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Socially situated perfectionism in a high school choir

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

SOCIALLY SITUATED PERFECTIONISM IN A HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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Doctor of Musical Arts

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DEDICATION

For Weston

and in memory of

Dr. Joel Griffin

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SOCIALLY SITUATED PERFECTIONISM

IN A HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

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ABSTRACT

School choirs, bands, and orchestras in the United States have long been guided by exacting standards of performance practice that require high levels of technical proficiency. Such ensembles are also socially situated, requiring interpersonal interaction as participants work toward achieving a shared set of goals. These factors could combine to exacerbate individuals' perceived pressure to meet goals. Hewitt and Flett (1991) called this pressure *socially situated perfectionism*. Some researchers have argued that perfectionism might be tempered or exacerbated in certain environments (Damien et al., 2014; Dunn et al., 2012; Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Hewitt et al., 2003; McArdle, 2010; Mouratidis & Michou, 2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of perfectionistic students, particularly their perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially situated perfectionism, in a high school choral classroom. In order to carry out this examination, a multiple case study methodology was employed; three high school students and their choir director were interviewed and observed in choral rehearsals, with students also asked to journal about their experiences. To varying degrees across cases and within cases, participants displayed behaviors that aligned with descriptions of socially situated perfectionism

outlined by Hewitt and Flett (1991). The presence of these behaviors suggests that perfectionism may play a role in their music making. It appears likely that the choral classroom environment, as facilitated by the instructor and including instructor critique/feedback as well as peer interactions, merits further study for its potential role in abating or exacerbating perfectionistic tendencies in certain individuals.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Perfection is an illusion. Ambitious and successful people can appear to have things put together. Art often seems flawless. Western society has normalized pursuing and projecting perfection in relationships, work, and creative endeavors (Kelly, 2015). Chasing perfection, however, is a debilitating reality for some. *Perfectionism* is a pattern of maladaptive cognition through which individuals seek to eradicate errors and avoid critique in pursuit of unachievable goals (Frost et al. 1990; Hamacheck, 1978; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Pacht 1984). Kelly (2015) called perfectionism “The Bane of Happiness,” a disorder that impedes self-actualization by negatively impacting self-esteem, self-worth, and feelings of acceptance.

Musicians are all too familiar with the pursuit of perfection. The pressure to perform is a real one for high school music students (Braden et al., 2015; Yöndem, 2012; Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2018), school-age children (Patston, 2014; Patston & Osborne, 2015), choral singers (Ryan & Andrews, 2009), and professional musicians (Wiggins, 2011), as are the competing interests of score accuracy, composer intent, performance practice, mentor guidance, audience reception, artistic instinct, and self-imposed standards (Abramo, 2017; Wiggins, 2011). Performing music usually necessitates practice and practice always requires trial and error (Platz et al., 2014). Professional, amateur, and student musicians often work from fixed scores and reference infallible recordings, only to later subject to public scrutiny the vulnerabilities and imperfections that are ubiquitous in live performance.

Making music can therefore be risky business, a scary prospect for individuals who grapple with perfectionism. As a former high school choir director who currently trains preservice teachers, I wonder about this tension for the student musician with perfectionistic tendencies. Does music making ever harm such students? Have they learned how to persevere? What do perfectionistic student singers, musicians whose instruments are inseparable from their physical selves, think of themselves when they err while practicing or performing? There is an urgent need for musical mentors to consider questions like these in order to safeguard the emotional health and well-being of those in their tutelage.

Problem Statement

Perfectionism is a maladaptive psychological condition in which afflicted individuals set and pursue unreasonable standards, fear the specter of failure while trying to meet those standards, and assign self-worth based on their success or failure in achieving the standards they pursue (Burns, 1980; Frost et al., 1990; Greenspon, 2008; Hamachek, 1978; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Self-worth and acceptance are negatively impacted by perfectionism (Frost et al., 1990; Greenspon, 2000; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Perfectionism is linked to health concerns such as depression (Blatt, 1995, Di Schiena et al., 2012), eating disorders (Boone et al., 2010), burnout (Chang, 2012), suicidal thoughts (Flett et al., 2014), social phobias (Juster et al., 1996; Jain & Sudhir, 2010), and anxiety (Shumaker & Rodebaugh, 2009), as well as maladaptive behaviors such as problematic internet use (Lehmann & Konstam, 2011) and avoiding physical exertion (Longbottom et al., 2010).

Hewitt and Flett (1991) identified interpersonal communication within social structures as a factor in the development of perfectionism in individuals. They called an individual's perceived pressure to meet potentially unachievable goals within social structures *Socially Situated Perfectionism* (SSP). SSP is a form of multidimensional perfectionism that develops and manifests in three domains: self-orientation, other-orientation, and social prescription. Like trait perfectionism, SSP induces maladaptive cognitions and behaviors in afflicted individuals but does so in relationship to social situations (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Ensemble musicians practice their art in social situations and ensembles require complicated interpersonal interaction to function effectively (Froehlich, 2007). Therefore, music ensembles are environments potentially predisposed to cultivating perfectionism under certain conditions for individuals with SSP tendencies.

School choirs, bands, and orchestras in the United States have long been guided by exacting standards of performance practice that require high levels of technical proficiency (Abramo, 2017; Meyers, 2012; NAfME, 2014). First, a high-stakes climate exists in U.S. ensemble music education (Abramo, 2017). Additionally, teacher-student interactions cultivate socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt et al., 2017). Finally, school choirs, bands, and orchestras exist as social structures (Froehlich, 2007). This confluence of social pressures and current practices in ensemble music education might unintentionally damage students predisposed toward perfectionism. Perceptions of self-worth might be particularly complex for singers given that their conceptions of voice and self are often intertwined (Heisel, 2015; Ryan & Andrews, 2009).

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of perfectionistic students, particularly perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance commonly associated with socially situated perfectionism, in a high school choral classroom. The following questions guided this study:

1. In what ways, if at all, do perfectionistic high school singers describe and respond to perceptions of standards and expectations set by their school chorus instructor using idioms associated with socially situated perfectionism?
2. In what ways, if at all, do perfectionistic high school singers describe achievement in choir as a contributing factor to feelings of self-worth and acceptance?
3. In what ways, if at all, do perfectionistic high school singers exhibit perfectionistic traits during choral rehearsal?

Theoretical Framework

People who suffer perfectionism believe that achieving perfection is the only conceivable route to acceptance (Burns, 1980; Frost et al., 1990; Greenspon, 2008; Hamachek, 1978; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Pacht, 1984; Stoeber, 2014). Greenspon (2014) explained that perfectionism is not a disorder so much as a collection of personality traits that, together, may lead to maladaptive cognition patterns and behaviors. These behaviors and patterns of thinking can be roadblocks, sometimes preventing perfectionists from attempting anything unless there is a certainty of success (Rimm, 2007). Hamachek (1978) and Pacht (1984) identified perfectionism as complex and debilitating, but it was Frost et al. (1990) as well as Hewitt and Flett (1991) who developed the first inventories theorizing its multidimensional nature. The work of Frost et al. (1990) was

groundbreaking, but focused on dimensions of perfectionism unique to the perfectionist's internal experience and personal standards. While Frost et al. were concerned with internal conditions for the perfectionistic individual, Hewitt and Flett's conceptualization accounted for social pressures in the development of perfectionism as well as the manifestation of perfectionistic tendencies in various social situations. Because music ensembles are social endeavors, the phenomenon as studied Hewitt and Flett (1991) serves as the most relevant and compelling theoretical framework for my study.

Hewitt & Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (HFMPS)

Hewitt and Flett (1991) examined the personal and social natures of perfectionism as it pertained to 77 clinical psychiatric patients. Based on their findings, they theorized three dimensions of what they termed socially situated perfectionism: Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP), Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP), and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP). Hewitt and Flett's initial research culminated with the development of a measuring tool that quantified an individual's predispositions toward these three domains.

Self-Oriented Perfectionism **(SOP)**

Individuals grappling with self-oriented perfectionism set unachievable personal goals and seek to make themselves unassailable to critique and impervious to error. Hewitt and Flett (1991) reported on five separate studies, the first of which codified the HFMPS. Strong correlations existed between SOP, self-criticism, and self-blame. SOP also correlated with negative emotions including guilt, self-disappointment, regret, shame, and anger. Hewitt & Flett found that some participants considered SOP a positive

attribute. Subsequent research has supported the idea that SOP is not always associated with maladaptive behavior and cognition (Dunn et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2011; Stoeber et al., 2007).

***Other-Oriented Perfectionism* (OOP)**

Individuals predisposed toward other-oriented perfectionism impose unreasonably high standards onto those in their sphere of influence and sometimes shape their self-worth on the ability of others to meet those benchmarks. Participants in the HFMPS development studies consistently described OOP as undesirable (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). The authors noted that OOP might be a particular manifestation of SOP in light of strong correlations between the two dimensions. Until recently, OOP was rarely studied independent of its self-oriented and socially prescribed counterparts (Stoeber, 2014). Stoeber (2014) sought to differentiate qualities of OOP that were distinct from the other two dimensions posited by Hewitt & Flett (1991). Multiple divergences emerged. The author found that other-oriented perfectionists are less emotional, agreeable, empathetic, supportive, and interested in others than self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionists. OOP negatively related to social norms necessary for communal work, suggesting it is "an ambivalent form of perfectionism associated with high self-regard but low regard for others" (Stoeber, 2014, p. 335).

***Socially Prescribed Perfectionism* (SPP)**

Individuals grappling with socially prescribed perfectionism endeavor to secure acceptance or avoid rejection through the achievement of perfection in the opinion of those around them. Negative emotions and low self-worth are reflected in those grappling

with SPP (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Based on this finding, Hewitt and Flett categorized SPP as undesirable. They observed SPP in some participants who simultaneously exhibited SOP. While SOP has sometimes proven to manifest in more adaptive ways in recent research (Hewitt et al., 2017), SPP has been consistently revealed as a particularly pernicious threat to individual well-being (Kilbert, Laghinrischen-Rohling, & Saito, 2005; Laurenti, Bruch, & Haase., 2008; Smith et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2019).

Flett et al. (2002) proposed four overarching factors that contribute to the development of SPP within family structures: social expectations, social learning, social reaction, and anxious rearing. In the social expectation category, the authors purported that perfectionism development is more than just developing traits aligned to dimensions of the HFMPS; perfectionism bred through social expectation is still linked to self-worth through contingent acceptance. Those contingencies, however, reflect social pressures beyond the perfectionist's parents. In the second category, *social learning*, the authors argued that perfectionism can be cultivated by watching and imitating others who exhibit perfectionistic behaviors. This paradigm is aligned with generalized social learning theory as described by Bandura (1977). Flett et al. hypothesized that some perfectionistic development is a coping strategy to deal with trauma or other environmental adversity, and termed this category *social reaction*. In their final category, *anxious rearing*, the authors noted how being overly concerned about mistakes can cause individuals with perfectionistic tendencies to watch for potential traps. When experiencing the influence of perfectionism, affected individuals might attempt to avoid or over-prepare for such hurdles as a means of evading failure.

Dimensional Overlap: SOP and SPP

Self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism include tangentially related characteristics. Kilbert et al. (2005) investigated the relationship between SOP and SPP in 475 university students. The authors reported correlations between both dimensions. Positive correlations included depression, suicide proneness, anxiety, shame, and guilt. Self-oriented perfectionism was positively correlated with achievement motivation and self-control, while the association with self-esteem was not significant. Socially-prescribed perfectionism was negatively correlated with self-esteem, perceived self-control, and achievement motivation.

Evolving Understandings of SSP

Though they originally conceived SSP to be an unchanging trait developed in early childhood, Flett & Hewitt (2002) later posited socially situated perfectionism as a stable construct rather than a static trait. They argued that individual discrepancies and domain-specific manifestations of perfectionism result from the unique nature of an individual's lived experience and might therefore cultivate perfectionistic tendencies beyond the confines of childhood (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Later, Hewitt et al. (2017) discovered that perfectionism does not develop solely in the early years. Rather, they cited peers, teachers, and coaches as highly influential in the development of perfectionism during adolescence. The authors determined an other-oriented perfectionist might instigate or exacerbate socially prescribed perfectionism in another individual.

Hewitt and Flett frequently collaborated with other scholars to expand their

understanding of Socially Situated Perfectionism following the publication of their original findings. These subsequent interpolations of SSP have deepened and refined certain parameters of the condition. Two refinements are worthy of inclusion in this discussion: Domain-Specific Perfectionism and Perfectionistic Self-Presentation.

Domain-Specific Perfectionism (DSP). *Domain-Specific Perfectionism* (DSP) is an expansion of Socially Situated Perfectionism and describes the presence of perfectionistic standards that are not ubiquitous in an individual's life. Though perfectionism is widely considered to be a pervasive trait, the qualities may in fact only manifest in certain situations. Flett & Hewitt (2002) acknowledged that adaptive perfectionism is likely to be domain-specific. Stoeber & Stoeber (2009) agreed, noting that while some perfectionistic individuals may pursue perfection in every aspect of life, most do so selectively. Multiple studies have affirmed this notion in sports (Longbottom et al., 2010; McArdle, 2010) and the workplace (Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Mitchelson & Burns, 1998).

Perfectionistic Self-Presentation (PSP). *Perfectionistic Self-Presentation* (PSP) is a projective form of perfectionism that somewhat melds SOP with SPP. PSP can account for differences in response between individuals identified as having otherwise similar perfectionistic tendencies (Hewitt et al., 2003). Hewitt et al. (2003) found that individuals who self-presented as perfectionistic did so by achieving goals and publicly advertising such achievements. The same individuals concealed imperfection by evading tasks that might result in failure, thereby avoiding public humiliation (Hewitt et al., 2003).

Other Relevant Terms

Hewitt, Flett, and their collaborators refrain from using multiple terms common to other research in the field, perhaps to keep their theoretical constructs distinct from competing frameworks. I utilize several of those terms in this document, however, and have therefore defined and attributed them below. Abbreviations appear when applicable.

- Multidimensional Terms from Frost et al. (1990)
    - *Concern for Mistakes* (CM) refers to pressure perfectionistic individuals might feel to eliminate errors from a task or performance.
    - *Personal Standards* (PS) are a perfectionistic individual's assumed intrinsic motivation for setting high goals.
    - *Doubts Over Actions* (DA) are the negative, retrospective self-assessments perfectionistic individuals make regarding their own actions in the past.
    - *Parental Expectations* (PE) refers to developmental influences that communicate conditional love or acceptance based on the acceptability of actions. Parental Expectations influence the development of clinical perfectionism in children.
    - *Parental Critique* (PC), similar to Parental Expectations, catalyzes perfectionistic development in children. The term references feedback regarding behavior, achievement, or obedience transmitted from parent to child.
    - *Organization* (O) references the stringent manner by which perfectionistic individuals' thinking and actions are ordered. This dimension is less

defined than the other five and, perhaps unsurprisingly, is no longer considered a defining characteristic of perfectionism as defined by Frost et al.

- Striving. Sometimes called healthy or adaptive perfectionism, striving is a term used interchangeably with the colloquial use of the term perfectionism. Greenspon (2000, 2008) argued that those who adapt their behavior to divert perfectionistic tendencies do not suffer from clinical perfectionism because they do not suffer ill effects.

Evaluative Concerns (EC). Burgess et al. (2016) suggested that, in light of 25 years of research on multidimensional perfectionism, Evaluative Concerns might more succinctly and accurately describe the worry perfectionistic individuals internalize surrounding self and public judgement than a plethora of more nuanced terms.

Rationale

If the confluence of ensemble environments, peer relationships, and current practices in ensemble music education detrimentally impacts perfectionistic individuals, the U.S. music education system might well take note. In this section, I provide theoretical, practical, and personal rationales to argue the need for this study.

Theoretical Rationale

Perfectionism can be a debilitating pathological condition that often pervades Western culture (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). In its many dimensions, perfectionism has been linked to social anxiety (Jain & Sudhir, 2010; Juster et al., 1996; Shumaker & Rodebaugh, 2009), burnout (Chang, 2012), depression (Blatt, 1995; Di Schiena et al.,

2012), body dissatisfaction (Boone et al., 2010), suicide (Flett et al., 2014), problematic internet use (Lehmann & Konstam, 2011), career indecision (Lehmann & Konstam, 2011), and low motivation for physical activity (Longbottom et al., 2010). Though Hamachek (1978) claimed the condition could present as normal or maladaptive, others have argued that the exacting nature of perfectionism precludes an adaptive form of the pathology (Burns, 1980; Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Greenspon, 2000; Greenspon, 2014). Perfectionism generally impacts all aspects of a perfectionistic individual's life, and those who are unable to moderate their perfectionistic pursuits in at least a few contexts are most likely to experience perfectionism-induced maladies (Hewitt, Flett, & Mikail, 2017).

The potential for situational resilience or susceptibility to perfectionistic tendencies in certain individuals will be addressed in this study, encouraging expanded avenues of research into the specifics of how socially situated perfectionism impacts musicians. Study participants might indicate that music rehearsals are an arena well-suited to consider situationally specific perfectionism as defined by Hewitt et al. (2002). Students might also report seeing music learning sequences or ensemble rehearsals as safe places to fail. Such a discovery might suggest singing is an activity in which perfectionistic individuals engage in an adaptive form of perfectionism or possess a domain-specific resiliency to their perfectionistic tendencies (Hewitt et al., 2002).

Practical Rationale

Abramo (2017) called competition the "current...epoch" (p. 151) of North American music education and pointed to its ubiquitous nature in opportunities like solo and ensemble contests for singers and instrumentalists alike. Competition in United States school music ensembles dates to The National Solo and Ensemble Contests (NSEC) held in the 1920s and 1930s (Meyers, 2012). Meyers (2012) noted that contest rubrics currently employed across the U.S. are descended from measures developed by that program and consequently reflect the high standards of the NSEC. Abramo (2017) argued that contests are a high priority for school music programs and Stamer (2006) identified widespread student sentiment reflecting high contest ratings and award designations as the "ultimate goal of the ensemble" (p. 52). Music students not only valued and enjoyed contest experiences, but reported competition motivated them to practice more often and with greater attention to detail in order to earn high ratings and outperform peers (Stamer, 2004, 2006).

Abramo (2017) noted that rather than promoting incremental growth, present learning practices in music education favor exacting adherence to socially agreed-upon performance standards. Students learn to compare their achievement to these standards and to the relative achievement of their peers (Hendricks, Smith, & Legutki, 2015). Students and teachers may feel that successfully performing to perfectionistic music standards will please others and add value to their music program at a time when the discipline's inclusion in public education is questioned (Jaeschke, 2016). Musicians subjected to unrealistically high expectations have developed various types of

performance anxiety (Braden, Osborne, & Wilson, 2015; Patston, 2014; Patston & Osborne, 2015; Ryan & Andrews, 2009; Yöndem, 2012; Zarza-Alzugaray, Orejudo, Casanova, & Aparicio-Moreno, 2018). General perfectionism in music learning environments has been reported to have served as a barrier to fruitful artistic experiences (Botha & Panebianco, 2017; Hill, Burland, King, & Pitts, 2019).

If participating in an ensemble positively contributes to a perfectionistic individual's self-worth in spite of any failures or setbacks, it could impact advocacy strategies in the fields of music education and community music-making. Conversely, the ensemble classroom—sometimes lauded colloquially as a safe and accepting environment—could negatively impact certain individuals if peers and/or classroom culture trigger or exacerbate their perfectionistic tendencies. Music students who interpret the expectations of instructors through the lens of socially prescribed perfectionism might have their feelings of self-worth negatively impacted by participating in rigorous ensemble rehearsals. Because unintentional harm might be catalyzed by an individual's perfectionistic tendencies within music rehearsals, I saw a need for additional research to determine the ubiquity of such occurrences amongst broad swaths of music students. Widespread affliction of this sort could signal a potential reckoning in ensemble music education, one that critically reexamines the collateral damage of philosophies, pedagogies, and practices on student health and well-being.

Personal Rationale

In this discussion about perceived perfectionistic expectations, I am reminded of a former high school student and her prepared performance of an Italian art song. Lily (a

pseudonym) had taken vocal lessons with me over the course of several months. She demonstrated increasing technical proficiency with each lesson, and her acumen and comfort level as a performer seemed high. Though she had expressed concern about a public performance, Lily appeared confident enough in her abilities to overcome any anxiety when it came time to sing. As her voice instructor and choir director, I assured her that my only expectation was that she demonstrate the skills she had developed in lessons. When her day came to sing publicly, Lily ran from the room in tears before singing a note. When I asked her what had happened, she expressed concern that her singing might not live up to my expectations or to those of her peers. She described her worries in a way that connected her performance abilities to feelings of intrinsic worth and sense of acceptance.

Given her demonstrated proficiency during lessons, I did not believe my expectations of Lily were unrealistic. She tried again to sing in front of the class for several days and—on the fourth attempt and with much happiness—eventually made it through the solo. Later, I began to wonder about Lily's motivations, specifically standards she had set for herself and any pressures she may have felt due to our classroom environment. I wondered about a potential disconnect between Lily's perception of and my actual expectations. Reflecting upon students who had occasionally turned otherwise reasonable expectations into unachievable ones in pressure-charged situations caused me to consider how my practices could have unintentionally promoted perfectionistic patterns of thinking in certain students by focusing on ever-increasing levels of achievement.

In this case, Lily demonstrated characteristics of both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism in a highly specific domain of her life: music performance. It has since occurred to me that the expectations of an ensemble conductor could unintentionally catalyze socially situated perfectionism in some members of the ensemble. Music-making could thereby become a fear-inducing experience for those students, negatively influencing their self-worth and sense of acceptance.

I consider myself to be an empathetic, relational, and restoration-minded person. It is important to me that students feel buoyed by their experiences in choir. Moreover, I work to make my classroom a space that students consider safe. My personal rationale for conducting this study is rooted in these personality traits and professional aims. Understanding how instructional practices, peer interaction, and course standards influence perfectionistic individuals in choir will affect my teaching, particularly if my current methods for facilitating rehearsals have the potential to harm students unintentionally. As one who educates pre-service music teachers, I also want to pass on what I learn to my students to broaden the impact of the research.

