

Asking Women How They Feel: A Survey of Women's Choir Members in Collegiate
Choral Programs in the Southeastern United States

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I sought to learn how members of college women's choirs feel about their choir and women's choirs in general. Singers from 19 institutions in the American Choral Directors Association Southern division participated. From the potential survey population (n=986), 302 respondents participated (response rate = 28%).

These research questions guided this study:

1. How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?
2. How do current members of college women's choirs feel about singing in this group? About women's choirs in general?

A researcher-developed survey instrument was used to gather demographic information and other data related to the research questions. After a pilot study, the survey was edited for clarity. The director of choral activities and the director of the women's choir at each institution was contacted via email. The schools that agreed to participate received the link to the survey and an email script to send to students. Two weeks later, a follow-up email was sent with the same materials. Two weeks after that, the survey window closed. The data were collected and analyzed for frequency and percentage. While analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests found no significant differences, the analysis of some of the independent variables, especially those having to do with the age and experience of the singers, were highly suggestive.

In this study, women's choir members responded positively to statements about the value of their choir within their institutions and communities. While respondents

often indicate that women's choirs are seen as inferior to mixed choirs, they nevertheless enjoy the repertoire they sing and like being challenged. Respondents answered affirmatively in Likert-scale questions about their women's choirs and women's choirs in general, but answered more critically in open-ended response questions about the same topics. The survey results echo the findings of earlier studies, amplified by the choir members' own opinions. The data in this study offer clear means to ensure that all students in all choirs are proud of their work and feel equally valued.

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father, Don Albey, who believed in me before I knew to believe
in myself. Love you Dad! (1962-2019)

Jenna, Ashley, and Emily, thank you for your never-ending support and continual laughter and love. Your encouragement bolstered me to continue on when I did not think I could.

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To my Momma, you have always been my hero. All of who I am, I owe to you. When it seemed no one was on my side, I always knew you would be. I love you!

To my husband, you have been my rock and strength when I was weak. Your love is unconditional and I am grateful for you every day. I love you, Bradley!

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CHAPTER ONE
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In 2001, I was named to the Georgia All-State Senior Women’s Choir. Though it was an honor, I was not excited, because like everyone else I knew, I wanted to sing in the mixed choir. When the first rehearsal began, however, I remember thinking, “I have never heard such beautiful singing!” It was a transformative experience in my young life and one that would lead me to be a champion of women’s choirs and treble music everywhere I went. As I entered the field of choral music education, I quickly found that my colleagues tended to dismiss women’s choirs. I could not believe that they would overlook the fascinating camaraderie and fail to hear the shimmering timbre I did every time I encountered a women’s choir. These widely differing perceptions prompted my desire to understand the reasons why women’s choirs seem so uninspiring to many musicians.

When I was in graduate school in Arizona, I had a conversation with a professor whom I admired and respected. I mentioned my view that women’s choirs were sometimes seen as second-class to other types of choirs, and she dismissed the idea, saying that women’s choirs were no longer perceived this way. However, a few months later I had conversations with undergraduate singers who felt the need to “move up” from the women’s choir into the mixed choir at our school. How could both of these things be right? In my search for answers, I realized that few people ask college women how they actually feel about singing in women’s choirs. This study is intended to begin to address that gap.

Need for the Study

The voices of college students singing in women's choirs are absent from the existing work on women's choirs. Some writers posit that women sometimes feel like second-class citizens when singing in a women's choir,¹ but there are no in-depth, cross-sectional studies that survey college women's choir members to determine the extent of these feelings. Studies that survey college women either include men in the survey as well, are about instrumental music, or are about the pedagogy of their director.² A brief article by Dee Gauthier in the *Choral Journal* covers the perceptions of college singers, but it includes the thoughts of both males and females.³

Another view in the literature is that a choral hierarchy exists and that women's choirs

¹ Dee Gauthier, "I'm Only in Women's Chorus: A Need for Positive Image Building," *Choral Journal* 46, no. 2 (2005): 42-47; Debra Spurgeon, "A Paradigmatic Change for Women's Choirs," *Choral Journal* 52, no. 9 (2012): 65; Debra Spurgeon, "The Status of Women's Choirs," in *Conducting Women's Choirs: Strategies for Success*, ed. Debra Spurgeon (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012): 1, 3; Naomi Stephan, "Is it Just (,) You Girls? A Plea for Women's Choral Music," *IAWM Journal* 11, no. 2 (2005): 5, 8; Gregory Vancil, "'No Guts, No Glory' Suggestions for Building a Vital Women's Chorus," *Choral Journal* 26, no. 5 (1985): 13; Jill Wilson, "Practices of and Attitudes Toward High School Treble Clef Choral Ensembles," DMA diss., Boston University, 2010: 1, 17; and others.

² Bret M. Amundson, "Factors Related to Continued Choral Participation: A Comparative Study of Participants and Non-participants in College Choir," (DMA diss., University of Washington, 2012); Denise A. Chrobak, and Philip A. Griswold, "Sex-Role Associations of Music Instruments and Occupations by Gender and Major," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 29, no. 1 (1981): 57-62; and Nana F. Wolfe, "Where Practice Meets Philosophy: Feminist Pedagogy in the Women's Choral Rehearsal," (DMA diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2015).

³ Gauthier, "I'm Only in Women's Chorus," 42-47.

always fall to the bottom of it;⁴ others, like my professor, believe the choral hierarchy no longer exists.⁵ These cannot both be true, but in most of the available literature, only music educators, adult community choir singers, or high school singers are asked about their opinions. While these and other studies and commentaries are valuable, a very important demographic has been left out: college women.

If we wish to understand women's choirs better, should we not be asking those singers for their opinions and perceptions? While college women figure prominently in other types of studies, the lack of voice for college women singing in women's choirs leaves a gap in the available literature. This document seeks to give a voice to those women. I hope other writers will follow suit and that the collective college women's choir voice will be heard loudly and clearly.

Purpose of the Study

This study addresses the perception of women's choirs from the perspective of those women who sing in them. It adds to the available literature by asking for the

⁴ Hilary Apfelstadt, "Practices of Successful Women's Choir Conductors," *Choral Journal* 39, no. 5 (1998): 38; Lauren E. Estes, "The Choral Hierarchy Examined: The Presence of Repertoire for Women's Choirs in Monographs on Choral Literature and Choral History," Master's thesis, Syracuse University, 2013: abstract; Patricia O'Toole, "A Missing Chapter from Choral Methods Books: How Choirs Neglect Girls," *Choral Journal* 39, no. 5 (1998): 15, 16; Spurgeon, "The Status of Women's Choirs," 2; Stephan, "Is it Just," 1; Wilson, "Practices of and Attitudes Toward," 126.

⁵ Catherine Roma, "Women's Choral Literature: Finding Depth." *Choral Journal* 44, no. 10 (2004): 30; Spurgeon, "A Paradigmatic Change," 65; Spurgeon, "The Status of Women's Choirs," 2; Debra Spurgeon, "The History of Women Singing in Groups," in *Conducting Women's Choirs: Strategies for Success*, ed. Debra Spurgeon (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012): 23; Wilson, "Practices of and Attitudes Toward," 183; Jill Wilson, "Advancing the Status of the Treble Ensemble: Choral Educators' Views on the Status of Treble Choral Ensembles," *Gender, Education, Music, and Society* 6, no. 1 (2013): 3.

opinions of members of college women's choirs. Through a survey, women's choir participants expressed their opinions on the perception of women's choirs and how they feel about singing in a women's choir. The survey posed demographic questions to ascertain each respondents' major, year of study, race and ethnicity, age, voice part in choir, and self-identified voice part. The respondents were also asked to rate statements on a Likert-type scale, answer multiple choice questions, and answer yes-no questions. In the final, open-ended section, the respondents were given the opportunity to state any other opinions or expound upon the answers to prior questions.

Research Questions

This study focuses on the following research questions:

1. How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?
2. How do current members of college women's choirs feel about singing in this group? About women's choirs in general?

Singers responded to survey questions about audition procedures, their choice of choir, the respect or value their choir holds in their own eyes and the eyes of their institution and community, self-pride in their choir, community pride in their choir, audience attendance at concerts, repertoire, the overall sound of their choir, and touring opportunities at their institution.

School Participation

The study targeted singers at the five largest (as determined by collegestats.org), four-year, co-educational schools that have a women's choir in each of the eleven states

that make up the Southern Division of the American Choral Directors Association.^{6 7}

This allowed for a cross-section of women’s choir members’ opinions in each state. This regional study will serve as a pilot study for an eventual nationwide study. Table 1 includes the list of schools that were approached for this research study.

Table 1. List of Colleges/Universities Involved in the Study

State	School
+Alabama	University of Alabama
	*Auburn University
Florida	University of Central Florida
	*University of Florida
	*Florida State University
	*Florida Atlantic University
	*University of North Florida
Georgia	*University of Georgia
	Kennesaw State University
	Georgia Institute of Technology
	Georgia Southern University
	*University of North Georgia at Dahlonega
Kentucky	*University of Kentucky
	Western Kentucky University
	Northern Kentucky University
	*Bellarmine University
	*Asbury University
Louisiana	Louisiana State University
	*University of Louisiana at Lafayette
	Southeastern Louisiana University
	Tulane University

⁶ ACDA, “Chapters,” accessed on July 8, 2017, <https://acda.org/ACDA/About-Root/Chapters.aspx>.

⁷ 49 schools in all. Alabama and West Virginia each had only two schools that had women’s choirs. The largest schools in each state are not necessarily represented in the study, because the largest may not have a women’s choir.

	Northwestern State University of Louisiana
Mississippi	The University of Mississippi
	*Mississippi State University
	University of Southern Mississippi
	*Delta State University
	~Mississippi University for Women
North Carolina	North Carolina State University
	The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
	The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
	East Carolina University
	The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
South Carolina	*University of South Carolina
	Clemson University
	Charleston Southern University
	South Carolina State University
	*Bob Jones University
Tennessee	University of Tennessee Knoxville
	*Middle Tennessee State University
	East Tennessee State University
	University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
	*Belmont University
Virginia	Virginia Commonwealth University
	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
	James Madison University
	*Radford University
	College of William and Mary
+West Virginia	West Virginia University
	*Shepherd University

*Designates schools that participated in this research study

+Alabama and West Virginia did not have five institutions with women's choirs on collegestats.org.

~ Mississippi University for Women has been co-educational since 1982.

Assumptions

The author assumes that those enrolled in the participating women's choirs self-identify as female. To participate, respondents had to be eighteen years of age or older, even if they were members of a college choir, in keeping with Institutional Review Board policies concerning parental consent for participation of a minor.⁸ No minors participated in this study.

⁸ <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/sites/default/files/archive/ASU%20IRB%20Procedures.pdf> (p. 34)

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature on women's choirs is extensive, though most of it deals with technique and repertoire. This literature review begins with studies about how women's choirs are perceived. Even in the scant literature that discusses the perception of women's choirs, very few researchers ask the members of those ensembles about their own perceptions. One area of concern addressed in this literature review is how various choirs relate to one another – the notion of a choral hierarchy – in the minds of composers, conductors, singers, and audience members. This concern has been covered in very few sources, but extensively within those sources. Examined in this literature review are some of the sources that cover choral hierarchy and also discuss gender bias in the classroom and in pedagogy. Modern sexism and its effects on women in women's choirs is discussed at length. Also addressed is the topic of the agency of a woman's voice and women's experiences that are important to the discussion about how women feel. Other topics that concern women in music are covered. Finally, there are sources that serve as a call to action for educators to be better conductors and stewards of women's choirs in the choral world.

Perceptions

Women's choirs are typically perceived in two distinct veins: as a place for community, spirituality, and sisterhood, or as a second-class, "leftover" group at the bottom of the choral hierarchy. Those who view women's choirs as a place for community, spirituality, and sisterhood describe them as having a safe atmosphere that

helps create a culture where singers are valued,⁹ a supportive and empowering group,¹⁰ and even a place where members experience spiritual moments or feelings.¹¹ “There are few places a group of women can join together and proclaim the power of the female spirit other than a choir,”¹² and when women’s choirs focus on community, that aspect can quickly become the most important aspect of their ensemble. To achieve this spirit of community, “Many women’s choirs these days have performance ‘quality’ as a second level goal and define the success of a concert or their singing together differently than a ‘traditional’ chorus.”¹³

This sense of community can play a role in how the members of the group feel about themselves. Lynne Gackle believes that positive self-image described from having vulnerable, intimate bonds between women is important in the learning process: “much of women’s learning has to do with women’s identity and self-esteem. Identity refers to who women are and how they identify themselves. Self-esteem refers to the positive or negative evaluations that women give to their identities.”¹⁴ Identity can also refer to self-

⁹ Frank Farris and Mary Ager, eds., *Take Up the Song: Building a Community of Heart and Soul and Voice* (Corvallis, OR: Hennings Fund [Earthsongs], 2003), 108.

