comparison was made between training in choir and training in voice lessons. This study compared choral training to church choir training. Subjects did not receive formal training, did not

discuss musical elements (pitch, melody, fundamental musical principles), and mostly learned their part listening to it. Examination of the procedures used in church choirs in the United States would determine whether vocal health and training is being taught in churches unlike in India.

Exploring Perceptions and Experiences of Female Secondary School Singers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Baker et al., 2022).

The purpose of the study was to discover to what extent female adolescent voice change (FAVC) is recognized and taught to cisgender female adolescent singers across New Zealand. Furthermore, the researchers wished to determine what connections might exist between adolescent females' vocal training and their perceptions and experiences of female adolescent voice change. Data collected would possibly inform current practices and lead to new pedagogical techniques for use with students who experience FAVC. The researchers asked 46 females (16–19) who participated in private group singing lessons, and who had no history of vocal injury or hearing loss, to answer questions regarding their experience during the FAVC. After collecting data, four individuals were found to have experienced vocal trauma, so those students were excluded from the study.

The researchers completed statistical analysis by utilizing the Kendall tau-b correlation coefficient to measure the association between variables. They accomplished further assessment through principal components analysis (PCA) and the Mann-Whitney *U* test. They also used the *NVivo 12 for Mac* to import results to organize, analyze and code data to discover common themes. In analyzing the responses, the frequency of the occurrence of nodes in singers was compared to the quantitative data collected to

determine the scope of FAVC experienced by the participants.

Respondents frequently reported they experienced “increases in range, vocal stability, and tone quality” (p. 501) during the FAVC, though some reported they experienced the opposite. Of the 42 respondents, 81% stated they experienced a vocal change during adolescence. Thirty-four of the 42 respondents stated they experienced range increase, mostly in the top range, during the three previous years. The researchers reported that singers who study privately with a teacher experience advanced knowledge of singing and a higher level of ease of singing. Increasing one-on-one time with individual singers in a group setting might help the singer to grow in confidence and gain personal knowledge about their own voice.

Because no two voices are alike, educators who possess the capability to teach in a way that allows each individual singer to understand and grow to fulfill their potential are needed.

Teachers who understand the physiological and emotional traits of FAVC might be able to encourage and guide their young singers as they experience vocal change. Teachers who facilitate healthy singing could create lifelong singers who maintain a healthy voice throughout life. Choir directors can reinforce and instruct their female students on FAVC so they do not become frustrated or injured during the maturation process. “Individualized approaches as well as awareness of and consideration for the unique voices of the singers that form the group are necessary for facilitating an effective and safe environment for voice learning (p. 503).”

As discovered in past research, the researchers found a connection between the

singer's emotional well-being and confidence (or lack thereof) and her experience during vocal change. The female singer sometimes connected problems singing with her self-worth. The researcher expressed a need for learner-centered pedagogy, not just group focused pedagogy.

Eighth- and Ninth-Grade Students' Perceptions of a Curriculum Designed to Support Adolescent Female Vocal Development: An Action Research Study (Mercado & Draut, 2023).

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to determine how curriculum designed to teach vocal anatomy and physiology to young female adolescents in the choral classroom would affect the perceptions of those students in relation to their own singing voice.

The researchers collaborated on all aspects of the project but divided the design duties. Mercado took leadership in the research design and Draut, in whose school the research took place, created the curriculum utilized in the study. Both researchers participated in the instruction over the course of 12 weeks and each led warm-ups and sectionals, rehearsed repertoire, and taught lessons on vocal anatomy and physiology.

Using Sweet's (2019) categories of vocal anatomy and physiology, the researchers divided the lessons into four parts: the respiratory system, the larynx, the digestive system, and the skeletal system. The research timeframe was divided into four two- to three-week action research cycles. During that time, the researchers modified the curriculum and adjusted lessons based on the analyzed data. Fourteen adolescent females enrolled in the advanced treble chorus in Draut's middle school choral program took part

in the research. Data were collected weekly via worksheets, lesson plans, and field notes. Focus groups conducted at the end of each unit provided further data.

Before the lessons began, both researchers emailed each other often and met three times to develop the course of action. During the study, they coded data individually, but met two times each week to discuss results. Draut utilized word processing software while coding, and Mercado used Atlas.ti, version 8.4.4. By employing *In Vivo* for coding, the researchers identified 20 themes and created interview questions for the final focus groups. Focused themes were obtained by comparing and contrasting results of the vocal experience charts, field notes, and lesson plans.

The researchers divided their findings into six sections: perceptions of breath, perceptions of *passaggio*, perceptions of vocal range, perceptions of vocal tone, perceptions of feedback, and perceptions of confidence. Regarding perceptions of breath, participants stated that they enjoyed learning about breathing; however, some misconceptions about anatomy and physiology remained after the lessons. As a result, the researchers retaught these concepts. Regarding perceptions of *passaggio*, participants learned the meaning of the word *passaggio* while also discovering which notes in their voice were in their own *passaggio.* The researchers encouraged the singers to embrace their voice and to not be afraid to sing imperfect notes in their *passaggio*. Singers were prompted to use the word *passaggio* instead of the words “break” and “crack” when speaking of notes in their *passaggio.* The researchers desired to reinforce positive language with the adolescents and remind them that their voices were not “broken” (p. 8).

In terms of perceptions of vocal range, participants were encouraged to sing

different vocal parts during the study, and they were also asked to stop using the common voice classifications of *soprano* and *alto*. The researchers utilized range extending warm-ups, and many singers discovered that their range was larger or different than they originally thought. Vocalists were assigned or misassigned choral parts based on their range. Some gained new appreciation for singing different parts, while some experienced discomfort while singing. The singers who were not comfortable singing a new part were reassigned to a more comfortable part. Researchers reported that range increases were probably caused by improved breath pressure.

Regarding perceptions of vocal tone, participants described their voices in a negative context at the beginning of the study, but also described other singers' voices in a positive light. After showing a video of the larynx, the researchers used different vowel shapes to work with students on unification of tone across their range, and many participants expressed surprise and excitement about their vocal sound. However, the students were unable to retain what they had learned and, as a result, were unable to transfer it to their singing.

Considering perceptions of feedback, the participants received group and individual vocal feedback from the researchers. Participants stated they felt more comfortable receiving comments in the smaller, same gender ensemble, than receiving similar feedback in the larger, mixed-gender ensemble. Students preferred receiving critiques when the suggestions for improvement were preceded with statements of affirmation. Some participants preferred to sing in a small group of two or three when receiving feedback regarding singing.

For perceptions of confidence, the confidence level of the participants varied throughout the study; however, the participants expressed increased confidence in their tone quality, pitch, and range. Explaining the effects of menstruation, estrogen, and progesterone on the voice to the students was suggested as being beneficial to help singers further understand possible vocal symptoms. These three things can affect the singing voice and cause periods of vocal instability, and it is important to let students know that this is completely normal. Premenstrual Vocal Syndrome (PMVS) was also listed as a possible issue to be discussed with adolescent singers who could experience vocal irregularity around menses.

Participants possessed some incorrect ideas regarding singing. For example, the singers believed that loud singing was good, while soft singing was bad. Through additional lessons, the researchers were able to dispel these misconceptions.

Limitations of the study may have included that the study involved two educators of different genders. The treble ensemble made up of female singers received the opportunity to work with a female for part of the study, though their classroom teacher was male. It is possible that having a female singer to vocally demonstrate during rehearsal may have impacted results. A study of male and female youth choir directors in church might show the comfort level of leaders in teaching the female voice and illuminate how singers receive their instruction.

The study pointed to the importance of educating female adolescents on the anatomy and physiology of their voice while providing support and instruction to allow their voices to develop fully. A study regarding how female adolescent singers are

supported and instructed in youth choirs in the SBC could inform current pedagogical practices in church youth choir rehearsals.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed 16 studies related to vocal health in choral rehearsal. Each of these studies has addressed the importance of appropriate vocal pedagogy and vocal health considerations for singers and teachers. In general, the studies point to the influence of teachers and pedagogy singers; however, many address the female adolescent singer specifically. Implications from this review include the need for teachers to be aware of the transition the female adolescent voice experiences during puberty and to be cognizant of the emotions the singer will experience during this time. In the following chapters, I report on my study of the female adolescent voice in SBC youth choir rehearsals, which expands upon this literature by addressing how the female adolescent and her voice is nurtured and educated during rehearsal and performance. I further examine the repertoire used by the choirs in worship services and determine its efficacy in supporting vocal growth and health in the female adolescent.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Current research has brought to light the physical and emotional struggles of female singers during adolescence (Sweet, 2015). Appropriate vocal pedagogy can help a student navigate the significant vocal changes that are a part of adolescent growth and transformation (Gackle, 2011). Vocal change makes it necessary to implement suitable practices in the choral rehearsal that support students through voice change without harming the vocal folds (Burburan, 2020; Gackle, 2011; Kempfer, 2014). Music educators who work with adolescent voices can help youth reach their full vocal potential through the successful application of appropriate technique and by using suitable repertoire (Phillips & Aitchison, 1997). Choral educators of adolescents who do not possess a complete understanding of the physiological changes affecting young singers might have difficulty instructing students in ways that are healthy and helpful for their vocal development (Hall, 2010).

Given the recent shifts away from age-appropriate repertoire in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) music (as described in previous chapters), a study was needed to understand how SBC choir directors are applying effective teaching techniques for the female adolescent voice within these constraints. To determine how and to what extent SBC youth choir directors are incorporating vocal pedagogical methods into youth choir rehearsals, the following questions guided this inquiry:

1. How and to what extent, if any, do directors of SBC youth choirs assist female adolescents in exploring their full vocal range and vocal technique?

2. How and to what extent, if any, does the repertoire used by SBC youth choirs adhere to or diverge from pedagogically appropriate practices for repertoire selection as outlined by Gackle (2011)?

Method Overview

I employed a collective case study approach. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that case study research requires "multiple sources of information" (p. 96), including observations, interviews, and document review. Furthermore, the case should exist in a contemporary setting and can be an "individual, a small group, and organization, or partnership" (p. 96). In this study, the contemporary setting was youth choir rehearsals, and the organization was the SBC. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the "hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case" (p. 98). To ascertain the most comprehensive qualitative data for triangulation, I conducted interviews with youth choir directors and youth choir members in SBC of Virginia churches, completed observations of female adolescents who sang in the choirs, and completed document review of repertoire. I analyzed the data by looking for emergent themes, using the context of the research questions and the Gackle (2011) framework as my foundation for discovery.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at Boston University, I selected participants for the study (as described in further detail below). I applied homogenous sampling as identified by Glesne (2016, p. 51) in this study. All church choir leaders I interviewed were members of the Southern Baptist Convention in the state of Virginia. Upon identifying all SBCV directors of youth choirs in Virginia, I

made initial contact with the directors via email and sought permission to conduct the study.

After contacting SBC churches in Virginia to determine which had youth choir programs, I contacted choir leaders from these churches and invited them to participate in this study. After the choir leaders agreed to participate, I conducted interviews with the participants and completed an observation of each adolescent in performance of a song of their choice in order to observe their vocal technique while singing (as explained below). The length of each interview was determined by the responses of the participants. Each conductor participated in one interview, the shortest being around 25 minutes long and the longest being a little over an hour. I completed initial coding to discover what vocal pedagogical concerns, if any, through the lens of Gackle's (2011, 2019) framework, leaders considered and utilized during rehearsal. I conducted a critical analysis of the music literature used in rehearsal by the youth choirs involved in the study, through a thorough score analysis that detailed pedagogical considerations as outlined by Gackle concerning repertoire selection. Upon completing all primary coding, I did second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2015) to find common themes connecting the repertoire analysis, interviews, and observations.

Upon contacting the applicable and appropriate youth choir directors, and having received adult consent and adolescent assent to proceed, I conducted interviews as described below. I arranged appointments for the interviews that were conducted via video chat with the participating leaders. I recorded the interviews to ensure that I had taken precise notes, and so that I could transcribe my notes, check them for accuracy, and

begin coding. I utilized the Observation Protocol (see Appendix D) when I conducted observations via video chat at a time suitable to the researcher and student participants. Below, I provide more information about the participants and outline each of these methods in further detail.

Participants

Because of the vast number of churches in the SBC, I contacted only churches in the state of Virginia. Virginia is also where I live and, as I was planning on observing rehearsals before COVID-19 restrictions took effect, it would have been convenient for me to travel to these churches. I communicated with the office of the SBCV and requested the contact info for churches on record as having a youth choir. After emailing the 15 churches, I received responses from six worship leaders of the churches verifying the existence of a youth choir. The other churches either did not have a youth choir or only had a youth band. The youth choir leaders of these six churches agreed to participate in the study.

Participants in the study were church youth choir leaders who work with youth choirs (n = 6), and female members of youth choirs who performed Contemporary Christian Music (n = 7). Adult participants held the position of Music Minister, Worship Pastor, or Choir Director[5] in their church. I received written consent via email attachment

[5] A Music Minister in the SBC is an ordained minister with a degree in music and a degree in divinity from a seminary. A Worship Pastor is also usually ordained, but may only hold a worship arts degree (or something similar) from a school with a religious affiliation (e.g., Liberty University). Similarly, to a Music Minister, a worship pastor is in charge of the music ministry at a church; however, the church will most likely trend towards contemporary worship experiences instead of traditional ones. A Choir Director might or might not hold a degree in music from an accredited music school. The choir director musically leads a choral ensemble at the church.

for interviews of youth choir directors and signed assent and consent from guardians via email attachment for interviews and observations of adolescents before any appointments were arranged. After initially contacting the youth choir directors via email, I scheduled rehearsal observations and interview dates with each director in follow-up phone conversations.

When the shutdown of churches and choral rehearsals occurred due to COVID-19 restrictions, I revisited the plan to interview the choir directors regarding their rehearsal practices. I then asked the director for female adolescent volunteers who sang in their youth choir to be interviewed and to sing one of their songs for me. I contacted parents of the adolescents, and those who agreed to participate filled out the appropriate forms to participate. In order to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, I used pseudonyms in case their answers might affect their positions at their respective churches, as described later in this chapter.

Data Collection

In this section I describe the process of data collection, including interviews, observations, and document review. I completed all interviews and observations before examining documents. Creswell & Poth (2018) suggested a researcher could choose to be "complete participant," a "participant," a "non-participant," or "an outsider" (p. 167–168). Before the restrictions of COVID-19, I had already determined that I would observe in the role of outsider; thus, I did not observe rehearsals or performances leading up to the observations and interviews. As it turned out, I would not have been able to conduct multiple site visits in order to have a more participatory role because of the pandemic. I

had not met any of the participants before the study and had only communicated with the directors and guardians of the students via email before the interviews. Specific procedures are outlined below.

Interviews

I conducted interviews using the interview protocols (see Appendix B and C) that were patterned after the sample interview protocol outlined by Creswell & Poth (2018, p. 167). The protocol included basic information about the place and time of the interview, information about the interviewee, and questions regarding the director's use of Gackle's (2011) framework in rehearsal. To make the participants feel comfortable, I kept a conversational tone during each interview while utilizing multiple data-collection methods during interviews as suggested by Glesne (2016), including making use of video recording and separate audio recording in case some words or phrases were difficult to understand. I also took notes on the interview protocol as the interview progressed, often writing down follow-up questions to answers that were given. I shaped the questions to the understanding of the interviewee, as described in Creswell & Poth (2018), in an attempt to ask clear and concise questions. I conducted the interviews with the youth choir directors and students by video chat at the availability of the participant because of the restrictions in place due to COVID-19 as mentioned previously.

Although it would have been preferable to see each choir director in rehearsal with their youth choir, the interview questions were designed to gather deep insight (Glesne, 2016) into each director's rehearsal in an effort to gain a full picture of their rehearsal practices. The same questions were asked of each director on the Interview

Protocol for Church Youth Choir Directors (see Appendix B); however, conversation naturally led to other related topics as we spoke. For example, worship pastors expressed that they wanted to do devote quality time to leading the youth choir, but they felt overextended by the responsibilities of their jobs. Lack of support from the senior pastor for the youth choir was a topic that was also brought up as conversation naturally flowed.

I interviewed the adolescent singers using a Student Assessment Protocol[6] (see Appendix C), and I observed them singing a piece of their choice while filling out the Observation Protocol (see Appendix D). In an attempt to calm the nerves of a few of the singers, I had to go off script at the beginning and throughout by adding encouraging words, or offering further explanation of some questions. However, I addressed all questions on the protocol with each student. One student was planning on majoring in music education in college, so we spoke briefly about my experiences in college because she was curious about them. The conductors also filled out a Rehearsal Assessment Protocol (see Appendix E) and provided me with titles of repertoire they used with their choirs and reviewed their repertoire with the Repertoire Assessment Protocol (see Appendix F). I checked transcriptions of director and student interviews for accuracy before distributing the transcript to the participants for member checks. I requested that participants examine the transcript of their interview for accuracy, and none of the participants requested changes. As a result, no changes were made.

[6] I created all assessment protocols utilizing guidelines for female adolescent vocal health established by Gackle (2011).

Observations

I could not conduct observations of youth choir rehearsals using CCM repertoire due to the shutdown of most churches and singing organizations during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. As an alternative, I asked participants to discuss various rehearsal techniques that would be normally used in a face-to-face rehearsal. I asked youth choir directors how they worked with female adolescents and utilized healthy and appropriate teaching techniques and practices during rehearsal (e.g., individuals singing with ease, vocal exercises that encourage vocal growth, appropriate use of breath; Gackle, 2011), and then I documented their responses. In order to determine healthy vocal techniques used in rehearsal, I interviewed each church youth choir leader, and asked them to complete a Rehearsal Assessment Protocol (see Appendix E) and a Repertoire Assessment Protocol (see Appendix F). Each director then provided me with a list of repertoire they were prepared to perform prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Four of the youth choir directors provided me with the names of two female adolescent singers. A total of seven females consented to participate in the study.

After the interview with each youth participant was complete, I completed a singing observation for each singer. I observed the seven female adolescents who had agreed to participate using the Observation Protocol (see Appendix D). I asked each participant to sing a CCM song used in pre-pandemic youth choral rehearsal so I could observe any indications (aural or visual) of vocal health issues (muscle strain in the neck, hoarseness, vocal distress or tension, etc.) (Wani et al., 2019). The participants each chose a song they sang in youth choir and a room that made them the most comfortable (e.g.,

kitchen, family room). Students were allowed to choose the format of their performance (e.g., singing without accompaniment or with accompaniment track). I took descriptive notes during the observation to highlight any connections to Gackle's (2011) framework.

I recorded field notes during the observations (see Appendix D) and recorded notes utilizing an observational protocol I developed as outlined by Emerson et al. (2011) and Creswell and Poth (2018). As recommended by the authors, I took descriptive and reflective notes during the observation in order to gain a deeper understanding and checked my notes for accuracy with the participants. I noted the space in which the interviews took place, detailed any internet connection interruptions that occurred during the video chats, and—during responses to questions—noted areas for follow-up once the answer had been given. After the call was finished, I reviewed my notes and recorded further any thoughts that I had. Once interviews and observations were completed, I developed themes after coding as designated by Glesne (2016, pp. 195–198). Codes included, but were not limited to, knowledge of female adolescent voice (use of full range in rehearsal), awareness of curriculum and pedagogical methods for youth choir, use of vocal techniques for adolescents, and repertoire characteristics. Each director and student answered questions regarding their experience in rehearsal in these areas. I divided each major heading into detailed areas for further discovery (see Figures 1–4).