Restatement of Research Problem and Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of perfectionistic students, particularly perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance commonly associated with socially situated perfectionism, in a high school choral classroom. The following questions guided this study:

1. In what ways, if at all, do perfectionistic high school singers describe and respond to perceptions of standards and expectations set by their school chorus instructor using idioms associated with socially situated perfectionism?
2. In what ways, if at all, do perfectionistic high school singers describe achievement in choir as a contributing factor to feelings of self-worth and acceptance?
3. In what ways, if at all, do perfectionistic high school singers exhibit perfectionistic traits during choral rehearsal?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the following section, I review relevant literature on socially situated perfectionism, domain-specific perfectionism, and perfectionism-induced maladies. I deliberately reference the relevance to music and music education. The research presented is intended to help readers appreciate the potential complexities perfectionism might introduce into in the day-to-day activities of high school musicians and the ensembles with which they rehearse and perform.

The Role of Perception in Socially Situated Perfectionism

Over nearly two decades of working with high school students, I have heard and observed first-hand the role social interactions play in developing students' understandings of themselves, their competence, and their place in the larger social structure of school, community, and family. Perfectionism is often rooted in the perfectionistic individual's interpretation of how others perceive them (Frost, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Hewitt et al., 2003). Rimm (2007) concluded that students compare themselves to others as a means of measuring success and coping with failure. Greenspon (2008) argued that a perfectionist's perceptions are derived from the meaning, fear, and sense of interpersonal connection associated with such comparisons. Perceptions of self, expectations, and competency matter in understanding those struggling with perfectionism, because of how such perceptions influence an individual's thoughts and actions.

Perceptions of Self

In people of all ages, comparison to peers influences the perfectionist's sense of self (Gilman, Rice, & Carboni, 2014; Hill et al., 2011; Rimm, 2007). For persons affected by perfectionism, concerns over comparative superiority and garnering approval often correspond to lower perceptions of competency and self-worth (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Rimm (2007) found that gifted children succumbed to unhealthy perfectionism when a pursuit became more challenging or when the pool of participants became more competitive.

Shame may play a critical role in socially-prescribed perfectionism (Kilbert et al., 2005). In music-making, feelings of shame can be compounded by a person's self-image and self-estimation, particularly if that image or estimation is misaligned with the truth of their actions or behavior (Levinson, 2015). According to Levinson (2015), shame is simply the internal manifestation of its socially-situated cousin, embarrassment. Internalized and public perceptions of ability, success, and failure matter to perfectionists (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Hewitt et al., 2003), so examining how shame impacts self-perception for musicians is germane to understanding socially prescribed perfectionism in musicians.

After studying several composers and representative works widely considered as influenced by shame, Levinson (2015) theorized four categories of shame specific to music: formative, performative, creative, and appreciative. *Formative shame* refers to shame relating to musical training and development. *Performative shame* references performance abilities and musical proficiencies. *Creative shame* centers on the ability to

create and manipulate music in either notational or technological realms. *Appreciative shame* deals with the reticence to explore and consume music outside of one's own experience. Levinson noted these types of shame surface because the shame-filled individual cares about the standard to which they are comparing themselves.

Comparison, shame, and the interaction of the two are foundational aspects of understanding sense of self in those predisposed to perfectionism. Individuals with perfectionistic tendencies that compare themselves to others may indicate feelings of shame or lower self-worth when they fail to meet self-imposed standards, those modeled by peers, or as expected by influential others. For musicians, such comparisons may well center on talent, skill acquisition, accepted behaviors, and contributions to ensemble.

Perception of Expectations

Expectations set by others may be easily perceived, but often prove too difficult to interpret. According to Frost et al. (1990), perfectionistic individuals develop their predispositions, in part, through conditional parental love and acceptance, real or perceived. Flett & Hewitt (1991) also originally concluded that parents played a principal role in the development of perfectionism in their children. In subsequent research, however, the authors expanded the scope of influential adults to include coaches and teachers (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Perfectionistic individuals have self-reported the highly valued role that feedback from peers, teams, and mentors plays in shaping their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-image (Gilman et al., 2014; Hill et al., 2011; Hewitt et al., 2003). Internalized fear regarding self-expectations, perceived expectations, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-image is consistently linked to those exhibiting traits of

perfectionism (Hewitt et al., 2017).

Perfectionism is defined by an individual's relationship with fear (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), and fear is often paired with feelings of vulnerability (Katthow, 2004; Wiggins, 2011). Feeling vulnerable allows for individuals to grow toward stringent goals, yet also feeds fears of failure regarding self-fulfillment (Katthow, 2004). Noble (2005) argued that teachers can mediate these competing ideas by modeling trust, gentleness, and wholeness to create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable to strive and risk. Exposing one's inadequacies to a teacher can still be fear-inducing (Hendricks, 2018; Hewitt et al., 2003).

Fear plays a role in perceiving, decoding, and interpreting expectations. People communicate expectations and influence those trying to meet such expectations through explicit and tacit feedback. In the social context of a music ensemble, potential exists for complex perceptions of fear and expectations due to the performance standards and cycles of reflection inherent to the art form.

Perceptions Related to Music Study

High school ensemble directors seem uniquely positioned to influence student perceptions related to all aspects of music study. Feedback from instructors may serve to either exacerbate or help music students with perfectionistic predispositions manage their fears (Froehlich, 2007; Hendricks, 2018). Froehlich (2007) acknowledged the dominating role ensemble conductors can play in establishing the rehearsal environment:

> It is an accepted behavior [that]...conductors are short and direct in their verbal comments, keep praises to a minimum, and are focused more on the music than

> on those who make it. For some students, such focus can be disconcerting...Not all students know how to interpret such demeanor in the correct context. If it remains unexplained, even the most accepted conventions of musical behaviors can therefore become barriers of learning. (p. 107)

A notable change has occurred in ensemble pedagogy since the start of the 21st century (Hendricks, 2018). The authoritarian approach of leading choirs, bands, and orchestras has given way to a more holistic methodology in many secondary school rehearsal rooms. Hendricks stated that, when students perceive a compassionate approach to instruction rooted in trust, empathy, patience, inclusion, community, and connection, they may be freed from the perceived need to be perfect.

Negative reactions from teachers, conversely, have been shown to precipitate frustration, anger, and depression in their perfectionistic students (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). Atlas et al. (2004) asked a In a small group of students from performance ensembles, individuals grappling with perfectionism were more likely to feel hurt by the instructor's critique and viewed their musical growth as impeded as a result of such critique (Atlas et al., 2004). Understanding how the critique of a choir director in a successful high school choral program influences student perceptions of musical prowess, skill development, and motivation is therefore understanding the response to those same critiques from those who simultaneously struggle with perfectionist proclivities in the same environment.

Perceptions of Competence

Some musicians naturally exude confidence—and thereby competence—when they take the stage to perform. Others struggle to do so. Similar patterns have emerged in my work in classroom settings through the years; musical leaders tend to be the ones who master concepts straight away, dare greatly while attempting new things, and exhibit a certain panache to which peers often aspire.

High levels of perceived competence in a specific domain might indicate higher resiliency to socially prescribed (SPP) perfectionism (Dunn et al. 2012). Self-oriented perfectionists (SOP) exhibited increased feelings of competency, which correlated to higher degrees of self-worth (Hill et al., 2011). Hill et al. (2011) found that the same correlation did not present for individuals possessing traits of socially prescribed perfectionism. In a study of 718 perfectionistic high school students, Gilman et al. (2014) discovered that both persons exhibiting either maladaptive or adaptive perfectionism regularly compared their domain-specific skills to their peers. The authors found that increased levels of maladaptive perfectionism correlated with higher levels of awareness to competency discrepancies, whether or not such awareness reflected reality. This type of comparison, within the social construct of a musical ensemble such as a choir, could have implications on the functioning of groups and upon the role(s) individuals play as members of such groups.

Domain-Specific Perfectionism

The ubiquity of perfectionistic tendencies across all aspects of an individual's life was long-considered axiomatic (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991, Hewitt & Flett,

2002). The omnipresence of perfectionistic influences should therefore apply in musical settings. However, Bong et al. (2014), noted the resilience of maladaptive perfectionism to contextual influences and McArdle (2010) suggested that perfectionism is variable across domains. Perfectionism-focused student athletes preferred engaging in pursuits in which they were likely to be validated for high degrees of competency. McArdle found that performance appraisal paralleled an individual's perfectionism traits and demonstrated abilities, resulting in greater value placed on domains in which higher competency was perceived. In a separate study, Dunn et al. (2012) independently determined the same conclusion, particularly with regards to manifestations of SOP and SPP. With value ascription in mind, three environments which could induce domain-specific perfectionism are examined here: sports, school, and music.

Perfectionism in Sports

Sports and music share similar operational frameworks with regards to teamwork, individualized practice, and group achievement. Greenspon (2000) noted that achievement-oriented traits are internalized in unhealthy ways by perfectionistic individuals. The issue of perfectionism is one of self-esteem, centering on how individuals view themselves when they fail to achieve perfection in a perfectionistic culture (Greenspon, 2014). Research highlighted in this section indicates that focusing on high achievement (SOP) in sports often presents as striving, whereas only SPP is consistently maladaptive in athletes.

In reviewing existing literature on perfectionism and sport, Flett and Hewitt (2005) determined that perfectionistic athletes protect themselves from emotional self-

harm by experiencing success, being proactive, adjusting goals, and developing cognitive flexibility about their performance. Such athletes seemed to have an accurate awareness of their abilities, low levels of ego, strong self-efficacy, and high levels of resiliency. When an athlete's perceived and actual abilities were mismatched, those with lower abilities and high perfectionism experienced a greater degree of pathological perfectionism. Flett & Hewitt (2005) pointed out that the nature of athletic competition may discourage long-term participation by maladaptive perfectionists because "the extreme orientation that accompanies perfectionism [in sport] is antithetical to attaining positive outcomes" (p. 14).

Exercise habits, motivation, engagement, and persistence were notably influenced by perfectionistic tendencies in athletes (Longbottom et al., 2010). Maladaptive and adaptive perfectionism influenced these factors distinctly in a sample of undergraduate athletes ($n = 215$). Maladaptive perfectionism correlated strongly to weaker and ineffectual habits, lower motivation, failure to engage in exercise, negative self-talk, and more frequent discontinuance of exercise. Adaptive perfectionism emerged as a positive trait, with identified participants showing fewer cognitive impediments and higher motivation regarding exercise than their maladaptive counterparts.

Adaptive concerns and evaluative concerns were shown to have different relationships in team athletic performance (Hill et al., 2014). High adaptive concerns correlated with positive performance and high evaluative resulted in poorer performance. The imposition of high adaptive concerns on team members—a form of OOP—yielded better performance in part because the entire team seemed to expect better performance

from themselves and one another. Hill et al. (2014) did not consider the negative effects of team perfectionism on individual team members.

Perfectionism rooted in personal standards yielded enjoyable experiences and correlated with higher levels of self-worth for youth athletes who exhibited only perfectionism rooted in what might best be called achievement concerns (Mallinson et al., 2014). When perfectionism centered on evaluative concerns, participants exhibited greater levels of personal angst and interpersonal conflict. Athletes with traits of SOP reported better coping skills than counterparts who demonstrated traits of SPP (Mouratidis & Michou, 2011). Mouratidis and Michou (2011) also reported that SPP athletes were less likely to remain autonomously motivated in the face of failure, whereas high degrees of perseverance defined those exhibiting SOP.

Setting rigorous personal goals was not maladaptive for athletes (Stoeber et al., 2007). In a sample of high school and university athletes (n=540), Stoeber et al. (2007) found that only negative reactions to failure in pursuit of perfectionistic goals were problematic. Others have discovered that SOP serves as a motivating factor for athletes in pursuing high levels of achievement (Dunn et al., 2012). Because perfectionism levels appear to vary across domains, perceived confidence in achieving self and other-imposed standards seemed to insulate athletes against the more detrimental elements of SOP (Dunn et al., 2002; Stoeber et al., 2007). Perhaps similar contextualization of high personal standards is leveraged to produce success for musicians grappling with elements of perfectionism as well.

Perfectionism in School

Classrooms are environments defined by interpersonal relationships (Froehlich, 2007; Hendricks, 2018; Noble, 2005) and many utilize clearly defined achievement expectations (NAfME, 2014; Stamer, 2004, 2006). Consequently, schools likely represent a rich domain in which to study socially prescribed perfectionism. Greenspon (2014) suggested empathy, encouragement, and self-reflection may help to mitigate perfectionistic strivings in the classroom, and noted that "perfectionism is not a fixed psychological entity but a dynamic property of a perfectionistic person's ongoing relational system" (p. 996).

When examining goal orientation across multiple school-centered domains in a group of 584 perfectionistic adolescents, Damian et al. (2014) discovered that levels of SOP corresponded to higher dedication to mastery and resiliency to setbacks, and coincided with higher levels of task avoidance when the demonstration of mastery was socially situated. Participants predisposed to evaluative concerns conversely focused on outperforming peers, meeting social expectations, and demonstrating their abilities, all of which are signs of maladaptive SPP.

Perfectionistic tendencies presented as domain-specific when Bong et al. (2014) examined self-efficacy and achievement goals of perfectionistic Korean students studying math and English. Inclination toward SPP predicted higher levels of test anxiety and maladaptive behaviors—such as normalization of cheating and task avoidance—as means of social self-preservation. Self-preservation of this kind might also be considered a form of perfectionistic self-presentation (Flett et al., 2003).

Self-identified persistent students who valued course grades as a sign of achievement showed a relationship between concern for mistakes (CM) and personal standards (PS) as students took a college course (Brown et al., 1999). High PS predicted concentrated study, better overall performance, and a positive description of self-efficacy and achievement in the course. High CM correlated with lower reports of self-efficacy, negative feelings about the course, and higher levels of study for what was described as a difficult course. Findings suggested that "perfectionism, discrepancy between standards and performance, and attributions about performance appear to be meaningful factors in the prediction of expectations, mood, behavior, and performance in the classroom" (Brown et al., 1999, p. 118).

When investigating the role of perfectionism in student perception of a high-stakes college exam, Bieling et al. (2003) found that an individual's level of maladaptive perfectionism did not predict exam success but was tied to negative feelings about the assessment. High adaptive perfectionism did predict student success on the exam. This suggests the possibility that individuals who are able to temper perfectionistic tendencies may feel pressure in performance scenarios but that their success in such situations is not necessarily a function of their ability to control perfectionistic ideation.

Perfectionism in Music

Perfectionistic striving in young musicians does not necessarily induce distress (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). Rather, Stoeber and Eismann (2007) discovered that only negative reactions to perfectionism precipitated anxiety in a sample of 146 German high school musicians. Participants indicated that aspects of perfectionism considered

"negative" corresponded to extrinsic motivation and anxiety. So-called "positive" perfectionism traits correlated with intrinsic motivation and higher achievement.

Wiggins (2011) asserted that the public nature of music making makes it inherently risky. For musicians, social support is critical to the development of resiliency and agency in the face of vulnerability that manifests as fear. Wiggins suggested "we are willing to be vulnerable when our vulnerability is embraced with acceptance" (Wiggins, 2011, p. 364). Experiencing positive feelings of acceptance correlate to a lower likelihood of exhibiting maladaptive perfectionism (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Sarikaya and Kurtaslan (2018) found that high levels of perfectionism corresponded to similarly elevated levels of music performance anxiety. The authors noted severe anxiety surfaced in music teacher candidates when participants encountered a demand for error-free performance. Participants with high levels of perfectionism and anxiety also suffered from low levels of self-efficacy.

Over the course of one academic year, Hill et al. (2019) surveyed 143 collegiate music students to determine potential connections between perfectionistic self-presentation and positive feelings about music making. Hewitt et al. (2003) suggested that certain perfectionists intentionally refrain from displaying or admitting imperfections and also tend to overestimate their skill in selective areas as a way of improving their standing in the eyes of others. Participants in the study with elevated perfectionistic tendencies at the start of the year reported intensification of those tendencies at the time of the mid-year and end-of-year surveys. Additionally, increased perfectionistic self-

presentation corresponded to fewer positive feelings about students' musical experiences.

Dobos et al. (2019) investigated correlations with social phobia and perfectionism in 100 musicians who were studying or had completed study in music. The authors found that social phobias such as music performance anxiety had strong positive correlations to five of the six dimensions of the FMPS. The strongest correlations existed between the domains of Frost's model that are often public and socially situated: concern for mistakes and doubts about actions.

High levels of SOP and SPP predicted higher levels of music performance anxiety among 255 collegiate musicians (Diaz, 2019). Diaz (2019) determined that mindfulness and meditation helped mitigate music performance anxiety for the 48% of participants who engaged in the practice. Tempered anxiety benefitted even those with strong perfectionistic tendencies and did so regardless of the type or frequency of meditation.

For music teachers, recognizing perfectionism might mean noticing times when control is sought and learning to let go when that urge strikes (Hendricks, 2018). Ryan and Andrews (2009) found that ensemble conductors play a major role in the development of performance anxiety in young musicians. Respondents attributed their performance anxiety directly to the heightened pressures put upon them by their conductors (Ryan & Andrews, 2009). Perhaps this is the result of OOP, or perhaps it is because "perfectionistic people [have] the reputation of being harsh taskmasters when directing the work of others" (Greenspon, 2014, p. 987). Knowing that musicians are emotionally sensitive to the critiques of their instructors (Atlas et al., 2004), perhaps OOP is less relevant to ensemble rehearsals than SPP.

Perfectionism-Induced Maladies

Many notable musicians in the Western tradition have grappled with illness that was brought on by or related to their work as composers and performers (Breitenfeld et al., 2015). Mental and physical health issues such as depression (Blatt, 1995, Di Schiena et al., 2012), eating disorders (Boone et al., 2010), burnout (Chang, 2012), suicidal thoughts (Flett et al., 2014), social phobias (Juster et al., 1996; Jain & Sudhir, 2010), and anxiety (Shumaker & Rodebaugh, 2009) are negatively impacted by perfectionism. Laurenti et al. (2008) also identified that deteriorating mental states result from perfectionistic traits. An inexhaustive sample of maladies relating to socially situated perfectionism is presented below.

Anxiety

Anxiousness is pervasive in Western music culture (Yöndem, 2012). Multiple dimensions of the FMPS, SPP, and EC have resulted in increased anxiety (Botha & Panebianco, 2017; Braden et al., 2015; Patston, 2013; Ryan & Andrews, 2009; Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2018). In an examination of the relationship between high PS and social anxiety, Shumaker and Rodebaugh (2009) argued that anxiety is symptomatic of maladaptive perfectionism. Hewitt et al. (2003) discovered that self-promoting perfectionists who concealed imperfection were prone to various anxieties, particularly social performance anxiety.

Music performance anxiety is a common malady for musicians, some of whom possess perfectionistic traits (Braden et al., 2015; Patston, 2013; Ryan & Andrews, 2009; Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2018). Heightened performance anxiety levels emerged in

perfectionistic instrumental music students completing a jury (Yöndem, 2012). Botha and Panebianco (2017) found that perfectionism and debilitating anxiety were strongly related in a small sample (*n*=93) of South African music students. Parental expectations, personal standards, doubts about actions, and parental criticism were statistically significant in inducing anxiety (Botha & Panebianco, 2017). What remains unclear is what aspects of the music classroom environment might increase anxiety for individuals who also struggle with perfectionism.

Low Self-Esteem

According to Hewitt et al. (2003), manifestations of perfectionistic self-presentation have consistently corresponded to lower self-esteem. Abdollhi et al. (2018) determined that evaluative concerns exacerbated negative self-esteem and low self-efficacy for perfectionistic students. Findings by Gilman et al. (2014) showed how maladaptive perfectionists possessed perspectives potentially “clouded by self-critical tendencies” and “skewed toward perceived rejection or disapproval” (p. 955). Laurenti et al. (2008) found that SPP increased negative self-talk and held no positive associations in establishing favorable self-image.

Task Avoidance

Students focused on mastery of a skill or acquisition of knowledge who simultaneously feared misunderstanding the material or demonstrating the skill improperly, particularly when “the environmental cues in an achievement situation and the individual’s motivationally relevant dispositions are seemingly incompatible” (Elliot, 199, p. 182). In a separate study, Van der Kaap-Deeder et al. (2016) noted that an

inability to disassociate self from action also triggers future task avoidance in perfectionists. Such individuals perceived themselves as unable to succeed and therefore disengage from learning processes (Elliot, 1999).

Stress

Teachers and healthcare workers predisposed to socially prescribed perfectionism exhibited increased levels of role stress, inefficacy, exhaustion, and cynicism at work (Childs & Stoeber, 2012). In an unrelated study, individuals exhibiting perfectionistic self-presentation possessed substandard interpersonal communication skills that induced social stress and included traits like modifying behavior to gain favor, verbally defending actions and speech, and categorically classifying others' body language as negative (Hewitt et al., 2003). Molnar et al. (2012) examined perfectionism, stress, social support, and overall health in 538 undergraduate students. Individuals with high predispositions toward SOP and SPP showed increased levels of stress, but only SPP was linked to poorer physical and mental health and perceptions of less social support.

Self-Sabotage

SOP and SPP led to self-defeating behaviors in a study of 238 undergraduate students (Hill et al., 2011). Moreover, Hill et al. (2011) argued that SPP inhibits positive interpersonal relationships between the perfectionist and those to whom they look for approval. Such behavior(s) may serve to alienate those who might provide approval, setting up a compounding spiral of lowered self-worth and competency in the perfectionist.

Rumination

Individuals high in EC perfectionism tend to ruminate intensely on failure (Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2016). Analytical and abstract rumination by individuals exhibiting SOP centered on doubts about actions (DA) and concern for mistakes (CM) and correlated with an increased risk for depression (Di Schiena et al., 2012). Earlier, Laurenti et al. (2008) had discovered that perfectionistic individuals who experienced increased rumination engaged in ever-expanding negative self-perception.