¹⁰ Lauren Vanderlinden, “We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton Area Women’s Choirs,” (Honors Project, Lawrence University, 2017), 11.

¹¹ Janice L. Kinney, “‘Making Church’: The Experience of Spirituality in Women’s Choruses,” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2010), 75-80.

¹² Mary Hopper, “Building Community in the Women’s Choir,” In *Conducting Women’s Choirs: Strategies for Success*, ed. Debra Spurgeon (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012): 126.

¹³ Stephan, “Is It Just,” 3.

perception in a number of areas including race, gender, college major, political affiliation, socio-economic class, and tastes. Jill Wilson's dissertation, a study of choral programs in Iowa to determine if treble choirs were being devalued, determined that "self-esteem and choral identity are tied to ensemble placement."¹⁵ Even when not expressly about women's *choir*, sources describe the bond of a group of women in similar terms.

"Women's groups are often venues for learning, healing, support, empowerment, and collaboration."¹⁶ As one example, Shira Gabriel, Olivia Schlager, and Ariana Young found that among groups of female friends, those who were willing to be vulnerable and open to non-sexual intimacy within those same-sex friendships had far fewer body image issues when comparing themselves to friends who weigh less than they do.¹⁷ It appears that in female groups, whether of friends or of members of larger groups, connection and vulnerability lead to better self-perception.

A common theme arises in the comments of researchers and conductors: second place. "All too often, a women's choir is a kind of leftover group, seen as a fallback for

¹⁴ Elisabeth Hayes and Daniele D. Flannery, *Women as Learners: The Significance of Gender in Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000): 54, quoted in Lynne Gackle, *Finding Ophelia's Voice, Opening Ophelia's Heart: Nurturing the Adolescent Female Voice* (Dayton: Heritage Music Press, 2011): 117.

¹⁵ Jill Wilson, "Practices of and Attitudes Toward," 185.

¹⁶ Marielle Amrhein and Steve Bearman, "Girls, Women, and Internalized Sexism," In *Internalized Oppression: The Psychology of Marginalized Groups*, ed. E. J. R. David (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2014): 219.

¹⁷ Shira Gabriel, Olivia M. Schlager, and Ariana F. Young, "Does This Friend Make Me Look Fat? Appearance-Related Comparisons Within Women's Close Friendships," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 36, no. 2 (2014): 153.

singers who are not selected for a mixed ensemble.”¹⁸ Dee Gauthier’s experience, surveying college and high school students about choir choice and the prestige of choirs, yielded a similar finding, that those who aren’t accepted into the advanced mixed ensemble are usually put into a leftover treble choir, giving them a “second-rate” feeling.¹⁹ Wilson reports that most students in her study perceived the mixed ensemble at their school to be more prestigious, and all educators reinforced this view.²⁰ Roberta Jackson also noted that women’s choir members describe the mixed choir as the most prestigious. She wrote, “Another unfortunate result is that young females in many women’s choirs come to the conclusion that they are only valuable as singers when they sing with men.”²¹ Phillip Swan, who was serving as the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Repertoire and Resources chair for Women’s Choirs at the time of the writing of this document, said that he was aware of the perceived “second-place” status of women’s choirs.²² He continued:

In the past, the majority of women’s choirs in the United States were comprised of individuals that did not ‘make the cut’ for the top ensemble. These individuals were decent singers – often quite good – but not labeled as ‘the best’ – and most of my colleagues made this status clear by their actions in the treatment of these choirs.²³

¹⁸ Hilary Apfelstadt, “Practices of Successful,” 38.

¹⁹ Dee Gauthier, “I’m Only in Women’s Chorus,” 116.

²⁰ Wilson, “Practices of and Attitudes Toward,” 142-143.

²¹ Roberta Q. Jackson, “Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride!,” *ChorTeach* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 2.

²² Phillip A. Swan, “The Y Factor in an X Chromosome World,” In *Conducting Women’s Choirs: Strategies for Success*, ed. Debra Spurgeon (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012): 133.

He went on to say that his male counterparts might think that “as most conductors know, a women’s choir will always be second place.”²⁴

Some take their arguments further and discuss the social ramifications of treating women’s choir members as second best. Lisa Fredenburgh notes the detrimental effects of consistent negative perceptions of women’s choirs:

When singers see consistently that the women’s choirs at schools are second best or last best, a holding pen for those who did not make it into the top choir, they start regarding women’s choirs as a substandard choral genre. Combined with the nearly gone but still lingering social concept that women are not quite equal to men, this idea of low status for women’s choirs can be damaging to young women’s self-concept and the attitude towards women’s choirs in general.²⁵

In her discussion on how to build community in women’s choirs, Mary Hopper also looks at the societal impact:

We live in a society in which many women still believe they are second-class citizens. Many treble choirs in public schools consist of “leftovers” – those that were not selected to sing in the SATB group. So, the combination of the weaker musicians, along with girls who may feel they are not worthy, creates ensembles in our school systems that perpetuate the perception that women are second best.²⁶

Choral Hierarchy

The perception of both members and conductors that the women’s choir is “less than” has implications for the place of the women’s choir in the profession as a whole and within a choral program at an institution. As Patricia O’Toole explains, “In the choral

²³ Ibid, 133.

²⁴ Ibid., 134.

²⁵ Lisa Fredenburgh, “Status and Competition: Perception of Women’s Choirs,” *Choral Journal* 48, no. 2 (2007): 38.

²⁶ Mary Hopper, “Building Community”, 118.

profession there exists an implicit hierarchy based on voicings that ranks choirs in the following order: mixed-voices, men, boys or children, women.”²⁷ Gregory Vancil also located the women’s chorus near the bottom of this hierarchy: “Many choral directors probably consider the women’s chorus to be at or near the bottom of the ‘prestige hierarchy’ among choral ensembles.”²⁸ In her master’s thesis, Lauren Estes proposes that this perceived inferiority is an outgrowth of the history of women being forbidden to sing in the church for many centuries, thus prioritizing music for men and boys.²⁹

Debra Spurgeon asserts that an “overabundance” of females in choral singing leads to females being placed in the “leftover” or “second-class ensemble.”³⁰ Lynne Gackle says, “I think one of the biggest problems female singers face in our choral programs today is demonstrated in the way we organize our choral programs.”³¹ She also says that making the SATB choir the flagship ensemble makes the women who are not accepted into it feel as though they are in a second-rate ensemble.³²

Naomi Stephan posits that there is a hierarchy with even greater implications: “The composing world harbors a hierarchical mindset. At the top, orchestral music

²⁷ Patricia O’Toole, “A Missing Chapter,” 15.

²⁸ Gregory Vancil, “‘No Guts, No Glory’,” 13.

²⁹ Lauren E. Estes, “The Choral Hierarchy,” 2.

³⁰ Debra Spurgeon, “The Status of Women’s Choirs,” 1.

³¹ Debra Spurgeon, “Building Excellence in Women’s Choirs: Master Conductors Speak,” In *Conducting Women’s Choirs: Strategies for Success*, ed. Debra Spurgeon (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012), 252.

³² *Ibid*, 252.

reigns, followed by ensemble and solo music, literature for SATB (mixed), TTBB (men's), children's chorus, and finally, SSAA (women's chorus – or WC).³³ Joshua Palkki notes that while this hierarchy is mostly troublesome for women's choirs, it can be for men's choirs as well: "In such a hierarchy, treble and bass clef choirs are devalued because they can be seen as simply stepping-stones to the advanced co-ed choir."³⁴ Marci Major and Jacob Dakon surveyed college students singing in mid-level choirs. They cited ensemble hierarchies as the main catalyst for students bringing negative attitudes into the mid-level choral ensemble.³⁵ They go on to say, "Whether real or perceived, a segment of mid-level choristers do not feel their mid-level choirs have earned enough prestige to warrant continued enrollment."³⁶ This perception of women's choirs is not only in the college sphere. Wilson says, "To make matters worse, the status of the high school treble clef ensemble is often viewed as inferior to the mixed ensemble."³⁷

Spurgeon states, "Historically, women's choirs have been relegated to second class status in the choral hierarchy, and one can still cite examples of unfair treatment."³⁸

³³ Stephan, "Is It Just," 1.

³⁴ Joshua Palkki, "Gender Trouble: Males, Adolescence, and Masculinity in the Choral Context," *Choral Journal* 56, no. 4 (2015): 32.

³⁵ Marci L. Major and Jacob M. Dakon, "Singer Perceptions of Collegiate Mid-Level Choral Experiences: A Descriptive Study," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 64, no. 1 (2016): 110.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁷ Jill Wilson, "Advancing the Status," 2.

³⁸ Debra Spurgeon, "A Paradigmatic Change," 65.

Gauthier notes, “The students believe if you are in a female choir, you would only be there as a second choice. The female choir has the least status or prestige of any choir...In addition, you are not good enough to get into the mixed choir, males singing in the mixed choir are more talented than you.”³⁹ Stephan articulates this hierarchy as a self-perpetuating cycle: “Here is the vicious cycle that still exists for WCM [Women’s Choir Music]: there is a bias in favor of SATB > WCM is seen as “less than” > there are too few WC choruses > composers under-compose for WC > directors under-program WCM > composers lack exposure and sensitivity to WCs > the bias in favor of SATB is reinforced.”⁴⁰

Not all writers think that the choral hierarchy still exists. Some assert that while there may be a hierarchy, women’s choirs fare better than they did in the past. “Single-gender ensembles are increasingly being offered in high schools, and in many of these programs the women’s choir is the top ensemble.”⁴¹ Discussing women’s choirs at the high school level, Iris Levine says, “The women’s groups may be of better quality than the mixed choirs at that level...If you take the highest-performing women and put them in the top group, the second-tier group is on par with the men.”⁴² Catherine Roma

³⁹ Gauthier, “I’m Only in Women’s Chorus,” 46.

⁴⁰ Stephan, “It Is Just,” 8.

⁴¹ Spurgeon, “A Paradigmatic Change,” 65.

⁴² Eric Kelderman, “For Advocate of Women’s Choirs, Fostering Student Engagement is a Song,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 18, 2010, Accessed March 12, 2015. http://chronicle.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/article/For-Advocate_of-Womens/66294/

strongly agrees: “Women’s choruses no longer occupy the bottom of the choral hierarchy. If we take time to read, analyze, and stay current with trends in musicology and women’s history, this becomes clear.”⁴³

Other writers propose that women’s choirs *might* not be at the bottom of the hierarchy. Spurgeon says, “In America, most choral programs in high schools and universities today offer at least one all-female ensemble. Unfortunately, these ensembles are sometimes not as highly regarded as mixed choirs, even though that attitude has changed somewhat in the past two decades.”⁴⁴ Levine notes the distance women’s choirs have come in the choral hierarchy: “Women’s choirs have come a long way...they are now well recognized as a means to not only broaden students’ musical experience but to help keep them enrolled.”⁴⁵ Wilson’s dissertation study concludes that while treble choirs may not be at the bottom of the choral hierarchy any longer, treble choirs are still stigmatized and perceived as less prestigious than mixed choirs.⁴⁶

Perceived Neglect of Girls: the O’Toole Controversy

In 1998, Patricia O’Toole wrote an article entitled, “A Missing Chapter from Choral Methods Books: How Choirs Neglect Girls.” She reviewed work by the American Association of University Women that showed “how stereotypical perceptions of gender roles affect teachers’ expectations and subsequent interactions with female and male

⁴³ Catherine Roma, “Women’s Choral Literature,” 30.

⁴⁴ Debra Spurgeon, “The History of Women,” 24.

⁴⁵ Kelderman, “For Advocate.”