Figure 1

Vocal Elements

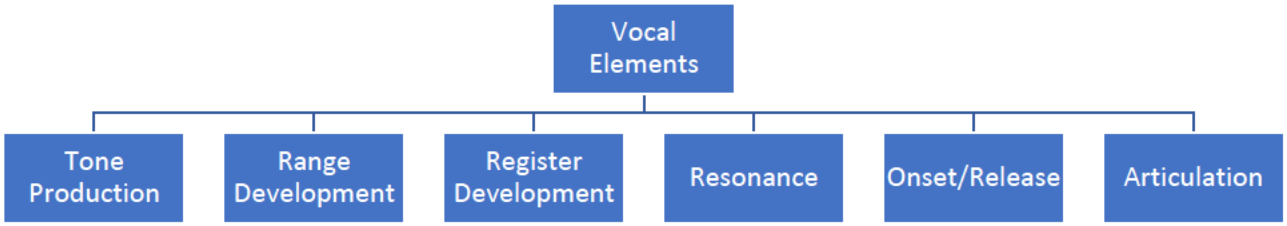


Figure 2

Musical/Expressive Elements

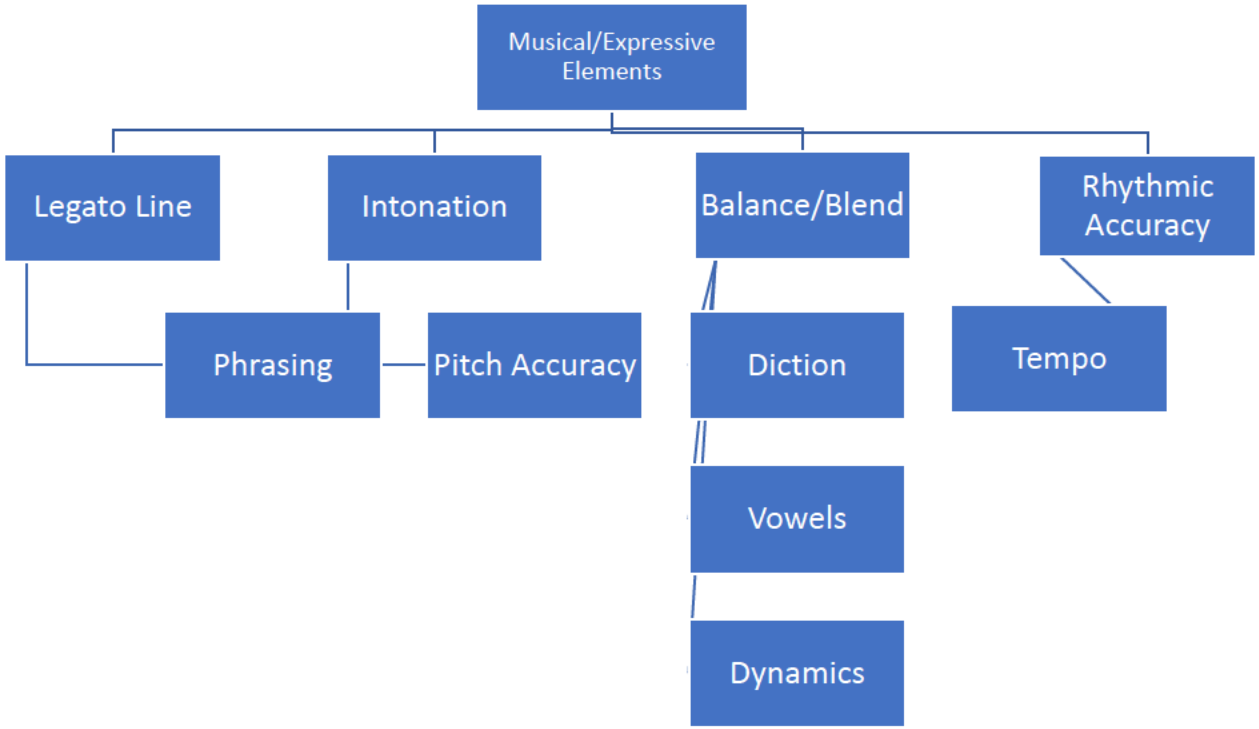


Figure 3

Physical Techniques

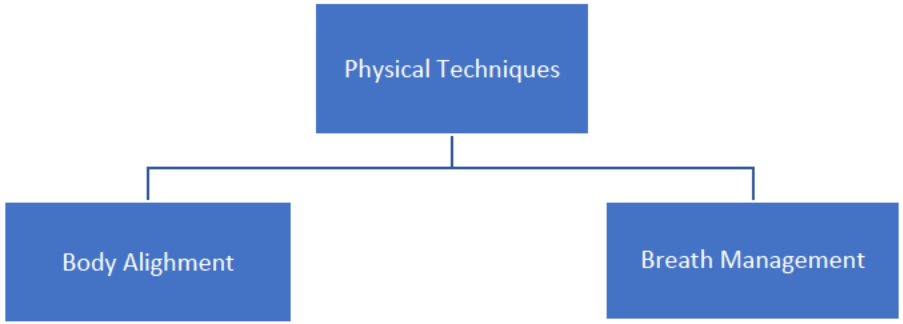
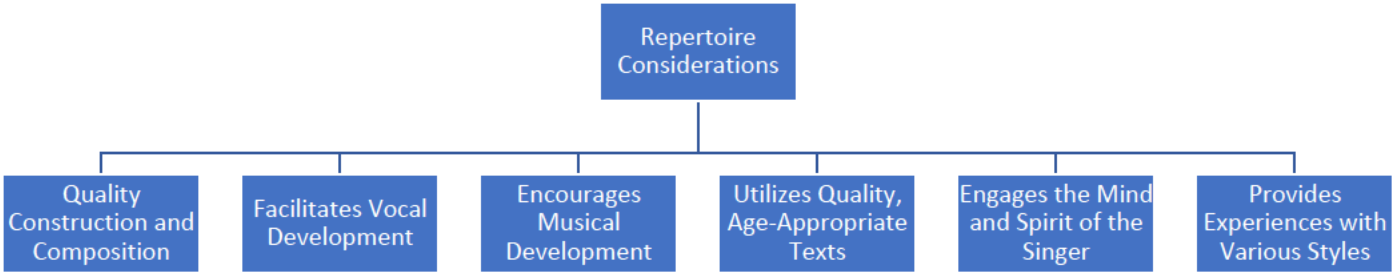


Figure 4

Repertoire Considerations



Document Review

Each youth choir director participating in the study provided titles of repertoire they used regularly in their choirs. A committee of five musicians, who were either educators who had church youth choir experience or were music ministers who worked with female adolescents in youth choir, analyzed and reviewed the repertoire utilizing Repertoire Assessment Protocol (Appendix F). The committee members were all well-known in the Richmond, Virginia community as excellent musicians and educators, and I was familiar with their excellent work with youth choirs. These educators were willing to take the time to carefully analyze the repertoire and receive no remuneration. Additionally, they were comfortable coming to a sanitized communal area to examine the repertoire, while still following the protocols in place at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The five elements reviewed were the overall quality of the repertoire, the age-appropriateness of the text, the likelihood the music facilitated vocal development, the experience with various styles/cultures/genres, and the prospect of encouragement in musical development. For the purpose of this study, the youth choir directors and committee members addressed these elements as consistently, often, occasionally, and never, in regards to their inherent application in the repertoire. Repertoire was catalogued by title, composer, and vocal designation. I purchased the sheet music or found it in the CCM publisher promotional material that I received seasonally from the companies. One director used songs that had been arranged by his worship arts team. He provided me with copies of their youth choir arrangements. I collected 14 pieces from the youth choir

directors at Bilyeu Heights Baptist Church, 12 from The Towers, four from Freedom Baptist Church, 15 from Tyree River Baptist Church, 11 from Hanchey Ridge Baptist Church, and five from Clarktown Baptist Church. The repertoire committee evaluated all 61 pieces and completed a Repertoire Assessment Protocol (see Appendix F) for each title. I reviewed secondary sources (vocal exercise websites, textbooks, and professional singing organizations' vocal warm-up exercises) to discover if they provided further insight to the study.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of all interviews, observations, and document review, I organized information into categories, created documents to combine results for clarity, and examined the data for themes and commonalities. I itemized and reported study findings, and conclusions are detailed in this document in the following chapters. I analyzed interview transcripts, descriptive and reflective notes from observations, and existing documents on an ongoing basis throughout the implementation of the study in a manner that helped answer the research questions. This cross-case analysis involved a process "examining themes across cases to discern themes that are common and different to all cases" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 102) by the use of coding, patterning, and thematic analysis. Through coding, I was able to discover common themes that I then logged. Next, I compared the themes from the protocols (see Appendix C, D, E, F) in a second cycle, pattern coding, that organized the codes from the different protocols in the first round of coding in order to create one cohesive selection of categories and themes (Saldaña, 2015). Pattern coding allows the researcher to take large amounts of

information and combine it into a more succinct and meaningful analysis. I reported findings in a descriptive write-up in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the case as defined by Glesne (2016). Once the documents were coded, I charted patterns and determined and connected the major themes in Vocal Elements, Musical/Expressive Elements, and in Physical Techniques. While coding, I discovered expected and unexpected information as Glesne (2016) described might happen during analysis.

Upon completion of pattern coding (Saldaña, 2015), I found commonalities among the cases in repertoire appropriateness, female adolescent head voice/chest voice use, vocal health/strain, and curriculum knowledge or unfamiliarity developed. I identified correlations and disparity in the director and student responses regarding rehearsal experience, and discovered connections and disagreements in the director and committee responses. I noted common themes beyond vocal pedagogy as well, including time constraints, budget concerns, and personnel availability (as discussed in the following chapter).

Trustworthiness and Reliability

In an effort to achieve as extensive results as possible, I planned the research study to maintain trustworthiness and reliability throughout the process of "data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (Glesne, 2016, p. 64). Glesne (2016) also advocated for using multiple strategies in the study so triangulation of data could be achieved. In the following paragraphs I further explain how I worked toward trustworthiness and reliability through triangulation, peer review, external audit, and researcher positionality, and reporting bias.

Peer Review

I asked five colleagues to be members of the repertoire committee, who also served as peer reviewers for the study. Each member was familiar with Gackle's (2011) work with the female adolescent voice, but I still asked the committee members to read the brief statement about Gackle's work that each of the church youth leaders were asked to read. The statement, which succinctly describes Gackle's guidelines, is at the top of the protocol that they completed (Appendix F). Amy El-Khouri, Choral Director at Deep Run High School, Clint Miller, Choral Director at J. R. Tucker High School, Lisa Pennington-Bass, Choral Director at North Raleigh Christian Academy, Jacob Saunders-Devol, Choral Director at Mills E. Godwin High School, and, David Schwoebel, Composer and retired Music Minister, were consulted to review the data analysis of the repertoire. These colleagues have over 100 years combined experience in the education of the female adolescent voice.

External Audit

Once coding was completed and themes and connections had been developed, Dr. Mark Potvin, Assistant Professor of Music at Luther College, was consulted to review the research for inconsistencies and inaccuracies. I requested that he audit my transfer of data from the protocol sheets that had been filled out by the participants to the digital format that would ultimately be used in the reporting of results. Dr. Potvin has worked with the female, adolescent voice for over 20 years. He was also familiar with Gackle's (2011) research and work with female adolescents.

Researcher Positionality and Reporting of Bias

As a director who has almost solely worked with teenagers, and as an officer of 12 years for the Virginia Choral Directors Association, I acknowledge that my preconceived ideas and my experiences may influence my judgements and observations. My experience as a choral director for over 34 years and my experience as a choral adjudicator for 24 years has allowed me to develop a distinct idea of choral sound and adolescent vocal expectations. I have attempted to report all data as honestly as possible. Although I possess a definitive idea of what excellent choral pedagogy looks like, and I have a strong opinion about how the female adolescent voice should be nurtured, my experience in the SBC as a full-time youth choir director for eight years gave me more insight into the successes and struggles that exist for youth choir leaders in the church. For example, in my case, I struggled with finding repertoire that I perceived as healthy and appropriate. Unlike some of the leaders I interviews, the pastors in my case did not dictate what repertoire I chose. The pastors at my church were extremely supportive of the youth choir and were always open to having the youth lead worship almost any Sunday. This was not the case in some of the churches in the study. Successes and struggles can and do affect what happens in rehearsal, and the data have highlighted some of these successes and struggles.

I conducted interviews with church leaders whose livelihoods may be dependent on their job in the church and their work with adolescents; therefore, the possibility exists that they may have been hesitant to answer some questions fully. It is also possible that research participants may phrase things in a way to their personal benefit (Miles et al.,

2014). I did my best to provide a safe and open space for them to discuss their experiences, but I wanted to respect their rights as a participant in the study to only share what they felt comfortable sharing.

Chapter Summary

This study provides a detailed account of the teaching and learning that occurs in youth choir rehearsals in the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV). I completed data collection by interviewing female adolescent singers who participate in youth choir and their directors. I also observed singers performing a piece of their choosing so I could note the qualities of their singing. A panel of experienced music educators reviewed the repertoire provided by the directors in order to determine the appropriateness of the music for the young singers. I used primary coding and secondary pattern coding in order to condense a large amount of information into more manageable and meaningful data and to look for common themes, which I interpreted through their relevance to the research questions and Gackle's (2011, 2019) framework. Finally, I reviewed the data and checked for reliability through peer review of experienced music educators and by external audit by Dr. Mark Potvin. In the following chapter, I share the findings from this analysis.

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF CASES

The purpose of this collective case study was to observe the teaching and learning practices of youth choir directors in the SBC to determine how and to what extent the SBC youth choir directors might be incorporating Gackle's (2011, 2019) vocal pedagogical methods into youth choir rehearsals. To ascertain the most comprehensive data, I used several qualitative approaches: interviews conducted with youth choir directors and youth choir members affiliated with within the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) youth choirs, observations of female adolescent singing, and a comprehensive review of repertoire and other secondary material. In this chapter I report the findings gleaned from the data, as guided by the research questions.

Participants[7]

Bilyeu Heights Baptist Church

Bilyeu Heights served between 1500 and 1600 congregants on three campuses, hosting six worship services most Sunday mornings. The church had been in existence for over 60 years, and their current Worship Pastor at the time of the study,[8] Chris Flood, had served at the church for six years. Flood had a bachelor's degree in church music from Furman University and a master's degree in church music from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Flood, with a dry sense of humor, joked, "I've been in the ministry forever."

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[7] All names of participants (church and individual) are pseudonyms.
[8] Worship Pastor is a title used by some churches instead of the term Music Minister or Minister of Music.

I conducted my interview with Flood on Facetime using the Interview Protocol for Church Youth Choir Directors (see Appendix B). When we spoke, he was seated in his office, comfortably rocking in his desk chair while answering my questions. The interview took place in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, so we began our interview discussing how church-life and worship had been affected by the shutdown. Flood described how worship ministries were struggling at that time:

> We're doing a lot of stuff online. We're also doing a drive-in service in our parking lot. It's actually going incredibly well. I've been, I've been pleased. We have about 300 people there every Sunday. They're pretty excited to be there, they, you know, they talked about how you know it's not perfect but it's the next best thing because they're at their church. (Transcript from Facetime interview, May 4, 2020)

During COVID-19, Flood utilized a smaller group of singers and instrumentalists to provide the music for church services.

When Flood accepted the position at Bilyeu Heights, there was no youth choir program. Flood recalled a conversation he had had with the senior pastor early in his career:

> The pastor and I, pretty early in discussions, he was like, ‘It’d be great to have them (children and youth choirs)’, and I said, ‘Yes, it would be great to have them. Let’s get going.’ (Transcript from Facetime interview, May 4, 2020)

This conversation was the impetus to begin the training program for children and youth at Bilyeu Heights.

The training program for future choral worship leaders was a goal Flood held for his ministry in the church. In order to develop a robust adult worship team, he encouraged youth to sing during the services. Flood characterized the church leadership as "presumptuous [and] unintelligent." Speaking to the issue of aging adult choirs in churches like Bilyeu Heights, Flood stated:

> We want to have choirs. We want to have adult choirs, but we're not going to have a student choir. I mean, most churches will have children's choirs, and then, and then there's nothing. You know, and then they wonder why our choirs are getting older and older and older. (Transcript from Facetime interview, May 4, 2020)

Flood noted that a lack of continuity is created by not having a youth-choir program between children's choir and adult choir, and as a result, many youth stop singing in the church altogether.

Flood ran into several obstacles while trying to build the youth-choir program at Bilyeu Heights. He stated that scheduling rehearsals was a challenge because of "competition" between the worship and student ministry[9]:

> We have a scheduling problem that we've battled from the beginning. Our big student worship night is Wednesday night. And so, they have their band and praise team that help lead the worship part, and they rehearse at 5:30 on Wednesdays. My rehearsals are five o'clock on Wednesdays. So I've begged and borrowed and

[9] Student Ministry, or Youth Ministry, is the ministry dedicated to educating and spiritually uplifting the students/youth of a church. Usually, a Student/Youth Pastor is in charge of the ministry, which serves sixth through twelfth grade students.

> stolen for four years with limited success in involving those students. (Transcript from Facetime interview, May 4, 2020)

Flood added that the student pastor "has tried to be verbally cooperative with me, but when it comes down to 'where the rubber meets the road' kind of support, I do not receive a lot." Flood suggested that the student pastor does not encourage students to participate in the youth choir.

Membership in the youth choir at Bilyeu Heights ranged from eight to fourteen singers. The group comprised of males and females in grades six through twelve, but the majority of the singers were in middle school. Flood described his rehearsal procedures:

> We gather and try to get going as close to five as possible. I'm a big proponent on… starting on time. They're not all going to be there, but I'm going with who I got. And so we're, we are working some parts, working through the songs, play the piano, sometimes we sing along with the tracks, the demo tracks. We also will take several rehearsals to break up and do sectional work. We'll have just the guys, just the altos, just the sopranos working, so I think that always maximizes the work when they don't have to sit around twiddle their thumbs while somebody else is getting their note banged out on the piano.
>
> (Transcript from Facetime interview, May 4, 2020)

I concluded the interview with Flood agreeing to send me the titles of repertoire that he scheduled to perform during the Spring of 2020, and he also assented to filling out the Repertoire and Rehearsal Assessment Protocols (Appendix B and C).

Two 14-year-old females, Lauren and Amanda, from the Bilyeu Heights Youth

Choir, agreed by assent, (see "Assent Form to participate in the ensemble being studied," Appendix G) to participate in the study. Both girls chose to sing "Bleed the Same" (Semsen, 2017/2019). Lauren identified as an alto and Amanda considered herself a soprano. The piece was written for male and female (treble and bass clef); therefore, it did not have separate soprano and alto parts.

After a few introductory questions, I asked Lauren to tell me about her singing experience. Lauren smiled and said, "I've been singing since I was two years old, and I just… singing has been what I just do. I love to sing." She exuded confidence and enthusiasm for singing through her smile and the excited tone through which she detailed her singing background. When speaking about her youth choir experience, she shared, "I just went (started singing with the choir) into sixth grade, so that's six, seven, eight, nine. Four years, I've been in the choir four years. I have sung solos. I probably get a solo every year." Lauren told me about her extensive solo experience singing at church, and she indicated that she loved auditioning for and performing solos.

The first time Lauren sang, she used a pre-recorded demonstration[10] track. The reference vocal on the recording made it difficult for me to hear Lauren sing. However, she displayed confidence and good posture. Her mouth positioning facilitated open vowel placement, an indicator of healthy/free singing. I asked Lauren to sing a cappella so I could hear her voice more clearly. She agreed and immediately began singing, choosing a key that was lower than the key notated. She struggled in the key, all the while showing

[10] A demonstration track is a recording that provides the listener with an example of how a performance of the musical score might sound. In this case, the recording included singers and instrumentalists performing the full arrangement of *Bleed the Same*.

discomfort through her facial expressions and tension in her neck muscles. In effort to encourage her, I stopped her and asked if she would like to sing it again with me giving her a pitch, and she agreed. At that point, her heavy sighs and apologies subtly transmitted that she was getting frustrated with her performance, so I moved on to questions regarding her experiences with choir rehearsals.

During the interview, Amanda described her extensive participation in choirs throughout her life:

> I've been in like a lot of children's choirs. And then also at my school, we have like a chapel team. So singing there and I guess also like, I'm at my church like the youth group. I'm also singing for their band. I've been singing since I was little. (Transcript from Zoom interview, August 8, 2020)

Amanda sang a cappella and with enthusiasm. When she sang in her chest voice, I observed that her vowels were pinched, she was under pitch, and her tone lacked resonance. Amanda was wearing braces, which may have caused the evident jaw tension (see Wani et al., 2019). During the first presentation of the song, Amanda selected the starting pitch and key, which was lower than the notation on the score. During rests she would change keys, exhibiting difficulty in maintaining pitch, which can often be the experience for female adolescents when singing rests as detailed by Sweet (2015). After finishing, I asked her if she would like to sing it again in the given key. She agreed and stayed on pitch during this second performance. When Amanda sang in her head voice, she exhibited more confidence and she remained in tune. I observed less jaw tension, and her vowels were resonant. Amanda expressed that she did not like to use her head voice,

even though she easily went into her head voice during the second presentation. After further discussion about some music terminology and vocal part assignment, Amanda revealed, “I don't really know a lot about it.” This statement evidenced her confusion when discussing head and chest voice, soprano and alto voice classification, and could be why Amanda considered herself a “melody singer.[11]”

The Towers Baptist Church

The Towers Baptist Church boasted approximately 4500 members and operated on two campuses[12]. When we spoke, the youth choir director, Angela Godwin, had been working as the Worship Associate for only a few months. Although Angela had no formal training in music education, she performed extensively with a vocal quartet during her formative years. She indicated that she learned singing techniques from the older, more experienced quartet members. Godwin assisted the Worship Pastor with music planning for worship services. The interview took place in May via Zoom, while Godwin was sitting in the music library at the church.

As we began the interview, Godwin shared her testimony[13] with me. She included the story of how the youth choir at The Towers was formed, “God had placed on my heart, a bigger vision for our children and our youth ministry, meaning, I saw talent in these children and wanted ways to develop them further.” She went on to share how she spoke to the pastor about how “God had laid it on my heart,” and the pastor replied to

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[11] The label “melody singer” was used by some adolescents and adults during their interviews to indicate that a singer rehearses the melody in each song.

[12] Campus is a term some churches use to call a branch of the church that is located in another area of the city from the home church.

[13] A testimony is the story of a Christian’s life and how they have gotten to where they are with the help of God. It usually includes their salvation story and how they came to follow Jesus Christ.

her, “I have just had that conversation with our executive team that we needed to develop a ministry for our children and our youth.” That conversation sparked the beginning of the Worship Arts Ministry for children and youth at The Towers.

Godwin worked well with the Worship Pastor and “feels supported” in her endeavors with the youth choir, but like Flood, her primary struggle was time. She shared:

> Trying to accommodate our families on a school and work night. Families have so much commitment outside of church. Also, trying to teach them four songs, doing the parts, all of that in 45 minutes plus trying to develop them spiritually because it’s [singing in youth choir] not just a matter of singing. It’s a matter of developing their heart (Transcript from Zoom interview, May 4, 2020).

Godwin further expressed that she sometimes felt as though she was competing with the youth ministry, which held activities for the students the same night as choir rehearsals.

The youth choir at The Towers Baptist Church consisted of 38 singers in grades 6-12. Thirty-two of the students were female and six were male. Godwin estimated that the number of sopranos and altos was equal with 16 females on each part (males did not sing soprano or alto). Twelve students comprised the Praise Team, an auditioned ensemble that sang using microphones in front of the choir when the students led a worship service. The 12 students rotated in the Praise Team every three months, so four students lead when the choir sings once a month.

Youth Choir Rehearsal at the Towers took place on Wednesday evenings from 6 – 6:45. The Praise Team arrived at 5:30 to work on the vocal parts of the pieces the choir

was learning so that the Praise Team could be “leaders in their sections.” Godwin used section leaders from the adult choir who attended youth choir rehearsal to sing with and encourage the youth singers. Godwin began her rehearsals with important announcements, followed with prayer, and then the rest of the time was spent on the four songs they learn in a year. Once a month, the group tried to break into sectionals to rehearse the individual vocal parts. Godwin was acutely aware of her “lack of education” in choral music; however, she stated that she studied on her own to inform her practices:

> Now, I am definitely always going out and researching and just trying to hone in on that skill set because I, I know that I don't have that type of training and I don't take it lightly and I know these children are in my hands and care and I want to make sure that what I'm teaching them is correct and setting them for hopefully something that they'll do later in life in the music ministry (Transcript from Zoom interview, May 4, 2020).

My 40-minute conversation with Godwin ended with an agreement to provide me with contact information for two female students. We established a time frame for Godwin to provide me with the titles of repertoire.

The two 13-year-old females from The Towers who assented to be interviewed and observed for the purpose of this study were Lanaya and Alexis. Lanaya stated that she was a soprano who grew up singing in school and church. Alexis described herself as an alto whose only experience singing was in church choirs because she was homeschooled. Lanaya sang “Holy Ground” (Jones and Singer, 2017). Alexis sang “God, You’re So Good” (Galbraith, 2018).

I was able to meet with both youths individually via Zoom on September 3, 2020. Lanaya's mom began her meeting by informing me that Lanaya was not exactly sure what she needed to do, but she told me that Lanaya was ready to sing for me. I let the mom know that I would make sure that I was clear with her daughter so there would be no confusion. At that point, I turned the conversation to learning more about Lanaya's experiences. Lanaya shared her musical background with me:

> I've always liked to sing, but I started taking singing lessons when I was like, I'd say around 10. I started choir in middle school this year because I was doing orchestra. I'm doing both this year (Transcript from Zoom interview, September 3, 2020).