A Competing Framework: The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

Frost et al. (1990) authored one of two competing conceptions of multidimensional perfectionism in the early 1990s. Hewitt and Flett (1991) rooted their theory in social structures and the interactions of the perfectionist within those social structures, while Frost et al. (1990) envisioned perfectionism as multidimensional within the perfectionistic individual. Frost et al. challenged overly simplistic notions of perfectionism touted by Hamachek (1978) and supplanted them with a reliable perspective on the phenomenon. Frost's team used existing perfectionism scales, including one by Burns (1980), to expand and illuminate upon the multi-faceted nature of perfectionism. Five of the six perfectionism dimensions—concern for mistakes, personal standards, doubts about actions, parental expectations, and parental critique—outlined by Frost et al. (1990) are arguably an expanded understanding of what Hewitt & Flett later (1991) termed self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism. In light of 25 years of research, Burgess, Frost, and DiBartolo (2016) consolidated the FMPS categories into two overarching dimensions: striving and evaluative concerns. Burgess et

al. (2016) argued that these streamlined categories are an accurate—though notably pithier—description of perfectionism as a bidimensional phenomenon.

Summary

Music and perfectionism are interrelated in potentially problematic ways. Hewitt & Flett (1991) categorized the effects of socially situated perfectionism as pervasively maladaptive and ubiquitous across all aspects of the lives of perfectionistic individuals. Adaptive perfectionism was thought possible for individuals who demonstrated lower tendencies in one or more of the three dimensions of the HFMPS (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Greenspon (2000, 2008) suggested adaptive perfectionism was not perfectionism at all; others argued that adaptive perfectionism adeptly described successful athletes (Dunn et al., 2012; McArdle, 2010) and high-performing musicians (Wiggins, 2011) who were predisposed to perfectionism but able to focus these traits toward achieving positive outcomes. Perfectionism in music is largely under-researched (Hill et al., 2019), but links have been demonstrated between perfectionism and increased music performance anxiety (Diaz, 2018; Dobos et al., 2018; Hill et al., 2019; Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018), non-enjoyment in music making (Diaz, 2018), increased self-efficacy of performers (Wiggins, 2011), and self-image resulting from musical critique (Atlas et al., 2004; Ryan & Andrews, 2009).

With this study, I hope to expand the understanding of music as a catalyzing or mitigating factor of maladaptive and adaptive responses in perfectionistic individuals (Flett et al., 2002). I am interested in determining in what ways, if at all, rehearsal expectations, peer interactions, and mentor choir directors cultivate perfectionistic

responses in high school singers as suggested by multiple scholars (Atlas et al., 2004; Flett et al., 2014; Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Froehlich, 2007; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Ryan & Andrews, 2009). I am also curious to discover if high-performing singers may have developed a natural resiliency or vulnerability to their perfectionistic tendencies that is domain-specific to choir, paralleling findings for athletes by (Dunn et al., 2012; McArdle, 2010). Perhaps music experiences serve as a catalyst for adaptive perfectionism or what Greenspon (2000) called striving, or maybe such experiences exacerbate mental health concerns, perceptions of rejection, or feelings of low self-worth.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of perfectionistic students, particularly their perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially situated perfectionism, in a high school choral classroom. Through this study, I sought insight into the experiences of three high school singers predisposed toward perfectionism by observing them in a choral setting. I was particularly interested in how instructors, peers, and ensemble culture might contribute to any such perceptions and how, if at all, perfectionistic singers would describe their self-worth and sense of acceptance in relationship to their musical achievement.

My queries, therefore, centered on manifestations of perfectionism in the words and actions of study participants. First, I was curious as to how high school singers might describe the expectations of their choral environment, their choir directors, and their fellow singers. Further, I wondered how students might conflate their achievements in choir with feelings of worthiness, self-esteem, and social acceptance in their lives writ large. Finally, I wanted to know if I could see high school singers grappling with perfectionism in the midst of rehearsal. Perhaps there were physical clues that might indicate intense moment of struggle with any perfectionistic predispositions

Benefits of Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods are most appropriate for researching the experiences of individuals (Glesne, 2016). The use of qualitative methods enables the ability to carry out an investigation from the perspective of those involved. By asking broad, open-ended

questions, participants have the opportunity to reflect, recall, and relive experiences and moments in specific contexts (Creswell, 2014). Rossman and Rallis (1998) provided eight characteristics of qualitative research, including its being situated in a natural setting, providing for emergent conclusions, providing space for interpretation, and promoting the researcher as one who "systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study" (p. 10). These features led me to deem quantitative design most appropriate for an examination of experiences.

Benefits of Multiple Case Study Design

Merriam (2009) defined a case study as an "in-depth analysis of a bounded system" (p. 38). In this instance, each case is an individual person. Multiple case study design allows for comprehensive and varied data collection of multiple bounded cases. Case study research is not generalizable, but employing a multiple case study design allowed me to explore the experiences of three high school choral singers using rich examination and exploration (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Multiple-case study facilitates two types of data analysis: (a) within-case, and (b) cross-case, providing deeper insight into participants' stories through the examination of differences and similarities across cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Employing a multiple case study will help me examine the confluence of perfectionism and singing from multiple perspectives. Freire (2000) proposed that students might not be able to see the hidden curriculum of the classroom(s) they inhabit, a condition that necessitates observation of instructor, students, and overall classroom

environment. A case study design allowed me to construct an understanding of a situation that, while often restricted to a highly specific population or single individual, represents certain truths about that situation for the individuals within it (Crotty, 1998).

Methodology

I used a multiple case study design involving three high school choir students and their choir director to examine aspects of socially situated perfectionism in the choral rehearsal environment. During the participant selection phase, I invited choir directors from geographically convenient sites who had led choirs in performance at conferences of either the American Choral Directors Association or National Association for Music Education in the last eight years (see Appendices B and E). Using the Hewitt & Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (HFMPS), I then screened interested respondents for predispositions toward socially situated perfectionism. A location was determined by finding the choir director with the lowest predisposition toward other-oriented perfectionism. My hope was that low levels of other-oriented perfectionism would help me more concretely gather information on the perfectionistic behavior of student participants by minimizing the influence of instructor-projected perfectionism.

The choir director at Waving Grains High School[1] (WGHS) demonstrated the lowest level of other-oriented perfectionism among respondents in phase one. I therefore contacted WGHS school district officials to garner approval to conduct the research at the selected site (see Appendix C). Once school district officials approved my request to conduct research onsite, eligible and interested choir students were invited to complete

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[1] A pseudonym.

the HFMPS as a screening tool (see Appendices D and F). I invited the three students who showed the highest predispositions toward self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism to participate in the second phase of the study (see Appendix G). These three participants represented approximately 50% of eligible and interested students who participated in the screening as well as 10% of the WGHS Chamber Singers roster. The three students selected also were the only students with notably elevated tendencies toward perfectionism according to the HFMPS. The predispositions of other students screened hovered at or near nominal levels of perfectionism in all three dimensions.

In the data collection phase, I interviewed the choir director and three student participants individually about their experiences with expectations, self-worth, and acceptance in choir (see Appendix A). I then observed the students during five choir rehearsals. The five rehearsals began after the conclusion of a performance cycle for the ensemble and coincided with the preparation of new repertoire for subsequent performances. This allowed me to observe process of acquiring new skills and the refinement of performance practice over several weeks and provided the opportunity to observe various rehearsal structures, lesson content, and spiraling rigor. Following the observations, I again interviewed student participants in a semi-structured group interview format. By interviewing the participants together, I hoped to provide ample opportunity for their conversation to evolve in a way that clarified individual responses. Further, my intent was to spur collaborative discussion about aspects rehearsal dynamics and decode peer-to-peer expectations that may have remained otherwise hidden to me as an outside observer.

Design

The multiple case study allowed me to hear and observe first-hand descriptions of perfectionistic individuals as they grappled with the social and musical expectations in the context of a skilled high school choir. I found no extant research on socially prescribed perfectionism in high school choir environments, so the multiple case study also offered an opportunity to expand upon theoretical foundation and implications (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Rich, descriptive detail surrounding student perceptions and overall classroom environment was essential to understanding student experiences with socially prescribed perfectionism (Glesne, 2016). I employed interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts (ex: journals) in an effort to understand experiences unique to each individual student. In particular, I was interested to learn how students reacted to feedback and described or exhibited maladaptive responses and behaviors linked to perfectionism. I did not wish to ascribe meaning to behavioral observations without asking students about what I witnessed in a follow-up conversation. I hoped that participant descriptions of experiences might clarify behaviors and that journaling might offer time for participants to ascribe meaning to those experiences (Yin, 2015).

Identification of Participants

Based on performances at a state, division, or national events sponsored by the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) or National Association for Music Education (NAfME) during the last 10 years by select choirs under their direction, eleven upper Midwestern high school choir directors were invited to participate in the screening

phase of the study. From this pool of potential participants, I selected schools within a 200-mile radius from my home whose choir directors were professional acquaintances. Of the 11 choir directors invited, nine were included in the project as they agreed to participate and submitted completed consent forms and HFMPS questionnaires.

In the participant selection phase of the study, I sought to identify a choir director with low levels of other-oriented perfectionism using the HFMPS. My choice to concentrate on a single choir director with low OOP scores stemmed from a desire to stay focused on student predispositions toward and experiences with their own perfectionistic tendencies. A choir director with elevated levels of OOP might interfere by projecting their perfectionism onto students and/or interpreting student success/failure as a measure of their own self-worth. The HFMPS inventory includes 45 situational statements about which participants identified their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = disagree, 7 = agree). The three dimensions of perfectionism are measured by 15 items each: *self-oriented perfectionism* (SOP), high self-standards and motivation for perfection; *other-oriented perfectionism* (OOP), one's expectations that others will be perfect; and *socially-prescribed perfectionism* (SPP), one's beliefs that others are imposing perfectionist standards on them.

I calculated and assessed the validity of scores using the instructions within the technical manual developed by the authors (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). These scores represent the individual's levels of perfectionistic tendency in each category after accounting for both gender and age. T-scores below the mean (M = 50, SD = 10) on each subscale indicate no concern. Scores between 50-54 are considered average and 55-59, moderate.

Scores one standard deviation above the mean (> 60) indicate an elevated level of perfectionism (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Mr. Hansen's[2] HFMPS profile T-scores were 67 in SOP, 49 in OOP, and 66 in SPP out of a possible 80 based on his gender and age group. These scores represent strong predispositions toward SOP and SPP but nominal tendencies toward OOP. By having low predisposition toward OOP, I deemed Mr. Hansen the least likely of the other choir directors to project unrealistic expectations onto his students. Mr. Hansen agreed to participate, and I made a formal request to the principal at his school.

I received approval from administrators to conduct the study in the Waving Grains Community School District, established a research schedule with the conductor, and sent both letters of invitation and consent forms to eligible students in the WGHS Chamber Choir. Eligible students were aged 18 or older as the HFMPS profile is not designed to be used with those under the age of 17 (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Six students returned the consent forms and indicated willingness to participate in Phase I. I administered the HFMPS inventory to these six students in Mr. Hansen's office adjacent to the rehearsal room. It took students between 10 and 17 minutes for students to complete the task, after which I calculated and verified scores using HFMPS protocols.

I invited the three student respondents with the strongest predispositions toward SOP, SPP, and simultaneous SOP and SPP to continue as participants in the full study. Just as with Mr. Hansen, the maximum adjusted score in a domain for students was 80. Marta's scores revealed elevated levels of both SOP (71) and SPP (75). Samuel exhibited

[2] All participant names are pseudonyms.

moderately elevated SOP (57) and SPP (58). Lauren displayed elevated SOP (67) and SPP (62). OOP T-scores for Marta (40) and Sam (45) were below average and in the average range for Lauren (54).

The three student participants received a letter of invitation and a consent form outlining the next phase or research. In these documents, I informed participants of the purpose, motivations, risks, and benefits of the study, as well as the methods of data collection, their rights to anonymity, and their role in member checks (Glesne, 2016). During my first meeting with the three student participants and their instructor, I explained the remainder of the study, defined terms as we would use them, and asked student participants to begin journaling about their experiences with SPP at the end of rehearsal each day.

Data Collection

I collected data in four forms over three months. Mr. Hansen and the three student participants each took part in an individual interview in his office. I conducted observations of five rehearsals of the WGHS Chamber Singers. During the time the observations were taking place, I asked student participants to submit journals detailing their reflections about the intersection of perfectionism and their experiences in choir. Finally, the three student participants met with me for one semi-structured group interview following the five observations.

Interviews

I interviewed the choir director and participating students individually about their perfectionistic tendencies and musical experiences using questions modeled after the work of multiple researchers: a perfectionism study by Speirs Neumeister, Williams, and Cross (2009), a reflective framework on perfectionism constructed by Greenspon (2014), and a rehearsal/environmental learning study by Silvey (2005). I recorded these semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) that lasted approximately one hour, allowing participants to suggest new topics and discuss emotions, perceptions, and experiences that related to the interview questions. I probed with follow-up questions when responses lacked clarity or seemed contradictory.

I conducted a semi-structured group interview with the students following the last rehearsal observation. I developed questions for this interview through the process of observing participants during rehearsals. I conducted and recorded the group interview via FaceTime after rescheduling several times due to inclement weather and impassable roads.

Rehearsal Observations

I observed five 50-minute choir rehearsals to obtain first-hand experience with the participants of the study in their regular environment. Observations occurred in the choir rehearsal room. I specifically desired to see how each student reacted when they or the ensemble made mistakes while rehearsing. What was their body language? Were there social implications of the mistakes, and if so, what were they? I took field notes during these rehearsals and recorded video footage of the participating choir director and all

student participants using multiple vantage points. I operated as a complete observer and did not participate in the rehearsals or interact with participants.

I hoped I might see students react viscerally to mistakes made in the natural course of rehearsal, perhaps in the form of headshakes, shudders, grimaces, etc. I wondered whether students might withdraw or become insolent if progress became arduous or if rehearsal rigor or instructor expectations increased significantly. Perhaps students would be prone to glance or glare at individuals and sections who struggled or outwardly support those who succeeded with smiles, cheers, and other signs of approval.

Journals

I introduced participating students to terms associated with perfectionism — expectations, self-worth, and acceptance — and encouraged them to use the terms in their journals. We discussed the language surrounding these ideas so that all participants might journal about moments of intersection between these three ideas—or related topics such as anxiety, comparison, and self-esteem—as they occurred through the course of the study. I supplied no formal prompts; I simply asked that they make a note if anything occurred that struck them as related to the aforementioned ideas or triggered a memory from our conversation.

I requested that the students write at the end of each daily rehearsal for approximately eight weeks. I reminded students to make journal entries through their choir director. All three students opted to submit their journals as digital word processing files via Google Drive.

Data Analysis

A student research assistant transcribed some interviews using audio recordings and Google Docs. I reviewed the transcriptions and completed others without such assistance. My research assistant and I transcribed interviews verbatim. I compiled these transcriptions along with field notes from my observations, annotated videos, and student journals to prepare for coding.

Coding is the process of organizing data by dividing it into purposeful chunks or brackets (Saldaña, 2015). I used Tesch's (1990) eight step inductive coding process as a guide. After getting a sense of the whole from reading several documents, I went back to the first interview transcript and began to add comments and my own thoughts/questions in the margins. I was looking for any data that seemed relevant to my research questions since I was open to any categories or themes that appeared connected to the theoretical framework (Tesch, 1990; Yin, 2014). I began to compile a list of topics that emerged and returned to the data to consolidate interrelated codes and develop accurate terminology to describe them as they became clear. I abbreviated, finalized, and alphabetized the codes within each theme before completing a final analysis of the data.

In the final analysis of data, I refined category names and began to organize by theme or overarching category and create subcategories that allowed me to identify patterns or trends. (Merriam, 2015). I searched for and categorized the perfectionistic traits of participants using descriptive terminology developed by Frost et al. (1990), Hewitt and Flett (1991), Flett et al. (2002), Hewitt et al. (2017), and Greenspon (2014). These models have been used extensively to examine the relationship between

perfectionism domains and the effects of perfectionism in various environments (Burgess et al., 2016; Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Longbottom et al., 2010; McArdle, 2010; Mitchelson & Burns, 1998).

I collated and coded field notes and participant journals independently by migrating interview transcriptions and observation data to a two-column spreadsheet. One column of the spreadsheet contained the full transcription of interviews/observations; the second column contained a series of codes denoting major ideas conveyed in each line of narrative. I organized codes into emergent themes and subcategories (Glesne, 2016). I coded observation field notes and video annotations in a manner similar to interviews, looking for overlap and similarities between codes after breaking them into segments. Commonalities between codes evolved into what I considered the transcending categories and themes of the compiled data.

I conducted within-case analysis by focusing on participants separately, completing one within-case analysis before moving on to another case, and so on. Participant SOP and SPP scores helped guide the process of coding interview transcriptions, observation notes, and artifact revelations, as did social learning, social expectation, and anxious learning definitions provided by Flett et al. (2002). Following within-case analysis, I looked for similarities in two or more cases in order to provide a cross-case analysis.

Validity, Trustworthiness, and Reliability

I triangulated conclusions through the collection of multiple artifacts: interview transcriptions, observation field notes, and journals. Because I knew participant HFMPS

scores and perfectionistic predispositions prior to the interview and observation phase, I endeavored to notice and mitigate this particular observation bias when analyzing data. I also employed multiple measures to establish the trustworthiness of this study. These measures included offering member checks to the interview participants (Glesne, 2016), having peers review my work regularly, reporting personal biases, and working to counteract observation bias. I have outlined limitations and delimitations that influence the trustworthiness and reliability of this study at the end of this section.

Member checks allowed participants to ensure their words and intentions were accurately represented when transcribed (Yin, 2014). All participants had an opportunity to elaborate upon and clarify the ideas they expressed in interviews by reviewing transcripts. No participant chose to revise their statements or provide clarifying information regarding non-verbal responses or body language. It was not necessary to ask follow-up questions or engage the participants in further dialogue following member checks.

Throughout the study, members of my dissertation committee, graduate cohort, and colleagues provided peer review regarding extant research, participant responses, and participant behaviors. Their feedback, provided through conversation and written comments, strengthened and ensured analysis only in areas where the supporting evidence was strong. Such peer review provided perspective into the accuracy of coding, emergent themes, and relevance to research questions. Peer review also helped to ensure the ethical treatment of participants with peers serving as a check and balance on my actions throughout the research process.

I employed thick description as means of communicating the full story of this study. Thick description refers to the details, context, and meaning that combine to help readers visualize the participants, environment, and results of qualitative research (Ponterotto, 2006). The intent of thick description is to merge the experiences of participants with the researcher's perception of participants within an environment and compared to constructs of a theoretical framework.

Personal Biases

I served as a high school choir director for 14 years in a school similar in size and geographic location to Waving Grains High School. I know the choir directors who completed the screening phase of the study and considered them colleagues. Mr. Hansen and I graduated from the same undergraduate institution and likely: (1) share some common philosophies, (2) utilize certain similar pedagogies, and (3) reflect the influence of common mentors. I found that I could relate to and understand the motivation behind certain aspects of Mr. Hansen's approach to teaching and rehearsing. During observations, I empathized with certain communication struggles and pedagogical failures that I found to be routine to working with high school students and celebrated quietly when his teaching tactics brought about intended results. I made a point not to assume his intentions, however, by asking follow-up questions in our interview and by reviewing each rehearsal video to determine concrete examples of explicit expectations.

I am in my early forties, Caucasian, and a product of a Midwestern, middle-class upbringing in a two-parent, cis-gendered, heteronormative household with two younger sisters. I had a wonderful high school choir experience in a strong program with rigorous

academic objectives and high performance standards facilitated by a choir director I loved. Each of the student participants identified as culturally Caucasian, came from two-parent, cis-gendered, heteronormative households, and had siblings. Each also reported that their parents garnered stable and moderate income levels. The exuded a love of participating in choir, shared a fondness for their instructor, and recognized the high expectations of the WGHS choral program. Consequently, I felt able to relate to theses students' circumstances as high school students. I therefore worked to contextualize and understand their responses through careful digestion and analysis of data that acknowledged the differences between my own memories and upbringing.

Finally, I consider myself a recovering perfectionist and likely present traits of socially situated perfectionism at times. I completed the HFMPS inventory to determine which I exhibit regularly and consider how such manifestations might influence this research. My scores were 51 (SOP), 59 (OOP), and 44 (SPP), indicating slightly elevated tendencies toward other-oriented perfectionism and nominal predispositions in the other two domains. My perfectionistic tendencies are somewhat less severe than I perceived. This may have made it difficult to understand the experiences of those who suffer from more extreme forms of the disorder, but might also have allowed me to see things with a greater degree of objectivity than the participants with high predispositions.

Presentation of Results

Creswell (2008) posited that qualitative research in a multiple case study involves a three-pronged approach to analysis. I followed these protocols by analyzing the explicit evidence provided by individual participants, exploring themes common among multiple

participants within their shared environment, and extrapolating meaning based on indirect evidence. In sensing connections, caution dominated my analysis; I avoided assumptions about participants by asking clarifying questions in individual interviews, employing follow-up questions during the group interview, and insisting upon elucidation about observed behaviors. This curtailed the insertion of my own biases and presumptions and also helped control any overlay of my own experiences as a high school student. The evidence I present is specific to these student participants, their teacher, and this classroom environment during a very specific moment in time.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of students' experiences on their perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially situated perfectionism in a high school choral classroom. In this chapter, I convey the demographics for the community and school in which the study took place and provide biographical sketches of the choir director and student participants. Each biographical sketch includes the words and actions of participants as they pertain to my research questions.