⁴⁶ Wilson, “Practices of and Attitudes Toward,” 183.

students, to the extent that boys have distinct advantages over girls.”⁴⁷ She applied this information to choral practices and policies. Her analysis of choral methods textbooks revealed that boys’ issues were addressed at length, but few address girls’ issues in music with the same attention.⁴⁸ She concluded that girls are, indeed, being shortchanged in education and the choral field as well. She noted that as a part of the choral profession, she had been guilty of perpetrating these very inequities. While she describes feeling bewildered because the choral profession limits the ability to change these issues, she also feels hopeful that since progress was noted in the AAUW study, it will come to the choral field as well.⁴⁹

The O’Toole article caused an uproar in the choral community. Sandra Snow describes a panel discussion that took place soon after the article was published:

In a 1998 article by Patricia O’Toole, she points out that if more women than men were participating in choral music programs, then perhaps the top auditioned group might be the women’s choir. She argued that boys are slower to develop vocally than girls and the playing field might be more even if the mixed choir were comprised of men and the women in need of first-stage vocal or musical training. I moderated a panel session at a Central Division Conference of the American Choral Director’s Association shortly after the article’s publication. In my professional experiences, I had never seen a room of more angry participants. I certainly did not have the training to moderate such a crowd! The very idea that there might be any institutionalized unfairness toward girls (or boys) was clearly uncomfortable for all in attendance.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ O’Toole, “A Missing Chapter,” 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁵⁰ Sandra Snow, “We Sing Ourselves: An Essay About Teaching and Learning with Women,” In *Conducting Women’s Choirs: Strategies for Success*, ed. Debra Spurgeon (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2012): 106.

In the two months after the O'Toole article appeared, there were five letters to the editor of the *Choral Journal* responding to it. Sandi Peaslee congratulates O'Toole on a well-written, encouraging article and thanks her for preparing new educators coming into the field.⁵¹ The other four letters opposed the claims O'Toole made. Alice Day wrote, "her article is filled with generalizations, and her arguments are weakened by poor resources and by her bias. O'Toole's article reads more like an ultrafeminist tirade than a serious essay on the education of girls."⁵² She continues, decrying the notion of the "so-called 'Choral Hierarchy'" and says that O'Toole's suggestion that the top choir be a women's choir discriminates against men.⁵³ She concludes by agreeing with some of O'Toole's ideas, but circles back to say that the article is "on par with feminist propaganda."⁵⁴

Michael Frasier believed O'Toole's article was highly biased, using mostly female writers or female organizations as sources. He goes on to say, "If opinion, anecdotal information, and gender-limiting citations suffice for research on this subject, a case could be made for the article being titled, 'How Choirs Neglect Boys'."⁵⁵ He

⁵¹ Sandi Peaslee, Letter to the editor, *Choral Journal* 39, no. 8 (1999): 4.

⁵² Alice Day, Letter to the editor, *Choral Journal* 39, no. 8 (1999): 22.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁵ Michael J. Frasier, Letter to the editor, *Choral Journal* 39, no. 6 (1999): 4.

concludes by saying he feels that no one is being neglected (or that demographic would diminish) and that the article should be labeled “opinion.”⁵⁶

Adrian Horn agreed with what O’Toole said, but thought she was causing damage to the choral field with her article. He relates an anecdote about a softball team, on which he plays, that gives women special treatment. If they didn’t, he posits that fewer women would play. He believes this would happen to choirs if O’Toole’s call for equality were met. He calls male participation the “magic bullet” for success and concludes by saying that the focus should remain on how to recruit more male singers.⁵⁷

Paul Langholz mostly agreed, but came to different conclusions about O’Toole’s arguments. He brings up her idea of making an SSAA ensemble each year at the honor choir and all-state choir level and asks, “Should we also have an honor band specifically for the overabundance of flutes that are not accepted into all-state each year?”⁵⁸ He notes that at his school, girls drop out if not given the opportunity to sing with boys, and boys drop out if there are too few of them.⁵⁹

Gender Bias in Education

In the 1990s, there was a thriving body of literature on the differences between the treatment of boys and girls in the classroom. In the source material, gender bias has been discussed in fairly general terms and has been addressed in more specific terms with

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁷ Adrian G. Horn, Letter to the editor, *Choral Journal* 39, no. 7 (1999): 4.

⁵⁸ Paul Langholz, Letter to the editor, *Choral Journal* 39, no. 7 (1999): 18.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 20.

regard to the choral classroom. “Perceptions of gender differences affect student learning.”⁶⁰ Koza, quoting Michael Apple, believes schools have a responsibility to be as unbiased as possible. “Schools ‘act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony’ – as sites of cultural reproduction, where unequal power relations of the dominant culture, including gender relations, tend to be recreated and perpetuated.”⁶¹ O’Toole warns, “Teachers are not immune from society’s notions of gender. Teachers have been found to interact differently with boys and girls, and thus their pedagogy is laden with subtle messages about who is important in the classroom.”⁶² In an article about gender in the classroom, Palkki says that there is a “hidden” curriculum in which differences in economic, cultural, racial, and sexual groups are defined and separated by social constructs. He says teachers often unknowingly participate in this by their teaching and through the examples they use or neglect to use.⁶³

Marie McCarthy believes the classroom can also be used in a positive way to address gender bias. She says that while discourse in the classroom is difficult because it is gendered and laden with bias, injustice, inequality, and stereotypes, she believes that

⁶⁰ Robin J. Giebelhausen, “‘I Felt a Compulsion to Write’: A Qualitative Examination of the Learning Experiences of Three Female Composers,” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2015), 5.

⁶¹ Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979): 6, quoted in Julia E. Koza, “The ‘Missing Males’ and Other Gender Issues in Music Education: Evidence from the ‘Music Supervisors’ Journal,’ 1914-1924,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 41, no. 3 (1993): 213.

⁶² O’Toole, “A Missing Chapter,” 13.

⁶³ Palkki, “Gender Trouble,” 26.

attending to and changing discourse “has the potential to free the human spirit to find one’s voice and to relate the voice, in its sameness and in its difference, to the voices of these who share the pedagogical encounter.”⁶⁴

In the music classroom, writers point out gender bias in materials, program offerings, and methods used. Palkki notes that “the structure of choral programs may reveal gender biases.”⁶⁵ Rosemarie Sherban points out that even teachers who try to remain unbiased use curricular materials that may have gendered messages.⁶⁶ Some teachers perpetuate biases, as shown in the study of sex-stereotyping by instrument choice. Authors of one study determined, “Sex-stereotyping seems to be related to exposure to study of music, to professionals, and to music educators.”⁶⁷ Colley et al., found that some school cultures also contribute to gender bias, which can have negative repercussions. In their study about perceptions of male and female composers’ work, students were asked to evaluate excerpts of classical, New Age, and jazz music. The students were asked to rate the likelihood of a male or female composing in each of the genres, and asked to rate musical examples that were attributed to a male or female composer (based on a short, fictional, biography). The study concludes:

⁶⁴ Marie McCarthy, “Gendered Discourse and the Construction of Identity: Toward a Liberated Pedagogy in Music Education,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33, no. 4 (1999): 112.

⁶⁵ Palkki, “Gender Trouble,” 32.

⁶⁶ Rosemarie A. Sherban, “Peering Through the Transparencies of Singing, Gender, and the Music Classroom,” (Master’s thesis, The University of Calgary, 1995), 23.

⁶⁷ Chrobak and Griswold, “Sex-Role Associations,” 4.

Stereotypes of male and female artistic abilities, used by individuals and embedded in institutional cultures, may impede the progress of females, and prevent their work from being evaluated positively. In terms of music education, stereotypes may have a powerful effect upon the interest and achievement of female students, particularly in genres which are heavily male-dominated.⁶⁸

Some writers argue that the choral classroom, in particular, has contributed to gender bias in education. Koza points out that the concept of “missing males” in choirs was a popular topic in music journals beginning over 100 years ago and remains so today.⁶⁹ Koza notes that missing males is only a problem, however, if mixed music is the only “legitimate” music.⁷⁰ Palkki takes this further, saying that misogynistic and homophobic tropes have been taught and repeated over the years in choral music education.⁷¹ Nana Wolfe discusses how traditional choral methods can have an inherent “masculine bias,” even in a women’s choir rehearsal, by “excluding knowledge, voices, and meaning from marginalized populations.”⁷²

Some examples of bias in the choral classroom include those described by Randi Carp, Mary Hopper, and Jill Wilson. Carp studied high school choral directors’ thoughts on teaching single-gender ensembles. She said:

Because many choral programs have far less boys than girls, younger and less experienced boys are frequently given the opportunity to be in more advanced

⁶⁸ Ann M. Colley, David J. Hargreaves, and Adrian C. North, “Adolescents’ Perceptions of the Music of Male and Female Composers,” *Psychology of Music* 31, no. 2 (2003): 140.

⁶⁹ Koza, “The ‘Missing Males’,” 213.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁷¹ Palkki, “Gender Trouble,” 28.

⁷² Nana F. Wolfe, “Where Practice Meets,” 74.

classes (typically mixed ensembles) while the girls are required to participate in a less experienced group (typically an all-female group) creating an inequity that could have legal consequences.⁷³

Mary Hopper uses an anecdote to examine inequity for women's choral ensembles.

"Years ago another conductor of women's choirs made the comment to me that all a men's choir has to do is put on tuxedos and walk on stage for everyone to think they are wonderful. This is quite true, thus women's choirs have an additional hurdle to jump in our culture – they have to be exciting, beautiful, and sing with accuracy of intonation."⁷⁴

Wilson said, "By the time males become high school singers, they are more likely to be met with nothing but encouragement from teachers in an effort to mask chastisement from peers."⁷⁵

Wilson also noted a positive example involving a change in the hierarchy of choirs in a high school. "The director believed that moving the treble ensemble to a higher position in the department's ensemble hierarchy had been a positive alteration. Other students in the choral department were already starting to take notice; younger girls were impressed by the group's performance and encouraged by the current singers to be a part of it."⁷⁶

⁷³ Randi S. Carp, "Single Gender Choral Ensembles, Attitudes and Practices: A Survey of Southern California High School Choir Directors," (DMA diss., University of Southern California, 2004), 3.

⁷⁴ Hopper, "Building Community," 123.

⁷⁵ Wilson, "Advancing the Status," 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

While most of the sources in this section have dealt with gender bias in the K-12 classroom, gender bias has no age limits. These observations apply equally well in the college or university classroom and in adult choirs, as several sources point out. Wolfe concluded that a mixture of traditional and feminist pedagogy could be beneficial for female singers.⁷⁷ Patricia Henning's brother, Frank Farris, said in an introduction to a chapter about her suggestions for programming and rehearsal, "This thought experiment shows what a little feminism has brought to the choral world. Patty and the PWC (Peninsula Women's Chorus) have taught us to think about 'communal creativity' as being fostered, not created, by the conductor."⁷⁸ These sources believe that women's studies pedagogy in the choral rehearsal is a positive example of how teachers and conductors can change gender bias in the choral classroom.

Single-Sex Choirs

Some writers describe positive aspects of having single-sex choirs. Nancy Jorgensen and Catherine Pfeiler wrote about the offerings not only in their choirs, but in the rest of the Wisconsin high school where they teach. They cite the success of their single-sex choirs and say, "Around the country, in response to low test scores and discipline problems, schools are exploring single-sex public education."⁷⁹ The principal

⁷⁷ Wolfe, "Where Practice Meets," 164.

⁷⁸ Frank Farris, introduction to Patricia Harris, "Helpful Hints Toward the Heart of the Matter," In *Take Up the Song: Building a Community of Heart and Soul and Voice*, Frank A. Farris and Mary Ager, eds. (Corvallis, OR: Hennings Fund [Earthsongs], 2003), 104.