Lanaya was seated at her dining room table and spoke with an easy confidence. Lanaya initially sang a cappella and chose a key lower than the notated key of the score. She used heavy glottal attacks at the beginning of certain words and phrases causing scratchiness in her tone. After the first display, I requested she sing the piece again; however, the second time, I gave her a new starting pitch. In comparing the two presentations, while she used her head voice in her first performance, she remained mostly in her chest voice the majority of the time. The second run included more head voice and fewer glottal attacks. Her head voice was free sounding, resonant, and without tension. While she exhibited some strain in her chest voice, Lanaya indicated that she felt strain in her voice when singing high in her chest voice for extended periods of time. To alleviate the tension, she revealed that she transitions to her head voice.

When I interviewed Alexis, she was seated at a counter in her kitchen. I found her

bright smile infectious. Alexis's choral experience solely derived from singing in church choirs. Alexis's piece had a limited, five-note range and hovered in an alto/tenor tessitura. Though the piece was slow, the phrases were short and separated by rests. Singing forte, Alexis attacked each phrase using wide vowels and a forced tone causing her to sing flat. When the pitch was higher, she raised her chin and tightened the muscles in her neck, thus displaying physical indications of tension (Stepp et al., 2011). Like Lanaya, Alexis used glottal attacks causing a slight scratchiness to her tone. Vocal tension was not something of which Alexis was aware, nor was she familiar with the terms *chest* and *head* voice. After a short discussion, Alexis stated that she feels tension when she is "singing from her throat and not her stomach."

Freedom Baptist Church

Freedom Baptist was the oldest and largest church included in the study. Freedom attendance was between 6,000–7,000 people across five campuses each Sunday, and the original 120-year-old church had one service which was broadcast to the campuses each Sunday. The service was a blended "celebration of worship," combining traditional and contemporary aspects into one unified worship service. Tom Johnson served as the Worship Pastor and youth choir director at Freedom. Johnson graduated from Samford University where he received a music education degree, and then he received a master's degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He had served at Freedom for 10 years at the time of the interview, and had been in the ministry for over 30 years.

My interview with Johnson took place in May 2020 via Zoom, and we had a lively discussion about Johnson sitting at a ping pong table during the interview. Because

of COVID-19, he was working from home and using his "FROG" room above the garage as an office. After explaining to me what FROG[14] meant, Johnson went on to share important moments in the musical life of the church that have shaped the current music ministry's vision and direction. Before 2011, members of Freedom Baptist met in two services, one traditional (choir and orchestra performing hymns and anthems) and one contemporary (praise band and praise team performing Contemporary Christian Music). In 2011, the services combined into one blended
service offering a balance of the two worship styles. Recently, the pastor asked Johnson to make another change:

> I've been asked to do some things that were really challenging for me. One was, you know, take the orchestra out of worship, and just most recently, because of our style… the pastor has asked me to not use the choir every week in worship. It has been a challenge but I've been willing to serve. I feel like God… He still has me here (Transcript from Zoom interview, May 13, 2020).

Johnson continued stating he still planned to use the orchestra and choir for special occasions and ministry opportunities.

Although Johnson had been challenged by the changes to his ministry, he acknowledged that his pastor was supportive of the youth choir ministry. He added that, "I feel like my pastor is very, very glad that we have this ministry." However, Johnson indicated that the youth pastor is not invested in the idea of a youth choir. Without solid pastoral support, communicating with youth located at five campuses, some an hour away

[14] Finished Room Over Garage

from the main campus, had been a daunting task for Johnson.

The Freedom Baptist Youth Choir was comprised of 95–110 high school students. This choir was the largest in the study and its mission was different than the other choirs. Johnson desired to teach the students how to share their love of Christ and to grow in their faith:

> My mission is so much bigger than style, and it's so much bigger than singing. The greater mission for me is when they graduate, they're not afraid to sing, they're not afraid to praise, they're not afraid to give their testimony, they're not afraid to participate and contribute to the ministry in the church (Transcript from Zoom interview, May 13, 2020).

The other youth choirs in the study led worship at their local church, while Freedom's youth choir never performed for their worship services; rather, the members participated in a week-long mission tour in the Spring of each year.

Rehearsals for Freedom's youth choir began with student-led devotional and prayer. Next, Johnson addressed what he called the "major music parts." He and his staff arranged most of the music the choir performs, and he stated they sing in four parts. Johnson stated that his assistant accompanied the group during rehearsal and played parts on a keyboard, but he specified he mostly worked a cappella, and that he "teaches by rote.[15]" The group rehearsed for two hours each Sunday afternoon, and in April, the group rehearsed for three hours. Because choreography is involved in the finished product,

[15] The teaching of vocal parts without the use of sheet music. Students learn by the demonstration of their vocal line sung to them first, and then they sing the vocal line back. This process is repeated until the part is learned.

Johnson had an attendance requirement in place to ensure that students would have time to memorize the songs and dance moves. Rehearsal ended with senior leaders sharing announcements.

Johnson and I ended the interview, and he said he would follow up and have his assistant, Jane, communicate with me regarding contact info for students and their parents. I found out later that Jane coached the female soloists for the choir, and also rehearsed with the two adolescent females I interviewed. The students from Freedom were the oldest students to be interviewed and observed.

Claire, a sixteen-year-old who identified as an alto, grew up singing at school and church and had sung the National Anthem at sporting events. Meredith, a seventeen-year-old who loved singing alto and tenor, grew up singing in choirs at both church and school. Both girls from Freedom sang Freedom's arrangements of two CCM songs. Meredith sang "Good News" (Varner, 2017/2019), and Claire performed "When We Pray" (Varner, 2017).

Meredith and I spoke on a Saturday in August 2020 via Zoom. She was sitting in her bedroom at a desk during the interview, and I was impressed by how well-spoken she was. Meredith stated that she planned on majoring in vocal performance when she entered college in the fall of 2021. When I asked Meredith what vocal part she sang, she replied:

> I usually sing alto like in chorus, like at my school I sing alto and in Chi Alpha. Um, but I… I've sung tenor before in chorus, because like we need more tenors. But soprano? Definitely not. I don't sing high (Transcript from Zoom interview,

August 8, 2020).

Meredith emphasized her preference for singing “low” (in her lower vocal range) many times during our conversation. She was the first person to inform me that the youth choir at Freedom is named Chi Alpha. She referenced the group by this name throughout the interview.

Meredith chose to sing “Good News” a cappella. Though she chose a higher key than notated, her singing was confident, rhythmically correct, enunciated clearly, and in tune for the duration of the song. Meredith sang forcefully and carried her chest voice into an uncomfortable range, visually demonstrating her physical discomfort with facial expressions as she strained for the notes. In various higher sections, Meredith flipped into head voice, her face displayed shock as it occurred. For the second performance, I asked that she try it in the notated key. She sang the entire song in her chest voice, using her hands for emphasis. Again, the higher chest notes were forced and loud; however, she maintained proper pitch. During the interview, Meredith said she rarely experiences vocal tension, but when it occurs, it is during long rehearsals. She shared that she does not like the sound of her head voice, so she tries to sing all vocal lines in her chest voice.

Because of Meredith’s maturity and understanding of her voice, we spoke further about her head and chest voice. She told me about her struggles with singing higher notes:

> There's so many times where I like go up to sing it (a song) or like I'm practicing or something. And I like can't hit the notes [in her chest voice]… even though it is not like that high. But sometimes it's just not working. But other times I can get

> there. I just don't love the way it sounds like when I have to go in my head voice (Transcript from Zoom interview, August 8, 2020).

Meredith had taken voice lessons when she was a few years younger, and she stated that she sang in her head voice often during those lessons, but she prefers to not utilize that part of her voice because she does not "like the way it sounds."

Claire and I spoke on a Wednesday in August via Zoom. Claire was seated in an office area in her house, and she radiated with natural poise, though her speaking voice was raspy. When speaking of her music education, Claire described her enjoyment of playing instruments:

> I've always been more into instruments than singing just because like I don't know it feels more technical. Like I feel like my singing was just something that I was naturally born with. It was like a natural gift, you know. And I really like working on like the different instruments. Like I've been playing piano since I was five (Transcript from Zoom interview, August 19, 2020).

Claire told me she had been playing the piano since she was five years old.

"When We Pray" has the repeated line "Whoa- oh -oh- oh" which caused Claire to use excessive glottal attacks on each syllable. With a limited tessitura of a fifth (D4-A4), Claire sang the piece with a pushed and forced tone, and entirely in her chest voice. Claire had an excellent sense of rhythm and pitch even though the piece was sung a cappella. In the chorus, Claire sang the tenor line, which held the melody, instead of the alto line. Claire explained that she experienced vocal tension when she strains for higher notes in her chest voice, noting it was more difficult to do so if she did not warm up

before singing. She commented, “It’s (vocal tension occurs) usually when I really try and belt it out without doing any form of vocal warmup beforehand.” Claire did not understand how the vocal mechanism operates, as she stated that her lower notes were “sung from her diaphragm,” and her head voice, or as she referred to it, “falsetto,” derived “from her head.”

Tyree River Baptist Church

At just over 40 years old, Tyree River was the newest church examined in this study. Each Sunday, the church met in two services which utilized a praise band-based[16] worship. A vocal praise team made up of two to three singers led worship in front of the 50-member choir at both services. I spoke with Becky Young, the volunteer youth choir director, on a Thursday in April via Zoom. Young holds a music education degree from James Madison University.

The interview with Young was the longest I conducted. Her vocal music education experience steered our discussion into meaningful discourse. When considering repertoire selection, Young explained the importance of the message in songs she selected:

> It takes me a long time to choose songs. I'm very selective. I realize and know that I am I am having these kids practice and sing and internalize a song. And so, it (the song) better be good, it better be something that is worthy of… of the mental space that they have to get to. And so that's why, for me, the message, the appropriateness, and… even the application a potential of a song is probably

[16] A praise band is a group of musicians who play drums, acoustic and electric guitar, bass, and keyboard. Sometimes other instruments are added for color.

foremost (Transcript, from Zoom interview, April 30, 2020).

Though Young enjoyed applying what she had learned while studying for her degree in music, her motivation for working with the youth was personal. Her children attended the church, and when the worship pastor could not find a volunteer to direct the youth choir, Young agreed to direct the group because her children were involved in the choir. Though she stated the worship pastor supports her efforts with the youth choir, Young told me he does not communicate regarding her continued participation with the group. She said, "I'm not exactly sure if it's assumed that I'll do it. Each year, I'm never really asked."

During her tenure as the director of the youth choir, Young has experienced a few challenges. Because Young's children were no longer in the group, she stated that she had had second thoughts about her leadership of the group. She considered the youth choir an important ministry in the church; however, she felt the pastors did not exhibit support of the youth choir program with their actions. She asserted:

> I have noticed that not a single pastor's son or daughter has ever been in the choir. And so if this is really not something that you guys really want, like, I don't want to be like just saying, "Hey I'm leading the student choir each year." (If) it's not really the direction, or that's not really the heart of, of our church... of well, of leadership, then I'd rather… Yeah, I'd like to know that (Transcript, from Zoom interview, April 30, 2020).

Young further added that the youth praise band, which was led by the youth pastor, was in competition with the youth choir. The "best singers" sang in the praise band, not the youth choir. Additionally, the youth choir rehearsal was "tacked on" to the beginning of

Wednesday night activities, so it “feels like it is not a part” of the normal church schedule. Young indicated that no paid staff member of the church “champions” the youth choir, so as a result, there is a “feeling of disconnection.”

The Tyree River Baptist Church Youth Choir had ten to twelve members; half were in middle school, and half were in high school. The group met at 5:30pm on Wednesday nights, and they performed four to five times a year, usually for special services (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, etc.). During rehearsal, the sopranos sat in the back row, while the altos sat in a group to Young’s left, and the “guys” sat in a group to her right. Because of her desire to expose the students to a variety of repertoire, Young chose pieces that highlighted the choir, but offered additional opportunities for students to have solos. As our time ended, Young provided the contact information for the parents of two students and agreed to send me repertoire titles.

Only one parent from Tyree River followed through with me to consent to an interview and observation for their daughter. Of all of the female adolescents that I observed, Lisa had the most natural and effortless tone. Lisa, who is 15, sang “God So Loved” (Galbraith, 2019). She noted she was homeschooled and her only singing experience was with church choirs. Lisa was seated, and she was the only person I interviewed who utilized the background effects of Zoom. She chose the northern lights because “They’re awesome.” Even though she sang at a desk with a slightly slouched posture, Lisa transitioned easily from head to chest voice and demonstrated no vocal or physical evidence of strain or tension.

Lisa comes from a musical family and told me about her grandmother who performed in shows on Broadway. Even though Lisa had taken piano lessons and could play the notes for herself,, her grandmother coached her whenever she had solos. When asked about what vocal part she sang, Lisa explained how she came to sing soprano:

> When I've asked [my grandmother] before, she says that generally I do sing soprano, and I could do alto if I wanted to, if I felt comfortable with it. But I just enjoy singing higher. I think I sound better higher (Transcript, from Zoom interview, August 12, 2020).

Lisa shared that she loved singing the high notes, and her easy tone and effortless performance verified this when she sang a cappella in a higher key than what was notated on the score. I asked Lisa to sing it one more time in the correct key, and she easily transitioned again from head to chest voice in the written key.

Hanchey Ridge Baptist Church

Having just acquired a new pastor, Hanchey Ridge was currently in transition. The congregation was mostly older, with many members having attended the church since it opened in the 1950s. The church served a few hundred members in two services each Sunday morning. At the time of the interview, the church was offering three drive-in services because of COVID-19. The pastor preached from the roof of the church while a small praise band, located under the carport of the church, performed over the radio for congregants in their cars. Landon Simon was the Music Minister at the time of this research; however, he left that position a few weeks after our interview. He provided repertoire titles, but had not completed the rehearsal assessment protocol or provided me

with names of female adolescents from the youth choir. However, because Simon's comments provided relevant insight for this research study, his answers remain in the data.

Simon spoke to me via Zoom from his office at Hanchey Ridge on a Wednesday in May. He was very open about his experiences and challenges at the church. After graduating from seminary in 1991, Simon had worked at five churches in his over 30 years of ministry. In that time, he had only one "successful" youth choir. Simon stated that the church defines success by "large crowds."

When I conducted the interview, Simon was in his sixth year at Hanchey Ridge. Speaking about the demands of his job, Simon said he struggled with the demanding requirements of his position as music minister:

> One of the biggest problems for me is I just have so many demands with other parts. I have a full orchestra, a choir, praise teams, ensembles. It's difficult because it can't be built on one person, it just doesn't work. And I didn't do a very good job when I first came here of garnering that (Transcript, from Zoom interview, May 20, 2020).

There were several pastoral changes during the three years before Simon started, and the five years after he came. This disruption to the unified vision of the church caused some difficulties for the staff. One significant example was the new youth pastor's decision to start a youth praise band. Simon stated the formation of the praise band caused competition with the youth choir for talented singers. Simon had the impression that most youth pastors do not support a youth choir at their assigned church. He further said,

“They (youth pastors) laugh when they find that we’re (Hanchey Ridge) even trying to do one (a youth choir).”

Simon suggested that his gender was a hindrance in working with the female adolescent voice, as was his age:

> I think, one of my difficulties in leading is my age difference. I'm 55, almost 56 years old. (It is) a little bit hard for me to relate to the 13-year-old, and my daughter's in there, and it's hard for her because it's her dad (Transcript, from Zoom interview, May 20, 2020).

Simon said that he thought youth choirs with female leadership were superior to youth choirs with male leadership because the majority of the students in youth choir cannot relate or pattern their voice to an adult male voice.

The youth choir only had eight or nine members, and Simon said he was limited with what he could accomplish with so few voices. One of his primary goals was to teach the students about worship; that included what their role was in worship and how to perform while leading worship. Simon had more middle school voices than high school voices, and his entire group was female.

The youth choir rehearsal took place on Sunday afternoons at 5pm for 45 minutes in the rehearsal space. Simon utilized DVD tracks during rehearsal. He had the students stand facing the monitor, holding microphones, and singing as the words flowed across the screen. Simon explained that this format was used by the adults during church services, so it gave the students opportunity to rehearse with a similar system. He wanted to teach the students to be “lead worshippers,” and this included coaching them on their

facial expressions. At the end of rehearsal, Simon closed their time with prayer, and then he walked the group to their youth group activity.

Clarktown Baptist Church

During the time of the study, Clarktown was searching for a new Minister of Music, and as a result, had been utilizing volunteers and interims to fill the position vacated by their former Music Minister, a well-known composer and arranger of church music. Clarktown served around 400 congregants each Sunday in two services. I spoke with Linda Good on a Tuesday in May via FaceTime. Good was serving as the volunteer youth choir director at the church. She had a music education degree from Longwood University, and was employed as a choir and orchestra teacher at a local middle school. After completing the interview, rehearsal protocol, and repertoire documentation, Emily stopped replying to my emails and phone calls. Even though she did not provide me with the names of female adolescents, the information she provided contributes to the research, thus, her answers were included in the research data.

A few months before COVID-19, Clarktown's sanctuary ceiling collapsed, so the regular flow of services had been interrupted and services were moved to the chapel. Up until the ceiling collapse, Clarktown had an 8:30am and 11am service on Sunday with Sunday school in the middle at 9:45am. Youth choir rehearsal took place Sunday evenings for forty-five minutes, and a thirty-minute-long handbell rehearsal followed, which all choir students attend. This musical training system was put in place by the recently retired music minister, and it remained after his departure.

Good had attended Clarktown her entire life. She grew up singing in the youth

choir and performing in their yearly mission tour in the Spring. As a music educator, she desired to see the group continue after the music minister left, but the staff had discussed "getting rid of" the youth choir. Good stated, "But it was our youth minister who really pushed to find that time and have this (the youth choir) for them (the students)."

There were 12 members in Clarktown's youth choir, three males and nine females. Ten of the students were in the sixth through ninth grades, and two were seniors in high school. Good began each rehearsal reviewing repertoire learned at the previous week's rehearsal. She moved onto new sections once the older sections had been mastered. As an educator, Good found herself walking a fine line of how much discipline she could use during rehearsal:

> Discipline is a struggle sometimes, and also just kind of seeing what all the students… what they get from their programs at school. Trying to find a way to bring all of that together because each of them are doing different things at school. (Transcript, from Facetime interview, May 5, 2020).

Regardless of any struggles, Good tried to have the group perform at least once a month in the second service. Because of the sanctuary ceiling collapse, the group had not been able to perform as much as normal because of the limited space available in the chapel compared to the sanctuary.

Chapter Summary

As evidenced in their own words, the youth choir directors in this study all hoped to give each student a spiritually-fulfilling experience while encouraging them in their growth as Christians and singers. The directors I interviewed expressed a desire to design

their rehearsals and choose repertoire thoughtfully, making use of their understanding of the vocal needs of the adolescent singers they taught in their choirs. They spoke of the challenges they experienced as the demands of their jobs left them with limited time to devote to all areas of their ministry. Every student I spoke with expressed a joy for singing, and each one was a proud member of their youth choir. In order to discover the impact of the experiences detailed above through the lens of Gackle's framework on female adolescent vocal pedagogy, further discussion occurs in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this case study using qualitative data was to observe the teaching and learning practices of youth choir leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention in Virginia to determine how and to what extent the SBC youth choir leaders might be incorporating Gackle's vocal pedagogical methods into youth choir rehearsals. In order to address the research questions comprehensively through the lens of Gackle's framework, adult participants were interviewed, youth participants were observed and interviewed, and a committee of qualified professionals reviewed the youth choir repertoire. This chapter provides a cross-case analysis of interview, observation, and document review data.

Worship Leader Interview Questions

I interviewed six youth choir directors. Interviews were completed within a two-week period from April 30th through May 13, 2020. Youth choir directors finalized repertoire and rehearsal assessment protocols over the following two months and emailed the final products to me. Interview questions were designed to glean information from participants regarding their process and comfort level teaching the female adolescent voice. None of the directors were familiar with Gackle's work with the female adolescent voice.

Do you feel confident regarding your knowledge of how to work with the female adolescent voice? Why or why not?

The three female youth choir directors expressed confidence working with female adolescents because they felt like their shared gender and similar voice-type gave them a

more intimate understanding of the females they taught. Good and Young indicated their music education degrees added to their comfort educating female adolescents. Godwin stated her singing experience while touring as a teenager contributed to her ability to work with adolescents.

Two of the three male youth choir directors indicated that they did not feel confident working the female, adolescent voice. Johnson and Simon both expressed a desire to improve, but acknowledged that working with younger voices was a weakness in their skillset. Simon expressed that the range limitations of the female adolescent voice are a challenge for him. On the other hand, Flood said that he felt very comfortable educating female adolescents as he had been a Worship Pastor for many decades.

***Are you provided with/aware of/knowledgeable about teaching methods for working specifically with female adolescent voices*?**

Three of the six directors expressed different levels of inexperience regarding specific adolescent vocal pedagogies, while Good, Young, and Flood cited their education in college as their main resource and knowledge base. Simon stated that he would research the female adolescent voice if his group was larger. He said the size of his group and his lack of available time to research during the workday prohibited him from necessary and meaningful study regarding teaching practices/techniques. Simon used CCM arranged for children in his youth choir rehearsals because he felt the range of the children's music he used worked best for his youth choir.

What criteria do you consider when preparing the pedagogical aspects of your youth choir rehearsal?

Not all of the participants appeared to understand this question, so I repeated it. I was then asked to explain it further. My impression was the term "pedagogical" was an uncommon word in ministry, therefore, the question caused momentary confusion and required clarification with some interviewees.

Johnson, who stated that he had not studied pedagogy for decades, said rehearsal timing was his primary focus. Realizing that he might not understand the question, I asked the question again; at that point, his answer centered on his rehearsal plan. Johnson did not use vocal warm-ups at the beginning of rehearsal. He had the students sing an easier song, working what he refers to as the "mid-range." Singing mezzo forte, he believed this prepared the singers for the challenging songs. Once he felt the students were focused, he progressed to music requiring more difficult vocal production.

Simon specified that even though he was not a voice major, he felt confident in his knowledge of the fundamentals of singing. He began rehearsals with warm-ups and breathing exercises. He used scales in his vocal exercises and emphasized the need for good vocal production in all styles of singing. Part of rehearsals were spent learning microphone technique and how to lead worship.