Community

Waving Grains High School (WGHS) is located in a small Midwestern city west of the Mississippi River. The city's population is between 70,000 to 80,000. It is bordered by several suburbs, none of which rival the size of the city itself but two of which have populations of approximately 20,000 residents. Approximately 60% of the adult population in the city possess a bachelor's degree or higher; the median income is slightly above $80,000 annually. The city is home to a large public university, two mainstream public high schools, and one alternative education public high school.

The Waving Grains Community School District encompasses all of the Waving Grains community, including its suburbs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (https://nces.ed.gov/), the school district has a total population of nearly 120,000 with a combined median household income of $55,000 across 47,000 households. From 2013-2017, slightly more than 11% of families in the district had

incomes below the poverty level and 18% received food stamp or SNAP benefits. More than 96% of families spoke English at home. Within the district, nearly 97% of parents reported having received a high school diploma or equivalent.

This most recent demographic data indicated that the district-wide student population was 77% White, 7% Black, 7% Asian, and 6% Hispanic. Less than 1% of students identified as either Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, while 2% identified with more than one category. In 2018-2019, demographic data at WGHS was markedly different from prior district-wide numbers: 54.7% of students identified as White, 19.3% as Black, 11.3% as Asian, 8.7% as Hispanic/Latino, and 0.1% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. An additional 5.7% of students reported multiple ethnic backgrounds.

The Waving Grains community in 2019 included ethnic diversity parallel to national averages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The population is largely economically stable and well-educated. Ethnic diversity is increasing within the student population at WGHS, but there is not data to reflect whether or not this same diversity is reflected in the choral music program. While these data points are irrelevant to the development of perfectionism, such factors may still account for the focus on Eurocentric aesthetic ideals—including peer and director expectations—in the choral program.

Choral Program

Waving Grains High School supports six curricular choirs and employs two full-time choral faculty. Additionally, the school sponsors multiple extracurricular singing opportunities, including competitive show choirs, several jazz and pop choirs, and opportunities to participate in numerous honor choirs. The WGHS Chamber Choir had

been selected by audition to perform at divisional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association on several occasions since the school opened in 1968, one of which was during the current choir director's tenure. The WGHS Chamber Choir is auditioned and composed exclusively of juniors and seniors. According to the school documents, the ensemble is dedicated to healthy singing, musical literacy, and the performance of varied choral works.

Classroom Environment

The choral rehearsal space at Waving Grains High School is made of white cinder block walls and features classic mid-century linoleum. The room shows signs of wear and tear expected for a space of its age. It was generally quite cold in the classroom, due to the fact that one side is an exterior wall for the front of the school. Floor-to-ceiling mirrors cover the back wall of the classroom. These mirrors are flanked by wooden storage cabinets and serve as a crown on four tiers of built-in risers. The risers are arranged in a severe horseshoe which faces a black upright piano, as well as two white boards and a Smart Board mounted in a small instructional alcove. Mr. Hansen opted to remove chairs from the classroom last fall. Students in the WGHS Chamber Singers sat on the floor or stood to rehearse in three tidy rows, having stored their backpacks on the sides of the classroom. Students brought their folders, octavos, and—in most cases—a water bottle to their assigned position at the start of class.

During the course of the study, students in the WGHS Chamber Singers were preparing for a festival performance of Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor* (K. 626). For this annual tradition, the thirty Chamber Singers members join multiple ensembles from other

schools to present a masterwork with an all-student orchestra. *Requiem in D Minor* (K. 626) is one of several pieces used in a rotation by the instructors involved. Mr. Hansen expressed passion about preparing this particular work in the course of rehearsals, citing its historical significance, artistic merit, and educational value as key motivators. He also referenced fond personal memories of performing the work. Chamber Singers regularly performs challenging a cappella pieces, several of which were rehearsed during the course of the study. Notable among them were anthems by Heinrich Schütz and Stephen Paulus.

Choir Director

Mr. Hansen has served at Waving Grains High School since 2012. He began his tenure as associate choir director, having arrived in Waving Grains directly from completion of a master's degree in choral conducting at a major graduate program in the United States. Prior to graduate school, Mr. Hansen served as a high school and church choir director in Iowa, South Dakota, and Florida. In addition to his work at WGHS, Mr. Hansen serves as the choir director at a large Lutheran church and directs a semi-professional adult choir. He earned his bachelor's degree from a small, mid-western, liberal arts college. We have known each other professionally for approximately 15 years, but have never interacted with one another substantively during that time.

Mr. Hansen is roughly six feet tall, slender, and has an elastically expressive face. He is a dynamic speaker and teacher, constantly moving about the room, offering rapid delivery of instruction, and rarely found without wide eyes and a smile on his face. His demeanor in rehearsals was kind and gentle, yet insistent and direct. The classroom

environment he created was rich in musical expectations that were strenuous but attainable. Students generally demonstrated attentiveness, perseverance, and adherence to classroom rules when working with Mr. Hansen in rehearsal. These actions and corresponding body language did not appear to be simple compliance, but rather suggested admiration and respect for their instructor as well as abiding commitment to the growth of self and achievement of the ensemble.

Mr. Hansen was selected as the teacher around whom to build this study based on his low levels of Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP) as gauged by the Hewitt and Flett (1991) Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (HFMPS). In the precursory phase of the study, Mr. Hansen's OOP score was below the median range when accounting for age and gender. His score was the lowest of ten conductor peers screened during this phase, suggesting that Mr. Hansen had little propensity to project unrealistic expectations onto others or for the performance of others to affect his personal self-worth.

Mr. Hansen's HFMPS profile also revealed elevated levels of Self-Oriented (SOP) and Socially Prescribed (SPP) Perfectionism. His proclivities in each area were more than one standard deviation from the median *t*-score when accounting for age and gender (SOP=69, SPP=66). Hewitt and Flett (1991) noted that individuals with elevated levels of perfectionism were generally less inclined to reveal their mistakes for fear of negative consequences. As a colleague in the field and a researcher looking to probe into these vulnerable areas, Mr. Hansen could have been motivated to keep me at arm's length, yet he did not.

Student Participants

I screened eligible and interested student participants in the WGHS Chamber Singers using the HFMPS to determine their perfectionistic predispositions. Students completed the HFMPS inventory at the outset of a Chamber Singers rehearsal. I then tabulated scores to find that three of those students showed moderately or severely elevated Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP) scores on the HFMPS. These students were invited to participate in the remainder of the study. The pseudonyms I have used for them are Marta, Samuel, and Lauren.

Marta

Marta was an 18-year-old senior alto in the WGHS Chamber Singers. She was slight in stature, possesses angular facial features, and had dark hair that she often pulled back tightly in a ponytail. Marta is the middle of three children, all of whom were pursuing music in multiple avenues at the time of the study. Marta was in her second year in WGHS Chamber Singers, but she reported singing with school choirs since seventh grade. She also performed with two additional choirs at the high school: pop a cappella choir and the school's competitive show choir. Outside of school, Marta participated in church choir through eighth grade. Marta's mother was a Broadway actress and Marta reported that the difficulty of that career path causes her mom to emphasize participation in music over perfection. Marta explained that her life is far different when it comes to academics. She reported that her parents tend to be the helicopter variety, checking in on her grades almost hourly. In the final group interview, Marta recounted a story of her father questioning her via text about a math grade within minutes of the mark being

posted.

Marta's Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP) score on the HFMPS was below the median for individuals in her age bracket. Conversely, her SOP and SPP scores were both two standard deviations above the median. These scores were the highest of all students in the original screening.

Samuel

Samuel was an 18-year-old senior in high school who sang bass. He is the third of seven children in a home with a mom and a dad. Samuel exuded a quiet warmth. He was somewhat rotund, stood roughly six feet tall, and had both a full beard and long, ginger hair. He dressed in fatigue-style vests and pants complemented by colorful t-shirts and ever-present combat boots. The video game cartoon figures that adorned his backpack combined with the permanent grin in his eyes to suggest a gentle giant that lies beneath a gruff exterior.

Samuel reported that he began singing in school choirs in seventh grade. During his junior and senior years of high school, he held membership in the WGHS Chamber Singers. In addition to his school choir experiences, Samuel sang in his church choir for many years. He considers himself the musical pioneer in his family. Each of Samuel's younger siblings began pursuing music as a part of their schooling due to his example. He shared that his parents place high value on academics, often checking in on his classroom performance and chastising him for a lack of progress in any given area. With regards to music, however, Samuel explained that their emphasis focuses on participation rather than excellence.

Samuel's self-oriented and socially prescribed scores on the HFMPS were less than one standard deviation above the median in each dimension, suggesting that he has elevated, non-alarming perfectionistic tendencies in these areas. Samuel's other-oriented perfectionism score was the lowest of the three participants, and also four points lower than Mr. Hansen.

Lauren

Lauren's physiology and demeanor were markedly different from Marta's. Lauren sang alto and one of the tallest treble singers in the classroom. She had a broad smile and long dark hair. As a dancer, she possessed a natural athleticism in the way she walked, stood, and sang. Peers openly looked to Lauren for musical and community leadership during Chamber Singers rehearsals. Her outgoing personality led to many conversations with classmates before and after rehearsals. At times her gregariousness detracted from Mr. Hansen's instruction during class, often in the form of laughter that devolves into a witty back-and-forth between the conductor and singers. Most of the time, however, Lauren exhibited strong leadership skills. She appeared to be a solid sight-reader, able to keep time, and skilled enough to maintain the learning pace set by Mr. Hansen. Lauren sat to the left of Marta in the second row of the alto section at the conductor's "two o'clock." Lauren and Marta were separated by two other singers.

Lauren has two parents and one younger sister. She had been a member of the WGHS Chamber Singers for two years and also participated in show choir. Lauren considered herself more of a dancer than a singer. She was generally concerned about making adequate progress in rehearsals, but she said her family life had encouraged her

to focus on being a nice person above other things. Consequently, she tended to view the process of rehearsing for improvement and development of interpersonal relationships as key aspects to successful musical experiences. Lauren's perfectionistic tendencies run deep; she shared a story about her parents bribing her not to get straight As on a report card, but instead offering $10 if she'd allow herself to get a B instead.

Lauren possessed a self-oriented perfectionism score of more than 1.5 standard deviations above the median, indicating strong predispositions toward maladaptive behavior. Her socially prescribed perfectionism score was slightly lower, but still measured >1.0 standard deviation above the median in her age group. These marks suggested that Lauren was highly susceptible to the maladaptive aspects of perfectionism. Lauren explained that she is working to accept mistakes and occasional failure in school as the mark of progress.

Participant Narratives

Mr. Hansen: Accepting, Insistent, and Student-Centered

In previous interactions, I had found Mr. Hansen's public persona to be amiable but guarded: a role he plays as if an actor on the stage, particularly when leading rehearsals and interacting with students. Away from the limelight, however, he proved willing to discuss delicate topics and often shared feelings of professional vulnerability. Further, Mr. Hansen was highly transparent regarding his reflective practices and inner monologue.

Mr. Hansen described himself as a detail-oriented teacher. In his view, rehearsals are environments in which students should actively risk, err, and try again. Public

performances, conversely, are cumulative assessments of both his work and that of his students. He maintains high standards for himself as a choir director and for students simultaneously:

> I think [my strengths are] rehearsal efficiency, independent musicianship, [and encouraging] a well-polished musicianship package [that] at the end of a concert would sound good in a recording or would sound good in a live performance: chords in tune, vowels matching, crescendos, decrescendos, all of the musical markings, and phrase direction, syllabic stress. [These] are all kind of my musical priorities.

Hansen argued that such standards are probably typical for other high-performing ensembles and conductors as well. He emphasized students' individual growth and reflection:

> I expect [students] are going to constantly be pursuing bettering themselves all the time, like even if they're not perfect initially. [I hope they are] always wanting to strive towards being better than they were the day before. So, especially in terms of their literacy, like, always working at that skill because the ceiling is never ending.

Mr. Hansen explained that pursuing the concrete details of performance with his choirs, particularly promoting accuracy to the printed score, is easier for him than facilitating emotional connection to text and music. These elements feel "safer" to him, and help him exert a certain amount of control in performances. His concerns centered on the sense of success and pride experienced by his singers: "I think that I do bear a certain

amount of responsibility for when those mistakes happen [in performance]. That if I had prepared the students in a certain way that they maybe wouldn't have...been embarrassed."

Mr. Hansen's rehearsals usually began with coaching singers on breathing concepts, producing long tones, and building chords. He often asked students to sing vocalization patterns and modulate around the circle of fifths using their tuning forks as reference. Instructional strategies during the body of rehearsal included under-tempo rote learning, the isolation of challenging intervals, verbal instructions on how to aurally orient between passages, and specific coaching geared toward nuance and interpretation.

Student participants asserted that Mr. Hansen has exacting musical standards for the WGHS Chamber Singers. I found his expectations during the warm-up portion of rehearsal rigid but appropriate for the ensemble; however, Mr. Hansen did not always demonstrate keen attention to detail as the choir rehearsed, particularly excerpts from Mozart's *Requiem*. He was often willing to gloss over repeated mistakes and commonly accepted the students' best effort rather than working with them to refine the sound. This was most often true in matters of score accuracy (i.e.: pitch, rhythm, etc.).

Patterns of instruction and performance expectations changed when the students rehearsed a cappella anthems like "The Old Church" by Stephen Paulus. In one rehearsal of that piece, Mr. Hansen focused on cleaning onsets, dynamics, and text stress in an eight-bar passage for nearly fifteen minutes. When Mr. Hansen asked questions of students, he quickly provided the answers he wanted to hear when students were slow to respond, increasing the intensity in the room. He stopped the choir frequently and had

them begin again, often with little or a single word of direction (ex: "Commit!"). Mr. Hansen acted and spoke more curtly during these moments with a distinctly edgy tone to his voice. His cries of "Listen!" "Sing like you're going to try." "Agree!" and "Support, support!" eventually yielded more finely attuned singing, but appeared to cause some distress for students as evidenced by tense body language and more frequent grimaces.

Student participants agreed that Mr. Hansen's expectations were reasonable. On several occasions, I had perceived Mr. Hansen's directions to be unclear or unarticulated when he stopped the ensemble and asked them to repeat a section. The students explained how the group tacitly understood the goals in such moments because Mr. Hansen had articulated the objectives previously. Marta and Lauren put it this way:

M: I mean, if he just starts us over, we usually already know what he's talking about.

L: He'll have said it before.

> M: Yeah, it's something we've already discussed. He's never like, "I'm just going to stop you. Do it again. Try not to do it wrong." He never does that. So, he always does explain and it is always helpful when he does explain, but I like that he tends to explain it [only] once or twice because -
>
> L: Then you have to listen.

Mr. Hansen's motivations and mode of operations helped to shape the students' perception of his expectations as reasonable, attainable, and student-centered.

By and large, Mr. Hansen described himself in terms associated with striving rather than perfectionism. He categorized mistakes made at work as far more problematic

than those made at home. Yet, he divorced his failures as a teacher from his self-worth, saying “I don’t think I’ve ever felt like a mistake in an ensemble or my teaching makes me a worse person.” According to Hansen, mistakes are a way for individuals to inform future actions and elicit positive outcomes.

Mr. Hansen articulated hopes that his students could come to understand mistakes as inherent to the learning process. He has great appreciation for students who consistently give their best effort. He argued that choristers who avoid risk do so to the detriment of the ensemble: “The kids that will hold back...because of their...fear of messing up will just kind of like sit in the back until they feel it’s, like, perfect and then will put their part in,” Hansen explained. He went on to say that making mistakes is the nature of rehearsal, but mistakes in performance are somewhat different.

When rehearsing excerpts from *Requiem*, Mr. Hansen undoubtedly demonstrated a tolerance for mistakes as he willingly accepted errors in the execution of vocal mechanics, vowel shape, and intervallic accuracy. Yet, his approach to rehearsing that work was notably relaxed from the rigidity he demonstrated during aural training and vocalization portions of rehearsal. Further, a strict discipline and frank instructions dominated his rehearsal of Paulus and Schütz. While rehearsing “The Old Church,” students stood in a circle and endeavored to polish their performance as Mr. Hansen shifted from encouraging students to try, err, and try again, to eliminating errors from their performance. His demeanor was also less cordial. Mr. Hansen’s behavior seemed counter to his previous assertion that mistakes in rehearsal are both ubiquitous and necessary.

There were occasions when Mr. Hansen seemed less tolerant of his own mistakes. These moments shared one of two characteristics: the mistakes were made in full view of the public or made permanent through recording. Mr. Hansen described his acute difficulty in letting go of errors captured for posterity in an anecdote:

> I have a recording of [Chamber Singers] singing the [Thomas] Weelkes' "Hosanna to the Son of David" and everything about it is really good except that there's that...one person that came in before everyone else...and you can hear it clear as day in the recording. It sucks that the recording then doesn't happen [as intended]...but it's still okay.

Hansen insisted that he does not think less of students when they err in performance, yet described errors made in front of others as more significant than those made within the confines of the ensemble. As an example, Mr. Hansen recounted a time when composer Eric Barnum served as a clinician with the ensemble on a piece he had composed. The group had rehearsed the accompanied piece *a cappella* using tuning forks and, by Hansen's account, sounded very good. When the clinic occurred, the group was noticeably out of tune as the piano was added. Mr. Hansen explained that having Barnum hear the choir sing flat, made him "feel extremely self-conscious."

Mr. Hansen suggested that making mistakes in performance was particularly uncomfortable for him personally. He described feeling pressure to meet the expectations of audiences, supervisors, and community members and shared a story about this discomfort from several years ago:

> I was conducting the orchestra and 250 kids singing...the "Tuba mirum" from Mozart *Requiem*, and the soloist was one measure off with, um, everything else. And so, I had to make a decision if we were going to just, like, plow through this and just get to the end and have it be kind of a mess or we were going to start over. [HE PAUSED AND SHOOK HIS HEAD] And so, I stopped. And we started over. And, I actually felt better about it than I was expecting to. I think there was that moment of, like, a hush where everyone thinks, "Oh, my goodness...this is bad. Is someone going to the hospital?"

Mr. Hansen stressed that it was not just the concern for what audiences would think when he stopped that bothered him; it was the fact that he had exposed a chink in his professional armor. This perception had changed over time. Mr. Hansen shared that mistakes are something he accepts more readily now than he did in his youth. Experience and age helped to temper his perfectionistic tendencies:

> How I view success in terms of [being a choir director at WGHS] in this profession has also evolved, like, a little bit from when I was younger...I was focused much more on extrinsic success and less on intrinsic success, and I feel like those have kind of shifted a little bit as I have taught for longer.

Mr. Hansen's changing perspective on success in his career paralleled a broader change in his sense of self that evolved over the same period.

> You are not a choir director, like, that's not who you are. Being a choir director is your profession, but again, I think that when I went out as a young teacher, I didn't really divorce those. I was like, "I am a choir teacher. This is what I talk

about. This is all...this is who I am." I think the longer I'm doing it [teaching choir], the easier it is to divorce those two things.

Patience is a key element of Mr. Hansen's rehearsal style. In one rehearsal, he assigned students to rehearse their individual parts for the Kyrie of Mozart's *Requiem* using Sound Trap as a learning guide. Sound Trap is a free, online software program that functions as Garage Band, allowing users to record, notate, layer, and manipulate multiple "tracks" of sound. Mr. Hansen had prepared the entire score of the Kyrie for students, who were encouraged to listen to their own lines, begin singing along, and then add or subtract other elements of the overall texture to gain a sense of independence. He further gave the option to design new tracks that could be added to the overall texture (ex: a rock drum beat). Students had various degrees of success in accessing and utilizing Sound Trap effectively. Further, some students moved off-task when working in groups of peers. Mr. Hansen maintained his patience and amiability as he redirected and coached students. When students broke down melismatic passages in small groups or sections, he rewarded progress over perfection in the form of short affirmations like "Good for you!" or "That's better!" He concluded the class with an expression of approval and gratitude for the work of the singers for attempting something challenging and new.

Mr. Hansen creates a classroom environment that is highly student-centered. His good-natured approach to classroom instruction helped to empower students. Each of the three participants expressed a fondness for him as a human being and suspected his intentions were honorable with regards to their health and well-being. They further shared how Mr. Hansen's coaching was influenced by this spirit of empowerment so as to

almost always be perceived as positive and growth-centered.

On the heels of a late-night performance for many of the students in Chamber Singers, Mr. Hansen implemented a “rotating sectional” for the period as if anticipating student fatigue and academic needs that transcended choir rehearsal. This allowed sections to take turns working on the “Kyrie” from Mozart’s *Requiem* with Mr. Hansen at the piano while the rest of the students concentrated on completing homework from or studying for other courses. Student participants noted that this type of compassion defines Mr. Hansen.

In rehearsals, most students in the ensemble demonstrated some off-task behavior and inattentiveness that occasionally caused long periods of transition between activities. They also seemed to get frustrated with the monotony and difficulty of some rehearsals. Mr. Hansen persevered in such moments and used growth-minded language to coach and direct the students.

Marta: Intense, Concerned, and Disconnected

Marta’s position in the classroom was in the second row of the choir, at the “one o’clock” position from the conductor. She was surrounded by peers on all sides and her body language seemed to respond to her position in two ways: (1) she was demure and withdrawn as if “pushed in” by the ensemble, and (2) she reacted to extraneous noises and activity with great frequency. She presented herself meekly, often wearing a jacket drawn in tight to her torso. In most rehearsals, Marta exhibited disengaged body language that included crossed arms, wandering eyes, and idiosyncratic shifting of her weight. Her eyes were unfocused and distant. She remained passive during vocalization and but

showed significantly greater attentiveness when the rehearsal pivoted to analysis, written work, and repertoire.

Marta tended to be the most visibly socially self-conscious of the participants. Though a self-professed leader in the ensemble, she tended to melt into the group during rehearsals. She literally looked over her shoulder when things were not going well or when mistakes were made in rehearsal. Marta expressed fear of negative evaluations by instructors, peers, and parents that corresponded to the high personal standards she seems to have for herself in both school and music. She often appeared stressed and described herself as being under pressure.