⁷⁹ Nancy S. Jorgensen, and Catherine Pfeiler, "Successful Single-Sex Offerings in the Choral Department," *Music Educators Journal* 94, no. 5 (2008): 39.

at their school cited their success in his push for single-sex education in classes at their school.⁸⁰ Carp reports in her dissertation that the choral directors she surveyed agreed that single-gender choirs are decidedly easier to manage.⁸¹ She also stated that most of the conductors she surveyed liked beginning single-gender choirs to serve as training grounds for advanced mixed ensembles because they found that vocal training for younger students is easier in a single-sex environment.⁸²

While some believe that single-sex choirs or classes are best to lead to more advanced co-educational groupings, Marielle Amrhein and Steve Bearman note how much harder females have to work to achieve those results. “The lack of resources available to women means that women may need to work harder to achieve the same objectives as men.”⁸³ While they are not writing about choral singing and the competition among female singers to be included in the top choirs, Amrhein and Bearman note that “competition within an oppressed group is one of the fundamental manifestations of internalized oppression.”⁸⁴

Modern Sexism

Various writers list a number of different kinds of sexism and ways that sexism manifests. Nicole V. Benokraitis and Joe R. Feagin identify three types of sexism:

⁸⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁸¹ Carp, “Single Gender,” 63.

⁸² Ibid., 69, 70

⁸³ Amrhein and Bearman, “Girls, Women,” 217.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 218.

1. Blatant – harmful treatment that is overt, 2. Subtle⁸⁵ – harmful treatment that is harder to recognize because it might be internalized over years of social conditioning, and 3. Covert – harmful treatment that is malicious.⁸⁶ Many sources describe internalized oppression, which “consists of oppressive practices that continue to make the rounds even when members of the oppressor group are not present.”⁸⁷ Amrhein and Bearman cite three other types of sexism: 1. Institutionalized, 2. Interpersonal, and 3. Internalized. They say that even in cultures where institutionalized sexism is not as prevalent, interpersonal and internalized sexism still occur. Women are conditioned to both live in and perpetuate internalized sexism by gender role conditioning.⁸⁸ They go on to say, “Internalized sexism, often left out of the discussion, is acted out within or between women, even when no men are present.”⁸⁹

Bearman et al., sought to determine whether or not internalized sexism existed in conversations between college female friends. They recorded 10-minute segments of casual conversation and found that, on average, those conversations contained more than 11 internalized sexist statements.⁹⁰ “Internalized sexism...which occurs when women

⁸⁵ Today, instances of subtle sexism are also referred to as “microaggressions.”

⁸⁶ Nicole V. Benokraitis and Joe R. Feagin, *Modern Sexism: Blatant, Subtle, and Covert Discrimination* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 39, 41, 42.

⁸⁷ Steve Bearman, Neill Korobov, and Avril Thorne, “The Fabric of Internalized Sexism,” *Journal of Integrated Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2009): 13.

⁸⁸ Amrhein and Bearman, “Girls, Women,” 195-197.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁹⁰ Bearman, Korobov, and Thorne, “The Fabric,” 26.

enact learned sexist behaviors upon themselves and other women, also takes everyday forms.”⁹¹

Phyllis Chesler, who wrote a chapter in *Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman*, said that “most women are aggressive...mainly against other women.”⁹² In this chapter, she recounts the struggles of the leaders of the second wave of feminism. They were still living in a sexist society, and she notes that even feminists cannot escape internalized prejudices.⁹³ She offers encouragement to women struggling with internalized sexism, saying, “Each woman must understand that women have probably been internalizing sexist values for thousands of years; this value structure cannot disappear immediately.”⁹⁴

Nancy Greenawalt studied coach preference among female college athletes. While this does not deal with singers, it nevertheless provides insight into the effect of internalized sexism among college women. Her study seeks to determine whether modern sexism plays a role in devaluing a female coach by female athletes. She asked athletes to give their preference for a male or female coach, asked about their past coaches, asked them to take the modern sexism scale, and interviewed some of them. While they scored low on the modern sexism scale, their statements in the interviews contradicted their scores.⁹⁵ She believes the reason for the discrepancy might have been due to the wording,

⁹¹ Ibid., 10.

⁹² Phyllis Chesler, “Psychological Ethics,” In *Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009), 441.

⁹³ Ibid., 464.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 475.

which may have tipped students off to answer in a more socially acceptable way.⁹⁶ She said, “Subtle sexism practices...have been internalized by most people as behavior that is normal or customary.”⁹⁷

The Modern Sexism Scale was developed by Swim et al., They sought to determine if college students were using modern sexism in place of older, more blatant forms of sexism. Their results showed that students were indeed using these more covert forms. “There are social pressures to suppress old-fashioned prejudicial and stereotypical statements about women...Thus, people, while rejecting old-fashioned discrimination and stereotypes, may believe that discrimination against women is a thing of the past.”⁹⁸

The conversation about woman-to-woman prejudice began in 1968 with an article that asked, “What do women think? Do they consider their own sex inferior?”⁹⁹ Goldberg asked college women to review articles by authors with fictitious names (some male, some female) and determined that women “downgrade the work of professionals of their

⁹⁵ Nancy J. Greenawalt, “Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis,” (EdD diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2012), 142.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 165.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁹⁸ Janet K. Swim, Kathryn J. Aikin, Wayne S. Hall, and Barbara A. Hunter, “Sexism and Racism: Old-Fashioned and Modern Prejudices,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68, no. 2 (1995), 200.

⁹⁹ Phillip Goldberg, “Are Women Prejudiced Against Women?” *Trans-Action* 5, no. 5 (1968), 28.

own sex.”¹⁰⁰ The publication of this article spawned numerous follow-up studies that sought to replicate its results.

Teresa Peck reviewed studies by Hanna Levenson et al., and Claire Etaugh and Suzanne Rose. Levenson wanted to see if the women’s liberation movement made a difference in how students would respond. To their surprise, the study found more gender bias among women than among men: females rated the female author’s work significantly higher than the male’s, and the males showed no sex bias.¹⁰¹ The Etaugh/Rose study sought to see if adolescents’ responses would be similar to those of adults. They determined that male adolescents fell in line with adults and, in all but one category, the work of the females was devalued, while there was no sex bias in the female students.¹⁰² Peck explored whether the status of the author had an effect on perceptions. She surveyed college students, asking them to rate articles by high- and low-status individuals. The high-status author was listed as a professor at a large university that had many publications and research honors, and the low-status author was listed as a doctoral

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰¹ Hanna Levenson, Brent Burford, Bobbie Bonno, and Loren David, “Are Women Still Prejudiced Against Women? A Replication and Extension of Goldberg’s Study,” *The Journal of Psychology* 89 (1975), 69.

¹⁰² Claire Etaugh, and Suzanna Rose, “Adolescents’ Sex Bias in the Evaluation of Performance,” *Developmental Psychology* 11, no. 5 (1975), 664.

candidate writing a term paper.¹⁰³ She found that women were strongly affected by status – over-valuing high-status females and under-valuing low-status females.¹⁰⁴

Wayne Hensley and Doris Waggoner reviewed studies by Gail Pheterson et al., Michael McReynolds and Gerald Miller, and Marianna Ferber and Joan Huber. In the Pheterson et al., study, college women were asked to evaluate work identified as painted by men or women in two categories: some of the paintings were classified as having been entered in an art competition and others were labeled recent competition winners. They found that “women value male work more highly than female work when it is only an attempt or entry; however, this bias dissipates when the work advances from entry to winner.”¹⁰⁵ The McReynolds/Miller study had students rate articles. They found that “audiences manifest male chauvinism in their evaluation of a source’s competence *and* that women are somewhat more chauvinistic than men.”¹⁰⁶ They posited that sexist conditioning and the stereotypically “male” field (physics) might have contributed to the results.¹⁰⁷ The Ferber/Huber study asked about former teachers. Male students favored male teachers and female students favored female teachers. They conclude that students

¹⁰³ Teresa Peck, “When Women Evaluate Women, Nothing Succeeds Like Success: The Differential Effects of Status Upon Evaluations of Male and Female Professional Activity,” *Sex Roles* 4, no. 2 (1978), 208

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁰⁵ Gail I. Pheterson, Sara B Kiesler, and Phillip A. Goldberg, “Evaluations of the Performance of Women as a Function of their Sex, Achievement and Personal History,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 19, no. 1 (1971), 116.

¹⁰⁶ Michael McReynolds, and Gerald R. Miller, “Male Chauvinism and Source Competence: A Research Note,” *Speech Monographs* 40, no. 2 (1973), 155.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

are not affected by sex bias.¹⁰⁸ Hensley and Waggoner stated that Goldberg's initial title was misleading because women might be prejudiced against "academic" women.¹⁰⁹ Their study had students rate the public speaking of other students they did not know. They conclude that stereotypes come into play when evaluating hypothetical people, and that the bias against women in studies using hypothetical people is stronger.¹¹⁰

Gauthier refers to internalized sexism and prejudice against women in her article. She quotes a young woman who said that she would "sing in a male choir before I would ever sing in a female choir!"¹¹¹ Gauthier notes, "If they had a second choice or could sing in more than one choir, the majority of males clearly favored singing in a men's choir while less than half of the women wanted to sing in a female choir."¹¹²

Women's Voices

"The concept of voice universally implies a sense of authority and authenticity."¹¹³ The agency and authority assigned to male and female voices may be

¹⁰⁸ Marianna Abeles Ferber, and Joan Althaus Huber, "Sex of the Student and Instructor: A Study of Student Bias," *American Journal of Sociology* 80, no. 4 (1975), 962.

¹⁰⁹ Wayne E. Hensley, and Doris R. Waggoner, "Are Women Really Prejudiced Against Women? A Reconsideration," (Communication, Language, and Gender Conference, Madison, WI, May 19-20, 1979), 3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹¹ Gauthier, "I'm Only in Women's Chorus," 44.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 46.

¹¹³ D'Juanna A. Montgomery, "Speaking Through Silence: Voice in the Poetry of Selected Native American Women Poets," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Arlington, 2009), 7.

largely cultural. The female voice has always been important in Native American culture, for example, allowing women to serve as storytellers and culture bearers.¹¹⁴ D'Juanna Montgomery analyzed the poetry of selected Native American female poets to examine the role of voice.¹¹⁵ She notes that “members of a minority class or culture often find themselves pushed to the fringes of the dominant society or culture where their *voice* goes virtually unrecognized or unheard.”¹¹⁶ In the choral hierarchy, women in women’s choirs are treated as a minority class.

Other than Nana Wolfe’s dissertation on feminist pedagogy cited above, only Lauren Vanderlinden’s honors project about the women’s choir culture in Appleton and Janna Montgomery’s master’s thesis on women’s choir formations deal with the perceptions (“voice”) of college female singers. Vanderlinden points out that while the adolescent female singing voice has recently been given a spotlight, there are few who continue to ask female singers about their perceptions in high school, college, and beyond.¹¹⁷ She carried out an ethnographic study to try to define the success of the thriving women’s choir community in Appleton. She said, “The experience of a choir director in any given rehearsal can be very different from the experience of their students, and in my research, I have noticed that those different student experiences are not often given the same weight in literature on choral methods, if they have garnered inclusion at

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 73.

¹¹⁷ Lauren Vanderlinden, “We Are One,” 5.

all.”¹¹⁸ Montgomery’s thesis asked college women’s choir members about their preferences for various arrangements of singers while singing. They sang a piece in block formation, then in mixed formation, and she surveyed their opinions.¹¹⁹ She found that while sopranos all agreed that the blend was better in mixed formation and they could hear themselves better in mixed formation, altos were more undecided. Most of the altos preferred block formation for tuning and blend, but most preferred mixed formation for being able to hear themselves. All singers reported feeling more freedom in mixed formation and 100% said that formation affects the choral sound.

In her book about women in the Pentecostal church, Elaine Lawless quoted Robin Lakoff who said, “We can learn about the way women view themselves and everyone’s assumptions about the nature and role of women from the use of language in our culture, that is to say, the language used by and about women.”¹²⁰ To understand the experience of female composers, Robin Giebelhausen asked three graduate students about their experiences, relationships, and influences of their gender in relation to their composing. She notes the compulsion to share one’s voice and compose.¹²¹ Beyond the field of music, Jennie Small wrote an article looking at “memory-work” through the lens of the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁹ Janna K. Montgomery, “Chorister Formation Preferences in a Women’s Choir,” Master’s thesis, The University of Mississippi, 2011.

¹²⁰ Robin Lakoff, *Language and Woman’s Place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 1, quoted in Elaine J. Lawless, *God’s Peculiar People: Women’s Voices & Folk Tradition in a Pentecostal Church*, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 80.