As there was a strong children's music education ministry at Clarktown Baptist, Good approached rehearsals differently from other church music programs. All children learned to play handbells, and the youth choir spent part of their rehearsal in handbell practice before moving to youth choir rehearsal. Good tried to utilize solfege in rehearsal,

but because some choir members were not learning it in their school programs, she used it sparingly. Because of the age range of the choir (ages 11–18), Good strove to keep rehearsals interesting for all, but she admitted that this could be a struggle.

The Worship Pastor at The Towers oversaw the entire worship ministry at the church. Working directly for the Worship Pastor, Godwin selected repertoire she believed align with future worship services, and the Worship Pastor verified and approved it accordingly. Emphasizing the need to teach the students about worship, Godwin had the students listen to the songs before singing them. They discussed the significance of the words as they prepared their hearts to sing. Rehearsals began with addressing the more difficult sections, followed by learning/reviewing easier passages, and then the rehearsals ended with devotion and prayer.

Flood focused on repertoire as a key element in pedagogy. He stated that music should contain lyrics that challenge the singer, help them grow spiritually, and create the opportunity for open discussion in rehearsal. Flood desired that his students' lives be transformed as a result of their participation in youth choir.

At Tyree River, Young began and ended each rehearsal with prayer. Warm-ups followed the initial prayer time, and she preferred for the students to be standing during the vocal exercises. Her warm-ups varied based upon what she was hearing during rehearsal and what needed to be addressed. There was a focus on listening to one another and cut-offs.

What techniques, if any, do you use to enable adolescent female singers to access their entire vocal range and meet their full potential?

Johnson was the only director who connected his conducting and teaching technique to exploring the vocal ranges of his female singers. The remaining directors specified that implementing various vocal exercises encouraged their singers to access their entire range. Johnson stated that energetic conducting, "making forms" while conducting (patterns and shapes), and standing directly in front of students encouraged relaxed tone and prevented the singers from "screeching and scratching their voice."

At the beginning of rehearsals at Hanchey Ridge, Simon had his students perform a vocal warm-up, many times having them raise their hands if the student could not sing any further in pitch. He expressed that in doing this exercise, he could protect their voices, however, he was unsure about the capabilities of the female adolescent voice. At The Towers, Godwin offered individual vocal coaching to select students before and after rehearsal. While not formally trained, Godwin felt passing on techniques that she had learned herself while performing would help her choir students become more confident singers.

Flood, Good, and Young all utilized warm-ups to encourage students to expand their ranges. Good expressed the need for exercising the upper register more than the lower register. She stated that most students felt comfortable in the alto range, but needed encouragement in the soprano range. Flood echoed Good's comments, stating that he did not want his singers believing that every female was an alto. Young used vocal glissandos on "ah" to transition from chest to head voice. She noted this exercise was

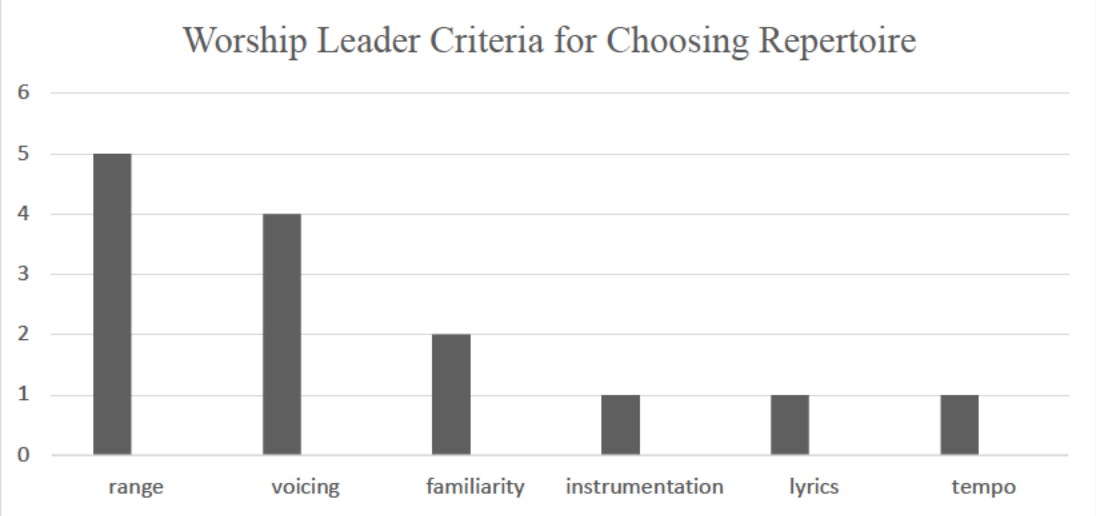
beneficial to male singers as well. Gackle (2011) posited that the female adolescents must be encouraged through the use of warm-ups and quality repertoire to expand their range as they grow into their voice with confidence. Although almost all directors mentioned using exercises to encourage students to expand their range, none specified the use of repertoire to aid in vocal growth.

What criteria do you use when specifically choosing repertoire for adolescent voices?

There were six basic elements directors indicated in selecting youth choir repertoire. As Figure 5 details, range and voicing were mentioned by the majority of the interviewees. Choir member familiarity with the song was suggested by two directors, and lyrics, instrumentation and tempo were identified by one director each. Unlike the majority of the participants, Gackle (2011) considered text as one of the primary considerations when choosing repertoire.

Figure 5

Worship Leader criteria when choosing repertoire for adolescent voices



Johnson had a team at Freedom that arranged songs for the choir and band. He felt this allowed him to ensure that the range of the song was not too high for his singers. Simon was challenged with choosing repertoire that was suitable for orchestra, rhythm section, and organ, while carrying a vocal part that was appropriate for his singers. As the only director who regarded tessitura in selecting music, Good considered vocal range across the entire piece, not just the overall range of the vocal line. Godwin used multigenerational music distributed by CCM publishers like Lifeway, while Young utilized the rhythm chart website, Praise Charts, as her main resource to find music. Flood noted the importance of lyrics as his main focus, emphasizing his belief that the text could help facilitate spiritual growth and maturity in worship.

The majority of the directors stated that their primary consideration when choosing music was vocal range and voicing for all of their singers, not just the female adolescents. All of the youth choirs had a wide age-range of singers, so they expressed the need to find appropriate music for the voices in their ensemble.

Have you ever considered adolescent vocal health/pedagogy when choosing an arrangement? Why or why not?

Responses to these questions were quite varied. Four of the directors admitted that they either do not consider vocal health when choosing arrangements, or they do so only in conjunction with choosing arrangements that meet personal parameters within the piece. Conversely, two directors did indicate they knowingly consider vocal health and/or vocal pedagogical practices when selecting musical arrangements for their ensembles.

Each director voiced a different concept regarding their approach to music arrangements. Johnson was concerned about the pitch being too high for the female singers, so sometimes he chose an arrangement which was lowered by an interval of a 3rd or 4th, thus allowing the sopranos to stay in their chest voice without straining. Godwin stated that she told the sopranos to drop down an octave or sing alto when the pitch became too high or uncomfortable. She asserted that she recognized that this was not proper pedagogy, but she worried about students getting discouraged or feeling their voice was straining.

Flood chose repertoire based upon his male singers more than his female singers. Additionally, he attempted to maintain a soprano range below G4, allowing them to move into their head voice only occasionally. Simon stated that he has never considered vocal health when choosing music. Having the freedom to choose whatever repertoire she would like to program, Good affirmed she absolutely considered vocal health and pedagogy. At Tyree River, the message and application of the song took precedence over any other repertoire considerations.

Although the directors stated that they do not wish to harm adolescent voices, the majority did not consider vocal health or pedagogy when choosing music. Most chose pieces in a vocal range that was not conducive for healthy adolescent vocal health, but they also had outside influences to consider. For example, finding music appropriate for services and spiritual growth and also making sure singers do not get discouraged was of primary concern for the directors.

Addressing the Research Questions

Gackle (2011) asserted that choral directors of adolescents should be well-informed in adolescent voice development. Choral teachers who understand the characteristics of vocal development select age-appropriate repertoire that supports vocal development, allows for musical maturing, and encourages self-expression through singing (Gackle, 2011). As stated by Gackle, lifelong vocal health is facilitated by choral teachers who teach the skills of best performance practices. In this section, I addressed each of the research questions as they relate to data for each case.

1. How and to what extent, if any, do the choral leaders of youth choirs in the SBC assist female adolescents in their choirs in exploring their full vocal range and vocal technique?

In order to determine how youth leaders were assisting their adolescent singers in developing their full range, the six youth leaders in the study were asked, "What techniques, if any, do you use to enable adolescent female singers to access their entire vocal range and reach their full potential?" The students were asked, "Do your directors work on your vocal range?"[17] The repertoire committee reviewed the literature for each youth choir and determined the appropriateness of the music to promote female adolescent vocal growth. These three sources of data provided findings that are categorized into the following themes: warm-ups, vocal range, tone production, intonation, balance/blend, rhythmic accuracy, diction, vowels, dynamics and tempo, body alignment, breath management, repertoire quality, age-appropriateness of text, vocal

[17] The students were given clarification when asked.

development, style/culture/genre, and musical development.

Warm-Ups: Director Perspective

Flood (Bilyeu Heights) expressed a desire to "help them (female adolescents) not to be afraid of their high notes." He vocalized the students to allow them to access their higher range so that "they don't all grow up just to think that every female has to be an alto."

Godwin (The Towers) individually coached six students utilizing techniques she learned while touring with a singing ensemble, though she was not trained to work with the female adolescent voice. She did warm-ups with her students which were fun and helped the students gain energy. As mentioned previously, she told her sopranos to drop down the octave if it got too high. She acknowledged that she knew this was not proper, but she did not want to discourage her students.

Johnson (Freedom) did not feel comfortable working with the female adolescent voice and does not do warm-ups. He admitted all can improve their knowledge, and teaching the female adolescent voice was one area about which he could learn more.

Young (Tyree River) was confident in her abilities to work with the female adolescent voice. Applying her degree in music education, Young utilized warm-ups she learned during her experience as a student and teacher. She pointed to glissandos, scales, and other exercises which carry the voice through register changes as being highly effective in rehearsal.

Simon (Hanchey Ridge) admitted openly that while he does not feel comfortable working with young voices overall, he tried his best to encourage all of his singers. His

daughter sang in his choir, so he also stated that sometimes affected the interpersonal dynamics of the group, thus affecting his teaching. While in seminary, Simon enrolled in some vocal technique classes, and he used the info he learned in these classes to inform his decisions in rehearsal. He had the students raise their hands when they were singing, and "when it gets too high, I have them lower their hand and stop singing." Simon believed that female adolescents could not sing high, and that their voices needed to be nurtured by not extending their ranges. He spoke in length about taking care of their voices and making sure he didn't cause harm by "going too high."

Good (Clarktown), a public-school music educator, began rehearsals with warm-ups she used in her classroom. Good stated that her students did not have any problems in their lower ranges, so she focused on the upper register in warm-ups. She desired to encourage the students to access their head voice and smoothly connect it to their chest voice by exercising the passaggio.

Many of the directors used the term "vocalize" to describe their warm-ups. A vocalize is a vocal exercise that uses single vowel sounds or syllables to practice intonation, tone, and flexibility in the voice and throughout a vocal line. When the directors and students described their exercises, the examples were general vocal warm-ups and not vocalizes. The students whose directors utilized warm-ups in rehearsal really enjoyed singing the warm-ups and mentioned that the exercises helped their voices during the rehearsal.

Warm-Ups: Student Perspective

Both Amanda and Lauren (Bilyeu Heights) said that they never do warm-ups.

They also stated that their music does not require them to go into their head voices. I had to demonstrate and explain chest and head voice to Amanda as she did not understand basic music terminology such as note and pitch.

Alexis and Lanaya (The Towers) eagerly spoke of their warm-up exercises. While Alexis stated that Godwin does warm-ups occasionally, Lanaya indicated that the choir performs warm-ups consistently in rehearsal. Both students understood the meaning of head voice and chest voice, but neither expressed a confidence in their head voice.

Claire and Meredith (Freedom) indicated that they never warm-up in choir or do any vocalizes to extend range. Claire liked the fact that they got to sing tenor sometimes and "sing really low." Both conveyed that they like that their music "doesn't go too high."

Lisa (Tyree River) was the only student who participated from the church. The other student's mother initially responded to my requests, but then stopped replying after they went on an extended vacation. Lisa spoke enthusiastically about the warm-ups they do with Young. She even demonstrated one for me during the observation.

Clarktown and Hanchey Ridge did not provide me with student names to participate in the observation portion of the study. Because of the rich data Good and Simon provided in other areas, I kept these participants in the study.

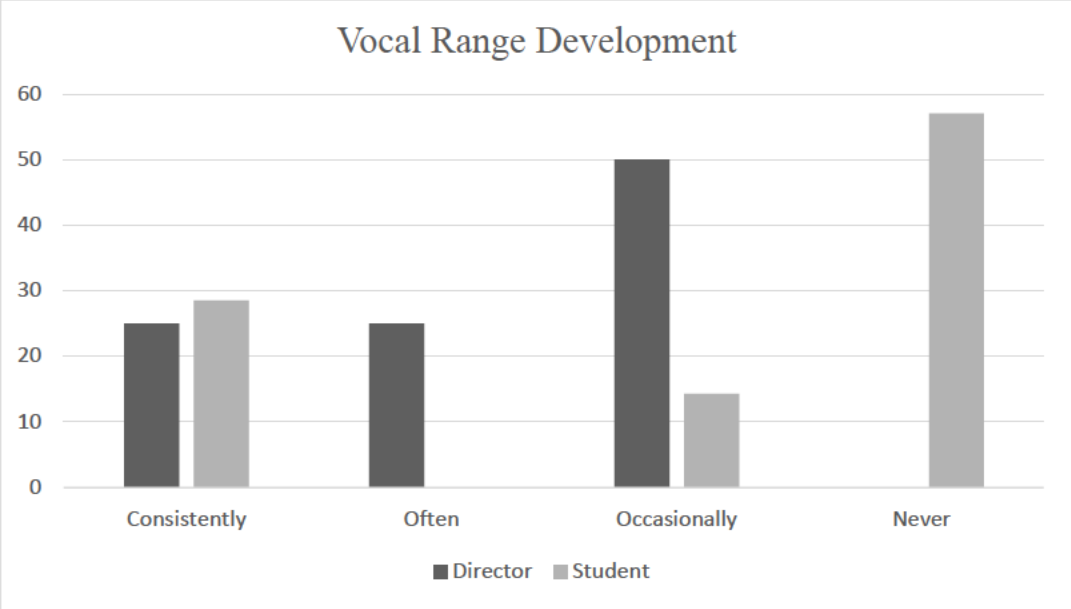
Response Comparison

After comparing the responses of the teachers and students regarding facilitating vocal range development in rehearsal, a difference of opinion was realized in the impression of the shared experiences. Of the four directors whose students participated in

the study, two directors said they occasionally worked student vocal ranges, one said they often did, and one said they consistently did. As illustrated in Figure 6, the students' answers differed considerably; four students stated they never worked on their vocal ranges, one said they occasionally did, and two said they consistently did.

Figure 6

Vocal Range Development: Director/Student Response Comparison



Although the impression of the students regarding vocal range development could differ from the directors because of a lack of understanding of pedagogy, the majority of students did not understand the difference between head and chest voice or had never heard the terms before. After I explained and demonstrated the two voice registers, some students said they never accessed their head voices in rehearsal although their teacher said they did. The students who said they accessed their head voice in rehearsal were also the ones who sang with the least amount of tension on higher notes.

Repertoire

Flood chose music which he felt had a good spiritual message, but he also looked for the opportunity to choose music which allowed for vocal range expansion into the head voice. He specifically mentioned choosing music that might go as high as the "G above middle C." All of the members of the repertoire committee found the range to be limited in all of the repertoire from Bilyeu Heights. They further determined that the consistent syncopated and busy rhythmic phrases left little room for development of the voice. Pennington-Bass stated:

> The repertoire from Bilyeu Heights sits very low for the female singer, rarely going above an A4, thus not allowing the sopranos, especially, to explore their upper range. The altos often have a limited four – five note range in these songs, and would easily get used to singing in their full chest voice, limiting their ability to access their upper register.

The committee expressed concern that the repertoire at Bilyeu Heights would encourage young singers to sing in an unhealthy, pushed chest voice, and that the singer would never have the opportunity to explore the beauty of their head voice. Because of the limited vocal range of the pieces, the female adolescent would most likely only use their chest voice singing these pieces of this genre. The students might never learn to lighten their chest voices as they explore higher notes, and as a result could develop bad technique while singing.

Godwin chose multigenerational music which was specially arranged for use with children and/or youth choirs and adult choirs and distributed by Lifeway or Word music

publishers. The staff at The Towers was in the process of building the multigenerational aspect of their worship services, and they found these pieces worked well for their ministry. The repertoire committee was pleased that the music allowed for sopranos to venture into their head voice by permitting an occasional C5 or D5, however, they were still concerned about the overall low tessitura of the music. El-Khouri expressed, "There are moments of head voice singing available for voices; however, the extended moments of extended lower register would encourage singers to press their voices in a less than healthy manner." Regardless, the adolescent singer would likely become aware of their upper register through singing the higher notes and having to choose their chest or head voice.

Johnson (Freedom) selected repertoire and then his staff arranged the music in what he called a "good range" for his singers. He stated, "There might be a song that's real cool and everybody likes, but we've been known to drop it a third or fourth if we have to." They attempted to make sure it was "not too high" for the sopranos and altos. The repertoire from Freedom caused some concern with the repertoire committee. One reviewer stated that only professional studio musicians could accurately and healthily sing the arrangements. The low tessitura and lack of healthy vocal range encouraged one committee member to state, "The repertoire from Freedom sets in a vocal range where the female adolescent basically explores a non-adventurous five-note range at any one time on a given piece."

Young (Tyree River) utilized Praise Charts arrangements. The repertoire was CCM which was available in lead sheet,[18] chord chart,[19] and full orchestration format. Young used lead sheets with the youth choir, sometimes allowing for simple harmonies. She carefully chose the pieces for the message of the song, and considered vocal range, but that was not necessarily a priority. The repertoire offered moments for legato singing in extended phrase passages, however, the melodic line rarely ventured past B4 or C5. The committee recognized that while the range was more appropriate, the tessitura was too low to offer extended opportunity for vocal growth. Schwoebel stated, "The repertoire from Tyree River is not fully set in a vocal range to optimize the voice of the female adolescent."

Simon (Hanchey Ridge) stated that he took great care to choose repertoire written for children's voices to use with his youth choir. He considered range an important factor in choosing music. The committee agreed that the vocal range of this repertoire was not only too low for youth voices, but it was also too low for the children's voices for which it was written. With a tessitura of C4 to G4, the music offered little or no opportunity for vocal range development or growth. Schwoebel stated that, "Limitations of vocal range in the design of this music is detrimental to the long-term development and success of the singer."

Good (Clarktown) focused on vocal range primarily when choosing repertoire. Because the personnel of her group varied each year, she stated that she must choose

[18] Music that has the melody written on a staff with chord names placed above.
[19] The lyrics to a piece of music with chord changes written above the words.

music that is accessible to the voices and enables vocal growth. The committee voiced favorable opinions regarding Clarktown's youth choir music. The repertoire had larger vocal ranges and higher tessituras than repertoire from all other churches. In their opinion, Good had chosen excellent music which could then be used as an exceptional medium to facilitate vocal range development in rehearsal. The committee expressed that students rehearsing and performing this repertoire would experience on-going musical and vocal growth.

Repertoire Vocal Range Disagreement

Although the youth choir directors of each church expressed a desire to select appropriate repertoire for their students, they had not succeeded when vocal range development is considered. With reference to Figure 5, five of the six directors interviewed mentioned range as a consideration when choosing repertoire; however, five of the six churches' repertoire was found to be lacking in vocal range development by the committee. Except for Clarktown, the committee members expressed concern regarding the repertoire from the other churches. The limited vocal range, the small tessitura, and the lack of notes leading to head voice accessibility failed to allow for female adolescent voice range development as outlined by Gackle (2011).

Gackle (2011) suggested following a set of specific guidelines when planning rehearsals with female adolescents. Successful rehearsals include moments that address vocal elements, musical and expressive elements, and physical techniques. These items could be interwoven into the warm-ups, and/or addressed through the repertoire. By including methods which allow for vocal growth, a music educator can support the young

singer as they navigate their vocal change. None of the directors in this study were familiar with Gackle or her suggestions for improvement of rehearsals with the female adolescent voice.

As discussed earlier, COVID-19 impacted my ability to observe choral rehearsals. As a substitute for rehearsal observation, I asked each director to complete the rehearsal assessment protocol that I had intended to utilize myself during my observations. The students were also asked questions that addressed these same concerns regarding their experiences during rehearsal. The following sections include discussion of the data collected from the rehearsal protocol and interviews conducted via Google Meet and Zoom. The information below includes data from the directors of the four churches who also had students who participated in the research.

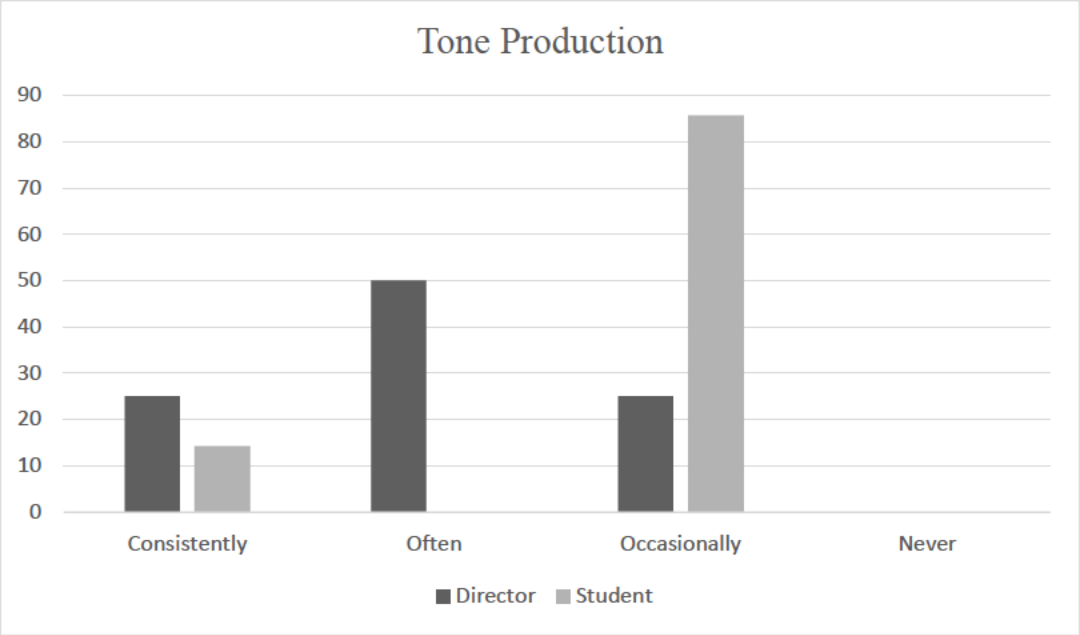
Tone Production

Tone production for the female adolescent voice should be free from tension, resonant and in-tune (Gackle, 2011). Johnson (Freedom) commented that he rehearsed to create a relaxed tone in his singers. He stated that he "likes to get up in front of them and wave his hands" to encourage relaxed tone. Simon (Hanchey Ridge) concentrated on what he called the "limited capabilities" of the female singers in his youth choir. He expressed concern that the young singers were incapable of producing good tone in their adolescent years. As illustrated in Figure 7, the responses differed greatly between the directors and the students regarding tone production practiced in rehearsal. One director stated they occasionally address it during rehearsals, while one stated consistently, and two stated often. Six of the students stated that they occasionally address tone production

in rehearsal, while one mentioned they do it consistently.