When singing in isolation with her section or as a part of the full ensemble, Marta's eyes constantly darted over her shoulder. When asked about this, she explained that the tenors behind her likely said something funny. Marta seemed hyperaware of her peers. She looked down the row at others in her section with great regularity, sometimes furrowing her brow in looks of projected scorn and other times with a dropped jaw and eye roll suggesting exasperation. When the altos formed a circle and sang toward the center, it was Marta who gave "side eyes" to her peers. Often, these glances corresponded to the sound of wrong notes, poorly executed vocal mechanics, or incorrect rhythms.

Marta expressed clear opinions about the nature of mistakes in the choral rehearsal. She identified mistakes as something within a person's power to do correctly that end up incorrectly executed. Marta felt that errors occurring in an ensemble are less worrisome than those in a solo setting. She explained, "When you're in the big group, I don't think anybody can really [hear] mistakes or point [them] out;" however, when she

believes a peer has heard her make a mistake while singing, Marta said she is inclined to sing more quietly and tentatively so as not to expose herself to critique.

Marta claimed that mistakes are inherent to the choral rehearsal but that they needed to be addressed and fixed. She found it frustrating when individuals made repeated errors:

> The one person who, you know, doesn't pay attention and then makes a mistake? That's frustrating, but [if] it is something that we are all working on together, it's not really a huge issue because the whole point is to struggle to get better.

She explained that repeated mistakes have long-term impacts for the ensemble and expressed irritation over peers' focus on short-term goals instead of retention. Marta argued this caused a preponderance of mistakes in subsequent rehearsals, but she also claimed to prefer making a mistake all the time rather than eliminating it in one rehearsal only to have it recur in subsequent ones:

> I'd rather have us just always mess up something then do it right once and then always mess up. Because then it's like we knew we could do it and then, like, why aren't we doing it anymore?

Of her own errors, Marta asserted that making mistakes closer to performances was a far more troubling prospect:

> I definitely am more self-conscious later in the rehearsal process. When we're first learning a piece, I'm not too terribly self-conscious, [but] when we all know the piece already...then if you do make a mistake you stick out more.

Marta seemed to tolerate her mistakes in choir rehearsal sparingly, even early in the

rehearsal process.

Though she expressed feeling able to compartmentalize her sense of self and her musical achievement, Marta indicated a struggle to separate feelings of self-worth from her performance in choir because of the social implications of making mistakes in public. She said, “I’m sure I sound better than I think I do, but if I... sound as bad as I think I do, then I assume [peers] won’t respond well.” When I asked how that perceived negative peer evaluation made her feel, she described feelings of embarrassment and an inclination to sing softer to avoid further critique.

Marta expressed her belief that her level of self-acceptance and overall self-image were not impacted by her achievement in choir:

> Choir, for me, isn’t one of those things that...it doesn’t affect my self-worth at all. (How I do in choir.) Just because it’s something I do for fun. It’s not really, like, a value of mine [where] I think, like, if I don’t succeed in choir, I’m not succeeding in life. I’m not one of those people.

Yet, Marta’s ability to contribute to Chamber Singers mattered deeply to her. She spoke highly of her musical abilities and expressed stringent self-imposed expectations regarding her classroom leadership. She felt obligated to play all notes and rhythms correctly on the piano in sectionals and worried that she was letting her section down if she made mistakes. She also tacitly implied that she should be serving as the de facto teacher during sectionals, an arguably unrealistic expectation for an 18-year-old.

Marta recognized the high standards she sets for herself, as well as her tendency to internalize and ruminate upon mistakes. Her musical self-conception vacillated

between feeling "mediocre" or "not amazing," but she also saw herself as the person others look to for her musical independence, reading skills, rhythmic prowess, and model timbre. Marta expressed dislike for the sound of her own voice and credited luck, not skill, as the most important element of her musical success at WGHS. Her goals in music included singing in choir at college, being cast in large musical theatre roles, and having fun. She was unsure what Mr. Hansen thinks of her as a singer, but believed he thinks she is "annoying as a person." Generally, she explained her musical knowledge and proficiencies—literacy, piano skills, and vocal technique—far more impressively than she demonstrated them. Her participation in rehearsal was often limited to reluctant, withdrawn, and non-influential singing.

Self-critical thought dominated Marta's journal entries. She forgot to write during the first few weeks of the study and her first entry started with "...well I feel terrible, I guess my new year's res is to remember to do these." In that same entry, she described the ensemble's progress on Mozart *Requiem* as "bad" and stewed over how "bad [she] sounded" due to illness. At the end of that week, Marta reflected on a run-through of the *Requiem* saying, "It went ok but I definitely could have done better." Any praise Marta offered of her own performance was often couched in negative and overly self-critical qualifiers. At one point, Marta commented positively upon her leadership from the piano during sectionals but subsequently lamented how many notes she played incorrectly and how her actions held back her peers.

Frustrations Marta felt toward Mr. Hansen were tied to class expectations. She perceived the use of tuning forks as an unrealistic push to cultivate perfect pitch in

students. She explained that, “Right now, it’s weird because he’s trying to, like, make us all have perfect pitch and I’m, like, ‘You can’t just...create that.’” She clarified that while the expectations surrounding tuning fork work may or may not be reasonable, she thinks any grades assigned in this area are unjustifiable.

She also took issue with Mr. Hansen’s rehearsal style, particularly those occasions when he worked to refine the ensemble’s nuance:

> He’ll spend, like, the entire class period having us sing, like, one vowel over and over and over again. That’s when all of us are like, “What’s the point of this? We’re all going to forget this by tomorrow.” We’re singing one vowel now and then the minute we get it right it’s like, “Sweet. We’re done. Good.” We’ll move on, but it’s just kinda like...he’ll just keep doing something until he gets it exactly how he wants it. But we all know it’s not going to stay that way anyways, so it’s kind of just...pointless sometimes.

Yet, Marta was quick to criticize her peers and Mr. Hansen equally when the expectations from those maligned rehearsals failed to show up in concert settings:

> When [my classmates] are not doing dynamics...those are one of the things we’ll, like, drill in class for, like, 40 minutes on one section, and it just doesn’t happen in the performance or something. And... I’m not upset about it, I’m just like, well why did we work on it for so long?

During a rehearsal of Mozart’s *Requiem*, Mr. Hansen identified the chromatic scale that emerges from each fugal entrance of the subject and countersubject in the development. Marta glanced over her shoulder and at peers throughout this exercise. This

behavior coincided with moments when the group struggled to find the scalar passages Mr. Hansen had pointed out and appeared to decrease Marta's attentiveness to subsequent instructions.

External pressure was a significant stressor for Marta in most aspects of her life. She described goals in music as something set by others and whose achievement is outside of her control. As examples, she cited the hierarchy of ensembles at WGHS and director preferences in casting both show choir and musical theater productions. Marta reasoned that her work toward securing roles with these organizations was compelled by her directors, peers, and family. She also argued that she had little power to influence the outcome of any audition she gives. Yet, Marta attested to lower feelings of self-worth when she failed to land auditions (e.g., in a school production of *West Side Story*) in part because cumulative rejections cyclically reinforced the idea that she is in some way not good enough in the eyes of others.

Peer feedback, perhaps unsurprisingly, had a profound impact on Marta. She preferred singing in groups so as not to expose herself to critique from classmates:

> I don't have a whole lot of anxiety about choral singing just because a lot of my anxiety is more school related. Like, life related. With choir, at least while we're rehearsing, I don't worry too much about it because I tend to get it pretty quickly and if I don't...no one hears you. You're in a big group. When I have to sing a solo, like, that's a little bit different.

Marta explained how garnering a solo intensifies scrutiny from peers, because "when you have a solo [in an ensemble], there's always people that are like, 'It should've been me,'

or 'It should have been ______' — y'know. So, you have to deal with that." Marta further identified that, whether singing alone or with others, a primary concern is the peer fallout for making mistakes in performance:

> My main anxiety isn't necessarily getting wrong notes because, again, you have that, like, people don't really know who sang the wrong note. For me, I do worry about, like, coming in too early, cut-offs, things that would make me stand out.

Implied critiques were as problematic as explicit criticism:

> M: If [the altos] were just out of pitch for whatever reason, or if we all sounded kind of bad, [one girl] will be, like, "Well, that was terrible."
>
> MP: How does that make you feel?
>
> M: I'm always, I mean, first of all: I kind of agree sometimes because it's like...it was bad. [But], I feel like for whatever reason I've internalized it as being directed at me instead of the big group. I feel kind of, like, embarrassed. I don't know if it's ever actually directed at any one person.

Marta's conveyed deep concern about what others think of her, particularly as it related to musical proficiency and work ethic. On one occasion, she wrote:

> I stayed home from school today. I am worried about missing choir, but I am [also] worried about missing show choir. Mr. Hansen gets really mad when you do not come, even if you are sick, but it is a rule in my family that if you stay home from school due to an illness you also must miss extracurriculars.

Her concern over what peers think of her musical skills was even more acute:

> When I do play [piano] though, I am super self-conscious about playing the notes and rhythms correctly. When I mess up somewhere, I feel like everyone is judging me and like I let my section down by teaching them wrong.

Marta also admitted singing more cautiously and quietly when sight-reading new music as a means of avoiding public embarrassment. She quickly clarified that this reticence to publicly err was rooted in social pressures, saying, “It’s the self-conscious stuff...not anything musical. It’s just about, like, we’re in high school and we want people to like us. It’s just...the social anxiety of it.”

Marta mentioned rare instances when Mr. Hansen’s demeanor and feedback had unintentional negative consequences. She relayed that such instances usually compounded already intense social pressures:

> He’ll occasionally do something that I think is demoralizing. He really upset my friend in show choir once because we were doing facial [expressions] and said to her, “That’s the first time I’ve ever seen you smile,” in front of everybody...when he’s giving general comments about music it’s never demoralizing. It’s when he’s trying to be funny and then makes a joke that isn’t funny but he thinks is funny.

She claimed moments like this one felt personal and altered the classroom environment so that peer critique seemed sanctioned, became commonplace, and felt hurtful.

Marta seemed socially distant from peers in Chamber Singers. On two occasions, she opted to work alone when the group divided into small groups. In those instances, she either left the room or put in her earbuds and retreated into a small personal space. She did not chat with peers before, during, or after the rehearsals. It is unclear what motivated

these actions but seem potentially linked to social pressures and I have therefore chosen to mention them here.

Despite her focus on expectations, compliance, and failure, Marta argued that her perfectionism was not ubiquitous. She claimed to set far more stringent expectations for herself outside of her musical world:

> I am a perfectionist in almost every area of my life and choir is not one of the ones that I'm super worried about, just because it's not terribly serious. You're in a big group and the fact that you're kind of anonymous makes it a little bit less pressure on you.

Marta cited her mother's experience as a working actor as a factor in developing different standards for herself in performance, resulting in lower pressure to be perfect in choir. She noted that her family values creating art for its own sake and readily acknowledges that a person cannot win every audition.

She went on to explain how her parents' philosophy differed in other arenas, highlighting how traditional academic work, as well as the impact of perceived failure, was more likely to evoke her perfectionistic drive:

> I've always put more pressure on myself with school. If I have a B in a class—I have an 87 in AP Calc[ulus] right now—and I think that's the worst thing in the world. I mean, that's an F to me. It's a B, [but] I think it's an F. So, most of my perfectionism is definitely with school. I get really beat down when I miss, like, two points on a project and I know it's unrealistic but it's, like, I get so upset with myself.

Marta perceived the standards in music as less definitive than in other classes. She credited this with tempering her perfectionistic tendencies:

> With academic classes [like Calculus], it's, like the only thing determining your success is a grade, and it's on paper and it's there and it's staring at you. But with choir, your end goal is a concert and you're singing and it just kind of happens...there's not a rubric for it, y'know? So... there's not a whole lot of pressure.

Yet, Marta was practical in her preference for rigorous and focused rehearsals, saying, "I am a busy person. I have a lot I need to be doing. If we're not going to be [engaged], I want to be somewhere else because it is a waste of time."

Samuel: Engaged, Realistic, and Unflappable

Samuel is a dutiful member of the WGHS Chamber Singers. He is usually one of the first students to arrive and generally finds his seat quickly. His position in the classroom was at the conductor's ten o'clock, in the back row, and in the approximate center of the basses. This location allowed Samuel to influence the sound and behavior of the ensemble through his actions. The bass section in the WGHS Chamber Singers is a social and good-natured group of students in which Sam fits well. As a section, they are generally disciplined in rehearsal. Samuel demonstrated exemplary diligence, attentiveness, and adaptability during class. He consistently modeled leadership commensurate to his level of experience as well as an eagerness to sing.

Samuel's self-oriented and socially prescribed scores on the HFMPS were less than one standard deviation above the median in each dimension. This suggested that

Samuel has elevated, non-alarming perfectionistic tendencies in these areas. His other-oriented perfectionism score was the lowest of the three participants, and also four points lower than Mr. Hansen.

Samuel was affable in all of our interactions, but his reflections about the intersection between identity and singing were not particularly enlightening. He possessed a rather uninformed understanding of his skills as a chorister. While he recognized that he does not read music very well, Samuel had little else to say about his current state of musical proficiency. He identified that he does not care for the sound of his own voice when he hears it on a recording, but this did not appear to conflict with his belief that he inherently has a good singing voice. Instead, he suggested his perceptions of his voice stemmed from feedback he has received from peers, teachers, and family at various points of his life.

Samuel had three goals for himself as a member of the bass section in the WGHS Chamber Singers. First, he wanted to contribute to the best of his ability. Second, he hoped that his contributions balance and enhance those of other singers. Finally, he desired to provide leadership by example. He expressed that this leadership included singing proper notes, keeping a steady pulse, and demonstrating compliant behavior.

Samuel seemed to possess a rational understanding of mistakes. He communicated no connection between his sense of self-worth and the mistakes he makes in choir, yet his responses indicated that his perfectionistic tendencies were only adaptive in certain situations. With regards to rehearsal, Samuel said:

> If I make a really bad mistake, like, singing a measure or so ahead or more than that or a voice crack, which is just embarrassing in the moment, [my anxiety is] usually not that bad.

Samuel claimed to loath repetition, but displayed impressive perseverance during challenging rehearsals. When Mr. Hansen asked the choir to repeat a section of the Schütz for a third time, Samuel responded by shaking his head, grimacing, gritting his teeth, and then soldering on.

Samuel shared concerns about reading new music. His anxieties focused on his own musical standards as well as living up to the unwritten code of being in WGHS Chamber Singers. I asked him if he felt self-conscious when reading music for the first time. He said difficult music doesn't faze him, but missteps on something straightforward can feel like defeat:

> If it's, like, pretty complicated or a different language or something like that, then typically no. If it's a relatively simple piece written in English, then messing up on it would make me feel self-conscious.

Performances were different for Samuel. He indicated that he holds high standards for his peers when they take the stage together. Samuel "expect[s] people to be trying their absolute best during a performance." These are similar to the standards he has set for himself:

> The idea of messing up really bad [in performance] is...well...it's not fun. It's something that I tend to try not to think about beforehand, while on stage, but in the case where I do, I do get kind of anxious about, well, what if people know it

> was me? [In that circumstance], I think people would understand that mistakes happen, but I would probably feel bad for potentially letting my section or my choir down a little bit by screwing up.

Samuel demonstrated resilience in a high-pressure rehearsal environment. During one set of vocalizations, Mr. Hansen's cries of "Listen!" "Sing like you're going to try." "Agree!" and "Support, support!" resulted in tense body language from many students, but not from Samuel. Despite the intensity of this rehearsal, Samuel seemed unfazed by Mr. Hansen's approach or the apparent increased stakes of expectations. Samuel was quick to correct his singing posture and refocus his eyes on Mr. Hansen when given instructions to concentrate. He showed great confidence in singing broken chords without hesitation, indicated self-perceived mastery when asked, and redoubled his efforts toward group goals without prompting from Mr. Hansen. During rehearsal of the Mozart, Samuel persevered when progress was slow and arduous. Failed cadences often resulted in a head shake from Samuel and then his confident entrance on the next bass cue. Samuel's leadership was on display that day, particularly in terms of rhythmic execution and behavior. He was patient and diligent, appearing unaffected by his own mistakes or those of his peers.

Samuel noted that Mr. Hansen's work with tuning forks raised the pressure on all students to sing in tune, but he offered no commentary on what that pressure meant to him or how he saw it playing out in the ensemble. Samuel viewed Mr. Hansen's most biting critiques in a positive light. Samuel offered this insight of his director:

> I think he's trying to, like, guide us in how he wants us to perform. If it were students [offering feedback], it [criticism] would probably be more demoralizing because they're just trying to get it set to how they want it to be.

Samuel had ideas about how peers perceive him, but his level of concern about those perceptions vacillated between tepid curiosity and calm acceptance:

> I think I have a good voice. A lot of people say that I do. Whether that's being nice I don't know, but it's a pretty common compliment in terms of voice.

Aside from his singing voice, he struggled to determine what peers think of his musicianship:

> I think [classmates are] realistically thinking that [when I make a mistake] it's easy for most of them and sometimes they don't understand why I'd be struggling with it. I think everyone in [choir] tries to be understanding [of mistakes], but it's more difficult for some people than for others.

His perception of and reaction to what peers expect of him was similarly rational.

> MP: What [do] your peers expect of you in choir?
>
> S: Just that I'm performing at the best of my ability, I guess.
>
> MP: Does that ever feel intimidating? Does it ever feel like too much?
>
> S: Sometimes, but not terribly often.

Samuel's assumption that others would give him the benefit of the doubt when he made mistakes in choir was reflected in the way he maintained an open mind about the mistakes of others:

> If it’s a wrong note, if it’s a little bit off, it’s understandable. If it’s way too high it was probably a voice crack. If it’s way too low, they’re probably just trying to impress the people around them...for basses, at least.

Samuel talked about pressure several times. At no time did he intimate that the pressure he felt from Mr. Hansen or peers was problematic or unachievable. From peers, Samuel intuited a pressure to expand his range:

> I do feel pressure that I need to be able to sing lower than what I can. Generally, in this choir it’s not as bad...but outside of it when I say that I’m a Bass II then people expect me to sing a lot, like, really low.

From Mr. Hansen, however, the pressures were somewhat more acute. Samuel assumed that Mr. Hansen thinks of him as a good singer, but he was somewhat uncertain. The lack of concrete affirmation or critique was unsettling for Samuel, given his self-appraisal in music literacy:

> MP: What does Mr. Hansen think of you as a musician? Do you know?
>
> S: Not really. I assume he thinks I’m good, but I don’t really know for sure.
>
> MP: What are your impressions? What are the clues that lead you to think [that] he thinks you’re alright?
>
> S: Well, being a sophomore in Concert Choir...is pretty much a guarantee you’ll be in Chamber Singers the following year and that’s also why very few sophomores ever get into Concert Choir.

Samuel’s actions in class tended to focus on the priorities he deemed most important and appeared to ignore the subtle pressures he described to me. Sometimes,

Samuel disregarded the fact that the ensemble had moved to a new task and finished what he was doing (e.g., numbering measures, writing in solfege). When called to the piano for a sectional, Samuel was the last of his section to report, yet he sang from where he had been studying when Mr. Hansen began to play his line. Then, when the bell rang, most students immediately stopped singing and began to exit the classroom. Samuel did not. Instead, he continued to sing until Mr. Hansen stopped playing. In this instance, Samuel was the last student to put his folder away and among the final few to leave the rehearsal space.

According to Samuel, Chamber Singers are expected to aspire to a rigorous standard of musical competency; however, he suggested that Mr. Hansen tempers these expectations with compassion when students err. Samuel described a likely scenario were he to encounter failure during rehearsal or a lesson:

> [Mr. Hansen] might pull me aside and ask if something is wrong. He'll generally try and assume the best of the situation and tend to be quite understanding of any potential issues that could come up.

Expressing reflective thinking seemed to challenge Samuel. In some cases, his reflection seemed surface-level, as it did when he discussed the unhealthy elitism and self-importance, he felt was inherent to WGHS Chamber Singers. When pressed, he did not elucidate on why those issues were problematic. Samuel did not seem to know what attributes earned him a berth in Chamber Singers, nor which kept him singing with the group. He cited basic literacy skills as critical, but did not expound upon other skills or his own reading proficiency with any detail.

Given Samuel's reserved verbal responses, I had hoped to learn more about him and his perfectionistic tendencies through his journal. When I noticed Sam had not been journaling, I gently reminded him to do so whenever he had the chance. He apologized for having forgotten to log his thoughts and committed to get something written down as soon as possible. By the completion of the study, however, he had yet to complete even a single journal entry. I am uncertain what prevented Samuel from making entries in his journal, but mention it here as another way in which he failed to engage in substantive self-reflection.

Samuel showed slightly elevated levels of perfectionistic tendencies. He offered a benign description of his experiences with pressure, expectations, and mistakes. Though the opinions and perceptions of others influenced Samuel's musical self-concept more than his own limited self-reflection, he also bluntly declared, "I don't care much what people think of me."

Lauren: Grounded, Committed, and Growing

Lauren described herself as a weak musician. Yet, her goals were reasonable, growth minded, and rooted in her current proficiencies. She hoped to gain confidence as a singer by participating in choir. Lauren intended to sing in college even though she plans to major in engineering. She indicated a hope that her involvement with choir will prepare her to sing in front of others at college choir auditions or alone in public performances later in life.

Mistakes, musical or otherwise, are a complicated matter for Lauren. She fretted at times about the impact of mistakes as they pertained to her goals:

> Logically, I know, like, mistakes are human but emotionally I'm like, gosh, like why did I do that? At times, it's hard to match the logical with the emotional, like, it's fine but it's also like I can learn from it, [but] it's fine to [also] be upset about it.