¹²¹ Robin J. Giebelhausen, “I Felt a Compulsion’,” 49.

experiences of female tourists.¹²² She concludes that this method is feminist because it gives voice to women's experiences and encourages more of this type of research.¹²³

Mary Beard wrote a book based on lectures she had given on women and power. She notes that "when it comes to silencing women, Western culture has had thousands of years of practice."¹²⁴ She says, "It is a nice demonstration that right where written evidence for Western culture starts, women's voices are not being heard in the public sphere."¹²⁵

Women's Experiences

Beyond the impact of female friendship on self-image discussed earlier, there is further literature dealing with women's experiences. Bret Amundson surveyed college students to determine why they did or did not continue with choir after high school. Seventy percent of his survey group were females.¹²⁶ He determined that having students see multiple choral ensembles rather than just the top group, dialogue with and providing information to high school directors, and providing information to parents all contributed to continued choral participation in college. To understand women's experiences in

¹²² Jennie Small, "Memory-Work: A Method for Researching Women's Tourist Experiences," *Tourism Management* 20, no. 1 (1999), 28.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹²⁴ Mary Beard, *Women & Power: A Manifesto* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), xi.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁶ Bret M. Amundson, "Factors Related," 40.

another field, Bobbie Jo Hill examined women's beliefs, behaviors, and performance in a college algebra class at a rural community college.¹²⁷

Of the 24 sources examining women's experiences located for this review, only five surveyed college women about choir.¹²⁸ Four of those sources are about women in *women's* choirs. Of the 11 other sources that surveyed college students, one source pertained to music, but not specifically choir,¹²⁹ one pertained to sports,¹³⁰ one pertained to friendships,¹³¹ one pertained to math,¹³² and seven related to the Goldberg study.¹³³ Some researchers surveyed adolescents, as opposed to college students. Two of those

¹²⁷ Bobbie Jo Z. Hill, "An Exploratory Investigation on the Beliefs, Behaviors, and Performance of Women in College Algebra in a Rural Community College," (PhD diss., Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, 2016), 2.

¹²⁸ Amundson, "Factors Related;" Gackle, *Finding Ophelia's Voice*; Montgomery, "Chorister Formation Preferences;" Vanderlinden, "We Are One;" and Wolfe, "Where Practice Meets."

¹²⁹ Chroback and Griswold, "Sex-Role Associations."

¹³⁰ Greenawalt, "Modern Sexism."

¹³¹ Gabriel, et al., "Does This Friend."

¹³² Hill, "An Exploratory Investigation."

¹³³ Ferber and Huber, "Sex of the Student;" Goldberg, "Are Women Prejudiced;" Hensley and Waggoner, "Are Women Really;" Levenson, et al., "Are Women Still;" McReynolds and Miller, "Male Chauvinism;" Peck, "When Women Evaluate;" and Pheterson, et al., "Evaluations of the Performance."

studies were associated with the Goldberg study,¹³⁴ and two asked about how adolescents felt about choirs.¹³⁵

Finally, several researchers discussed women's choirs, but instead of asking the singers, the researchers focused on conductors. Seven of these sources have already been cited in this chapter.¹³⁶ Claudia Bryan's dissertation discusses the experiences of female choral conductors, but not those of the singers in the choirs they conduct.¹³⁷ Lisa Fredenburgh talks about how competition and status can change the way members of a women's choir feel. She also discusses ways people have tried to champion women's choirs.¹³⁸ Nancy Menk discusses the history of women singing together in Indiana and asserts that many people treat women's choirs as "secondary or inferior."¹³⁹

Sandra Snow talks about the "transformative experience" of young women in all-state women's choirs.¹⁴⁰ She also relates a story about asking women's choirs to hold up

¹³⁴ Colley, et al., "Adolescents' Perceptions;" and Etaugh and Rose, "Adolescents' Sex Bias."

¹³⁵ Gackle, *Finding Ophelia's Voice*; and Vanderlinden, "We Are One."

¹³⁶ Apfelstadt, "Practices of Successful;" Carp, "Single Gender;" Spurgeon, "A Paradigmatic Change;" Swan, "The Y Factor;" Vancil, "'No Guts, No Glory';" Vanderlinden, "We Are One;" and Wolfe, "Where Practice Meets."

¹³⁷ Claudia A. Bryan, "Women Choral Conductors in the Academy: A Case Study," (PhD diss., Auburn University, 2016).

¹³⁸ Lisa Fredenburgh, "Status and Competition," 38.

¹³⁹ Nancy Menk, "Re-Evaluating the Women's Chorus," *Indiana Musicator* 47, no. 1 (1991): 11.

¹⁴⁰ Sandra Snow, "We Sing Ourselves," 103.

their hands if they compose their own music. Tentative hands go up, but when she asks who writes their own lyrics, more hands confidently raise.¹⁴¹ Near the end of that chapter, in a section titled, “In Their Own Words: What Women Value,” the quote is from a male conductor.¹⁴²

Other Topics

Other topics, such as the role of women in music, repertoire, and ACDA, are pertinent to this discussion. Aelwyn Pugh discusses women as performers and composers. Pugh does not interview any of the women, but her book is an accessible resource about women in music, repertoire, and history.¹⁴³ Julia Koza examines articles from the *Music Supervisor's Journal* from 1914 – 1924 and notes that women and girls were discussed in terms of the music they played or taught to their children. She looks at three kinds of evidence: women as members of performing organizations, contributions women made to musical life, and women's names on membership lists and contribution lists.¹⁴⁴

Lauren Estes observes that ACDA does not have a Repertoire and Standards (R&S) chair for mixed choirs since mixed music can fall under a number of categories. She posits that this condones the choral hierarchy by marking all other types of choirs

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 105.

¹⁴² Ibid., 108-109.

¹⁴³ Aelwyn Pugh, *Women in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁴ Julia E. Koza, “The ‘Missing Males’,” 226.

“outside the norm.”¹⁴⁵ She notes the growth in the past 25 years of quality repertoire for women’s choirs.¹⁴⁶ She also points out, however, that lack of familiarity with women’s choirs (because they are not programmed for, broadcast as much, or researched as frequently), and lack of music education texts about them makes it difficult for teachers to feel qualified to conduct them.¹⁴⁷ Catherine Roma’s article looks at the history of repertoire for women’s choirs, the recent rise in numbers of women’s choirs, and new music for women’s choirs.¹⁴⁸

Among ACDA’s resources for women’s choirs are the Repertoire Women’s Choir History page and the Women’s Choirs page. The former gives a history of the women’s choir R&S committee, lists the names of the chairs, and notes what happened during their tenure.¹⁴⁹ The latter contains current information about the women’s choir R&S committee chair and the women’s choir consortium commission.¹⁵⁰ Sharon Breden, the first women’s choir R&S chair, wrote about the National Committee Chairs in the introductory pages of an issue of the *Choral Journal*. She shows that women’s choirs and

¹⁴⁵ Estes, “The Choral Hierarchy,” 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ Roma, “Women’s Choral Literature.”

¹⁴⁹ ACDA, “Repertoire Women’s Choir History,” Accessed July 2, 2017.
https://acda.org/ACDA/Repertoire_and_Resources/Repertoire_Specific/Womens_Choir_History.aspx

¹⁵⁰ ACDA, “Women’s Choirs,” Accessed July 2, 2017.
https://acda.org/ACDA/Repertoire_Resources/Repertoire_Specific/Women_s_Choir/ACDA/Repertoire_and_Resources/Repertoire_Specific/Women_s_Choir.aspx

boy choirs were the last groups to be labeled separately by the ACDA and were not regarded as separate entities until 1980. All other groups were formed in 1977 or 1978.¹⁵¹

Calls to Action

A few sources serve as calls to action to educators in an effort to secure fair treatment for women's choirs. Lisa Fredenburgh and Nancy Menk address conductors directly. Fredenburgh points out that some singers may make the leap between the idea that women's choirs are not good to the idea that being a woman is inferior.¹⁵² She notes ways in which people have worked to change the perception of women's choirs. She concludes by reminding educators that men should be equally celebrated in choral music and gives suggestions for ways to ensure that women's choirs are receiving equal treatment.¹⁵³ Menk firmly reminds teachers to reassess their treatment of women's choirs and their attitudes towards them. While she believes that it is harder to find good music for women's choirs than it is for mixed choirs, she gives resources to find quality women's choir literature.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Sharon Breden, "National Committee Chairs," *Choral Journal* 35, no. 2 (1994), 5.

¹⁵² Fredenburgh, "Status and Competition," 38.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁴ Menk, "Re-Evaluating," 12.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the first two chapters of this study, the need for this study and the related literature were assessed. The opinions and feelings of female college students singing in women's choirs are mostly absent from the current literature. These opinions and feelings are valuable tools for advancing the future of choral singing. While not the only survey that asks for the opinions of female college students, this is the only survey to date that asks for their opinions about their choir's place within their school's choral program and their opinions on the status of women's choirs in general. This is also the only survey that asks singers across multiple states and institutions about women's choirs' place in the choral hierarchy.

Method and Participants

This study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Arizona State University on September 22, 2017. It was granted exempt status on September 26, 2017. On September 29, 2017, the director of choral activities and women's choir director were contacted at each of the 49 schools that met the following criteria: a) located in one of the 11 states in the Southern Division of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA)¹⁵⁵, b) is one of the five largest, co-educational institutions in each state, according to collegestats.org, and c) has a women's choir. Originally, faculty from 24

¹⁵⁵ The Southern division, according to <https://acda.org/about-us/chapters-and-regions/>, includes: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

institutions said they would like to participate, faculty from three institutions declined to participate, faculty from 21 institutions never responded, and one faculty member asked to see the survey document, but did not respond further. The first email with the recruitment letter (Appendix A) for respondents and link to the survey was sent to the initial 24 interested institutional representatives on October 25, 2017. Faculty members were asked to forward the recruitment letter and a link to the survey to the members of their women's choir. Two weeks after the first email (November 8, 2017), a two-week reminder email was sent. At this point, some of the institutions requested more time, as the first email had not yet been sent to their students.

Another two weeks were added to the survey window for all institutions to allow those respondents the same amount of time as the other respondents. The two-week reminder email served as their initial contact, on November 8, 2017. The last two-week reminder email was sent on November 27, 2017, and the survey closed on December 11, 2017. Out of the original 24 institutions that showed interest, 19 institutions (in 10 of the 11 states) participated and sent both the initial email and the reminder email. Data collection closed on December 11, 2017, and data analysis began.

The participating institutions reported having a total of 987 singers in their women's choirs. Of those, 318 responded to the informed consent statement, for an overall response rate of 32.2%. Since all questions were optional, not all respondents answered all of the questions. SurveyMonkey, the data collection platform, noted that the survey had an 85% completion rate and took an average of nine minutes to complete. Table 2 shows the frequency of responses for each question. Since each question had a

different number of responses, the researcher determined the mean of the responses to find the response rate. The mean was 278.35, giving a survey response rate of 28.2%.

Table 2. Frequency of Responses to Questions

Question Number (QN)	Frequency (F)	QN	F	QN	F	QN	F
1	318	18, 19	295	30, 35, 38, 39	289	44	257
2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	304	17	294	32, 33, 34, 36	288	41	248
10, 12,	302	21, 22, 24	292	31, 37	287	42	240
11, 13	301	23	291	40	282	4	224
15, 16	296	20, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29	290	43	262	14	207

All participants met the following criteria for participation: a) must be at least 18 years of age, and b) must sing in their institution’s women’s choir. The respondents took the survey voluntarily with no remuneration for their participation. Their answers were completely anonymous, and the responses have been kept confidential. In order to preserve anonymity, respondents’ names were coded. The survey did not ask for institutional information that could have identified the respondents.

Survey Instrument

In the related literature, certain general areas of inquiry emerged concerning women’s choirs and their place in the choral hierarchy. These included audition procedures, respect or value the choir holds, community pride in the choir, audience attendance at concerts, touring and recording, choice of being in the choir, self-pride in the choir, repertoire, and sound or timbre. Based on these concepts, a researcher-

developed questionnaire was created (see Appendix B) covering each topic briefly. Demographic and open-ended questions were also included.

Only Question 1 was mandatory. Question 1 reviewed the informed consent information participants had received from their professors in the initial recruitment email. Questions 2 through 9 were demographic questions covering level in school, major and minor, race and ethnicity, age, and voice part in choir (both assigned and self-identified). Questions 10 through 40 were Likert-type scale, multiple choice, and yes-no questions assessing the areas of inquiry found in the related literature. The final four questions were open-ended, with the intent of learning about the perceptions of singers on their best and worst days in choir and the general state of women's choirs (theirs and women's choirs at large).