Figure 7

Tone Production: Director/Student Response Comparison



None of the students understood the term tone production, and one understood tone to indicate the pitch of the note played on a piano. After explanation and demonstration, the students all said there were times when tone was addressed in rehearsal; however, this was not a primary focus in rehearsal in their opinion. Almost all of the directors mentioned their work in tone in regard to "ah" sounds or taller vowels.

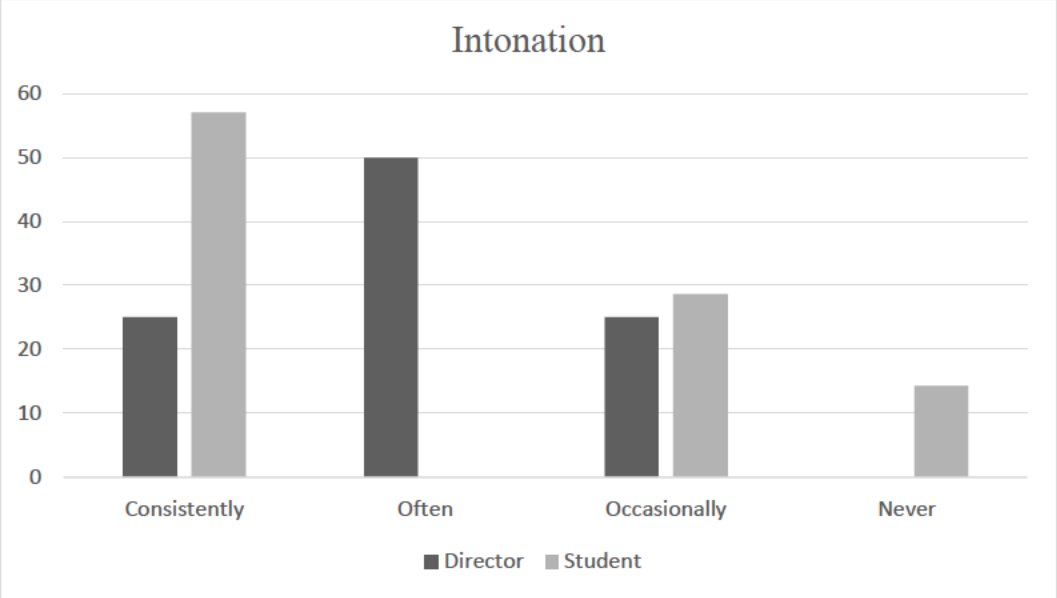
Intonation

While in-tune singing is the result of good tone production, intonation should be addressed not only individually in rehearsal, but also collectively as a group (Gackle, 2011). Intonation involves vocal production and aural recognition working in concert. Figure 8 details the differing responses between each participant. Directors specified

intonation as being important in their rehearsal process. One director stated they occasionally address it during rehearsals, two stated they often address it, and one stated consistently. Over half (four) of students responded that their director addressed intonation in rehearsal consistently. Two replied that intonation is addressed occasionally, while one stated it was never mentioned.

Figure 8

Intonation: Director/Student Response Comparison



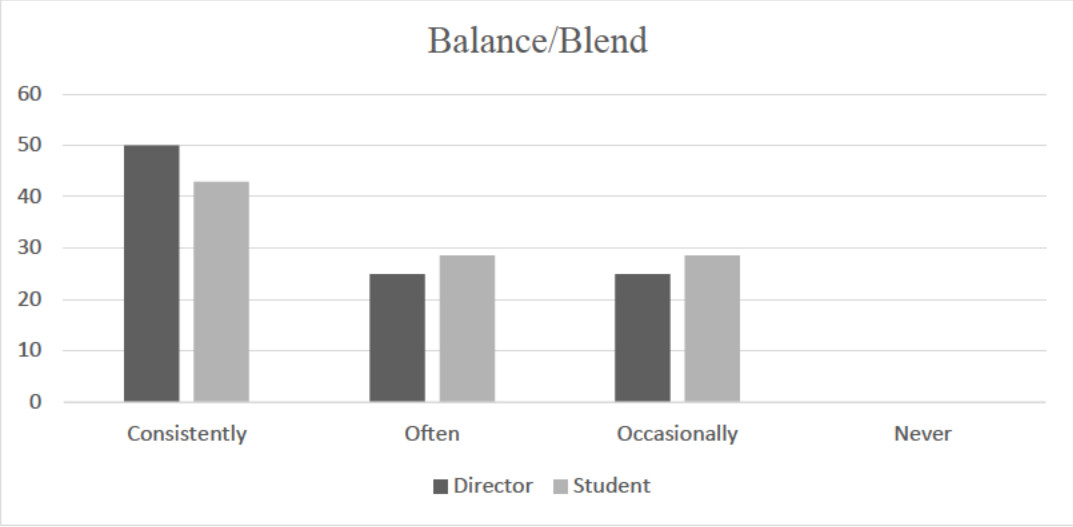
Over half of the students responded that their director addressed intonation in rehearsal. The majority of students did not know what intonation was, but once I described it as "singing in tune," they knew immediately how to answer the question. Overall, the data show that all directors and students, with the exception of one student, feel that intonation was taught in rehearsal.

Balance/Blend

An extension of aural training is understanding the importance of balance and blend in an ensemble. Gackle (2011) has developed multiple ideas for placement of students with different vocal qualities to enhance the ensemble sound and support the students through their vocal development. The technical elements of balance between the different vocal lines and blend between the individual voices and sections can be taught through repertoire, yet balance and blend are important to communicating the expressive elements of the music and text (Gackle, 2011). The data demonstrate that the directors and students are almost in full agreement regarding the instruction of balance and blend in rehearsal which can be seen in Figure 9. Balance and blend were stated as being included in rehearsal consistently by 50% of the directors and 42.9% of the students, often by 25% of the directors and 28.6% of the students, and occasionally by 25% of the directors and 28.6% of the students.

Figure 9

Balance/Blend: Director/Student Response Comparison



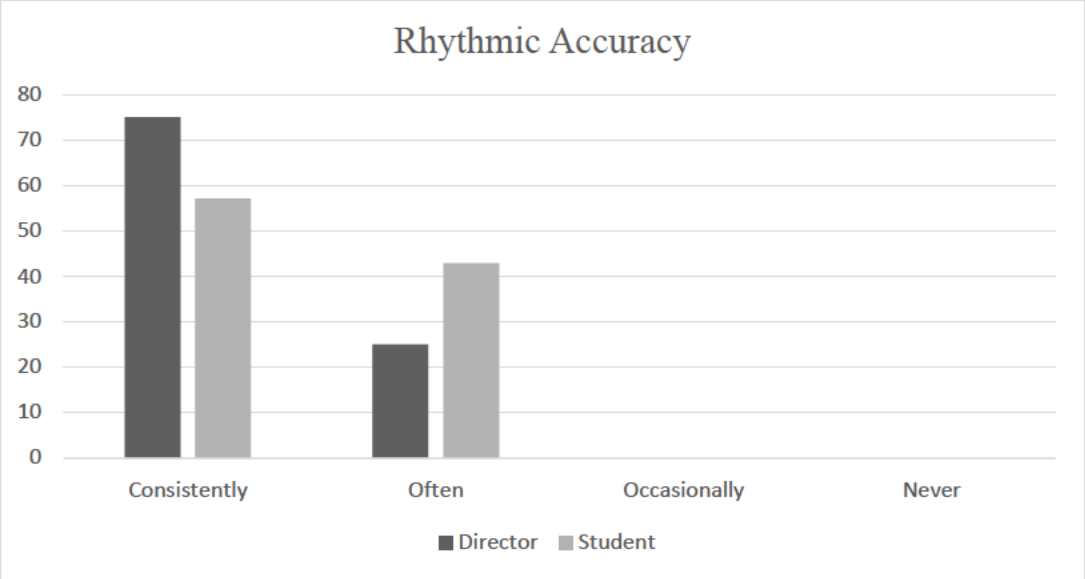
The students and directors were more consistent in their responses for blend and balance being addressed in rehearsal. According to the data, these topics were taught in rehearsal in some form because none of the participants responded that this was never taught. Most of the ensembles were taught mic techniques in order to facilitate leading worship. Part of the balance discussion in rehearsal for these groups was the correct manner to hold a mic so the sound technician could mix the sound and create the correct balance.

Rhythmic Accuracy

Rhythmic accuracy is a technical element which can be important for understanding and communicating the meaning of the text of a piece of music (Gackle, 2011). The CCM performed by all of the youth choirs that had students participate has complicated rhythms with short note durations and frequent syncopation. Figure 10 shows that rhythm is an element which the directors and students stated receives a lot of attention in rehearsal. Three directors address it consistently, and one addresses it often. Four students specified rhythmic accuracy as studied consistently, and three specified often.

Figure 10

Rhythmic Accuracy: Director/Student Response Comparison



Because of the rhythmic complexity of the repertoire examined for this study, the data are not surprising regarding rhythm being taught consistently or often in rehearsal. As mentioned before, the directors considered text and spiritual growth to be a major consideration when choosing music. In order for the message of the lyrics to be clearly communicated to the congregation, it is critical for the rhythm of the words to be precise. During the performances, the students sang difficult rhythms with great accuracy, thereby verifying the data above.

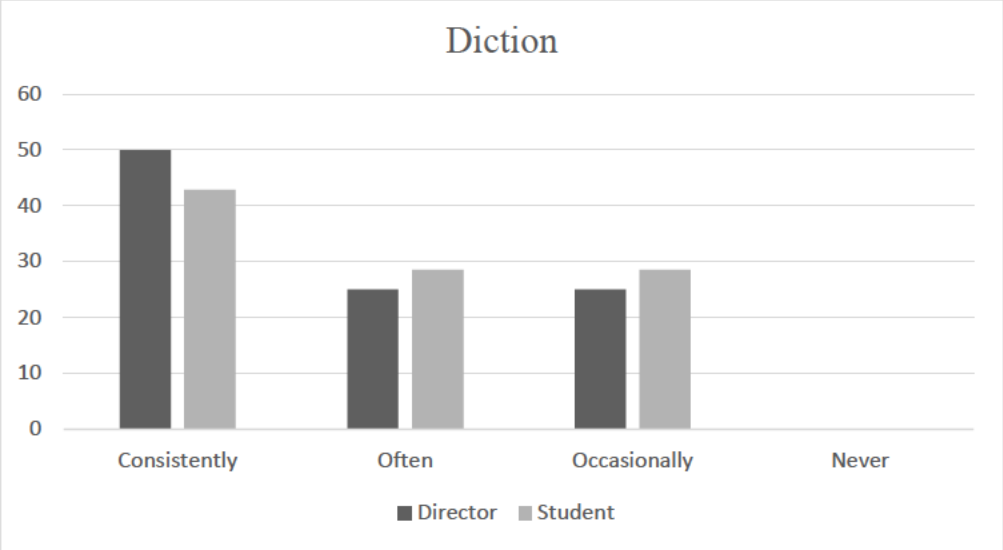
Diction

Whereas rhythmic accuracy is important to help communicate the text, diction is crucial in making sure the meaning of the text is understood (Gackle, 2011). Contemporary Christian Music can include text that can have complex, religious imagery, but CCM also often contains repetitive phrases and syllables. The data in Figure 11 point

to rhythmic accuracy being rehearsed more often than diction in practice. Two directors addressed diction consistently, one often, and one occasionally. The students' responses aligned with the directors, three stated diction was discussed consistently, 2 often, and 2 occasionally.

Figure 11

Diction: Director/Student Response Comparison



When comparing the rhythm data with the diction data, it is interesting to note in regards to the director and student responses that rhythm was addressed more often in rehearsal than diction. Considering again that the message of the text was a primary focus for the directors, one might expect diction to be rehearsed more than rhythm.

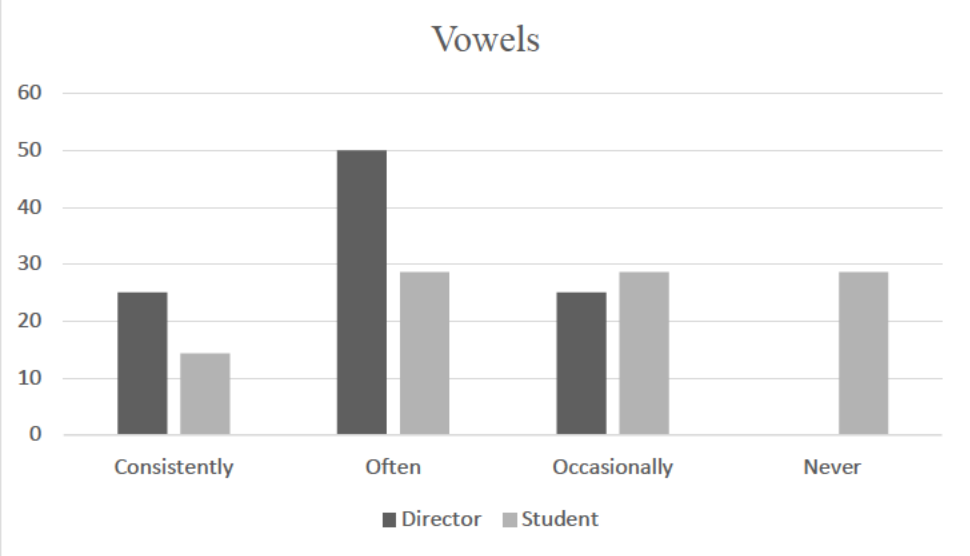
Vowels

In order to achieve blend as an ensemble, Gackle (2011) argued that vowel unification must be rehearsed in warm-ups and repertoire. Singing long, legato lines allows the educator and singer to focus on the vowel sounds, and ultimately the quality of

sound of the ensemble. As noted in Figure 12, the directors and students had differing opinions regarding the rehearsal of vowels in practice. 25% of directors and 14.3% of students stated that vowels were addressed in rehearsal consistently, 50% of directors, and 28.6% of students stated often, 25% of directors, and 28.6% of students stated occasionally, and 28.6% of students stated never. Students mentioned that practicing consonants seemed more important than practicing vowels in rehearsal.

Figure 12

Vowels: Director/Student Response Comparison



Rehearsing vowels can be less noticeable to the student then rehearsing consonants because consonants help drive the rhythmic intensity of a piece. A director might say, "drop your jaw" to create a taller vowel sound, but the student might not know that was the purpose of the direction. Although all the directors stated they addressed vowels in rehearsal, the majority of students stated directors never or only occasionally addressed vowels. This disparity may because of the students' lack of understanding of

the vocal pedagogy used by the directors in their choral rehearsal.

Dynamics and Tempo

Stylistic elements such as dynamics and tempo are part of the expressive elements that communicate the composer's musical intention and the relay the meaning of the lyricist's poetry (Gackle, 2011). The youth choirs involved in the research used performance tracks or live accompaniment in concert. The tempo and dynamics were preset on the prerecorded track. Some choirs were accompanied by a live praise band which utilized a click track to maintain the tempo. The directors followed the tempi and dynamics of the tracks, or they directed their live band to follow the professional recorded tempi and dynamics. Students misunderstood the idea of tempo and related it to rushing entrances or cutting of the ends of phrases too soon. Six out of seven students cited that their directors have mentioned dynamics in rehearsal, but none of the seven singers performed utilizing varying dynamics as noted in Figure 13.

As Figure 14 shows, the dynamics comparison between the directors and students revealed similarities, with two directors stating they often rehearsed dynamics, one consistently, and one occasionally. Three students indicated dynamics are discussed often, two consistently, one occasionally, and one never. The discussion regarding tempo was markedly dissimilar. Two directors discuss tempo consistently, one occasionally, and one never. The students, as a whole, cited that directors discussed tempo more than the directors believe they do. Two students indicated their directors consistently mentioned tempo, two often, and three occasionally.

Figure 13

Dynamics: Director/Student Response Comparison

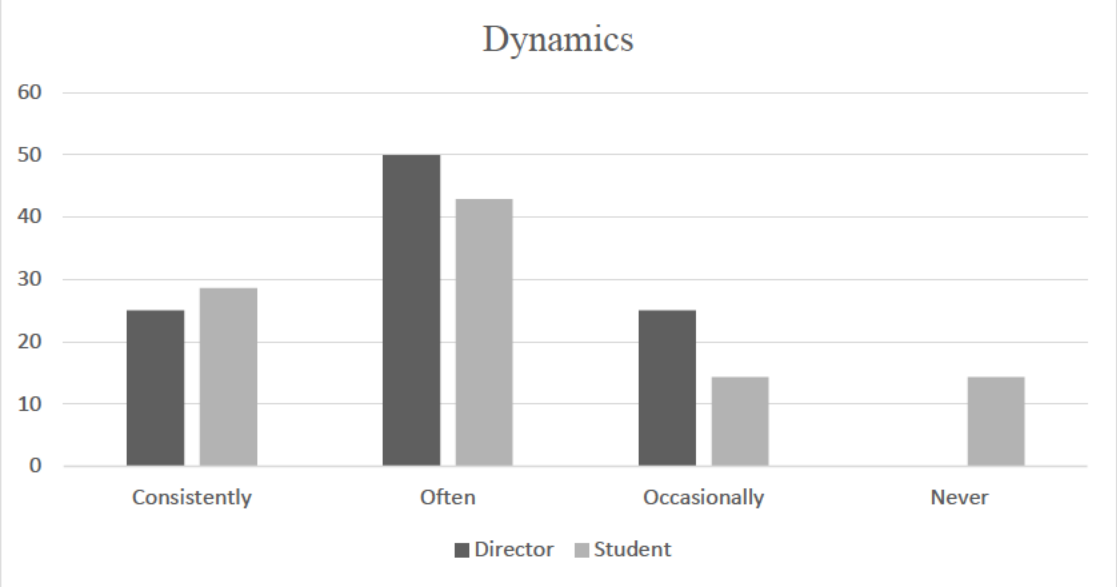
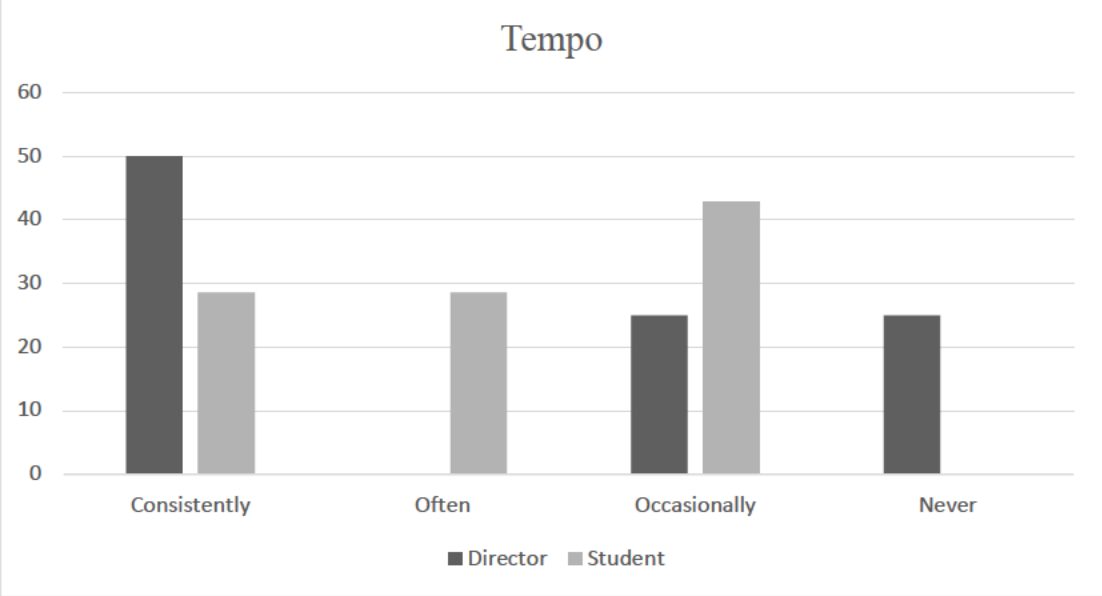


Figure 14

Tempo: Director/Student Response Comparison



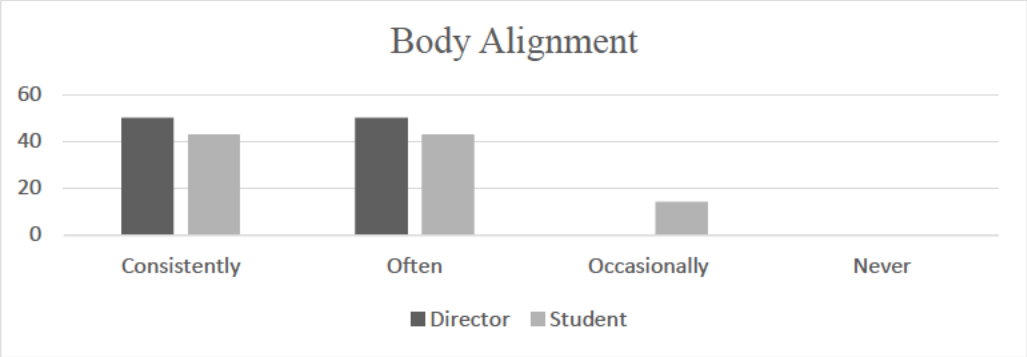
Dynamics and tempo have an unusual place in CCM for youth choirs. As mentioned above, most of the groups used pre-recorded accompaniment or had a live band that followed a click track. Both accompaniment options controlled the tempo, thus somewhat limiting tempo discussions in rehearsal. Directors responded more negatively regarding teaching tempo in rehearsal, with half of them stating that they either never or occasionally taught it. Each group also utilized mics in performance, which allowed a sound technician to control dynamics; however, the students and directors were almost entirely in agreement about dynamics, as the data show.