Lauren's performance experience originated primarily in dance, and she joined choir as both a social outlet and to qualify for membership in show choir. She professed low self-efficacy as a singer and confessed to frequently comparing herself to skilled peers. Lauren recognized her problematic reasoning:

> You can't really compare yourself to others, [which] is hard to do in a choir. [There are] people who have had like years...they're technically very good, or people who sing next to me, they're, like, *so* musical theatre, [and] it's like, okay, they're great at musical theater. But it's also, like, easier to think judgement about other people then, and if I think judgement on other people, they're probably thinking judgement on me, too. It's, like, hard to compare voices because everyone's a little bit different.

Lauren seemed aware of but also resilient to mistakes in rehearsal. During a particularly rough run sight-reading portions of the Mozart, all three participants showed varying degrees of frustration on their face that corresponded to mistakes made. At one point, Lauren stopped singing for a time after looking sideways and grimacing at peers near her. Then she aggressively jumped back in on a cue from Mr. Hansen near the end of the excerpt. Throughout, Lauren seemed to listen intently and demonstrated engagement on her face and in her singing.

She noted that perennial mistakes were more problematic than those that happened once and were fixed permanently. Lauren identified that mistakes can be helpful early on in the rehearsal process:

> When we're learning and making mistakes loud[ly]...we can figure it out and hear where we are making a mistake instead of learning it timidly and then not ever knowing it.

Lauren's philosophy explains her opposing behaviors in moments in rehearsal when large groups of students erred. In these moments, she seemed personally unfazed by new melismas but smirked over her section's missteps. She explained that she works hard to lead by example when others make such mistakes. There was a limit to her indulgence of mistakes, however:

> If people make the same mistakes over and over again, but they're, like, cognizant of it and are, like, at least trying, I think that wouldn't bother me as much as [when] they obviously don't care or are not focused on the material we are working on.

Lauren intimated that the acceptability of mistakes in choir was situationally specific for her. Rehearsals, she recounted, are a place where mistakes should be expected. "I mean, that's when we're, like, learning." Performance and recording situations, however, raised her level of concern for mistakes considerably:

> I don't generally make mistakes, like, when we're singing [in performance]. I mean, like, voice cracks...I'm embarrassed about those types of things...Like, if we were recording- which we do sometimes - like, it wouldn't get super sickly

> anxious or anything but sometimes I'll just, feel more pressures to sound good...just because it is, like, the whole choir that I'd be letting down if I make a mistake.

Empirical and personal standards are important to Lauren. She viewed performing as a dancer and as a singer as fundamentally different endeavors; however, she noted how each uniquely related to her sense of self. She explained it in this way:

> I can sing, but if it's like, I'm the only one singing and everyone's just listening to me, it's just like a lot of pressure. Whereas dancing I can do a solo 'cause it doesn't feel as much myself as voice. Like, singing feels like it's a big part of me because it's my voice, whereas dancing is more external. So [singing is] a little bit more scary and vulnerable.

These high personal standards were particularly exposed in Lauren's interactions with Mr. Hansen. It was incredibly important to Lauren that Mr. Hansen viewed her as a competent, contributing member of the WGHS choirs. She shared that she has "gone from not being able to sing in front of Mr. Hansen to…[thinking] I don't care, like, I'll just sing." In a recent lesson, Mr. Hansen shared positive comments regarding Lauren's development. She mentioned that he was incredibly positive with her, commending her for her work in preparing for contests, auditions, and regular Chamber Singers rehearsals. Lauren was visibly proud as she recounted the story and stated that it felt good to meet Mr. Hansen's expectations.

During a sectional, Lauren asked a question of Mr. Hansen regarding ties and notation. He responded that she was correct in her analysis and that choir auditions for

the following year might include sight-singing material like the section that spurred Lauren's question. Lauren quipped that she "won't be in choir next year" if that were the case, clearly implying that she didn't think she had the skills to read such a passage accurately on sight. After that exchange, Lauren's behavior changed as her group sang the remainder of the movement. She would either shake her head, lightly jump up and down, or tense her jaw tightly when she sang a pitch, rhythm, or passage incorrectly. Her section didn't fare any better than she did on the last twenty bars, to which Mr. Hansen responded with a sarcastic "Really?" as they finished. Lauren whirled around and marched away from the piano and returned to her seat. While I cannot be certain how Lauren was feeling through this exchange, it appeared that she may have decided her efforts to meet Mr. Hansen's expectations or her personal musical standards fell short.

To compare Mr. Hansen's actual expectations for students against Lauren's perception of those goals, I asked her to describe what she thought Mr. Hansen expected from singers. She went so far as to say that, "[Mr. Hansen] doesn't settle for like, anything," but she relayed that his standards go beyond musical growth, saying:

> [Mr. Hansen] expects us to be good people...which I respect because I think that's really important and he teaches us life lessons instead of just being good all of the time when you sing.

Lauren later said that she found Mr. Hansen's musical and extra-musical expectations to be "reasonable" and based in "good intentions." She recognized that she is harder on herself than Mr. Hansen is when she falls short of musical or personal standards:

> I think he knows that, like, I'm disappointed in myself, probably, so he doesn't, like, take it upon himself to, like express his disappointment. I think he knows, that just like me especially as a person, like, I'm kinda hard on myself, so…[he can be sure that] if I make a mistake I'll fix it.

During a rehearsal of "The Old Church," Mr. Hansen changed his gesture to affect alterations to tempo and phrase shape. Lauren demonstrated greater physical tension and more concentrated eye contact in an attempt to respond to gestural inflection. Mr. Hansen asked students to follow the gesture, but new expectations were not verbally stated in each iteration of a phrase. Lauren showed some hesitation to follow Hansen's changes in tempo and also lagged in her response to changes in dynamic and articulation modeled in the gesture. While Mr. Hansen's approach eventually yielded more finely attuned singing, it appeared that his overall pacing and rigorous expectations caused some distress for students, particularly Lauren. Lauren seemed compelled to hold a score as they sang, even though she appeared to have the piece memorized.

Lauren referred to this rehearsal at one point and, perhaps surprisingly, explained her preference for chasing rigorous standards in this way:

> [A] stringent rehearsal...normally means we are further along in the piece. I think that [in] the low-key rehearsals, processing [time is] mandatory to understand your part and learn it. But, I prefer the other ones because they are more structured, and have Mr. Hansen directing, and they have all the parts combined so it sounds cooler, and then also we can focus on...enhancing the piece and connecting with the piece.

Sentiments of irritation dominated Lauren's intermittent journal entries. These feelings centered on the personal standards she sets for herself far more than mistakes she felt she had made during rehearsal. When the full choir split for sectionals in mid-December, Lauren noted that the altos were unproductive and that she felt responsible for not providing more leadership. At one point, Lauren lamented a perceived inability to access her head and chest voice with consistent grace. She said that she was at odds with herself over this shortcoming. She was highly self-critical over her timeliness in mastering rhythmic diction.

Despite—or perhaps because of—her misgivings about her musical prowess, Lauren worked diligently during rehearsals. She audiated her line independently, an action I recognized because she was moving her lips and concentrating intently on her score. When the ensemble collectively went flat, Lauren's eyebrows raised instantaneously. Lauren was quick to approach the piano for sectional work and consistently maneuvered herself to stand at the center of the group when the altos worked alone with Mr. Hansen.

Lauren said that Mr. Hansen established an open and supportive environment in Chamber Singers. In particular, she cited his sense of humor as a critical tool in establishing rapport with students. She expressed admiration at the way his jokes allowed her to be more at ease in the classroom and how good he is at reading situations among students.

Positive peer praise was important to Lauren and promoted resilience, with the degree of positivity mattering significantly:

> My friend will get like, “Oh my gosh you were so good!” versus, like, “Oh you did a really good job,” [and such] differences in praise level probably...even if it doesn’t mean anything...I’ll probably read into it. Because I’m super paranoid.

For Lauren, peer feedback was both explicit and perceived. Implicit peer feedback—in the form of body language, whispers, and passive aggressive exchanges—were perceived by Lauren as negative. During solo auditions, she stated “you can’t even talk because even if you’re not talking about [the auditionee] as a singer, like, they'll just think that you are talking about them.” She explained that peers whispering when she is singing caused her to question her skills, worry that she has unintentionally or unwittingly erred, and negatively impacted her self-worth.

Any explicit feedback Lauren described having received from peers was often veiled in subtext that she was left to interpret. She called the atmosphere in show choir “toxic” because of the insecurities of each performer:

> Everyone in the choir department is a little bit insecure about, like, themselves as a performer. But, like, you want to support other people so I feel like my friends kind of support me but also while supporting themselves. It’s a kind of selfish support. So, if I have any chance of outshining them, or like anybody, [friends will be] really proud of you but also jealous.

Lauren combatted this by being cautious as she provided feedback to classmates because she did not want to tell people what to do or “hurt their feelings.” I asked her to discuss her approach to providing feedback. She commented that the passive aggressive approach her peers take was hurtful for both what was said and the ways in which it was

said. In her terms, she tried to be gentler because no one needs to be “throw[n] under the bus” and “they care about the choir, too.”

Lauren shared that her disinclination to address repeated errors with peers was due to an aversion to confrontation. Yet, while rehearsing the Schütz, Lauren identified an error in her neighbor's sight singing. She made direct and lasting eye contact with that peer and seemed to hope the peer would resolve the mistake. Toward the end of class, Lauren consulted with a neighboring alto to ensure that they both had the proper solfege syllables notated in their scores.

Lauren explained it was easier to accept the sound of her own voice and her musical skill when free of social pressure.

L: I can sing in front of strangers.

MP: Okay.

L: But if it was in front of my friends…

Similar pressures were mitigated for Lauren when she was singing in a group rather than alone:

> I don’t think people are going to listen to me explicitly [when singing in a duet]. I can think they are listening to the other person and I can sing. But, if it’s like I’m the only one singing and everyone’s just listening to me it’s just like a lot of pressure.

Lauren has high standards for herself outside of choir and has a difficult time accepting small failures. Some of her perfectionistic tendencies appeared during rehearsals, but she expressed the view that rehearsals are a time where mistakes are

bound to happen. Lauren’s awareness of peers and their feedback are important to her feelings of success in choir, but she reported little connection between these factors and her sense of self-worth.

Summary

Mr. Hansen, Marta, Samuel, and Lauren are all predisposed to socially situated perfectionism. Each showed unique understandings of their personal standards, the nature of mistakes, and the expectations of peers. To varying degrees, all participants showed and expressed situational resilience to failure in choir rehearsal. No participant felt that their self-worth was negatively impacted by the failures, expectations, or interactions experienced through choir. Each conveyed some degree of susceptibility to negative peer feedback, however, and at times that feedback came during the course of music making activities. I discuss specific points of intersection between the participants’ perfectionistic tendencies and the impact of those predispositions on musical pursuits in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of students grappling with perfectionism, particularly their perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially situated perfectionism, in a high school choral classroom. I hoped to discover what ways, if at all, an individual's perfectionistic tendencies might be triggered, exacerbated, mitigated, or abated through the normal processes of participating in choir. Special attention was paid to the choir director's role in setting classroom expectations and facilitating ensemble dynamics.

Addressing the Research Questions

Music ensembles may be environments predisposed to cultivating perfectionism in adolescents. A high-stakes climate exists in U.S. ensemble music education (Abramo, 2017), teacher-student interactions cultivate socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt et al., 2017), and school choirs, bands, and orchestras exist as social structures (Froehlich, 2007). Because of the influence of pressures, ensembles, and peers, current practices in ensemble music education might unintentionally damage students predisposed toward perfectionism. Perfectionism is known to induce maladaptive cognitions and behaviors (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). This damage may be particularly acute for perfectionistic singers, as their instruments are inseparable from the corporeal self.

Research Question 1: Perception of and Responses to Standards and Expectations

Through interviews and observations, I discovered that the musical and behavioral expectations in the WGHS Chamber Singers classroom were often rigorous,

yet achievable. Mr. Hansen seemed to curb overt expressions of his own latent perfectionism. He did so by balancing rigor with achievability and carefully crafting feedback regarding effort and achievement. Ensemble goals and instructor standards were also consistent with what I have observed in other high-performing choral programs. Mr. Hansen demanded that students arrive on time, take their assigned seats, actively participate in rehearsal, follow directions, and make progress in refining the music for performance. Course objectives appeared to be focused heavily upon notational and aural literacy.

During the study, Chamber Singers rehearsed the type of challenging repertoire common to ensembles selected to perform for state, division, and national ACDA/NAfME conferences. A capella selections were harmonically dense and *sostenuto*, requiring students to master advanced, but age-appropriate, aural skills and vocal technique. These pieces also required diligent concentration from students in rehearsal because of the nuance expected of them in performance. Mr. Hansen attended to these matters by asking singers to focus on the precise onset of sound, unified vowel shapes, carefully crafted phrases, and articulate diction. Mozart's *Requiem* proved challenging for Chamber Singers due to the virtuosic demands of the score, particularly complicated melismatic passages, rapid rhythmic counterpoint, and sustained extreme tessituras. Mr. Hansen focused on process over product and growth as achievement when rehearsing the Mozart, thereby modifying expectations to be more reasonable for high school singers while still maintaining stringent standards for the process of collective rehearsal. Such behavior was consistent with his OOP scores from the onset of the study.

In my analysis of the first research question, two cross-case themes emerged. First, two of the students interpreted course goals, instructor feedback, and mistakes in ways reflective of adaptive perfectionism. Second, students went to great lengths to avoid peer scrutiny across cases. Within-case themes specific to Marta are notable as well. Her interpretation of course goals and Mr. Hansen's feedback were indicative of maladaptive perfectionism. She was also prone to the selective use of procrastination and avoidance in situations where she felt likely to fail.

Cross Case Themes

Adaptive Interpretation of Goals and Mistakes. Neither Lauren nor Samuel described classroom expectations or Mr. Hansen's standards using language or idioms associated with perfectionism. Rather, they intimated that Mr. Hansen's feedback and pedagogy promoted resilience in the face of adversity and allowed them to be vulnerable while rehearsing, describing social support similar to that reported by Wiggins (2011) and corroborating the role of mentors in influencing perfectionism in adolescents (Hewitt et al., 2017). Both Samuel and Lauren argued that Chamber Singers functioned at a high level because of individual work ethic and the standard of excellence established for the group. Neither described pathological thinking about Mr. Hansen's expectations, though Lauren did voice concern over the perceived pressure peers put on her regarding performance standards.

Lauren and Samuel lauded Mr. Hansen's gentleness and sincerity. Each described the choral rehearsal and the choir classroom as safe spaces. They shared that making mistakes is part of the rehearsal process, that trying again is acceptable in Chamber

Singers rehearsals, and that the goals Mr. Hansen had for the ensemble were appropriately rigorous. These descriptors indicate that Mr. Hansen had facilitated an environment in Chamber Singers where students felt comfortable to strive and risk in pursuit of artistic goals. According to Noble (2005), the expression of one's truest self as an artist is only possible by eliminating the fear of failure and embracing vulnerability.

Mr. Hansen facilitated a classroom in which mistakes are commonplace and germane to the learning process. He differentiated mistakes made in rehearsal from those made in performance and claimed that those made in performance were more permanent and, therefore, problematic. Mr. Hansen's philosophy was echoed across all three cases as they described their feelings about and reactions to mistakes. Each expressed a certain comfortability with making errors in rehearsal and certain aversions to public mistakes such as those that might occur during performance. This understanding of the nature of mistakes aligns with the idea of *striving* (Greenspon, 2008), but also might suggest *domain specific* resiliency to perfectionistic tendencies (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Mr. Hansen's approach seems to have mitigated certain perfectionistic tendencies across two cases: Lauren and Samuel. Rather than internalizing ensemble goals and instructor standards as unachievable, Samuel and Lauren compartmentalized their work in choir as non-perfectionistic. Mr. Hansen's focus on educational processes and interpersonal sincerity seemed to have helped these two participants counteract their perfectionistic tendencies. The attributes Lauren and Samuel appreciated about Mr. Hansen's approach to class expectations and feedback correspond to what one might expect given his low levels of OOP (Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Avoiding Peer Scrutiny. Marta and Lauren avoided undue attention for making mistakes by singing bashfully and quietly in moments of musical uncertainty. They relayed this was more a function of adolescence than perfectionism. Their comfort level to musically risk, err, and try again in the presence of peers seemed to vacillate with their perceived proficiency, but there were moments when behaviors did not adhere to that guideline. During the strenuous rehearsal of "The Old Church," for instance, Lauren held her music even though she appeared to have it memorized. Because she sang with confidence and seemed wholly prepared, holding sheet music appeared akin to clutching a security blanket. She did not need the printed score, but seemed intent on meeting Mr. Hansen's heightened expectations and avoiding errors in the eyes of her equally focused and prepared peers. Lauren and Marta both seemed to hold a genuine concern for mistakes and any peer judgement that might result from having made mistakes. Their concerns were evidenced by their proclivity to sing softer in new or unfamiliar passages of music as well as in the admission that negative peer feedback often made them embarassed or left them feeling hurt.

Even Samuel was somewhat concerned with making mistakes in front of peers saying, "I do get kind of anxious about, well, what if people know it was me?" However, Samuel noted a difference in his level of concern for peers noticing his mistakes respective to both context and type of mistake. He noted that making mistakes on easy passages or when dealing with simple concepts was something he tried to avoid, but suggested that he did not fear social consequences if basses around him noticed his errors. Rather, Samuel implied that he preferred to be accurate whenever possible as a

means of not drawing attention to himself. Samuel admitted that mistakes made in public performances would likely draw more peer scrutiny than those made in rehearsal.

Within-Case Themes

Maladaptive Interpretation of Goals and Critique. Marta spoke of Mr. Hansen's expectations for Chamber Singers using perfectionistic idioms. She commented that Mr. Hansen's expectations regarding tuning forks were out of her reach and his insistence on continual refinement "pointless." Her ruminations suggested that she perceived the goal as an unattainable standard of achievement. When students used tuning forks in class, they did so in the context of solfege exercises. These exercises moved students around the circle of fifths and trained them to rapidly sing diatonic patterns in new keys. Mr. Hansen frequently asked students to refine their intonation by using the tuning fork as a reference. Each of these exercises seemed geared toward developing age-appropriate aural skills. Perhaps because she viewed the group's work through the lens of socially prescribed perfectionism, however, Marta interpreted Mr. Hansen's learning goal as something unattainable. Such a misinterpretation would be consistent with SPP and the way Marta described the goal as developing perfect pitch.

Marta sometimes described Mr. Hansen's feedback as cutting in word choice or tone. Neither of the other two participants offered similar descriptions nor did I observe overly harsh critique from Mr. Hansen during rehearsals. While Marta may indeed have found Mr. Hansen's feedback aggressive or hurtful, an overpowering need for affirmation from a valued coach/mentor might also have colored her perception of his words and actions (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Flett & Hewitt, 2002, Flett & Hewitt,

2005). Interpreting feedback in this way is a defining characteristic of maladaptive perfectionism, but a socially prescribed perfectionist like Marta might also have responded differently had Mr. Hansen opted for alternate words or behaviors (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Flett & Hewitt, 2005).

Procrastination and Task Avoidance. Individuals with extremely high levels of self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism tend to be highly self-critical, often severely overstating or overestimating their shortcomings (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Hewitt & Flett (1991) also noted that severely perfectionistic individuals are prone to procrastination and task avoidance. Marta's SOP and SPP scores were the highest of the study participants and 2.5 SD above the median for her age group. Her perfectionistic tendencies were perhaps most notable in the nuance she used to discuss her tendency to put-off or sidestep difficult tasks.

Marta stated her belief that the goal of working with tuning forks was to develop perfect pitch in all students; however, a pedagogical lens suggests the exercises were geared toward developing relative pitch and strong understandings of diatonicism, skills necessary to conceptualize tonal shifts quickly and maneuver through such shifts with dexterity when they are encountered in the context of repertoire. Hewitt and Flett (1991) noted that procrastination and avoidance are common coping mechanisms used by perfectionists. After internalizing an expectation to develop perfect pitch as unachievable, Marta may have chosen not to participate as a way of avoiding what she saw as inevitable failure.

Likewise, procrastination and avoidance also surfaced when Marta discussed Mr.

Hansen's attempts to refine "The Old Church" by Stephen Paulus. She lamented rehearsing small concepts repeatedly because she did not feel the ensemble would carry their polishing work into the next day's rehearsal. In such cases, she may have thought Mr. Hansen's expectations to be unreasonable because she viewed them as unachievable, going so far as to wonder "Why did we work on [that] for so long?" This perception may have accounted for the way Marta appeared to zone out when the ensemble made consecutive attempts to refine the same passage of music. Conceivably, the manner in which Mr. Hansen was rehearsing could have caused her to describe the goal as unrealistic and triggered her perfectionistic tendencies.

Conclusions

It appears that some high school singers prone to perfectionism describe the expectations of their choir director as unachievable or in perfectionistic terms. Marta particularly struggled to see the goal of certain activities (ex: tuning fork work) as anything but perfection. Within that case, it is clear that choir director experiences can be interpreted, misunderstood, or described as perfectionistic. Marta notably grappled with the highest levels of perfectionism across all three participants, a factor that may have contributed to the way in which she internalized feedback and expectations more generally.

Across cases, however, there was less consistency in how expectations are described. The student with the lowest proclivity for perfectionism, Samuel, seemed most adept at instantaneously interpreting Mr. Hansen's instructions in a healthy manner. Lauren also demonstrated this skill, but did so reflectively by contextualizing Mr.

Hansen's insistence within the entirety of her interactions with him across a breadth of experiences. Both Samuel and Lauren appeared to be resistant to describing choir director expectations using idioms associated with perfectionism, but it is not clear what coping mechanisms or aspects of their own perfectionism influenced this tendency.

Research Question 2: Impact of Achievement in Choir on Self Worth

Individuals with perfectionistic tendencies base their self-worth on their ability to achieve goals (Frost et al, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Hewitt & Flett (1991) determined that social pressures play a role in determining goals and discerning expectations for perfectionists. They also suggested that public failure to meet expectations can be damaging for perfectionistic individuals' sense of self-worth. However, Flett & Hewitt (2002) and Flett et al. (2002) indicated that perfectionistic individuals might have some resilience to the maladaptive effects of perfectionism under certain conditions or in specific situations.