For researcher-developed, Likert-type scale questions, it is standard to test for reliability and internal consistency to be sure the questions are “measuring the same underlying attribute.”¹⁵⁶ The most common test is Cronbach's coefficient alpha.¹⁵⁷ The researcher entered the information into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26, and reverse coded any negatively phrased questions. The resulting Cronbach's alpha (α) was .834. Statisticians recommend a minimum value of 0.7,¹⁵⁸ so the Likert-type scale questions were above the acceptable range.

¹⁵⁶ Julie Pallant, *SPSS Survival Manual*, (Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 6.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Pilot Study

Before the survey was sent to the participating institutions, members of the Arizona State University women's chorus agreed to participate in a pilot study. The survey was sent to them on September 27, 2017 and was closed on October 4, 2017. Eight respondents completed the survey, but one student did not answer all the questions. The ASU women's chorus had 35 members, giving the pilot study a 20% response rate. Based on the responses from the ASU Women's Chorus members, several questions were edited for clarity, and the questions asking respondents to rank choirs were pared down from ten choices to three. The pilot study also revealed that respondents would choose the neutral option ("neither agree nor disagree") on most questions if one were provided. After the pilot study, the neutral option was eliminated from the Likert-type scale questions. The pilot participants took less time than anticipated to complete the survey, so the informed consent letter was reworded to reflect this.

After these changes were made, the finalized survey was sent to institutions listed in Table 1 (see p. 5).

Pilot Study Results

Out of 35 singers in the ASU Women's Chorus, 8 respondents participated in the survey (23%), but only 7 completed all of the questions (20%). Of those respondents, most were first-year undergraduates (75%) and juniors (12.5%), with one transfer student who chose "Other" (12.5%). Three respondents (38%) were music majors (musical theater, vocal performance, music education), two (25%) were non-music majors (museum studies, and business), and three (38%) were undecided or undeclared. Only two (25%) respondents listed minors (film & media studies, and music performance). The

vast majority of respondents were white (87.5%), with one (12.5%) student choosing multiple races, and one (12.5%) who preferred not to answer. The majority of respondents (87.5%) were not of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin; one (12.5%) student chose that ethnicity. The respondents' identifications were coded, and the researcher knew none of the respondents personally.

Respondents were either 18 (75%) or 20 (25%) years old. When asked about voice part and self-identified voice part, five (62.5%) respondents said they sang soprano, but only four (50%) said they self-identified as a soprano. Three (37.5%) respondents said they sang alto and self-identified as alto. One (12.5%) respondent said they did not know their self-identified voice part. This ended the demographic portion of the survey.

When asked about auditioning (Question 10), six (75%) respondents said their choir required an audition, while two (25%) said it did not. In response to the question about the audition requirements being the same for all choirs at their school (Question 11), two (25%) respondents said yes, four (50%) respondents said no, and two (25%) respondents said they did not know. When asked if they auditioned, specifically, for women's choir or if they auditioned in general and were placed in the women's choir (Question 12), two (25%) respondents said they generally auditioned and were placed in women's choir, two (25%) respondents said they auditioned, specifically, for the women's choir, three (37.5%) respondents said they auditioned for another choir, specifically, and were placed in the women's choir, and one student (12.5%) chose "Other" and said, "Women's choir was my second choice choir."

When asked about where they would put women's choir in their personal lineup of choir choices (Question 13), one (12.5%) student chose first choice, six (75%)

respondents chose second choice, and one (12.5%) student chose third choice/anything below third choice. No respondents selected “I would not choose to be in the women’s choir.”

Seven respondents chose something other than “first choice” on the previous question, so when asked what choir they would choose to sing in before the women’s choir (Question 14), the responses were:

- Concert Choir (listed as the only choice by 4 respondents)
- Chamber Singers, Concert Choir, then Women’s Chorus or Gospel Choir
- A mixed concert choir
- Chamber Choir

Based on the names “concert choir” and “chamber choir,” one cannot assume the voice distribution of these choirs, however, ASU only has one women’s choir, so the researcher assumes these are meant as mixed choirs.

The next set of questions were Likert-type scale questions. Table 3 shows the responses.

Table 3. Pilot Study Responses for Questions 15-20

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe that the WC is highly respected at my college/ university	0	2 (25%)	5 (62.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)
All choirs at my school are equally respected	1 (12.5%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0
People at my college/ university perceive the WC to be more worthwhile than the mixed choir	0	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	0	0
I am proud to be a member of the WC	0	0	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)	3 (37.5%)
The WC is highly valued in my community	0	0	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0
My community should do more to recognize the importance of the WC at my college/ university	0	0	3 (37.5%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)

*WC = Women's Choir

Question 21 was about promoting women's choir concerts. Seven (87.5%) respondents said that they tell friends and family about concerts, two (25%) respondents said they make or share social media posts about the concerts, and one (12.5%) student said they do not actively promote women's choir concerts. Respondents were asked to select all options that applied, so there were ten responses from eight respondents.

Question 22 asked respondents to rank choirs at their institution according to their feelings about the level of respect they are accorded at their institution, with 1 as the most respected group and 10 as the least-respected group. If their school did not offer a particular choir, they were asked to choose N/A for that choir. All answer choices except for General Mixed (SATB) Choir (mostly non-music majors) and Vocal Jazz Group (faculty directed) had eight (100%) responses. General Mixed Choir had nine responses, and Vocal Jazz Group had seven responses (Table 4).

Table 4. Pilot Study Responses for Question 22

Choir	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
Select Mixed (SATB) choir (mostly music majors)	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)	0	0	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	0
General Mixed (SATB) choir (mostly non-music majors)	0	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (12.5%)
Men's Choir	0	0	1 (12.5%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	0	0
Women's Choir	0	0	3 (37.5%)	3 (37.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	0
Show Choir	0	0	0	0	2 (25%)	0	0	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	4 (50%)
Vocal Jazz Group (faculty directed)	0	0	0	1 (14.29%)	1 (14.29%)	1 (14.29%)	0	0	1 (14.29%)	0	3 (42.86%)
Student directed cappella group ^a	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	0	1 (12.5%)	0
Gospel Choir	0	0	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	0
World Music Choir	0	0	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	1 (12.5%)	0	0	5 (62.5%)

Questions 23 and 24 were about the singers' friends' opinions of their choir.

Question 23 asked if the singer's friends were enthusiastic about the women's choir, and

Question 24 asked if the singer's friends regularly attended women's choir concerts

(Table 5).

Table 5. Pilot Study Responses for Questions 23 and 24

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My friends are enthusiastic about the women's choir	0	3 (37.5%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)	0
My friends come regularly to women's choir concerts	0	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	0	0

Question 25 asked respondents to rank the choirs found in Question 22 in terms of which has the largest audience attendance at concerts. They were again asked to place a 1 next to the group with the largest audience attendance, and assign the highest number to the choir with the smallest audience attendance. If their school did not offer a particular choir, they were asked to choose N/A for that choir. Only five respondents completed this question (Table 6). One student replied that she did not know the attendance rates and chose "Other."

Table 6. Pilot Study Responses for Question 25

Choir	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
Select Mixed (SATB) choir (mostly music majors)	3 (60%)	0	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)
General Mixed (SATB) choir (mostly non-music majors)	0	1 (20%)	0	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 (60%)
Men's Choir	0	0	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)
Women's Choir	0	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	0	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	0	0	1 (20%)
Show Choir	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (25%)	0	3 (75%)
Vocal Jazz Group (faculty directed)	0	0	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 (80%)
Student directed a cappella group	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0	0	2 (40%)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)
Gospel Choir	0	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)
World Music Choir	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 (100%)

One student did not answer any further questions after Question 25, so the number of respondents for the remaining questions is now seven. Question 26 asked if there were some choirs that respondents believed had more skilled singers in them, how were those singers chosen for that choir? One student skipped this question. Respondents were encouraged to choose all options they felt applied. Seven (100%) chose “By audition,” three (42.66%) respondents chose “By class level (undergraduates vs. graduate students),” and one (14.29%) student chose “Other.” When explaining their choice, they wrote, “Major (music vs. non-music).”

Questions 27-37 were all Likert-type scale questions about placement of singers, the music their women’s choir sings, the sound of their women’s choir and the sound of women’s choirs in general (Table 7).

Table 7. Pilot Study Responses for Questions 27-37.

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The placement of singers in choirs at my school is extremely fair	0	2 (28.57%)	1 (14.29%)	57.14%	0
I enjoy the music the WC sings	0	3 (42.86%)	0	3 (42.86%)	1 (14.29%)
The difficulty level of the music the WC sings is appropriately challenging for the singers in the choir	0	1 (14.29%)	2 (28.57%)	4 (57.14%)	0
The music the WC sings is just as interesting as that of the other choirs at my school	0	3 (42.86%)	1 (14.29%)	3 (42.86%)	0
I wish that the WC sang music that was less difficult	4 (57.14%)	3 (42.86%)	0	0	0
I wish that the WC sang more challenging music	0	2 (28.57%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (28.57%)	2 (28.57%)
The sound of a WC is especially beautiful to me	0	2 (28.57%)	0	5 (71.43%)	0
The sound of my WC is warm and full	1 (14.29%)	1 (14.29%)	1 (14.29%)	4 (57.14%)	0
The sound of WCs are too similar without the addition of male voice parts	0	3 (42.86%)	4 (57.14%)	0	0
A WCs sound/timbre is equally as satisfying as the sound of a mixed choir	1 (14.29%)	3 (42.86%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (28.57%)	0
My WCs sound/timbre is as well respected as that of the other choirs at my college/university	0	1 (14.29%)	5 (71.43%)	1 (14.29%)	0

When asked if any of the choirs at their school tours and/or records (question 38), one (14.29%) student chose “Yes,” and the other six (85.71%) respondents chose “I don’t know.” No respondents chose “No.” When asked if their women’s choir tours and/or records (question 39), two (28.57%) respondents chose “No,” and the other five (71.43%) respondents chose “I don’t know.” No respondents chose “Yes.”

Question 40 determined which respondents sang in a women’s choir in high school. Two (28.57%) respondents had sung in a women’s choir in high school, while the other five (71.43%) respondents had not.

The final four questions were open-ended responses. All seven singers responded to each question (Table 8).

Table 8. Pilot Study Responses for Questions 41-44

<p>Tell me about the best day you ever had in a WC.</p>	<p>“I enjoyed the day we voted for our student officers and section leaders”</p>
	<p>“Honestly the best day I had in women’s chorus was AFTER Women’s Chorus when people stayed to audition for a solo. The women who were there were women who seemed actually excited to be at choir. Normally the women in the choir don’t seem excited to be there (because it wasn’t their first choice, which doesn’t matter to me, but it matters to them), and they often will talk/text/Snapchat/etc. about how ‘oh great I have to be at Women’s Chorus again’ and just how generally they don’t like it. So the days where some of those people aren’t in choir are some of the better days.”</p>
	<p>“Finally getting music”</p>
	<p>“N/A”</p>
	<p>“When I met my friend in the alto section. Every day in women’s choir is fun.”</p>
	<p>“Either during a retreat or during a concert when we were waiting to go onto the stage to perform. We had to wait for a few hours so we shared snacks, talked, danced and just had a good time being social which we couldn’t really do during rehearsal because that was a time of productivity”</p>
	<p>“The best day was last Wednesday. We went through most of the pieces, and it was just a fun day.”</p>
<p>Tell me about the worst day you ever had in a WC.</p>	<p>“The worst day was when we were put in a specific seating order because the people I sit by now don’t ever talk to me”</p>
	<p>“There was a day where a particular student was picking on our director for not explaining something correctly. She later got so fed up that she stormed out of the class and my director started to cry. It was particularly upsetting because we all knew she was singling her out because English isn’t her first language and she was having a hard time explaining a concept that day. There was a group of us that went up and gave her a group hug and told her it wasn’t her fault but there was also a group in the class that sat on their phones and didn’t care that their director was being bad mouthed right in front of them, to her FACE might I add.”</p>
	<p>“Having a girl bully the director”</p>
	<p>“N/A”</p>

(Table 8 continued)