Body Alignment

Gackle (2011) applies the term body alignment instead of utilizing the word "posture." Posture brings to mind tension and rigidity, while "body alignment refers to the proper placement of the body for singing without the implication of tension" (Gackle, 2011). The students and directors agreed considerably regarding discussing body alignment during rehearsal as shown in Figure 15. Two directors consistently addressed body alignment, and two often addressed it. Three students stated their director consistently discussed body alignment, three stated often, and one occasionally.

Figure 15

Body Alignment: Director/Student Response Comparison



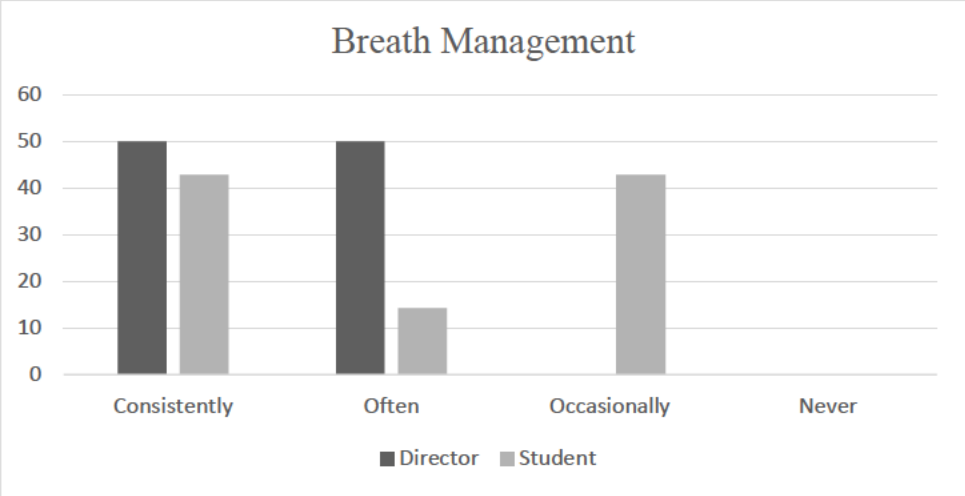
Body alignment, or posture, was addressed in rehearsal by directors as an important part of singing. They told their students that good posture facilitated easier breathing and singing. Students and directors responded that posture was important for rehearsal and performance, and the data show that the discussion and practice of posture was a routine feature of rehearsal.

Breath Management

Gackle (2011) refers to breath management as "breathing for singing." Singers need a basic understanding of breathing for singing in order to sustain long phrases and maintain consistent tone production. The majority of the CCM repertoire reviewed for this study contained shorter phrases, and as a result, discussions of breathing might not have been as frequent. The directors and students disagreed on how often the topic is discussed in rehearsal. As shown in Figure 16, the directors were split 50/50 between consistently and often. Three students agreed that breath management was discussed consistently, but three also stated that dialogue regarding the topic occurred occasionally. One student stated it occurred often.

Figure 16

Breath Management: Director/Student Response Comparison



As mentioned previously, CCM does not require substantial breath support for long phrases because most pieces have short phrases. Sentences in lyrics are commonly broken into several mini-phrases separated by rests. All subjects stated that breath management was taught in rehearsal, but the directors expressed that breathing exercises were a routine part of rehearsal. Students agreed; however, they were split between the exercises being consistently or occasionally utilized in rehearsal.

Out of the ten comparisons, the students and directors generally agreed on five topics, and disagreed on five. Except for body alignment, the foundational techniques for vocal production (tone production and breath management), and important singing skills (vowels and intonation) created significant disagreement between the directors and students. The students stated their directors had not addressed these items in rehearsal as often as the directors stated. Because I was not able to complete rehearsal observations due to COVID-19, I am unable to determine if the disparity in their answers was due to

different viewpoints, or if there were other mitigating reasons for the disagreement.

2. How and to what extent, if any, does the repertoire used by youth choirs in the SBC adhere to or diverge from the pedagogical guidelines for repertoire selection as outlined by Gackle (2011)?

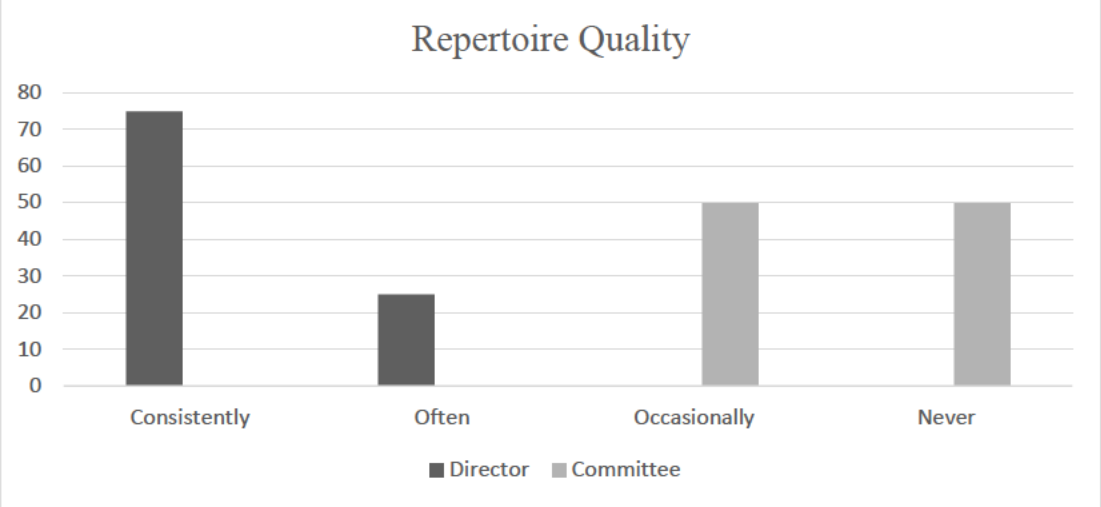
Gackle (2011) detailed key elements to study when choosing repertoire for the female adolescent voice. The youth choir directors and repertoire committee members were asked to evaluate the repertoire performed by the youth choirs in the study by applying Gackle's (2011) framework to the music. The five elements reviewed were the overall quality of the repertoire, the age-appropriateness of the text, the likelihood the music facilitates vocal development, the experience with various styles/cultures/genres, and the prospect of encouragement in musical development.

Repertoire Quality

According to Gackle (2011), repertoire for the female adolescent voice should be selected with great care and concern to nurture the developing, young voice. After I spoke with both participants and committee members, the disparity in their respective opinions became apparent. As shown in Figure 17, the youth choir directors overwhelmingly believed their repertoire was consistently or often good in quality of construction and composition. The committee disagreed by declaring two of the churches' music as never, and two as occasionally, of good quality.

Figure 17

Repertoire Quality: Director/Committee Response Comparison



By the time the repertoire committee began reviewing the music from the third church, they experienced difficulty filling out the "Repertoire Assessment Protocol" (Appendix F). They expressed frustration about being "too harsh" and "not wanting to make people look bad." As the data show, the group's responses were in complete contrast with the director's responses. Though each committee member filled out the protocol for each piece individually, they were in the same room. After a brief discussion, the group came to the conclusion that they needed to be completely honest and not "spare feelings." I felt it was important to not interject myself into the conversation, and I ultimately agreed with their outcome because the study could only be successful if they were candid.

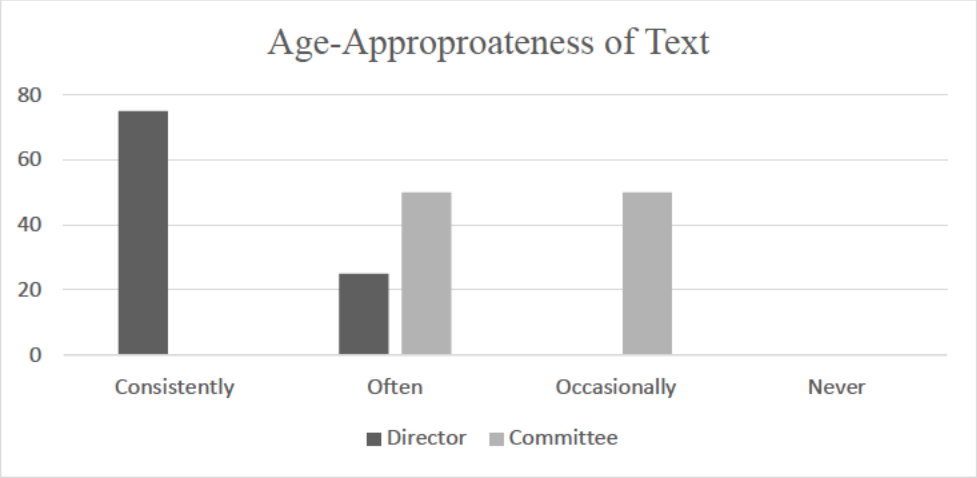
Age-Appropriateness of Text

Quality lyrics open opportunities for discussion and contemplation in rehearsal, thus the importance of choosing text which is appropriate for the age group is paramount.

Selecting lyrics which students might not understand could cause confusion if not presented or coached properly. The repertoire committee found some selections of the CCM youth choir music studied trite and repetitive, and furthermore possessing mature themes of failure and hopelessness. Two churches often used age-appropriate lyrics, and two performed occasionally. Three directors stated music was consistently age-appropriate, and one posited often. Figure 18 shows the disparity between the committee and director responses.

Figure 18

Age-Appropriateness Text: Director/Committee Response Comparison



The directors spoke of their desire to choose quality music with spiritually appropriate lyrics. Their answers point to their desire to choose text that would not only glorify God, but would also edify the students' souls. The committee understood that this was their desire, but they stated that some of the themes (i.e., suicide) addressed in the lyrics were too mature for the younger adolescent singers. The committee also argued that the lyrics should have been more founded in scripture and less founded in self. While

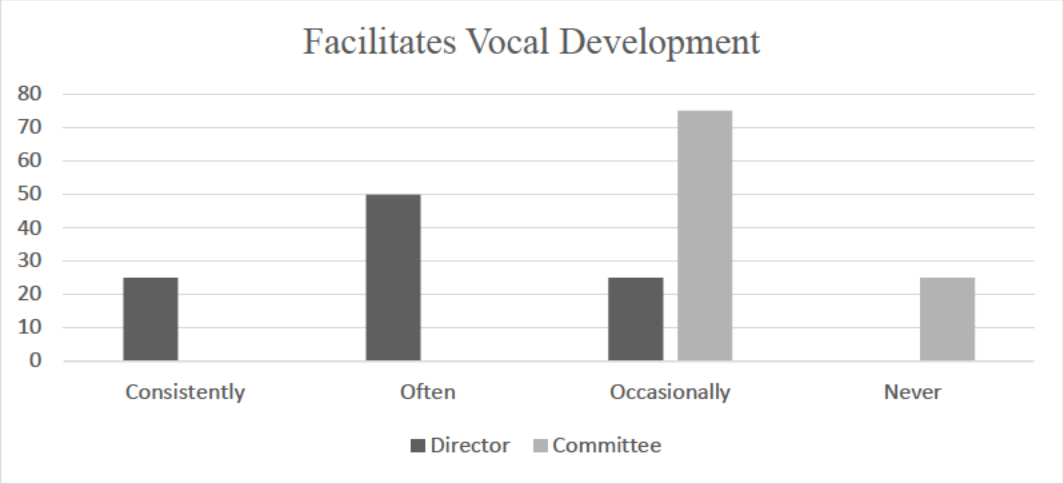
singing about "self" was not an issue in Gackle's (2011) research, the committee's recommendation was to choose text that glorified God and not self. They further expressed that text should be of good quality and founded in quality literature. Together, these committee recommendations suggest the importance of lyrics that are based in scripture. Gackle (2011) stated that quality texts enlighten the mind of the singer and offer opportunity for emotional and mental growth.

Facilitates Vocal Development

Because the female voice is evolving during adolescence, repertoire should support vocal changes that might occur (Gackle, 2011). A major concern for the committee was the vocal range of the arrangements they reviewed. Discussion regarding the low tessitura of the repertoire controlled the discussion, and their responses regarding the music epitomized the conversation. Figure 19 shows how music from three churches occasionally facilitate vocal development, and one never. The directors differed in opinion; one director stated consistently, one occasionally, and two often.

Figure 19

Facilitates Vocal Development: Director/Committee Response Comparison



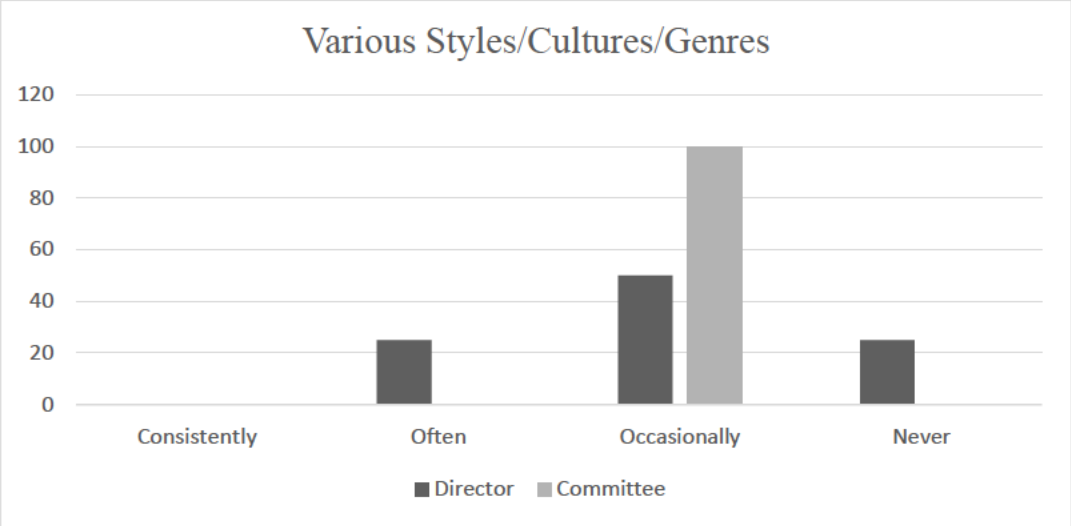
Overall, the directors stated that they had chosen music that would work well with young, female singers. However, the repertoire committee stated that the CCM music they examined was not conducive for female adolescent vocal development. The rating of occasionally was their highest rating, but it came with the caveat of "if taught correctly," meaning that some parts of the music could facilitate vocal development if the director was familiar with how to work with the female adolescent voice.

Various Style/Cultures/Genres

Exposing singers to repertoire of differing styles, cultures, and genres, supports a thorough music education, and develops an understanding of the relationship between music and history (Gackle, 2011). The directors and committee members recognized the opportunity to introduce a variety of music of different styles/cultures/genres in a church youth choir might be hindered by the lack of availability of religiously relevant music arrangements for each church situation and ideology as shown in Figure 20. Two directors identified the repertoire as occasionally offering opportunities for stylistic/cultural/genre exposure, one never, and one occasionally. The committee responded that all repertoire occasionally offered the opportunity for such experience.

Figure 20

Various Styles/Cultures/Genres: Director/Committee Response Comparison



The primary focus of directors was to choose music that would be appropriate for the worship services for which they sang, and, for the most part, the committee and the directors were aware that the limitations put on directors by the requirements for worship services could affect repertoire choice. The Senior Pastor of the church in the Southern Baptist Convention most often would have an opinion about what music was chosen. If CCM is the genre which is familiar to the congregation at a church, then CCM is what the youth choir would be expected to perform. These constraints made it very difficult for there to be a mixture of musical styles, as the data show.

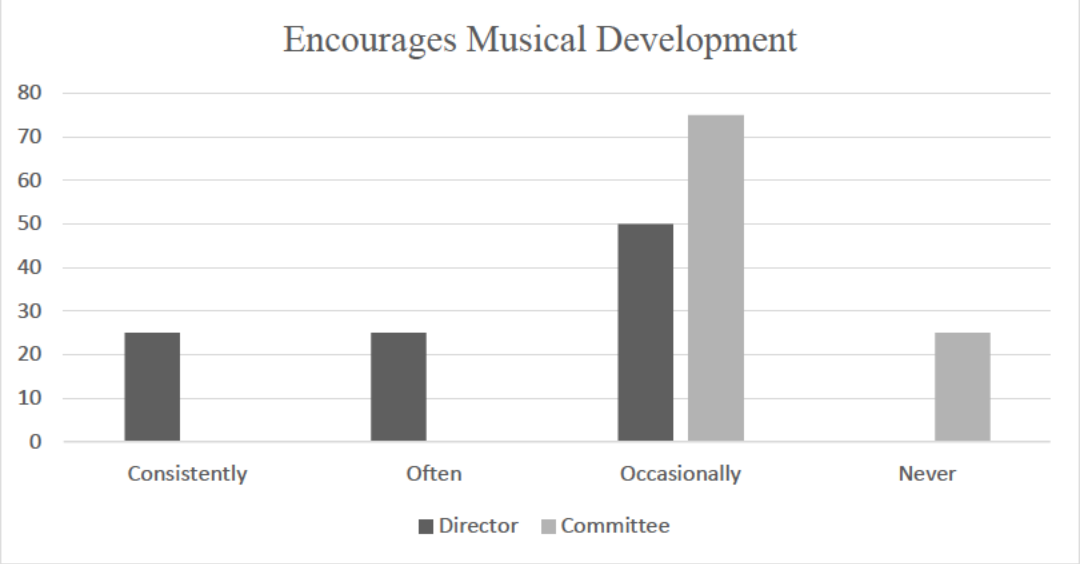
Encourages Musical Development

Gackle (2011) identified *Musical* Development as an important element to consider when choosing repertoire for the female adolescent voice. Repertoire which provides the opportunity for a student to develop artistry through and in their singing is

paramount for musical growth. The directors understandably expressed a desire for their students to primarily develop spiritually. While the committee members agreed spiritual growth was important, they expressed the viewpoint of choosing music that accomplished *both* spiritual and musical growth. Figure 21 shows that two directors stated the repertoire occasionally encourages musical development, one often, and one consistently, while the committee reported one church's repertoire never, and three occasionally.

Figure 21

Encourages Musical Development: Director/Committee Response Comparison



The repertoire committee stated that they believed that youth choir directors chose music that would not only be spiritually edifying, but would also challenge students musically. However, the data show disagreement between the directors and committee regarding CCM's ability to encourage musical development. Because the CCM they reviewed rarely utilized dynamics or expressive markings, the directors would need to create the markings and train the students how to perform them. It was unclear whether

the directors actually added expressive markings to their music; however, the directors did follow the tempi of the pre-recorded backing tracks and click tracks that they used in performance.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided data explaining the rehearsal experiences of directors and students in the SBC youth choir. Data showed that directors consistently or often stated they were addressing appropriate vocal techniques in rehearsal, while students stated they were occasionally, or sometimes never, addressing them in rehearsal. This chapter also provided data comparing the repertoire committee's view and the directors' views regarding the music used in youth choir rehearsal. Overwhelmingly, the repertoire committee stated the music used in rehearsal was not conducive for female adolescent vocal growth, while the directors reported that it was. The next chapter will provide further discussion and implications from these findings.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

As addressed in the first two chapters of this dissertation, Gackle (2011) and Sweet (2018) pointed to the importance of individuals working with the female adolescent voice having an understanding of vocal pedagogy. Instructing adolescents when one does not possess an understanding of the changes affecting young singers could be damaging not only to the voices, but also the mind and spirit of young singers (Hall, 2010). Furthermore, a lack of understanding of the correct vocal ranges of the adolescent female voice, and the knowledge of how to identify the correct vocal range in a young singer, may contribute to vocal distress in a singer (Lycke et al., 2010).

The purpose of this collective case study was to investigate the pedagogical practices and repertoire used by youth choir directors in SBC youth choir rehearsals. In order for youth choir leaders to provide a meaningful choral experience for their students, they could benefit from having a comprehensive knowledge of the development of the adolescent voice, knowing how to assess the individual nature and ability of each student, being able to select repertoire that is developmentally appropriate for the singer, and educating themselves in the best methods and techniques for training adolescents (see Gackle, 2011).

The participants in this study expressed their desire to worship their Lord with excellence. Throughout the study I noted the care with which they thoughtfully answered my questions, and their desire to honor their church in their participation. Following the discussion below, I offer conclusions and implications from this study that are intended to inform future practices of CCM choir directors in ways that may support female

adolescent voice development.

Discussion

Even though the worship pastors in this study each had decades of experience with working with voices, they admitted to having no training in pedagogy of the adolescent voice, and all of them had limited training in choral music. As a result, they may have been unable to pass on developmentally appropriate vocal knowledge to their young singers. Some directors in this study asked singers to adjust their vowel sounds/shapes in order to create a desired sound, similar to directors in Kempfer's (2014) who lacked an understanding of vocal pedagogy. In both instances, the vowel shape correction was being used to correct what was an underlying physiological issue which needed correction instead. Additionally, the worship pastors (Johnson, Flood, and Simon) in the current study had a degree in worship leading, which is only partially about music; however, in most cases, the degree did not include education about the voice. This is similar to the majority of worship leaders in Ravall and Simberg (2020), who also each had a degree in worship leading. Godwin from Tower Baptist had experience as a singer and did not have any experience in music education, which correlates with findings of Ravall and Simberg (2020) whose study included participants who were cantors or singers with an unrelated university degree or without a music education degree. The youth choir directors in my study had more training than the worship leaders in Neto and Meyer (2017). In that study, only 13.8% of the respondents have a degree in worship leading. Even though that degree does not always include training in the voice, those worship leaders were still expected to lead the musical

worship portion of services at churches.

Most of my participants said they supported their breath in their stomach, chest, or throat. This might imply that the students lacked a foundational knowledge of the physiology of the voice. These findings align with research by Hall (2010), who concluded that many choral educators of adolescents do not possess a complete understanding of the physiological changes affecting young singers, and as a result might have difficulty with instruction. Similarly, in working with the adolescent voice, Hill (2019) stated, "Many conductors lack real knowledge about the anatomical set-up for voice production…this is a special age group in light of the physical, spiritual and musical development that transpires during these years" (p. 794). For youth choir leaders the need for training in vocal pedagogy may be particularly strong; Hendricks (2012) discovered that only two universities in the 12 studied required future worship leaders to enroll in a course in vocal music education, leaving most future youth choir leaders without the proper education to support and train their singers. Additionally, the participants in a study by Ravall and Simberg (2020) had limited knowledge in the physiology and operation of the voice. About 1/3 of the participants in this study misunderstood what supporting one's sound meant, including saying that one's stomach muscles stretch to produce support.