The degree to which success and failure in choir influenced feelings of self-worth varied within cases, but across cases participants described a resistance to perfectionist tendencies specific to their music-making pursuits. Three themes are discussed below: domain-specific resilience (cross-case), perfectionistic self-presentation (within-case, Marta), and social influences on self-worth (cross-case). It is important to note that I interpreted the evidence addressing all research questions knowing the HFMPS scores for each participant. I found it particularly challenging to divest observations and responses from my understanding of each individual's perfectionistic predispositions when addressing the second question.

Cross-Case Themes

Domain-Specific Resilience. Flett & Hewitt (2002) suggested that some aspects of perfectionism may be domain-specific or mitigated in certain circumstances, an outgrowth of the adaptive perfectionism described in their original research (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Across cases, participants differentiated their self-worth from mistakes that occurred in the process of making music, though Marta seemed less adept at actually following through on that differentiation. Participants seemed less focused on *achievement concerns* than *evaluative concerns* ala Burgess et al. (2016), suggesting a certain degree of *domain specific resilience* to perfectionism parallel to those discovered by McArdle (2010), Damien et al. (2014), Dunn et al. (2012), and Mouratidis and Michou (2011).

According to his HFMPS profile, Samuel has elevated perfectionistic tendencies. Yet, his actions and interview responses largely conveyed resilience to those tendencies in the choral setting. He set reasonable goals for himself in choir, described his understanding of Mr. Hansen's expectations in achievable terms, worked through the most arduous—and arguably risky—portions of rehearsal, and expressed minimal concern over what others thought of him when he erred ("Mistakes happen, but I would probably feel bad for potentially letting my section of my choir down…") Samuel seemed to defy the expectations of someone with his HFMPS profile, though Hewitt and Flett (1991) noted that elevated tendencies do not typically correlate with pathological behavior.

Alternately, his differentiation between mistakes and self in choir might suggest that singing is an area where Samuel is somewhat immune to his perfectionistic tendencies. If true, Samuel has developed *situationally specific* or *domain specific* perfectionism (Flett & Hewitt, 2002) wherein choir is unaffected by his perfectionistic tendencies. Evidence to this point is his describe comfort with making mistakes in front of other basses and the unconditional support/encouragement he felt from Mr. Hansen. Further, Samuel consistently described mistakes as part of the music-making process. In this way, his resilience to perfectionism within choral music is similar to that found in perfectionistic athletes (Mouratidis & Michou, 2011).

Unlike dancing, Lauren was not convinced that her achievements in choir improved her self-esteem. I remain unconvinced that any failure to meet expectations set by Mr. Hansen negatively impacted Lauren's self-worth. Her evolving fearlessness of singing in front of Mr. Hansen ("I don't care, like, I'll just sing."), however, did seem connected to the positive comments he shared about her progress. His opinion mattered to her, but that is as much as can be concluded by the evidence. In all aspects, she otherwise described her focus on achievement in choir as striving.

This was not true in other areas of Lauren's life, however, as evidenced by the anecdote she shared about the bribe her parents offered to get a B in another class. Her acceptance of mistakes in choir is at odds with her aversion to mistakes elsewhere in her life and suggests that Lauren has developed a resilience to her perfectionistic tendencies within this specific domain of her life (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Lauren also expressed holding herself to a much higher standard in dance than in music. Dance is an area where she has high levels of self-perceived proficiency as evidenced by her description of herself as a dancer first and signer second. Dunn et al. (2012) suggested that this type of perceived competency might indicate high levels of resilience to socially prescribed perfectionism. Lauren described the opposite: high levels of resiliency in an area (singing) where she felt less competent. This assertion was at odds with her assertion that "dancing…doesn't feel as much myself as voice," and indicates a greater interconnection between performance in choir and her sense of self. The rehearsal environment Mr. Hansen cultivated due to his relatively low levels of OOP may have promoted the development of such resiliency in both Lauren and Samuel.

Achievement in music seemed important for Marta, though she sent mixed messages on this front. On one hand she claimed that her musical successes and failures had little bearing on her sense of self-worth ("I'm not one of those people."), yet she also described the toll that resulted from those moments. She took great pride in her piano skills and her ability to use them to influence the success of Chamber Singers through sectional work. Failure to garner a solo in choir and a role in a school-wide theatrical production were sore subjects for Marta in our discussions.

Marta's conflicting statements surrounding self-worth and achieving or falling short of standards in choir might hinge on a perceived loss of control. Individuals with high levels of socially prescribed and self-oriented perfectionism often experience increased paranoia and tend to fear failure, criticism, and loss of control (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Marta scored in the upper echelon of perfectionists in both of these domains. In

her interview, Marta claimed that musical goals were set for her by the course and extra-curricular offerings of her school, the hierarchy of the choral program, and the demands of music as an art. She also asserted that others—Mr. Hansen, for example—had more control over her achievement than she did by virtue of their evaluative power as evidenced by her solo and *West Side Story* auditions. Marta showed little resilience to this perceived loss of control.

Social Influences on Self-Worth. Gilman et al. (2014) determined domain-specific peer comparisons as ubiquitous among high school perfectionists. Gilman et al. (2014), Hill et al. (2011), and Rimm (2007) argued that peer comparisons regularly influence perfectionistic individuals' sense of self. For Lauren and Marta, feelings of acceptance appeared somewhat hindered by peer comparisons and peer interactions in choir. Both engaged in more reluctant singing when they feared negative appraisals from peers. Previous findings indicated that individuals are more likely to take risks when they know their risk will be met with acceptance (Wiggins, 2011), and that only negative reactions induce anxiety in perfectionistic musicians (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007).

Lauren fixated on how others reacted to her mistakes in choir, but not necessarily on the mistakes themselves. Lauren shared a fear that other altos would judge her if she made a mistake. This judgement aligns with what Frost et al. (1990) called *concern over mistakes* and is a major component of socially prescribed perfectionism. Perfectionists attempt to eradicate mistakes in virtually every aspect of their lives. Since perfect performance would eliminate judgement by her peers, Lauren might have experienced

discomfort over the exposure of her errors that was exacerbated by her high level of socially prescribed perfectionism.

She worried most about how others perceived her when she sang alone or erred when reading new music and whether they viewed her as worthy of having her membership in the WGHS Chamber Singers. She explained that, because the voice is part of her body, singing is a highly personal and internalized endeavor that can leave her feeling exposed. In this way, she implied that her success and failure in choir impacts her self-worth because of the voice's inseparability from the self. This revelation corresponded to previously documented interconnectivity between conceptions of voice and self (Heisel, 2015; Ryan & Andrews, 2009).

Samuel and Marta compared themselves to peers within Chamber Singers, but most of the social pressure they felt appeared to come from outside of the ensemble. For Marta, the pressure to meet expectations derived from family standards and peers in other choirs. According to Frost et al. (1990), familial pressures are key factors in developing perfectionism. Samuel described pressure from the community to conform to some nebulous paradigm representative of a Chamber Singer. He felt little to no pressure exerted upon him from peers in his section or the ensemble writ large.

Within Case Theme: Perfectionistic Self-Presentation

By claiming to be powerless to affect change in her status, Marta may be subtly acknowledging that her musical skills are not as strong as she sometimes purports them to be. If she privately views her skills as subpar and combines that perception with fears over critique and lost control, Marta may be exhibiting symptoms of *perfectionistic self-*

presentation (Hewitt et al., 2003). More than the other two participants, Marta expressed her identity and self-worth in terms of her musical achievement while simultaneously avowing no connection between the two. Though her words suggested she might be somewhat resilient to these tendencies in choir, her actions did not corroborate those assertions. Marta's tendency to self-promote and laud her musical skill is a likely manifestation of perfectionistic self-presentation. A clear disconnect exists between what Marta shared about her feelings, the behaviors she exhibited in class, and the effects of her perfectionistic tendencies on her work in Chamber Singers.

Conclusions

Participants did not uniformly or consistently describe their achievement in choir as related to their feelings of self-worth. All three students described both a desire and ability to detach achievements from their internal sense of self in music. Lauren, however, struggled to maintain that same separation in other aspects of her academic life and Marta sometimes failed to differentiate success of endeavor from success of self. Domain specific resilience to perfectionistic predispositions might serve as an explanation for this phenomenon in both Marta and Lauren. Samuel's responses suggested a reliable ability to differentiate between his self-worth and his achievement in choir.

Feelings of acceptance, conversely, seemed tied to success in choir for all three of the participants. Each noted the "pressure" they felt to act as a functioning member of the ensemble, to model musical and behavioral prowess in front of peers, to avoid making

blatant mistakes in class, and to garner Mr. Hansen's approval of their skills. This pressure seemed to be more intense with increasing predisposition toward perfectionism.

Research Question 3: Exhibiting Perfectionistic Behaviors in Class

Mr. Hansen's artistic standards, behavioral expectations, and instructional techniques all emphasized process over product. Though rigorous and unyielding at times, the expectations of singers in the WGHS Chamber Singers seemed age-appropriate and achievable for the singers who comprised the ensemble. Nevertheless, all three participants demonstrated some behaviors during class that suggested classroom activities, expectations, or environment triggered their perfectionism. In two of the three cases, participants exhibited body language and acted in ways that suggested a stronger ability to normalize persistence and perseverance in the face of spiraling academic rigor. Hewitt and Flett (1991) indicated that manifestations of adaptive perfectionism were more likely for those with less severe perfectionistic tendencies or with elevated levels of perfectionistic tendencies in only one or two domains. Within the case with the highest perfectionistic predisposition, I observed maladaptive behaviors that might have indicated a malady commonly associated with psychopathy: paranoia (Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Cross-Case Theme: Persistence and Perseverance

Across two cases, participants readily acknowledged the importance of making mistakes in the choral rehearsal as a path toward individual and collective improvement. Each showed moments where they "shook off" a mistake during rehearsal, whether by pausing to grimace and re-entering the song or by pausing to consider an error during a break in the rehearsal. Such persistence defies typical expectations for perfectionists

(Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Perseverance was necessary during Mr. Hansen's rehearsals, as was the acceptance of mistakes. He modeled these behaviors (Hendricks, 2018) and provided space for the students to risk (Noble, 2005). Lauren and Samuel responded with various degrees of striving as defined by Greenspon (2008), commensurate with their respective perfectionistic predispositions.

Lauren's attention was keen during class periods focused on ensemble singing. Her focus manifested as intense concentration on the printed score in her hand, in furrowed eyebrows and heat tilts, as well as in physical reactions to mistakes she or her section made while rehearsing. This open hostility and impatience with one's self is typical in self-oriented perfectionists (Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and, for Lauren, seemed exacerbated by the rehearsal process. Still, Lauren still persevered in the face of failure and apparent self-criticism. She seemed to recognize her tenacity as a positive trait; it was a palpable approach as I observed rehearsals.

Though the most relaxed of the three participants, even Samuel exhibited impatience with himself at times. Samuel seemed more able to discard rising frustrations and reset himself than Lauren. He exhibited similar head shakes and grimaces when erring, but was faster in returning to the fray and making second, third, and fourth attempts to persevere and achieve the expectation(s) Mr. Hansen articulated.

Within-Case Theme: Paranoia

Marta's actions in rehearsals most closely aligned to descriptions of perfectionism as defined by Hewitt and Flett (1991). Paranoia sometimes surfaces in perfectionistic individuals when, in pursuing unachievable goals, such individuals perceive their pursuit

of those goals as the focus or target of the other individuals' conversations and actions. Most often, this seems to happen when the conversations are inaudible or when the motivations of others are unclear. The person grappling with perfectionism might well internalize such social cues as being specifically about them.

This was how paranoia manifested for Marta. It was clear that she thought others spoke of her work and worth in choir without her knowledge. Further, she seemed to internalize critique aimed at her section or the full ensemble as directed at her specifically. She was sometimes reticent to attempt challenging exercises, often singing half-heartedly after any redirection or request for modification made by Mr. Hansen. She was visibly impatient with herself when she struggled, often setting her jaw as though silently growling through gritted teeth. Her impatience and hostility were not necessarily directed to her own mistakes, however; the reactions she had to classmates' intonation struggles, poor sight reading, and slow mastery were visceral. Marta often glared down the row at classmates through the corners of her eyes, particularly when Mr. Hansen would address a concept for the second or third time. Her unhealthy self-reliance, hostility toward classmates, and need to eliminate mistakes were also revealed in interviews. These traits were intensified by classroom activities and contributed to her social isolation within the ensemble.

More than anyone in the room, Marta seemed to pay attention to others' reactions during class. She literally looked over her shoulder on a regular basis. On the days when I sat closest to her—approximately 15 feet away, behind her, and slightly to her left—I would often catch her glancing at me when her section or the choir struggled to master a

concept. These actions suggest that she may have felt watched by her peers, Mr. Hansen, and me, and that the reactions of others to her actions might impact her in some way. She defended her body language by saying that the singers behind her were talkative and the noise sometimes caught her attention, but also later explained that she found her section members to be unkind and judgmental and felt anxious about leaving herself open to their criticism. I did not witness unkind or judgmental actions toward Marta during rehearsal from her peers. In saying so, I do not wish to marginalize Marta's lived experience. Rather, I simply wonder if her perceptions about her peers are manifestations of a perfectionist's paranoia rooted in the expectations that she has for herself or those she believes others have set for her.

Conclusions

Across cases, participants exhibited perfectionistic traits during rehearsals to degrees that seemingly matched their individual perfectionistic predispositions. Marta's reactions to her own failures as well as those of her peers in the form of grimaces, winces, and head shakes seemed most severe among student participants. She also demonstrated an apparent awareness of others' judgement and concern that she was being watched by others through what appeared to be frustrated glares and concerned glances. Lauren showed less of these types of behavior and more rapid return to more neutral body language after making mistakes or receiving critical feedback. Samuel's body language was even less severe, seemingly aligned with his nominal levels of perfectionism. All participants demonstrated varying degrees of persistence and perseverance in the face of failure or mistakes.

Discussion

Hewitt and Flett (1991) theorized perfectionism to be ubiquitous in all aspects of the lives of those who grapple with perfectionism. They and others later suggested that some degree of resiliency to perfectionistic predispositions is possible in certain areas or domains, but that such resiliency is influenced by social context and personal experience (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Flett et al., 2002; McArdle, 2010; Hewitt et al. 2005). Flett & Hewitt (2002) and Flett et al. (2002) also suggested that certain contexts might exacerbate the negative effects of socially situated perfectionism.

To varying degrees across cases and within cases, participants displayed behaviors that aligned with descriptions of socially situated perfectionism outlined by Hewitt and Flett (1991). The presence of these behaviors suggested that perfectionism played a role in their music making. Marta had the highest levels of SOP and SPP (71 & 75), followed by Lauren (67 & 62), then Samuel (57 & 58). The degree to which the rehearsal environment and expectations triggered each participant's perfectionistic tendencies matched the severity of their predispositions. None of the three participants described maladies akin to depression (Blatt, 1995), eating disorders (Boone et al., 2010), burnout (Chang, 2012), maladaptive rumination (Di Schiena et al., 2012), suicidal ideation (Flett et al., 2014), social phobias (Jain & Sudhir, 2010; Juster et al., 1996), problematic internet use (Lehmann & Konstam, 2011), low physical motivation (Longbottom et al., 2010), or generalized anxiety (Shumaker & Rodebaugh, 2009), so it is uncertain to what degree, if any, their experiences in choir might contribute to such afflictions in the rest of their lives.

Across cases, participants described their self-worth as unrelated to their achievement in choir. All were adamant that mistakes and failures in choir had no impact on their feelings of self-worth, which was unexpected in light of the theoretical framework constructed by Hewitt and Flett (1991). More surprising was how their words and actions indicated that each succumbed to perfectionistic ideation in a manner roughly proportionate to their predisposed levels of SOP and OOP. For Lauren and Samuel, choir may be an area of their life in which they are situationally resistant to their perfectionistic tendencies (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Alternately, their adaptive responses in this arena might even preclude social scientists from categorizing them as perfectionists in the first place (Greenspon, 2000, 2008).

In many ways, Marta seemed to engage in perfectionistic self-presentation (Hewitt et al., 2017). She insisted upon her own musical prowess and the value of her contributions to the group in our one-on-one conversation, but when observed in rehearsal she evaded, demurred, or opted out of putting those words into action. By avoiding putting her skills on open display, Marta may have been saving herself from acknowledging failure and shortcomings in public. Moreover, Marta's avoidance of certain tasks may have represented a type of procrastination common to perfectionists who, either by assumption or in light of previous experience, anticipate failure before making an attempt on something new (Elliott, 1999; Van der Kaap-Deeder, et al., 2016). Finally, Marta often demonstrated paranoid behavior during class, a trait common to those suffering from abnormally high levels of socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Based on the case studies in this investigation, it seems that domain-specific perfectionism might indeed be cultivated in the choral rehearsal for certain individuals as it was for Lauren and Samuel. Marta, conversely, seemed more vulnerable to the negative effects of maladaptive perfectionism than the others two participants. It is unclear whether this is a reflection of the ubiquity of her perfectionistic tendencies or whether those predispositions intensified during choral rehearsals. It appears likely that the choral classroom environment, as facilitated by the instructor and including instructor critique/feedback as well as peer interactions, does influence the resiliency development in certain perfectionists. Hewitt et al. (2002) suggested that teachers, coaches, and mentors influence the development of perfectionism outside of the confines of early childhood. Choir directors with low levels of OOP may be particularly adept at facilitating such an environment, but more research is needed to understand the complexity of the phenomenon in other contexts: in different schools, with different directors, and in the voice of more students.

Abramo (2017) claimed that competition and high standards are defining characteristics of music education in the United States. Across cases in my study, participants identified the presence of high standards of their classroom environment and generally attested to their value. No theme referencing competition arose. Potential for success and/or failure in achieving these high standards motivated participants across cases but, for one participant, seemed to trigger maladaptive patterns of thinking and perfectionistic behaviors like paranoia (Hewitt & Flett, 1991), self-criticism (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), and perfectionistic self-presentation (Hewitt et al., 2017).

Based on the data from the current study, I believe choir directors—and perhaps other teachers as well—may be able to mitigate the impact of a student's perfectionistic predispositions by the way they talk about goals and standards, offer feedback in achieving those standards, and teach students about interacting with one another en route to such goals.

As I think back on my high school student, Lily, I wonder if the way in which she internalized my expectations for her solo performance was a form of maladaptive perfectionism. Perhaps her behavior was precipitated by the fear of public humiliation, common to any of us who remember adolescence with a degree of chagrin. Lily may have attempted to present herself as flawless (Hewitt et al., 2017), avoided or procrastinated on a task she thought she could not accomplish (Elliot, 1999; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), or feared the lack of acceptance failure might induce (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Based on this study, I am confident that I could have done more to create a safe environment in which Lily could make music unencumbered by any perfectionism traits she may have possessed. Lauren, Marta, and Samuel were influenced by Mr. Hansen's careful shaping of language about expectations. They would have further benefitted by knowing more about their own perfectionistic tendencies, understanding ways to interpret Mr. Hansen's behavior and that of peers, and by using music to develop situational resilience to their perfectionistic tendencies.

Implications for Music Education

Because of the growth mindset necessary for success in music (O'Neill, 2011), it is conceivable that perfectionism is mitigated for some choristers in ways similar to what

Longbottom et al. (2010) and McArdle (2010) described in their work with athletes who reported less concern for mistakes and failure in practice settings than in competitive ones. Just as Hewitt et al. (2017) identified coaches and other mentors as influential in the development of perfectionism in adolescents, choir directors may influence the predispositions of perfectionistic students through the nature and delivery of feedback, the establishment of operational norms, and the cultivation of rehearsal environment. Choir might be a domain in which some individuals are impervious to perfectionism, expanding the understanding of domain specific perfectionism (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Flett & Hewitt, 2005; McArdle, 2010; Mouratidis & Michou, 2011). Music educators would be well-advised to increase their awareness of perfectionists in their midst, and reconcile how current pedagogy and practices might help students cope with or succumb to their perfectionistic predispositions.

If choristers struggle with high predispositions toward perfectionism, it appears that they may also have an increased desire to know that they and their efforts are recognized as acceptable by their choir director. This was a theme reiterated in various forms by all three student participants in this study. Choir directors could implement regular feedback cycles that emphasize the inherent worthiness of their students as human beings, explicitly celebrate acceptability of their students' achievements, and reinforce the importance of process and progress over achievement. Such feedback may well interrupt maladaptive thinking for students who struggle with aspects of perfectionism.

Choir directors who facilitate rehearsal environments in which mistakes are celebrated help to temper singer fears surrounding judgement and non-acceptance. Such

choir directors likely celebrate obvious group and individual errors as good and necessary. If students were to be lauded by choir directors for what they fear as mistakes, it seems possible that this could counteract the fear of non-acceptance by peers by normalizing the idea of erring. Those who suffer from the effects of perfectionistic self-presentation do so by keeping their fallibilities hidden (Hewitt et al., 2003). Normalizing the sharing of mistakes in public spaces might expose such individuals to the preponderance of mistakes in the broader community. With regards to rehearsal environment, it is perhaps most important to note that peer scrutiny—not choir director actions—was most responsible for how these perfectionistic individuals gauged the weight of their mistakes.

It may be beneficial for students and choir directors to know their perfectionistic predispositions early in their choral singing careers. Knowing the ways in which students internalize goals, standards, and feedback regarding self-worth could prove beneficial to improving interpersonal relationships, clarifying and improving feedback cycles, reprioritizing the high stakes culture of North American music ensembles, and creating a safer environment for students who suffer from a potentially debilitating mental health condition. In order for this to happen in high school classrooms, additional research is needed to expand the reliability of the HFMPS for students under the age of eighteen. A less clinical version of the screening could be developed for implementation with high school musicians. Such a measure, coupled with other music-specific diagnostic tools, might be utilized to assemble a complete picture of students as musicians and persons at the start of each academic year.