	“When I was sick and couldn’t sing.”
	“Probably the day(s) that members were unwilling to cooperate and we as a group had to run parts of music over and over again or stop rehearsal to reprimand their behavior.”
	“I haven’t had one.”
How do you feel about singing in a WC right now?	“I don’t really like it because I have few friends and I don’t really like the sound of women’s choirs.”
	“I like the group of friends I have made in women’s choir, and I love my director, but the music is just a bit boring to me coming from previously singing in a concert choir that sang harder music, as well as a vocal jazz group and show choir in high school. Some of the songs we’re singing I sang in middle school or Freshmen year of high school when I was in beginning/intermediate choir. I understand the overall level of the choir I’m singing in is lower than the choirs I sang in in high school but that doesn’t change the fact that I’m a bit bored of the music we’re singing currently. ASU also doesn’t have a show choir or vocal jazz group which is really sad to me because those were always my favorite choirs to sing in.”
	“It’s okay. I prefer mixed voices.”
	“The music is very easy to the point of being uninteresting. I like the people in the group but not the choir itself. I feel as if the group does little to improve my skills as a musician.”
	“I love it!”
	“I love women’s choir!”
	“It’s wonderful”
How do you feel about WCs, in general?	“I have never really liked them because I feel they don’t have the warm sound we can hear in SATB choirs”

(Table 8 Continued)

	“I think women’s choirs need to be more respected and held to a higher standard. While you do have to audition to get into the women’s chorus at my school, it almost feels like a default for the women who ‘aren’t quite good enough to get into the concert choir’ and I feel like it shouldn’t be that way. I hope that women’s chorus can be more well respected eventually (and men’s chorus too because it’s basically the same for them, as well except people treat them a bit differently since it’s an all-male ensemble and apparently straight girls love that no matter their talent level).”
	“They can be beautiful. But mixed is preferred”
	“A women’s choir can be just as skilled as any other group if trained well. However, in practice, most women’s choirs end up being the least skilled women thrown together in one beginner level group.”
	“Although I would rather be in a mixed choir, I love the sound of choral music in general.”
	“I feel like they can either be really strong and united or fall into subgroups of cliques and there’s potential for catty behavior to arise, though I find the younger the members, the more hostile of an environment it can be.”
	“I enjoy them about the same as a mixed chorus”

Principal Study Data Collection

Data for the main study were collected over the course of six weeks, from October 25, 2017 to December 10, 2017. The survey closed the day after the last response was collected. The survey was disseminated by a link to www.surveymonkey.com in an email to the singers from either their women’s choir director or the director of choral activities (or individual with the comparable title) at their institution. The link to the survey was sent in both the initial email and in the two-week reminder email.

Principal Study Data Analysis

For the analysis, demographic questions were analyzed for frequencies and percentages. The research questions were analyzed for frequencies and percentages according to each subcategory (see Table 9 in Chapter 4, p. 61). This included Likert-

type scale, multiple choice, and yes-no questions. For the open-ended questions, mind maps were employed to get an overall picture of what singers were saying. The website coggle.it was used to make the mind maps. Many of the responses fell into similar categories. Within these categories, subcategories were created. Within the subcategories, generalized responses were listed to maintain the anonymity of the surveyed respondents. The final section includes four questions on which the researcher chose to run analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests and frequency and percentage charts. These questions most directly assessed the research questions. Null hypotheses were written for these questions that postulated that there would be no statistically significant difference between groups of independent variables.

Research Questions

These research questions guided this study:

1. How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?
2. How do current members of college women's choirs feel about singing in this group? About women's choirs in general?

Variables

The independent variables in this study were major, age, experience singing in a women's choir, and the audition status (whether the respondents had to audition for their choir or not). The dependent variables were the survey questions. They were separated into two categories: experience and opinion. Experience questions asked about

respondents' experiences in women's choirs and opinion questions asked about respondents' opinions.

Limitations

The responses of the women in this study are not necessarily representative of all women in all women's choirs. Also, since no institutions in North Carolina participated in this study, it is not a complete picture of the perceptions of women in women's choirs in the southeastern United States.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Research Questions

The research questions and how they were assessed were:

1. How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?
 - a. Audition Procedures
 - b. Respect / Value
 - c. Community pride in choir
 - d. Audience attendance
 - e. Touring / Recording

2. How do current members of college women's choirs feel about singing in this group? About women's choirs in general?
 - a. Choice of choir
 - b. Self-pride in choir
 - c. Repertoire
 - d. Sound / Timbre
 - e. Feelings

Table 9 shows how the research questions and data were analyzed, including a null hypothesis when appropriate.

Table 9. Analysis of Research Questions (RQs) and Survey Questions

RQs	Research Questions	Analysis	ANOVA Hypotheses	SQs
1	How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?			
1a	Audition procedures	Frequency & Percentage (F & %); List	—	11, 12, 26, 27
1b	Respect / Value	ANOVA; F & %; Mean (M) & Standard Deviation (SD)	H ₀₁ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of students by major, age, experience, or audition status.	15, 16, 17, 22
1c	Community pride in choir	ANOVA; F & %; M & SD	H ₀₂ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of students by major, age, experience, or audition status.	19, 20, 23
1d	Audience attendance	F & %	—	24, 25
1e	Touring / Recording	F & %	—	38, 39
2	How do current members of college women's choirs feel about singing in this group? About women's choirs in general?			
2a	Choice of choir	F & %; List	—	13, 14
2b	Self-pride in choir	ANOVA; F & %; List; M & SD	H ₀₃ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of students by major, age, experience, or audition status.	18, 21
2c	Repertoire	F & %	—	28, 29, 30, 31, 32
2d	Sound / Timbre	ANOVA; F & %; M & SD	H ₀₄ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of students by major, age, experience, or audition status.	33, 34, 35, 36, 37
2e	Feelings	Mind Maps	—	41, 42, 43, 44
—	Demographic Questions	F & %	—	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 40

Principal Study Results

Demographic Information and Analysis

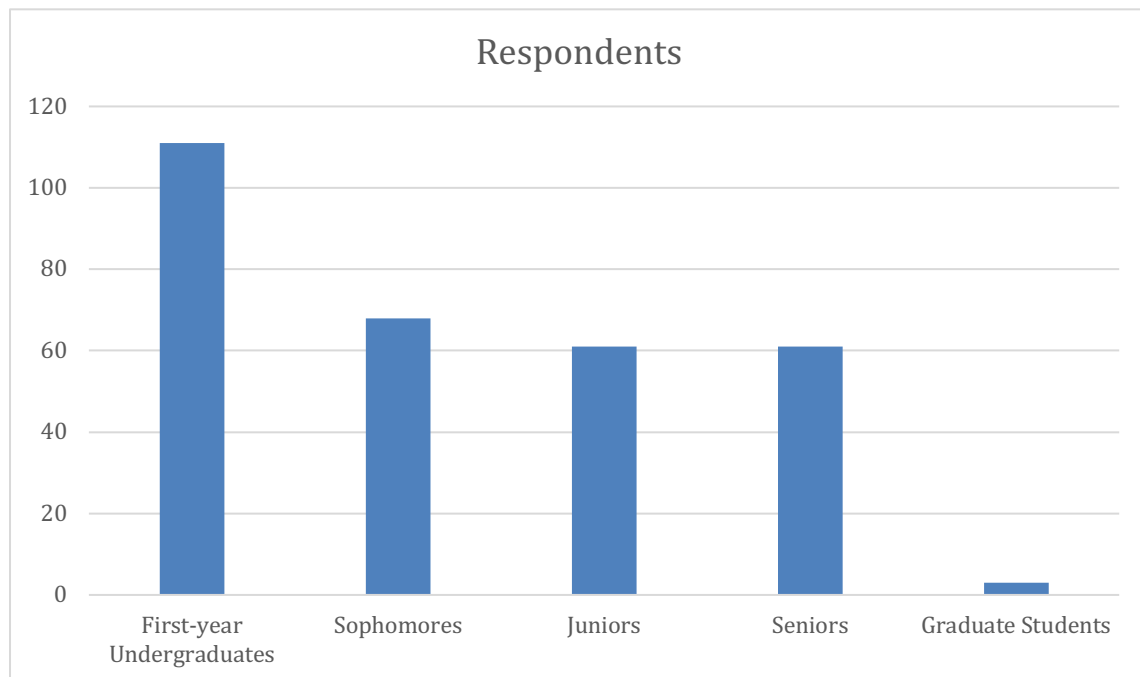
Of the 304 respondents who completed the demographic portion of the survey, 111 (36.51%) were first-year undergraduates, 68 (22.37%) were sophomores, 60 (19.74%) were juniors, 60 (19.74%) were seniors, and 3 (.99%) were graduate students.

Two respondents (.66%) chose the “Other” option. They listed these responses:

- In my junior year, but two credits off from being a junior, so still classified as a sophomore. Not sure if that’s important!
- Fifth year undergrad

Figure 1 shows a graphic representation of the respondents’ school level. The two “Other” responses were included as junior and senior respectively.

Figure 1. Question 2: What is Your Level in School?



More than half of the respondents were first-year undergraduates and sophomores. This might be due to the fact that some choral programs routinely assign younger female singers to women's choirs, which are treated as entry-level ensembles.

Table 10 shows the breakdown of majors in response to Question 3. More than a third of the respondents were music majors; the remaining responses were widely varied. Of the 311 total respondents, 224 (72%) answered the question about their minor. It is possible that not all respondents had a minor and decided to skip the question, but 128 respondents (41.15% of the total; 57.14% of those who answered this question) answered "none" or "N/A." The highest frequency of minors (9.82%; n=22) was in the Arts (music, theatre, art, and dance) (Table 11).

Table 10. Question 3: What is Your Major?

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Music (Education, Therapy, Worship, Commercial Music Technology, Composition, Performance, Commercial, Business)	115	37.83%
Double Major	29	9.5%
Psychology (Psychology, Communication Disorders, Rehabilitation/Disability Studies)	23	7.57%
Communications (Communications, Public Relations, Media Communications, Visual Communications, Advertising)	17	5.59%
Education (English Education, Spanish Education, Special Education, Elementary Education, Child Development, Math Education, Middle Grades Education)	14	4.6%
Medical (Nursing, Pre-Medicine, Biomedical Science)	11	3.62%
Science (Biology, Chemistry, Astronomy, Sustainability Studies)	11	3.62%
Art (Art, Fashion Merchandising, Studio Art, Art Education, Architecture)	9	2.96%
Engineering (Agricultural Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Biological Engineering)	8	2.63%
Mathematics (Math, Economics, Accounting)	8	2.63%
Animals (Pre-Veterinary Medicine, Poultry Science, Equine Studies, Animal Science, Zoo/Wildlife Studies, Marine Science)	6	1.97%
Entertainment (Culinary Arts, Entertainment Industries, Audio Production, Film/Video Production)	6	1.97%
English (English, Creative Writing, Publishing)	6	1.97%
Undeclared	5	1.64%
Family (Human Development, Family Studies, Social Work)	4	1.32%
Computer (Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Graphic Design)	4	1.32%
Culture (Anthropology, Sociology)	3	.99%
Health (Nutritional Science, Exercise Science, Health Science)	3	.99%
Language (Spanish, Linguistics, Asian Languages/Literature)	3	.99%
Religion (Bible, Theology, Christian Ministries, Biblical Counseling)	3	.99%
Liberal Studies/Integrated Studies	3	.99%
Business	3	.99%
World (Global Studies, Cross-Cultural Service)	2	.66%
Justice (Criminology, Criminal Justice)	2	.66%
Triple Major	2	.66%
Women's Studies	1	.33%
Theatre	1	.33%
Political Science	1	.33%
Graduate Student	1	.33%

Table 11. Question 4: What is Your Minor?