My research did not provide evidence to suggest that an education in CCM and classical vocal training was necessary for the vocal health of students; however, it did point to a need for youth choir leaders to have some training in vocal health. While the majority of the music was CCM, the leaders were largely unaware of the capabilities and

limitations of the female adolescent voice, and as a result did not know the best techniques and repertoire to utilize in rehearsal. In Tepe et al. (2002), 31% of the singers stated that they had over-sung in the past, and 43% stated they had experience vocal strain while singing. Many of my participants stated that they experienced vocal stress when carrying their chest voice higher in their range or after rehearsal was finished. Meredith at Freedom Baptist expressed that she often would leave rehearsal with a strained voice, and that she would sing through pain because it was important for the performance. Meredith mentioned that their week-long tour was particularly taxing on her voice, and she believed it was acceptable for the voice to become hoarse during tour. Furthermore, her director, Tom Johnson, stated that the tour in which his youth choir participated was the cause of vocal health issues for his singers. He stated that his staff always tried to be mindful of the health of the voices, but that they were not always successful. The process to sustain vocal health included encouraging students not to scream on busses, to talk in a normal voice when not singing, and not to sing "too hard." He stated his goal was "to prevent them from screeching and scratching their voice, their vocal cords." In Daugherty et al. (2015), students accepted a decline in vocal quality as their new "normal." This could point to other singers accepting vocal issues as satisfactory.

Training and Repertoire

Although all six directors in this study desired to be excellent educators for their singers, none were informed about the specific techniques for supporting the female adolescent voice. All of them pointed to their music education in college, their

experience, or their training singing with touring groups, as the extent of the preparation they received for working with youth choirs. Only one expressed the need to further educate himself in the training of young singers. The three male directors in my study detailed a deficit in their education in regards to the female adolescent voice. Similar to Draut (in Mercado and Draut, 2023) they reported feeling more comfortable working with male adolescent voices than female adolescent voices. Even in cases where teachers receive vocal training (such as in Smith-Vaughan, 2007), misunderstandings and differences in knowledge of the adolescent voice can lead to vocal tension.

Sweet (2018) purported that teachers should be aware of vocal health in order to educate their students. All of the youth leaders in the current study expressed a desire to help their singers; however, most did not know exactly how to achieve this goal. The youth leaders were not applying accepted good practices for vocal health (singing in comfortable ranges, warm-ups, water intake, etc.). This could point to a lack of education in how to maintain vocal health and how to teach vocal health. The worship pastors mentioned they had not studied vocal health in college or said they could not remember because it was so long ago. They stated that lack of time in their work schedules was a prohibitive factor in educating themselves on vocal health.

All but one director chose repertoire that was found by the repertoire committee to be inappropriate for their choirs. Furthermore, the majority of the directors stated that they considered vocal range as a primary concern when choosing music, but all of the repertoire except from one director was found by the repertoire committee to be in inappropriate ranges for the singers. All of the directors in the study expressed a lack of

resources and/or time as a deterrent to selecting repertoire. Their struggle to find time in their daily schedule relates to Hill (2019) who found that "Selecting suitable repertoire for the group based on this knowledge (of adolescent voices), is perhaps an art as well as a skill that takes considerable time and energy outside formal rehearsal time" (p. 802). Choir leaders who spend quality time outside of rehearsal choosing appropriate repertoire can help their singers grow.

Some students in my study expressed that they did not or could not sing higher notes, and their directors also stated that they did not incorporate range extending warm-ups in their rehearsals. The limited range of these participants, and the lack of range extending warm-ups, is reflective of research by Mercado and Draut (2023), where researchers utilized warm-ups that were designed to explore the entire range of the singers' voices. Some of their participants discovered they had a larger range than they originally believed.

Age-appropriate repertoire is important to engage the mind and spirit of the young singer and for training the young voice (Gackle, 2011). In 2012, choral composer Stephen Leek stated that when choosing repertoire, "Young voices do not necessarily have the same sort of stamina that adult voices do, so this needs to be taken into consideration" (as cited in Hill, 2019, p. 793). Andrews (2022) detailed the current state of music in the SBC, including worship leaders and a small praise ensemble/band performing only CCM in worship services. The directors in the current study were likely at a disadvantage because the repertoire available to them from CCM publishing companies was not vetted by a panel of educated and experienced professionals. For example, as detailed in

Rawls's (1998) research, the SBC ceased to produce a hierarchical curriculum that was created for each singing age group and to aid ministers of music to choose appropriate repertoire. As a result, Rawls (1998) reported that the educational quality of SBC repertoire has declined.

Contemporary Christian Music

Directors in my study expressed a desire to help their singers be successful in singing in the CCM style; however, all of the male directors stated that their level of understanding the capabilities and limitations of the female adolescent voice were not to the level they wanted. Further, although the three female directors possessed a better understanding, only one (Linda Good at Clarktown Baptist) chose CCM music in a range appropriate for the female adolescent voice. The CCM music utilized by the directors from the other churches was pitched in a range that did not allow the adolescent voice to explore its potential, and the students' vocal health suffered in some instances because of this. All other directors utilized resources available to them from the evangelical publishers most commonly used by the SBC denomination, so they were utilizing the repertoire available to them. The male directors stated that they did not want to choose music that was too high because they believed their female adolescents were incapable of singing above a C5. The repertoire available to them from the popular publishers did not provide the female adolescents the opportunity to sing above C5 in most arrangements.

In the SBC youth choir, transposing music to a comfortable range for singers could be a starting point, especially for those directors who do not possess a thorough knowledge of the female adolescent voice. It is possible that, had these directors been

aware of the capabilities of the female voice, they might have made adjustments to the arrangements to help their singers fully develop. By doing so, the youth leaders could help their young singers access their full vocal range. As Burburan (2020) stated, “By becoming more relevant and incorporating vocal best practices specific to genre, choral music educators may help ensemble members have a foundation of healthy singing regardless of genre, so that upon graduation they have the ability to make music for life, regardless of genre” (p. 215).

Vocal Issues

The singers in my study experienced trouble accessing higher notes, hoarseness, trouble navigating through the passaggio, and discomfort in the throat after singing in choir. These same vocal issues were experienced by the singers in research by Sharma and Devadas (2021). The singers in that study had limited knowledge when it came to the risk factors that could contribute to vocal issues. A vast majority of them, 88.4%, reported they experienced two or more vocal issues while or after singing. Additionally, 51.5% of the singer in Rosa and Behlau (2017) exhibited vocal issues while singing in their community choirs. The singers who identified themselves as soprano in my study were singing vocal lines that were pitched in the alto or tenor range. Some singers found the vocal ranges of the repertoire to be uncomfortable for their voices. Similarly, the singers in the study by Sharma and Devadas (2021) identified the pitch range of their vocal line as not lining up with their assigned vocal part.

Except for the repertoire from Clarktown Baptist, all other repertoire in my study was pitched in an alto range and never allowed the singers to extend to their soprano

range. Similarly, singers in Sweet's (2018) study were assigned to one vocal part and never got to explore their entire range. Sweet and Parker (2019) suggested that teachers select repertoire that is appropriate for the singers' voices, and if it is not, they suggested that the song be revoiced to fit the singer. As choir directors allow singers to extend to their full range, they will be able to better ascertain the appropriateness of repertoire for that range.

Pastoral Support

The youth choir leaders in the current study spoke in length about pastoral support being an important element of a youth choir program's success. The majority of directors in this study stated that there was a lack of support in one form or another with regard to the youth choir and its place in the church. Five of the directors expressed frustration or sadness in how this lack of support negatively affected the youth choir and worship ministry as a whole. All of the churches in this study had at least a senior pastor, a youth pastor, and a worship pastor/music minister on staff. In four instances, the youth choir director stated that, although the senior pastor supported the youth choir, the youth pastor was not supportive of the youth choir. At Clarktown, the staff suggested not having a youth choir after the long-time music minister left; however, the youth pastor disagreed and supported the decision to maintain the youth choir program at the church. In each situation, there were employees on staff who either did not appear to see the importance of a youth choir program in the spiritual nurturing of youth, or they saw it as a relic of the past. Additionally, the most talented singers were encouraged by the youth pastors to join the praise band instead of the youth choir. As discussed previously, Young stated that, in

the time she had been attending the church, she had never seen any pastors' son or daughter sing as a member of the youth choir. On one hand the pastors would say they wanted all of the youth to sing in the youth choir, but in reality, their own children never sang in the youth choir. Such lack of pastoral commitment was illustrative of the lack of support pastors had overall for the youth choir at their church.

The youth choir leaders in my study expressed a desire to help their young choir members develop, and they each appeared to be doing their best with the knowledge they possessed. However, in the majority of cases, the senior pastors in authority over them limited the choir leader in what the group could perform or even how they could perform. For instance, at Hanchey Ridge Baptist, the youth never sang alone as a featured ensemble. The youth choir always performed with and adult ensemble and were never given the opportunity to lead worship by themselves, which may have limited their growth as future worship leaders. For example, in the field of music education, O'Neill (2006) has argued for the importance of youth-driven activities to not only enhance student youth development but to "establish and guide the next generation" (p. 468). The relative lack of youth worship leader experiences in the current study may have limited the opportunities for these youth to grow in their leadership and subsequent longevity at church.

Needs of the Individual Singer

Singing in Sweet's (2018) study was choir-centric and did not necessarily address the needs of the individual singers, which led to range difficulties for singers who were assigned to one vocal part and never got to regain their entire range. In the current study,

church youth choirs were choir-, worship-, and church-centric. Choir leaders in the study chose repertoire based on sermon topics, religious observances, and requests from the senior pastor. The repertoire selected by the youth choir directors did not allow the singers the opportunity to explore their entire range, but instead kept the singers in an alto range, even if they considered themselves "melody singers" or a "soprano." Participants in my study experienced some of the vocal issues that the singers in Sweet (2018) did, but not all. The most common observed were phonation issues, tension, and air flow efficiency.

One question addressed by Sweet (2018) was, "Are adolescents perceived and treated as a cog in a larger musical ensemble machine or an important contributing member?" (p. 146). In my study, the youth choir and its members were not the focus of any performance; in fact, each leader pointed to the desire for the members of the choir to put all focus onto God. Even when they performed, their contribution to the service was one small part leading to the sermon. Although this may cause students to feel less-important or undervalued, in the church, the role of all members is to work to glorify God over self.

Half of the adults in my study were pastors in the Southern Baptist Church. In the SBC, not only are pastors considered to be in authority, but men (who are the only individuals who can be ordained as pastors) are considered in authority over others in SBCV churches. If a female adolescent were to have questions regarding their voice change, they might be reticent to ask a question (or to question the decisions) of their pastor. Female singers in Sweet's (2018) research expressed trepidation in questioning

their teacher. They trusted the person in authority over them to make the best decisions for them. Worship pastors who desire to help their adolescent singers through their voice change might need to take special care in order to encourage their young female singers so that they feel safe to experiment and explore their vocal range in rehearsal and worship services.

Other Considerations

As the vision of a church changes, so can the duties and requirements of members of staff, including the worship pastor. As SBC church congregations have grown in size, the decision-making groups have decreased in size (Miller, 2006). The vision of a SBC church can be altered by the agreement of the entire staff, a board of elders, or in some cases where the senior pastor has complete autonomy, the vision is altered by one person. In my study, Simon and Johnson stated that their job requirements changed during their tenure at their churches. Simon experienced several pastoral changes in a five-year span, which created confusion and difficulty for all staff members. Johnson was asked to modify the way he presented worship. He was asked to change to a mostly praise band led worship, only utilizing the choir and orchestra for special occasions.

Young and Godwin expressed concern with maintaining their programs because the youth choir seemed to be an afterthought to church staff in comparison to other events in the church life. They used phrases like, “in competition with” and “tacked on” to describe how rehearsal scheduling occurred in relation to other events. The result was that youth choir members either had to skip dinner, stay late on a school night, or split their rehearsal time with another church activity. All of the directors stated that their

rehearsals were not long enough to thoroughly teach the music to their singers; however, their rehearsals were just one part of the busy church schedule, so they all understood there was little that could be done to change the length of rehearsals. In some instances, the directors had to share their students with other youth leaders who were in charge of different activities. The busy schedule sometimes caused friction between leadership, especially if the youth pastor was the person in charge of a conflicting activity.

Finally, despite issues with vocal health pedagogy and conflicting activities, students in my study expressed a love for and a confidence in their singing, and a positivity regarding their learning environment. The students interviewed in my study stated that their youth choir leaders were supportive and were teaching them well. Even though the answers they gave regarding the vocal health pedagogy they were receiving pointed to a deficit in their education, all of the students spoke highly of their teachers and expressed that they enjoyed choir and the choral experience. Students can learn self-confidence through singing and carry this confidence into their everyday just as the students in Parker (2018) did. Singing with other females in different stages of vocal change can help individual students feel that they are not alone in the process. This supportive environment can foster the young singer's confidence and vocal growth (Parker, 2018).

Music Education in Youth Choir

Because the SBC no longer provides a graded curriculum in music (Rawls, 1998), the only source of education in music for adolescents at church is the youth choir director, whether that be a volunteer or a worship pastor. When quality instruction is

given primary focus, excellence is acquired along with quality performance. Benz (1988) recognized that choirs exist to perform and lead worship in services, and expressed concern that the musical performance quality was negatively affected by either poor instruction or by the lack of instruction. According to Benz (1988), when church choir leaders receive appropriate choral training during their studies, they are more qualified to prepare their singers for performance. Similarly, in a study on music education in American Association of Christian Schools, Moore (2005) suggested that nurturing the musical aptitude of young Christian students could help train them to serve and minister through their musical gift as they mature in their faith. Because the SBC, along with other religious organizations, has prioritized performance over education (Garcia, 2013), it appears that young SBC musicians are lacking the education they need in choral music. Furthermore, because of the popularity of rhythm-based or praise band music, there continues to be a decrease in choral music in churches (see Kim, 2014).

Youth Praise Band

When I set out to contact churches in Virginia with youth choirs, I was given a list of 15 churches by the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. Of the 15 churches contacted, nine replied to my initial email. Of those nine churches, all had a youth praise band, but only six had a youth choir. The youth pastor in each of those churches had either started a youth praise band or had carried on the tradition from a former youth pastor. The bands were organized by the youth pastors, and the rehearsals were often in conflict with youth choir rehearsals. The majority of the directors stated that the youth band was a hindrance to the success of their youth choir program because the best and

most confident singers often performed with the band. Furthermore, the youth bands were comprised of three to five singers (male and female) who received no vocal training and were directed by a youth pastor who had no formal vocal or choral training.

Future of Choir

Boss (2011) pointed to the trend of religious universities moving to a worship pastor or a worship leader degree instead of a minister of music degree. Worship pastors might be expected to lead a traditional, blended, or contemporary service; however, they may be only comfortable in one style. This trend, along with declining church membership, availability of volunteers, cost, and relevancy were all factors that Boss (2011) listed as contributing to the decline in choir membership. In my study, all but one of the directors interviewed expressed concern about dwindling numbers in their youth choir, but all considered the youth choir as a training program for future participation in the adult worship team at their church. As stated earlier, Flood said that a flourishing adult choir could not exist without a healthy youth choir program.

Repertoire

Because repertoire choice is an important part of any choral curriculum, its importance cannot be underestimated (see Guth, 2016). In his conversation with renowned choral pedagogue Tom Shelton,[20] Guth (2016) discussed the significance of choosing repertoire that will highlight the choir's vocal range, that possess quality lyrics

[20] Tom Shelton was the President-Elect of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) at the time of the interview, and he also was a well-known composer and educator with decades of experience working with the adolescent voice. Gackle served as President-Elect of ACDA during Shelton's presidency.

appropriate for the age, and that have musical concepts that are educationally suitable for the age. Gackle (2011) stated that youth choir repertoire for the female adolescent voice "exhibits quality in construction and composition (and) facilitates vocal development" (p. 69). The directors in the study stated that they chose quality repertoire for their students. Furthermore, some of the repertoire was published by companies who solely distribute Christian resources, and the repertoire that was reviewed from those companies was published for the adolescent voice. After examining the repertoire, the repertoire committee specified that five of the six churches were utilizing music with inappropriate vocal ranges for the female adolescent voice. Specifically, the committee said that some of these songs were pitched too high for the male voice and too low for the female voice.

Implications

With so many obstacles to youth choir programs in church, the future of youth choir in the SBC church is in question. Pastoral lack of support, competition with youth bands, lack of qualified leadership, and lack of quality repertoire availability all appear related to a decline in youth choir membership. All is not lost, however, and directors who are interested in sustaining youth choir programs may achieve success with their choirs through a renewed focus on training young voices while edifying their souls, including by (a) increasing their knowledge of the adolescent voice, (b) seeking out reputable publishers who have curated music that is conducive to supporting adolescent voices, and (c) finding healthful repertoire or by adjusting current repertoire to fit the capabilities of their singers.

Moore (2005) pointed to the importance of nurturing the musical aptitude and

talent of young students involved in youth choir in order to train them for a future of serving Christ in their church as worship leaders or worshiping congregants. Teachers may be able to lead their students to a richer and deeper understanding of material being studied, while allowing the learner to develop skills to create their own new understandings in the process. For youth church choir leaders, this might of course include delving deep into the text of the music to develop a deeper understanding of God's role in their life and salvation, thus leading to a more meaningful relationship with Christ. However, it would also include helping young singers to develop their voice and to understand their voice and how it works. Baker et al. (2022) found that a connection exists between the adolescent female's confidence and her emotional well-being. By teaching students how to use their voice in a healthy manner, and by helping them understand the text they sing, youth choir directors can help their singers be confident vocally and spiritually when leading worship. Similarly, Lewis (2018) found that singers who sang in church felt most confident in their vocal capability when they were musically prepared, were connecting with the audience, were feeling physically and vocally free, and were spiritually ready to perform.

Increasing Knowledge of the Adolescent Voice

Youth choir directors might not have received training in the female adolescent voice before being given the responsibility of leading a youth choir. In this study, two out of the six directors had received a choral music education; however, none of the directors had specific training in the pedagogy of the adolescent voice. Even in cases where churches may not see training directors as a priority, directors can still find avenues to

receive training, thus improving the experience for the singer. Knowing how busy the music ministers or volunteers might be, I have provided a few suggestions for ways to improve vocal education:

1. Listen to podcasts where teaching and the adolescent voice are discussed by experts in the field (e.g., *Choir Ninja,*[21] *Choir Director Corner Podcast,*[22] and *Singing is Essential with Lynne Gackle*)[23] . When searching for podcasts, research the qualifications of the podcaster to ensure they are experts in understanding the intricacies of the adolescent voice.
2. Watch webinars similar to *Music in the Middle with Mr D,*[24] *Looking Forward: Inspiration for Revitalizing Your Middle and High School Choirs,*[25] and webinars on the Chorus America website (https://chorusamerica.org/online-learning) hosted by educators who work exclusively with adolescent voices.
3. Ask a clinician such as a local middle or high school choral educator to lead a rehearsal or sit in on a rehearsal to give feedback for improvement.
4. Search the ACDA[26] or NA*f*ME[27] websites for free resources.
5. Participate in a local festival, like the Kings Dominion Choral Festival[28], so

[21] https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/choir-ninja-with-ryan-guth/id980970922
[22] https://choirdirectorcorner.com/podcast/
[23] https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/singing-is-essential-with-dr-lynne-gackle/id1262284121?i=1000487208307
[24] http://inthemiddlewithmrd1.blogspot.com/
[25] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q33M3xVMQXc&t=9s
[26] American Choral Directors Association
[27] National Association for Music Education
[28] Kings Dominion is an amusement park outside of Richmond, Virginia, that hosts music festivals every weekend in the spring. They bring in qualified judges from all over the United States to give

the director and students can receive feedback for improvement from professional choral music educators.

Understanding that money can be a deterrent in churches, most of the aforementioned suggestions are free. If money is available, the directors could attend ACDA conventions to immerse themselves in the choral world, including attending concerts and workshops. Other universities offer summer programs or classes, such as Baylor University's *Alleluia Conference*[29]. This week-long event includes music reading sessions for youth and adult repertoire, workshops on children's and youth choirs, and performances of a variety of different ensembles. The ACDA Voices United Conference[30] offers workshops, conducting masterclasses, and music reading sessions in many areas of choral music including middle, high, college, community, and church choir. By attending workshops and listening to experienced educators, a director can learn ways to evaluate their singers through warm-ups and singing in rehearsal, thus allowing them to understand their singers' capabilities before choosing repertoire.

Even if a director cannot attend a workshop or conference, local resources may be available. For example, many public and university choral music educators are willing to share their knowledge with colleagues in the church world, often free of charge. Local voice teachers are sometimes willing to offer a free coaching session with students to share valuable techniques for singing. Church youth directors may only need to reach out

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feedback to adolescent performers. Ensembles can participate in competition and/or receive written and recorded comments for improvement.

[29] https://www.baylor.edu/alleluia/

[30] https://acdavoicesunited.wordpress.com/

and ask for assistance; however, it is important to seek individuals who have experience in the pedagogy of the female adolescent voice.

Seeking Out Reputable Publishers

Not all publishing companies produce repertoire appropriate for adolescent voices as described by Gackle (2011, 2019). Some publishers cater to praise bands, some to college and community choirs, and others to specific composers. Some publishers provide excellent repertoire written for adolescent voices, and Gackle (2011) suggested using "Heritage Music Press, Santa Barbara Music Publishing, Boosey & Hawkes, BriLee, Oxford Music Press, and Colla Voce Music" (p. 153); however, most of these publishers do not distribute Contemporary Christian Music. Other reputable publishing companies that do distribute CCM are Lorenz Publishing, Word Music, Brentwood-Benson Publishing, Lillenas Publishing Company, Hal Leonard, and Lifeway Worship Resources. Although not all of the arrangements are appropriate for adolescents, a director can choose music by considering these criteria in the selection process, which are adapted from Gackle (2011, p. 69):

1. Appropriate range for the age of the singers.
2. Promotes vocal growth.
3. Promotes emotional, spiritual, and mental growth through quality text.
4. Encourages musical development.
5. Engages the listener/congregant.

With some careful consideration, a director can successfully select music that would work well for their singers and hopefully give the students a meaningful and rewarding

youth choir experience.