Choir directors may also benefit from knowing their own perfectionistic tendencies in order (?) to temper those tendencies in their own music making or mitigate the negative impacts their perfectionism might have on students. Rather than taking the HFMPS inventory as a means of determining these tendencies, choir directors might reflect on their feelings about making mistakes, how their sense of self-worth is related to their work, or in what ways their achievements as a musician/pedagogue/conductor influence their sense of acceptance in the field. Knowing the complex relationship between one's musicianship and sense of self may prove informative in relating to colleagues, students, and curriculum. Further, it may help to shift priorities in the classroom toward process- rather than product-centered work.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of perfectionistic students, particularly perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance commonly associated with socially situated perfectionism, in a high school choral classroom. It appears that the negative effects of perfectionism were more severe for the participants in this study who demonstrated higher perfectionistic predispositions. Participants only occasionally described perceptions of standards and expectations set by their school choir director using terms associated with socially prescribed perfectionism, indicating a situational resiliency to the pathology of perfectionism in the choral rehearsal. Students viewed mistakes made in performance as more costly than those made in rehearsal, reinforcing the possibility of domain-specific resiliency in choral settings and suggesting the possibility of differences in resiliency choral singing situations. Participants generally

expressed acceptance of their own mistakes in choir and expressed no meaningful connection between their self-worth and their success in choir, converse to common expectations for those with trait perfectionism. I observed some perfectionistic traits in the three participants during rehearsal observations, but these traits only appeared to be problematic for the individual who scored abnormally high in the socially-prescribed domain of the HFMPS inventory.

The domain-specific resilience exhibited by these three singers suggests that additional research is needed to examine how, if at all, some individuals might experience tempered perfectionism within music ensembles. Broader and more descriptive data is also necessary to determine in what ways and to what degree choir directors influence the development or abatement of perfectionism in their students. Investigating the role a choir director with high levels of OOP in might play in triggering perfectionistic students might prove particularly fruitful. It would be helpful for choir directors to know more about how differentiated instruction could mitigate perfectionism's influence as a barrier to learning and rehearsing. Perhaps perfectionistic presentation is more pronounced in performance situations rather than rehearsal situations, since making mistakes in rehearsal was reported to be less problematic than erring in performance. Finally, future researchers might consider how domain-specific resilience is developed through participation in music. Understanding how music aids the development of resilience to perfectionism might help to unlock mitigation strategies in other domains as well.

APPENDIX A: PROTOCOL FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Conductor Interview Questions

What does a mistake mean to you? Does it mean something is wrong with you?

What is your overall view of yourself as a musician?

Do you get anxious about the possibility of making mistakes in class? What about the prospect of you or your students making mistakes in performance?

What do you expect of your students?

What do you think of your students when they make musical mistakes in rehearsal?

What do you think of your students when they make musical mistakes in performance?

What do you think of yourself when you or your students make mistakes?

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Student Interview Questions

What does a mistake mean to you? Does it mean something is wrong with you?

What is your overall view of yourself as a singer?

What are your goals for yourself as a singer?

How did/do you determine those goals?

Do you get anxious about the possibility of making mistakes in class? What about the prospect of making mistakes in performance?

Do you have any frustrations that you experience in choir? Could you describe them?

What does your choir conductor think of you as a musician? What do they expect of you in choir?

What does your conductor think of you when you don't do well in choir?

What do your peers think of you as a musician? What do they expect of you in choir?

What do your peers think of you when you don't do well in choir?

What expectations do you have of your peers during rehearsals and performances?

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Questions based on Greenspon (2009) and Speirs Neumeister, Williams, and Cross (2012)

APPENDIX B: INITIAL LETTER TO CHORAL DIRECTORS

Boston University College of Arts & Sciences

725 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
T 617-353-2000 F 617-353-2177
bu.edu/cas

September 2019

Dear colleagues,

I am a doctoral candidate in Music Education at Boston University. I am writing to ask your assistance in my dissertation work.

Much research has been done on the detrimental effects of perfectionism. Perfectionism is known to induce self-destructive behaviors and negatively impact feelings of worthiness. Today's high-stakes climate in education combined with the exacting standards to which students aspire in school choirs, bands, and orchestras could have the potential to unintentionally cultivate certain forms of perfectionism.

Do students feel the pressure of our expectations as a directive to achieve perfection? When singers are working in choir, might they internalize critiques of their vocal progress as criticisms of themselves as people? How do our practices in rehearsal and expectations for performance impact student conceptions of self-worth and acceptance? The impetus for this project evolved from my sixteen years as a high school choir director. I noticed in my students a high commitment to ensemble goals and a sincere desire to meet or exceed my expectations. I'm left wondering if that was a product of good motivation or something more insidious.

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers. I'm writing to request your participation in and/or permission for volunteers from your most select choral ensemble to participate in this study. The first phase is a conductor survey that should take no more than 10 minutes to complete online. It can be accessed at https://www.mhsassessments.com/MAC/login.aspx with the ID [INDIVIDUALZED] and password [INDIVIDUALIZED]. Based on responses, I'll be inviting one conductor and his/her/their students to participate in the observations and interviews in the full study.

If you are willing to continue in this process and willing to host me for up to five rehearsal observations, please reply to potvinma@bu.edu to provide your contact information. Further participation will include forwarding information to parents and students. Parent permission and student assent will be obtained prior to their participation in the study. Thank you for taking time to make this research possible.

Sincerely,

Mark Potvin
(612) 889-2791, potvinma@bu.edu

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Jill Wilson, (712) 899-7061, wilsji01@luther.edu

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO ADMINISTRATORS

Boston University College of Arts & Sciences

725 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
T 617-353-2000 F 617-353-2177
bu.edu/cas

October 2019

Dear [INSERT ADMIN NAME],

I am a doctoral candidate in Music Education at Boston University. I am writing to ask your assistance in my dissertation work.

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers. I'm writing to request permission to ask for volunteers from your most select choral ensemble to participate in this study by completing a survey that will take approximately ten minutes. I'm also asking to observe and meet with three to four students during regularly scheduled rehearsals. These observations and meeting will occur in November and December 2019. Mr./Ms. [CHOIR DIRECTOR NAME] has consented to this request pending your approval. Parent permission and student assent/consent will be obtained prior to their participation in the study.

Much research has been done on the detrimental effects of perfectionism. Perfectionism is known to induce self-destructive behaviors and negatively impact feelings of worthiness. Today's high-stakes climate in education combined with the exacting standards to which students aspire in school choirs, bands, and orchestras could have the potential to unintentionally cultivate certain forms of perfectionism.

Do students feel the pressure of our expectations as a directive to achieve perfection? When singers are working in choir, might they internalize critiques of their vocal progress as criticisms of themselves as people? How do our practices in rehearsal and expectations for performance impact student conceptions of self-worth and acceptance? The impetus for this project evolved from my sixteen years as a high school choir director. I noticed in my students a high commitment to ensemble goals and a sincere desire to meet or exceed my expectations. I'm left wondering if that was a product of good motivation or something more insidious.

If you are willing to grant me permission to conduct this study in your district, please reply to potvinma@bu.edu to provide your contact information. Thank you for taking time to make this research possible.

Sincerely,

Mark Potvin
(612) 889-2791, potvinma@bu.edu

Enclosed: Mark Potvin MN Teaching License
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jill Wilson, (712) 899-7061, wilsji01@luther.edu

APPENDIX D: INITIAL LETTER TO STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Boston University College of Arts & Sciences

725 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
T 617-353-2000 F 617-353-2177
bu.edu/cas

November 22, 2019

Dear choir students,

I am a doctoral candidate in Music Education at Boston University. I am writing to ask your assistance in my dissertation research.

I am investigating perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with high expectations and choir participation in high school singers. I'm writing to ask for student volunteers aged ≥18 from the [ENSEMBLE NAME] to participate in the first phase of this study by completing a survey that will take approximately ten minutes.

Based on survey responses, three or four students will be invited by letter to participate in Phase II of the study. Details on Phase II will be provided at that time.

[CHOIR DIRECTOR] and [CITY NAME] school district officials have consented to allowing this research to take place in the school. Obtaining participant consent is the last step before we begin.

If you are ≥18 years old and willing to participate in this study, please complete (initial, sign) and return the participant consent form to [CHOIR DIRECTOR] by Tuesday, November 26. Thank you for taking time to make this research possible.

Sincerely,

Mark Potvin
(612) 889-2791, potvinma@bu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jill Wilson, (712) 899-7061, wilsji01@luther.edu

APPENDIX E: CHOIR DIRECTOR CONSENT FORM

Protocol Title: Socially Prescribed Perfectionism in a High School Choir	
Principal Investigator: Mark Potvin	Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jill Wilson
Description of Subject Population: Midwestern high school choir conductors in programs with choirs recently invited to perform for conferences of the American Choral Directors Association and/or National Association for Music Education.	
Version Date: October 2019	

Participant Consent Form (Conductor)

Study Summary

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers.

Subjects who take part in the full scope of this research will be in this study for approximately six months. During this time, participants will be visited by the principal investigator five to seven times and provide two to three hours of access time for interviews and interview transcription review.

Subjects taking part in this study will complete a 45-question survey that will take approximately ten minutes. Responses to this survey will determine who will be invited to participate in the full study. One respondent will be invited by letter to have the added responsibility of completing two interviews, being observed during no more than five regularly scheduled choir rehearsals with their elite choir, and reviewing transcriptions of their interviews for accuracy.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Participants may need to reflect upon experiences that spurred the development of their perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may also encounter uncomfortable feelings regarding their sense of success, failure, and self, particularly as feelings self pertains to success and failure in the choir classroom. It is conceivable that knowing about one's own perfectionism could exacerbate negative feelings about the self and/or maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please read the rest of this form.

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 any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions.

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 Mark Potvin, a doctoral candidate at Boston University. Mr. Potvin is supervised by Dr. Jill Wilson. Mark Potvin can be reached at potvinma@bu.edu or (612) 889-2791. Jill Wilson can be reached at wilsji01@luther.edu or (712) 899-7061. We will refer to these individuals as the "researcher" throughout this form.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers.

We are asking you to take part in this study because you have demonstrated excellence as a high school choral conductor and currently manage a successful choral program. Both of these qualifications were determined through your choir's recent invitation to perform for a state, regional, or national conference of either the American Choral Directors Association or the National Association for Music Education.

Eight to ten conductor participants will take part in this portion of the research study.. Should you participate in the full study the members of your most elite choir will be invited to participate as well.

This research is unfunded.

How long will I take part in this research study?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately six months.

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

If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we do any study procedures. The consent form can be found on the final page of this document. Full study procedures are listed below.

- All participating conductors will:
  - Submit conductor consent form
  - Complete a 45-question survey
- One conductor, based on survey responses will:

- Participate in an initial interview with the researcher
- Assist in the distribution of materials to student participants
- Allow the researcher to observe up to five choir rehearsals
- Allow the researcher access to the three or four students that participating in phase two of the study during class time
- Participate in a final interview with the researcher
- Read and revise transcriptions of your interviews to ensure accuracy

The study will begin in September 2019 and will conclude in December 2019. Review of interview transcriptions will occur in January and February 2020.

Audio/Videotaping

We would like to audio/videotape you during this study. If you are videotaped it will be possible to identify you in the video. We will store these recordings digitally using password protection and encryption. Only approved study staff will be able to see the tapes. We will label these recordings with a code instead of your name. The key to the code connects your name to your videotape. The researcher will keep the key to the code in a password-protected computer/locked file. Recordings will be stored for seven years per university guidelines.

Do you agree to let us audio/videotape you during this study?

______YES ______NO _______INITIALS

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by storing all hard copy documents in a locked file cabinet. Digital documents will be stored securely using password protection and encryption. Only the researchers will have access to your records. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

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

- The Researcher and any member of his 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 sponsor or funding agency for this study
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research

The study data will be stored in either: (1) a locked file cabinet, or (2) a password protected and encrypted digital storage device.

The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. We will not put identifiable information on data that are used for these purposes.

Study Participation and Early Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw 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 from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential.

Also, the researcher may take you out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can't make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

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

Questionnaire/Survey Risks

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Participants may need to reflect upon experiences that spurred the development of their perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may also encounter uncomfortable feelings regarding their sense of success, failure, and self, particularly as feelings self pertains to success and failure in the choir classroom. It is conceivable that knowing about one's own perfectionism could exacerbate negative feelings about the self and/or maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies.

You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. Tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Loss of Confidentiality

The main risk of allowing us to use and store your information for research is a potential loss of privacy. We will protect your privacy 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?

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include developing strategies to cope with maladaptive perfectionism traits.

What alternatives are available?

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

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

We will not pay you 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.

If I have any questions or concerns about this research study, who can I talk to?

You can contact us with any concerns or questions. Our contact information listed below:

Mark Potvin	Jill Wilson
Principal Investigator	Faculty Adviser
potvinma01@bu.edu	wilsji01@luther.edu
(612) 889-2791	(712) 899-7061

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University IRB directly at 617-358-6115.

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 participate in the study.

SIGNATURE

____

Name of Participant

_______________________________________ _____________________

Signature of Participant Date

I have explained the research to the subject and answered all his/her questions. I will give a copy of the signed consent form to the subject.

Mark Potvin ________________________________

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

_____________________ ________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

APPENDIX F: STUDENT CONSENT FORM, PHASE I

Protocol Title: Socially Prescribed Perfectionism in a High School Choir	
Principal Investigator: Mark Potvin	Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jill Wilson
Description of Subject Population: Midwestern high school choir students singing with choirs recently invited to perform for conferences of the American Choral Directors Association and/or National Association for Music Education and conducted by [CONDUCTOR NAME]	
Version Date: October 2019	

Consent Form (Adult Student) – Phase I

Study Summary

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, acceptance, and mistakes associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers.

This phase of the study will take approximately ten minutes. Subjects who take part in the full scope of this research will be in this study for approximately six months. During this time, participants will be visited by the principal investigator five to seven times and provide two to three hours of access time for interviews and interview transcription review.

Subjects taking part in this study will complete a 45-question survey that will take approximately ten minutes. Responses to this survey will determine who will be invited to participate in the full study. Three to four respondents will be invited by letter to participate in the second phase of the study. Details on Phase II will be explained in that letter.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Participants may need to reflect upon experiences that spurred the development of their perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may also encounter uncomfortable feelings regarding their sense of success, failure, and self, particularly as feelings self pertains to success and failure in the choir classroom. It is conceivable that knowing about one's own perfectionism could exacerbate negative feelings about the self and/or maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please read the rest of this form.

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 any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions.

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 Mark Potvin, a doctoral candidate at Boston University. Mr. Potvin is supervised by Dr. Jill Wilson. Mark Potvin can be reached at potvinma@bu.edu or (612) 889-2791. Jill Wilson can be reached at wilsji01@luther.edu or (712) 899-7061. We will refer to these individuals as the "researcher" throughout this form.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers.

We are asking you to take part in this study because you sing for a specific conductor within a successful choral program rooted in high expectations. Your choir conductor is already involved in this study. The program qualifications were determined through the recent invitation of a choir at your school to perform for a state, regional, or national conference of either the American Choral Directors Association or the National Association for Music Education.

All the members of your school's elite choir will be invited to participate in the screening phase of this study. Three to four students will be invited to participate in the second phase of the study.

This research is unfunded.

How long will I take part in this research study?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately six months.

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

If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we do any study procedures. The consent form can be found on the final page of this document. Full study procedures are listed below.

- All participating students will:
    - Submit consent form
    - Complete a 45-question survey

The survey will be distributed for completion in November 2019. Phase II of the study will take place from November 2019 to February 2020.

Audio/Videotaping

We would like to videotape you during this study. If you are videotaped it will be possible to identify you in the video. We will store these recordings digitally using password protection and encryption. Only approved study staff will be able to see the tapes. We will label your recordings

with a code instead your name. The key to the code connects your name to each individual videotape. The researcher will keep the key to the code in a password-protected computer/locked file. Recordings will be stored for seven years per university guidelines.

Do you agree to let us audio/videotape you during this study?

______YES ______NO _______INITIALS

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by storing all hard copy documents in a locked file cabinet. Digital documents will be stored securely using password protection and encryption. Only the researchers will have access to your records. We will make every effort to keep these records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of records.

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

- The Researcher and any member of his 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 sponsor or funding agency for this study
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research

The study data will be stored in either: (1) a locked file cabinet, or (2) a password protected and encrypted digital storage device.

The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. We will not put identifiable information on data that are used for these purposes.

Study Participation and Early Withdrawal

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

Also, the researcher may take your out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can’t make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

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

Questionnaire/Survey Risks

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Participants may need to reflect upon experiences that spurred the development of their perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may also encounter uncomfortable feelings regarding their sense of success, failure, and self, particularly as feelings self pertains to success and failure in the choir classroom. It is conceivable that knowing about one's own perfectionism could exacerbate negative feelings about the self and/or maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies.

You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. You may tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Loss of Confidentiality

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

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include developing strategies to cope with maladaptive perfectionism traits.

What alternatives are available?

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

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

We will not pay you 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.

If I have any questions or concerns about this research study, who can I talk to?

You can contact us with any concerns or questions. Our contact information listed below:

Mark Potvin
Principal Investigator
potvinma01@bu.edu
(612) 889-2791

Jill Wilson
Faculty Adviser
wilsji01@luther.edu
(712) 899-7061

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University IRB directly at 617-358-6115.

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 Participant

______________________________________ ____________________
Signature of Participant Date

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

Mark Potvin
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

____________________ ________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

APPENDIX G: STUDENT CONSENT FORM, PHASE II

Protocol Title: Socially Prescribed Perfectionism in a High School Choir	
Principal Investigator: Mark Potvin	Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jill Wilson
Description of Subject Population: Midwestern high school choir students singing with choirs recently invited to perform for conferences of the American Choral Directors Association and/or National Association for Music Education and conducted by [CONDUCTOR NAME]	
Version Date: October 2019	

Consent Form (Adult Student) – Phase II

Study Summary

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers.

Subjects who take part in this phase of the research will do so for approximately six months. During this time, participants will be visited by the principal investigator four to five times and provide two to three hours of access time for interviews and interview transcription review.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Participants may need to reflect upon experiences that spurred the development of their perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may also encounter uncomfortable feelings regarding their sense of success, failure, and self, particularly as feelings self pertains to success and failure in the choir classroom. It is conceivable that knowing about one's own perfectionism could exacerbate negative feelings about the self and/or maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in learning more about this phase of the study, please read the rest of this form.

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 any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions.

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 Mark Potvin, a doctoral candidate at Boston University. Mr. Potvin is supervised by Dr. Jill Wilson. Mark Potvin can be reached at potvinma@bu.edu or (612) 889-2791. Jill Wilson can be reached at wilsji01@luther.edu or (712) 899-7061. We will refer to these individuals as the "researcher" throughout this form.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of expectations, self-worth, and acceptance associated with socially prescribed perfectionism in high school singers.

We are asking you continue in this study because of your responses to the 45-question survey you took in Phase I of this study. You are one of a small group of students who have been invited to participate in Phase II.

This research is unfunded.

How long will I take part in this research study?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately six months.

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

If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we do any study procedures. The consent form can be found on the final page of this document. Full study procedures are listed below.

- All participating students in Phase II will:
    - Submit consent form
    - Participate in an initial interview with the researcher
    - Be observed in four to five choir rehearsals
    - Participate with the other students involved in the full study in a final group interview with the researcher
    - Keep a daily journal of their experiences with expectations, success, and mistakes in choir during Nov/Dec 2019 and Jan 2020
    - Read and revise transcriptions of your interviews to ensure accuracy

The study will begin in November 2019 and will conclude in January 2019. Review of interview transcriptions will occur in January and February 2020.

Audio/Videotaping

We would like to videotape you during this study. If you are videotaped it will be possible to identify you in the video. We will store these recordings digitally using password protection and encryption. Only approved study staff will be able to see the tapes. We will label your recordings with a code instead your name. The key to the code connects your name to each individual videotape. The researcher will keep the key to the code in a password-protected computer/locked file. Recordings will be stored for seven years per university guidelines.

Do you agree to let us audio/videotape you during this study?

______YES ______NO _______INITIALS

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by storing all hard copy documents in a locked file cabinet. Digital documents will be stored securely using password protection and encryption. Only the researchers will have access to your records. We will make every effort to keep these records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of records.

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

- The Researcher and any member of his 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 sponsor or funding agency for this study
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research

The study data will be stored in either: (1) a locked file cabinet, or (2) a password protected and encrypted digital storage device.

The results of this research study may be published or used for teaching. We will not put identifiable information on data that are used for these purposes.

Study Participation and Early Withdrawal

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

Also, the researcher may take your out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can’t make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

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

Questionnaire/Survey Risks

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Participants may need to reflect upon experiences that spurred the development of their perfectionistic tendencies. Participants may also encounter uncomfortable feelings regarding their sense of success, failure, and self, particularly as feelings self pertains to success and failure in the choir classroom. It is conceivable that knowing about one's own perfectionism could exacerbate negative feelings about the self and/or maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies.

You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. You may tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.
You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Loss of Confidentiality

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

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

You may or may not benefit from taking part in this study. Possible benefits include developing strategies to cope with maladaptive perfectionism traits.

What alternatives are available?

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

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

We will not pay you 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.

If I have any questions or concerns about this research study, who can I talk to?

You can contact us with any concerns or questions. Our contact information listed below:

Mark Potvin
Principal Investigator
potvinma01@bu.edu
(612) 889-2791

Jill Wilson
Faculty Adviser
wilsji01@luther.edu
(712) 899-7061

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone independent of the research team, you may contact the Boston University IRB directly at 617-358-6115.

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 Participant

____

Signature of Participant ____________________ Date

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

Mark Potvin ______________________________
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

____________________ ________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

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