Healthful Repertoire or Adapt and Adjust to Create a Better Experience

As an adjudicator for two well-known festival companies, I have learned that a stigma exists regarding including Contemporary Commercial Music in a traditional choral assessment; however, pop and rock styles are extremely popular with many choral ensembles. In a study by Kramer and Floyd (2019), repertoire requirements for choral assessment in NA*f*ME's North Central division were examined. None of the repertoire lists included Contemporary Commercial Music, yet as of April 1, 2023, JW Pepper and Songs, Inc., one of largest music retailers in the United States (https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/welcome.jsp), had its most trending Choral Music listed as: Taylor Swift Midnights, Taylor Swift Choral Music, Stranger Things, Disney's Encanto, 2023 Grammy Nominees, Sea Shanties, Pinkzebra, Pentatonix, and VOCES8. With the exception of sea shanties and VOCES8, all of the trending music was Contemporary Commercial Music. If the trend to include Contemporary Commercial Music in the choral music classroom persists, and if educators (including church youth choir leaders) are aware of the limitations versus capability and ability of their singers, they may be able to help their young singers grow musically and emotionally by choosing and adapting repertoire thoughtfully.

Once repertoire has been selected, a director might still need to adapt an arrangement to fit their choir. Sometimes a piece might only be available in a lead sheet[31]

[31] A lead sheet is sheet music with the melody and lyrics placed on a staff (usually in treble clef) with chords notated above.

version in the recorded key. If this is the case, a youth choir director might need to change the key to make the vocal range more appropriate for adolescent singers. Often Contemporary Christian Music is pitched in the guitar keys of C and G, and CCM songs in these keys are not always conducive for the female singing voice. By using a capo, a guitarist can play the same chords of C or G, but change the key of the song to accommodate the vocalists.

In order to determine the how best to adapt a song for their choir, the director needs to understand the capabilities of the singers in the group. Below are some suggestions for doing so:

1. Spend the first rehearsal getting to know singers vocally and personally. The more comfortable they feel with the director, the more confident they may sing. Gackle (2011) stated that "A successful teacher is somehow called to touch the lives of another generation through the power of music" (p. 148)—and it follows that teachers with this aim will want to foster meaningful interpersonal connections with their students.
2. Vocalize the singers throughout their entire range to determine where their strengths are to more effectively choose repertoire that highlights their strengths. Sweet (2020) stated that it is important to help the student find their true singing voice, thus allowing them to grow to their full potential. Repertoire can be an excellent tool for training young voices and allowing them to flourish.

3. Begin singing in unison to create a musically safe space. Choosing a song that is sung often at the church, or choosing a song that is popular at church youth activities may be an excellent place to start because the students would have heard the song and would be familiar with it. By crafting a rehearsal so that the singer can find success, the director can create a positive learning environment and creative space for singers to explore their vocal possibilities (see Gackle, 2011).

Once a church director knows the capabilities of their singers, they can choose repertoire that will work in their church's worship services, which can then be adapted to the piece to fit their youth choir in order to highlight the singers' voices. When the singers feel confident in what they are singing, they will likely be more comfortable leading worship in front of the congregation.

Suggestions for Future Research

After completing the study, I am left with the impression that unless quality repertoire becomes available for youth choir directors, and until directors who work with female adolescents understand the capabilities of the female adolescent voice, a quality music education may not be available to all youth who sing in youth choir in an SBC church. However, this is true for any choir where female adolescents sing. No matter the education or background of the director, if they do not have requisite education in the age range of the students they are teaching, they may lack the knowledge and skills to fully support singers' health and vocal capacity. A study to discover how the vocal health training of the worship pastor relates to the vocal health of the singer/performers in the

church where they serve might help reveal the limitations and needs of such pastors and singers/performers. Because appropriate repertoire choice for female adolescents is important, developing a repertoire guide for youth choirs in the SBC—similar to the guide Gebhardt (2016) developed—might provide guidance and information for those directors who need extra support.

In order to discover the state of youth choirs in the SBC, future research consideration could be focused on the state of children, youth and adult choirs in the Southern Baptist Convention, whether that be in one state or a region within a state. Because past research has stated the church choir is in decline (Boss, 2011), a comparison to the 2011 study would provide enlightenment to the actual decrease of membership in choral programs. Another direction would be to discover if and how youth and adult choirs have changed since the cessation of graded curriculum materials for Southern Baptist choirs in 2002 (Kim, 2014). Furthermore, a study discovering how and to what extent the youth choir programs influence adult choir programs at a church might inform the efficacy of the "womb to tomb[32]" concept in the music education and experience for congregants in the SBC. Considering that Sheeks (2016) showed that pastors and worship leaders do not place primary focus on vocal or choral training, a study to see how choirs in church are affected by the perceptions of pastors and worship leaders might indicate and predict the future of church choir in the 21st century.

Because the implementation of this study was altered due to COVID-19, and

[32] Church leaders often use the phrases "womb to tomb" (Warkentin, 1976) and "cradle to grave" in relation to the education and edification of members as they grow up in the church and in their relationship with Christ.

because I know of some local church choral programs that suffered losses because of the cessation of singing during the pandemic, research on the effects of the pandemic on choirs in church might inform what happened in public schools. For example, in the county where I teach, every choral program lost at least 25% of their numbers in the 20–21 school year. Some programs lost as many as 50% of their students. The 2022–23 school year was the first time we started school with no restrictions since March of 2020. All of the programs gained student numbers back; however, these numbers were still not back to where they were prior to the pandemic.

Other consequences for choral singers during the pandemic were more personal for the individual singer. For those students who experienced puberty and went through major vocal changes during the pandemic, and because they were not singing with an ensemble where their change was guided and nurtured by a professional, it is possible that many of them lost confidence in their voice, and in some cases, had difficulty in knowing how to use their "new" voice. Anecdotally, singing in masks caused students to over-sing to hear themselves in some instances, and directors (including myself) had trouble hearing and correcting mistakes in basic vocal technique because we could not see their mouth shape or hear their tone. Further research into the changes that occurred to music programs during the pandemic, and the reasons for the changes, might produce further insight as to the state of choir in church.

Conclusion

The Southern Baptist Convention's commitment to training singers from the "cradle to the grave" (Garcia, 2013, p. 32) appears, at least in the cases studied here, to no

longer exist. The SBC has ceased their educational programming to train individuals to cultivate commitment to church music, and there is currently a lack of developmental and performing experience to improve music ministries (Messer, 1988; Tipton, 1996). In line with previous research, in the current study, Chris Flood, from Bilyeu Heights Baptist Church, noted that not having continuous educational programming in choral music has caused the youth to stop singing and the adult choir to dwindle.

When I started attending the church where I would be employed while conducting this study, I noticed a stellar youth singer who belted out worship while leading songs at the youth service in the youth band and the youth choir. As an educator, I of course noticed some discomfort in her voice as she got higher in her range while carrying her chest voice up, but I also recognized her talent. I was only a congregant back then, and I was not a part of the music and worship program.

Five years later, I left my job as a full-time choral music educator at a local high school to become heavily involved in the music and worship ministry at the church. The teenager was now an adult singing tenor in the adult choir in the blended service, and she was also singing alto in the praise band in the contemporary service. As I got working with her, I realized that she was actually a soprano. I convinced her to sit in the soprano section and "give it a try." She was not happy with me at first, but she respected me, so she really gave her all. We talked about utilizing the head voice and not trying to belt when it was uncomfortable. I was amazed at how quickly she was able to resolve old issues she had in her passaggio, and I was delighted to see how she grew as a vocalist and performer. She became the premiere soprano soloist for the ministry at the church, and

because the church was televised, she was often recognized in the community as somewhat of a "celebrity." Eleven years later, this singer now lives in a different state, but she sings soprano in the choir and praise team at her church. She understands that she is not a tenor or an alto, and she has embraced her soprano voice fully.

In the first chapter, I spoke of a youth with whom I worked who had been singing in the wrong vocal range for her voice. In that situation, she had been told she was an alto by her mom and a music minister, so she chose to sing that vocal part. As mentioned, the music I was given at the time was written in inappropriate ranges for the students, so I adjusted keys and added parts to meet the needs of the students. I also listened to individual voices and asked students to try new vocal parts. Though appropriate repertoire was not available, I was able to adjust what I had been given to fit the needs of the adolescents, while still assessing individual vocal needs.

Above, I mentioned a young adult whom I had heard sing since she was a teen, but with whom I had worked when she was a young adult. In this situation, the repertoire, which I had been able to choose, was selected to highlight the vocal ranges of the singers and promote healthful singing. She had been convinced previously that she was a tenor, but I was able to encourage her to try new vocal parts and, together, we discovered she was actually a soprano. In both situations, I am not sure that the young singers would have discovered their true vocal capabilities had they continued to sing in the limited ranges of the repertoire they were performing. By offering singers the opportunity to explore their full vocal range, directors can allow their singers to discover their full range and find the most comfortable and healthful range for their voice.

Ultimately, the goal of leadership in SBC churches is to create spiritual and meaningful worship that glorifies God and leads their congregants to a deeper relationship with God. Church leaders can support worship pastors and youth choir directors in this goal by giving them the time and space to receive appropriate training to lead the choirs they direct. Furthermore, they can provide resources for the directors to purchase music from reputable publishers, and then give them the time and support that will allow them to fully evaluate their groups before expecting them to produce an outcome ready for performance. Offering this kind of support to youth choir leaders may help youth who sing in choirs not only feel confident while singing God's praises, but they will do so utilizing healthful repertoire and vocal technique in ways that may better sustain singers for a lifetime.

APPENDIX A

Original Email to Youth Choir Directors

Dear Youth Choir Leader,

Whether you are a worship pastor, music minister, worship director, or volunteer, I am in need of your help. I am currently working on my Doctor of Musical Arts in music education at Boston University, and I am conducting a research study of church youth choirs. More specifically, my study addresses the teaching practices of youth choir rehearsals, especially as it applies to the female adolescent voice.

There are three parts to my study. The first would be an interview with you, the youth choir leader. The second would be an observation of one regularly scheduled rehearsal. The third would be collecting music, lyric sheets, etc. used in rehearsal.

I was wondering if you would be willing to participate in the study. We would find an equally convenient time for both of us, and the plan would be to interview you on the same day as the observation, so as to limit any inconvenience to your normal schedule. Of course, I would also be willing to conduct the interview at a different time if it worked better for you. We can discuss those details if you decide to participate in the study.

Thank you for considering my request, and whether you decide to participate or not, I appreciate you taking the time to read this email. If you would like to participate, please respond to this email by Friday, January 31st.

SHERRI A. MATTHEWS
director of worship and music
Grove Avenue Baptist Church
804.740.8888 | groveave.com

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Church Youth Choir Directors

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

1. What criteria do you consider when preparing the pedagogical aspects of your youth choir rehearsal?
2. Do you feel confident regarding your knowledge of how to work with the female adolescent voice? Why or why not?
3. Are you provided with/aware of/knowledgeable about teaching methods for working specifically with female adolescent voices?
4. What techniques, if any, do you use to enable adolescent female singers to access their entire vocal range and meet their full potential?
5. What criteria do you use when specifically choosing repertoire for adolescent voices?
6. Have you ever considered adolescent vocal health/pedagogy when choosing an arrangement? Why or why not?

Final statement: Thank you for participating in this interview.

Interview Protocol based on Creswell & Poth (2018, p. 167).

APPENDIX C

STUDENT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Notable vocal pedagogue and theorist, Lynne Gackle, focused on the female adolescent voice and choral pedagogy practices. Before beginning a rehearsal, score study is necessary in order to plan the best way to instruct the ensemble on a new work. Score study allows the educator to become familiar with all aspects of a piece of music so that they can provide the best rehearsal experience for each student. Gackle suggested concentrating on the following items when examining a new piece of music: tonal considerations, text, technical concerns, interpretation, style, and form. By studying these items before the first rehearsal, the teacher can create a lesson plan which will meet vocal and musical objectives which are appropriate for the ensemble.

With this in mind, please fill out the charts below selecting the degree to which you address the following items in your youth choir rehearsals. Please use the comments section for explanation or clarification.

Youth Choir Director:
Church:

Vocal Elements	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
tone production					
range development					

Comments:

Musical/Expressive Elements	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
intonation					
balance/blend					
rhythmic accuracy					
diction					
vowels					
dynamics					
tempo					

Comments:

Physical Techniques	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
body alignment					
breath management					

Comments:

Repertoire Considerations	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
utilizes quality, age-appropriate texts					
engages the mind and spirit of the singer					
facilitates vocal development					

Comments:

How old are you?

When did you begin singing? What is your experience?

What voice part do you sing? Do you know your voice classification?

Sing:

Have you ever felt tension or pain when you were singing? When was it and what did you feel?

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Vocal Elements	Rating	Notes/Evidence
a. tone production		
b. range development		
c. register development		
d. resonance		
e. onset/release		
f. articulation		

Musical/Expressive Elements	Rating	Notes/Evidence
a. legato line		
b. intonation		
c. balance/blend		
d. pitch accuracy		
e. rhythmic accuracy		
f. diction		
g. vowels		
h. dynamics		
i. tempo		
j. phrasing		

Physical Techniques	Rating	Notes/Evidence
a. body alignment		
b. breath management		

Repertoire Considerations	Rating	Notes/Evidence
a. quality construction and composition		
b. facilitates vocal development		
c. encourages musical development		
d. utilizes quality, age-appropriate texts		
e. engages the mind and spirit of the singer		
f. provides experiences with various styles, genres, languages, or cultures		

3. Clear communication and application of Gackle's theory.

2. Somewhat clear communication and application of Gackle's theory in this area.

1. Minimal emphasis placed on this area of Gackle's theory.

0. No emphasis placed in this area of Gackle's theory.

Observation Protocol patterned after:

https://physicscourses.colorado.edu/phys4810/phys4810_fa06/protocols/APPENDIXC.pdf

APPENDIX E

REHEARSAL ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Notable vocal pedagogue and theorist, Lynne Gackle, focused on the female adolescent voice and choral pedagogy practices. Before beginning a rehearsal, score study is necessary in order to plan the best way to instruct the ensemble on a new work. Score study allows the educator to become familiar with all aspects of a piece of music so that they can provide the best rehearsal experience for each student. Gackle suggested concentrating on the following items when examining a new piece of music: tonal considerations, text, technical concerns, interpretation, style, and form. By studying these items before the first rehearsal, the teacher can create a lesson plan which will meet vocal and musical objectives which are appropriate for the ensemble.

With this in mind, please fill out the charts below selecting the degree to which you address the following items in your youth choir rehearsals. Please use the comments section for explanation or clarification.

Youth Choir Director:
Church:

Vocal Elements	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
tone production					
range development					
register development					
resonance					
onset/release					
articulation					

Comments:

Musical/Expressive Elements	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
legato line					
intonation					
balance/blend					
pitch accuracy					
rhythmic accuracy					
diction					
vowels					
dynamics					
tempo					
phrasing					

Comments:

Physical Techniques	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
body alignment					
breath management					

Comments:

Repertoire Considerations	Consistently	Often	Occasionally	Never	N/A
quality construction and composition					
facilitates vocal development					
encourages musical development					
utilizes quality, age-appropriate texts					
engages the mind and spirit of the singer					
provides experiences with various styles, genres, languages, or cultures					

Comments:

Observation Protocol patterned after:

https://physicscourses.colorado.edu/phys4810/phys4810_fa06/protocols/APPENDIXC.pdf

APPENDIX F

REPERTOIRE ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Notable vocal pedagogue and theorist, Lynne Gackle, recorded key elements to consider when choosing repertoire for the female adolescent voice. The first element, text appropriateness, should be given significant attention as the vehicle through which notes are sung and emotion is relayed. Range and tessitura of a piece should take into consideration the vocal considerations of the female adolescent voice, while still offering challenges for the voice so growth can take place. Finally, the musical construction of the piece is extremely important, as are the musical concepts and expressive elements such as phrasing and dynamics.

With this in mind, please fill out the charts below selecting the degree to which the selected piece of music follows the guidelines listed.

Title:
Arranger/Composer:
Youth Choir Director:
Church:

Vocal Elements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
tone production					
range development					
register development					
resonance					
onset/release					
articulation					

Musical/Expressive Elements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
legato line					
intonation					
balance/blend					
pitch accuracy					
rhythmic accuracy					
diction					
vowels					
dynamics					
tempo					
phrasing					

Other Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
quality construction and composition					
facilitates vocal development					
encourages musical development					
utilizes quality, age-appropriate texts					
engages the mind and spirit of the singer					
provides experiences with various styles, genres, languages, or cultures					

Assessed by:_____ **Date:** **7/20/20**

Protocol patterned after:

https://physicscourses.colorado.edu/phys4810/phys4810_fa06/protocols/APPENDIXC.pdf

APPENDIX G

Protocol Title: Assent Form to participate in the ensemble being studied
Principal Investigator: Sherri A. Matthews
Description of Subject Population: Youth choir members of a church choir
Version Date: 3/1/2020

Assent Form

What is a Research Study?

We want to tell you about a research study we are doing. Research studies help us to learn new things and test new ideas. People who work on research studies are called researchers. During research studies, the researchers collect a lot of information so that they can learn more about something. We are doing this study because we would like to learn more about how youth choir directors teach youth choirs in church. We are asking you join this study because you are a member of the youth choir at your church.

There are a few things you should know about this study:

- You get to decide if you want to be in the study
- You can say 'No' or 'Yes'
- Whatever you decide is OK
- If you say 'Yes' now, you can change your mind and say 'No' later
- No one will be upset if you say 'No'
- You can ask us questions at any time
- We will also get permission from your parent/guardian for you to take part in this study

What will I do if I am in this research study?

If you decide to be in this study, we will ask you to participate in a regular rehearsal while I observe the rehearsal. This study will last the duration of your rehearsal.

Video/Audio Taping

We will video/audiotape the rehearsals that are part of this study. This will help us to remember what we saw in the rehearsal. The recordings will only be seen by the researchers and will not be used for any further research, presentations or publications.

If I join this study will it help me?

- Being in this study may help youth choir directors learn different ways to teach, and as a result may help your youth choir improve. It also may have no affect at all.

Will I be paid to do this study?

- No, we will not pay you to be in this study

What will happen to my information in this study?

We don't plan to tell anyone or share your name or other information about you if you join this study. However, there is a small chance that other people could find out your information. We will do our best to make sure that doesn't happen.

Taking part in this research study

You do not have to take part in this research study. You can say 'Yes' or 'No'. You can say 'Yes' now and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop. No one will be mad if you don't want to take part in the study or if you change your mind about taking part in the study. Your parent or guardian can also decide to have you stop taking part in this study—that is OK too.

Contacts

If you have any questions about this study, you can talk with me at any time.

Sherri Matthews: cell number: [redacted]
Email: samsing@bu.edu

I will give you a copy of this paper if you want.

APPENDIX H

Protocol Title: Consent Form to allow your child to participate in an ensemble being studied
Principal Investigator: Sherri A. Matthews
Description of Subject Population: Youth choir members of a church choir
Version Date: 3/1/2020

Study Summary

The purpose of this research study is to study how the youth choir leaders in the Southern Baptist church (SBC) conduct youth choir. I will investigate the methods and repertoire used in SBC youth choir rehearsals in order to discover how choir leaders are using teaching practices to help the youth reach their full vocal potential.

Participants who take part in this research study will be in this research study for one rehearsal. During this time, I will make one study visit to the church rehearsal space.

Participants taking part in this study will participate in a regular youth choir rehearsal while the researcher observes the rehearsal.

Introduction

Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If you have any questions about the research or any portion of this form, please ask us. Taking part in this research study is up to you. If you decide to take part in this research study we will ask you to sign this form. We will give you a copy of the signed form.

The person in charge of this study is Sherri Matthews, and her Co-Investigator is Dr. Paula Grissom. Sherri Matthews can be reached at [redacted], or samsing@bu.edu. We will refer to this person as the "researcher" throughout this form.

What should I know about a research study?

Participation in research is voluntary, which means that it is something for which you volunteer. It is your choice to participate in the study, or not to participate. If you choose to participate now, you may change your mind and stop participating later. If you decide not to participate, that decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to study the teaching practices of youth choir leaders in choir rehearsal in southern Baptist churches in Virginia (SBCV).

Why was I selected to participate?

Your child was selected because they are a member of a youth choir in an SBCV church.

Who is Funding the Study?

No one is funding this study. The researcher is paying all costs.

How long will I take part in this research study?

Your child will participate for one normally scheduled rehearsal and/or performance, and for the time which their youth choir meets.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we conduct any study procedures.

Study Visit

The visit will take a normally scheduled rehearsal and/or performance to complete. The time allowed is entirely up to your youth choir leader and normal church procedures.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

The main risk of allowing us to use and store your child's information for research is a potential loss of privacy. We will protect your privacy and that of your child by labeling your information with a code and keeping the key to the code in a password-protected computer.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

Your child may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include may include recognition of differentiated teaching strategies to improve adolescent singing in a church youth choir.

Other youth choirs may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

What alternatives are available?

You may choose not to allow your child to take part in this research study.

Study Participation and Early Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to allow your child to take part or to withdraw your child at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw your child from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential.

Audio/Video Recording

We would like to video record the rehearsal during this study. The camera will be angled in such a manner to only include the conductor and students who have agreed to be in the shot. We will store these recordings on our computer and only approved study staff will have access to the recordings. The recordings will only be seen by the researchers and will not be used for any further research, presentations, or publications. We will label these recordings with a code instead of your child's name. The key to the code connects your child's name to your recording. The researcher will keep the key to the code in a password-protected computer. Recording will be kept for one year after the researcher completes her doctorate.

Do you agree to allow us to audio/video record your child during this study?

_____YES _____NO _____Participant Initials

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by storing them on a password protected computer only accessible to the researchers.

The following people or groups may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- The Researcher and any member of their research team
- The Institutional Review Board at Boston University. The Institutional Review Board is a group of people who review human research studies for safety and protection of people who take part in the studies.

The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. We will not include identifiable information in our publications and/or presentations,

Will I get paid for taking part in this research study?

We will not pay you or your child for taking part in this study.

What will it cost me to take part in this research study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this research study.

What happens if I am injured as a result of participating in this research study?

If you are injured as a result of taking part in this research study, we will assist you in getting medical treatment. However, your insurance company will be responsible for the cost. Boston University does not provide any other form of compensation for injury.

Whom do I ask if I have questions or concerns about this research study?

Please call us with any concerns or questions about the research, or any research-related problems:

Sherri Matthews at [redacted]. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any complaints or concerns and want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University Charles River Campus IRB at 617-358-6115. The IRB Office webpage has information where you can learn more about being a participant in research, and you can also complete a Participant Feedback Survey.

Statement of Consent

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to participate in the study.

SIGNATURE

_____
Name of Study Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Study Participant Date

I have explained the research to the research participant and answered all their questions. I will give a copy of the signed consent form to the participant.

_____
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

_____ _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

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