Minor	Frequency	Percentage
None/ N/A	128	57.14%
Arts (Music Theatre, Art, Dance)	22	9.82%
Double/Triple Minor OR No Category	14	6.25%
Marketing (Marketing, Urban Planning, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Non-Profit Studies, Entrepreneurship)	8	3.57%
Language (Spanish, German, French)	8	3.57%
Psychology (Psychology, Pediatric Psychology)	7	3.125%
Education (Elementary Education, Child Development, Secondary Education, Math Education, Vols Teach*)	6	2.68%
Business (Agribusiness, Business, Business Management)	6	2.68%
Speech/Hearing Services (Speech and Language Pathology, Audiology, American Sign Language)	4	1.79%
Leadership (Adventure Leadership, Sports/Entertainment Management, Office Management, Event Management)	4	1.79%
World (Intercultural Studies, International Studies, Chinese Studies, Asian Studies)	4	1.79%
People (History, Public Policy, Criminal Justice, Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, Jewish Studies, Women/Gender Studies, Law)	4	1.79%
Science (Biochemical Engineering, Physics, Equine Science, Health)	3	1.34%
Math	2	.89%
Religion (Religious Studies, Biblical Languages)	1	.45%
English	1	.45%
Computer Science	1	.45%
Mass Communications (Film/Media)	1	.45%

*The student did not explain what VolsTeach was, but it was specific to her school.

The majority of respondents were white (84.54%; n=257). The next largest groups were those who chose Black or African American (9.21%; n=28), Asian (4.61%; n=14), and those who chose “Other” (4.61%; n=14). The smallest demographic group represented American Indian or Alaska Native (1.32%; n=4), and those who chose “I prefer not to answer” (1.64%; n=5). No respondents selected Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The majority of respondents identified as Not Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin (90.13%; n=274) when asked about ethnicity. Respondents who did identify as Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin (5.59%; n=17) and those who chose “I prefer not to answer” (4.28%; n=13) made up the final ten percent. Figures 2 and 3 show a graphic representation of this information.

Figure 2. Question 5: In Terms of Race, How Do You Self-Identify?

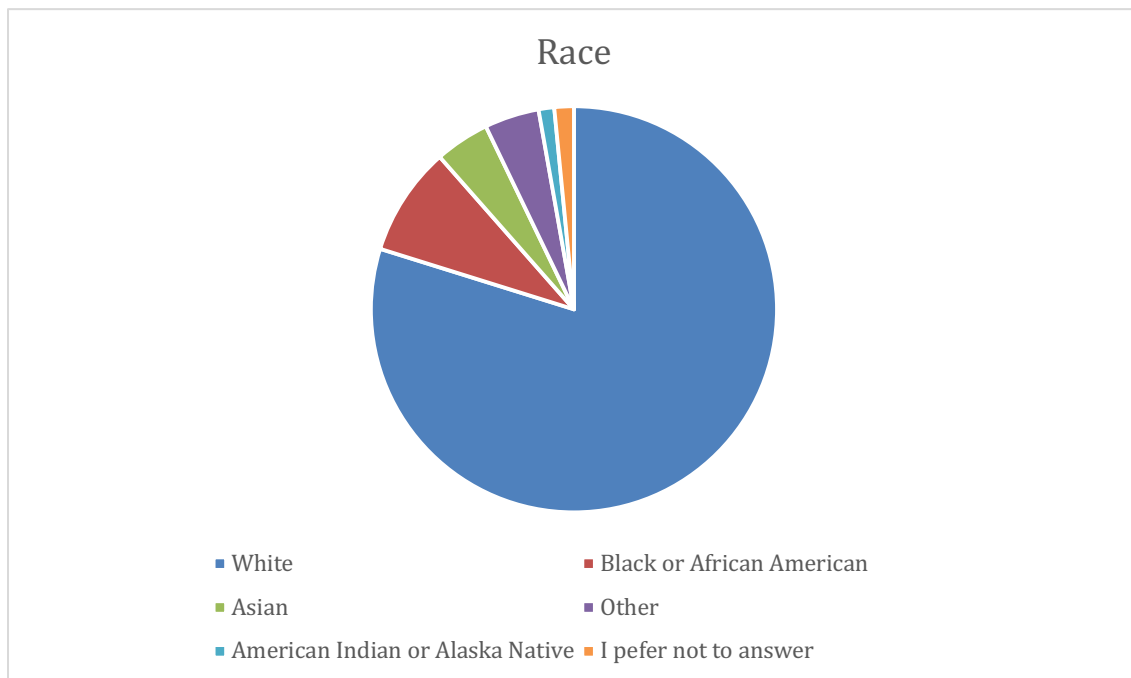
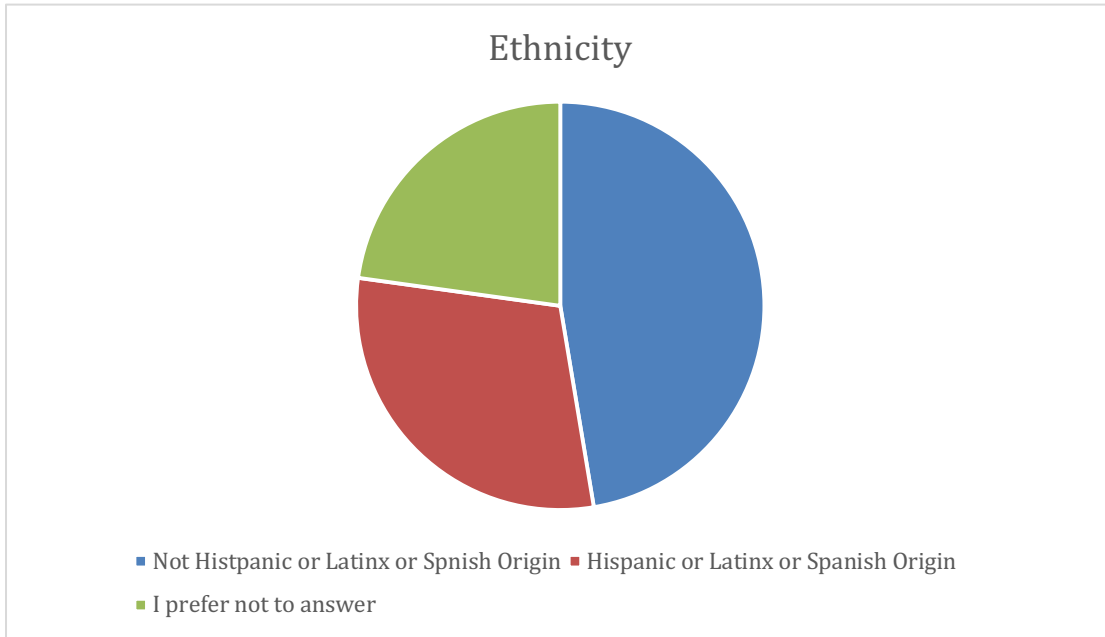


Figure 3. Question 6: In Terms of Ethnicity, How Do You Self-Identify?



The ages of respondents varied more than in the pilot study. Over 50% of the population were ages 18 and 19 (Table 12). This might be due to the fact that young women are often assigned to the beginning women’s choir.

Table 12. Question 7: How Old Are You?

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	88	28.95%
19	68	22.37%
20	57	18.75%
21	49	16.12%
22	27	8.88%
23	8	2.63%
24	3	.99%
26	1	.33%
27	1	.33%
31	1	.33%
Prefer not to answer	1	.33%

There was relative consistency between those who self-identified as soprano and those assigned to sing soprano in their choir (Table 13). There was greater variation between those assigned to sing alto and the voice part with which they self-identify. When asked which voice part they had been assigned (Question 8), six respondents (1.97%) chose “Other.” Explaining their answer, they said:

- Second soprano (listed by four respondents)
- Alto 2 (listed by one respondent)
- S2 and A1 (listed by one respondent)

The respondents (7.57%; n=23) who self-identified as “Other,” (Question 9) reported various self-identifications as singers:

- All parts (listed by eight respondents)
- Mezzo or Mezzo-soprano (listed by nine respondents)
- Middle voice parts (soprano 2 / alto 1) (listed by three respondents)
- Soprano 2 (listed by two respondents)
- Alto 2 (listed by one respondent)

Table 13. Assigned and Self-Identified Voice Parts (Questions 8-9)

Assigned	Frequency	Percentage		Self-Identified	Frequency	Percentage
Soprano	163	53.62%		Soprano	167	54.93%
Alto	135	44.41%		Alto	105	34.54%
I don't know	0	0		I don't know	9	2.96%
Other	6	1.97%		Other	23	7.57%

There was approximately the same number of sopranos between assigned voice parts and self-identified voice parts, but there was almost a 10% difference in those who were assigned to sing alto and those who self-identified that way. There were also more respondents who said they did not know their self-identified voice part and those who specified a broader range of voice part options when self-identifying.

Question 10 asked if respondents' women's choirs required an audition, and Question 40 asked if respondents had sung in a women's choir in high school. The majority of respondents answered "no" to each of these questions (Table 14). These questions were used as independent variables.

Table 14. Questions 10 and 40: Audition Status and WC Experience

Question	Yes	No
Does membership in your women's choir require an audition?	137 (45.36%)	165 (54.64%)
Did you sing in a women's choir in high school?	129 (45.74%)	153 (54.26%)

Research Questions and the Results

Research Question 1

The first research question asks, "How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?" The researcher used subcategories to assess this question, including audition procedures, respect and value, community pride in choir, audience attendance, and touring and recording. The results will be discussed in this order.

When asked if the audition procedures were the same for all choirs at their school (Question 11), 25.91% (n=78) said yes, 35.88% (n=108) said no, and 38.21% (n=115) said they did not know. Question 12 asked respondents if they auditioned to be in the women's choir, specifically. The majority of the respondents had participated in an audition before joining the women's chorus. The largest number of those, 32.78% (n=99), said they auditioned to sing in whatever choir possible and were placed in the women's choir, 12.91% (n=39) of respondents said they were placed in the women's choir after specifically auditioning for the women's choir, 4.97% (n=15) of respondents said they were placed in the women's choir after their audition for another choir. A large proportion of respondents (43.05%; n=130) said that they joined the women's choir because there was no audition. Some respondents (6.29%; n=19) chose "Other." Their explanations are listed below:

- Placed in this women's choir due to maturity (split women's choirs)
- Asked to be moved to women's choir because of schedule (listed by five respondents)
- Part of more than one choir (listed by two respondents)
- Qualified by being in another choir with the same director
- Assigned here as a first-year undergraduate (listed by eight respondents)
- Did not make it into another ensemble
- Vocal tutor knows the instructor and suggested the choir

A summary of Questions 11 and 12 can be found below (Table 15).

Table 15. Audition Procedures (Questions 11 and 12)

At your school, are all audition procedures the same?	F	%	Were you placed in your WC after an audition for any choir or did you audition for WC, specifically?	F	%
Yes	78	25.91%	I auditioned to sing in whatever choir possible and was placed in the WC	99	32.78%
No	108	35.88%	I was placed in the WC after my audition for the WC	39	12.91%
I don't know	115	38.21%	I was placed in the WC after my audition for another choir	15	4.97%
—	—	—	There is no audition for my WC, so I simply joined	130	43.05%
—	—	—	Other	19	6.29%

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of singers' abilities and placement in choirs. Specifically, Question 26 asked, "If there are some choirs that you believe have more skilled singers in them, how are those singers chosen for that choir?" Respondents were able to choose multiple responses, so some respondents chose more than one answer. Of the 290 respondents who answered this question, 253 respondents (87.24%) said by audition, 57 (19.66%) said by class level (undergraduates vs. graduate students), 32 (11.03%) said they did not know, and 16 (5.52%) chose "Other." Those who chose "Other" provided the following explanations:

- No first-year undergraduates allowed in top choir (listed by two respondents)
- Voice type and tone (listed by one respondent)
- Teacher knows them – no audition (listed by two respondents)
- Major and experience (listed by eight respondents)
- Biased selection (listed by one respondent)

- I don't know (listed by one respondent)
- Professor recruits (listed by one respondent)

Table 16 summarizes the responses to Question 26.

Table 16. Question 26: How are More Skilled Singers Chosen for Choirs?

Response	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
By audition	253	87.24%
By class level (undergraduates vs. graduate students)	57	19.66%
I don't know	32	11.03%
Other	16	5.52%

Question 27 asked respondents to answer on a Likert-type scale whether they thought the placement (after an audition or being automatically placed) of singers in choirs at their school was fair. The majority of respondents (82%; n=239) agreed or strongly agreed that placement of singers was “extremely fair,” while a fairly substantial group of respondents (17.58%; n=51) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (Table 17).

Table 17. Question 27: The Placement of Singers is Fair

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
The placement of singers in choirs at my school is extremely fair	5 (1.72%)	46 (15.86%)	195 (67.24%)	44 (15.17%)	290

The next subcategory for Research Question 1 was about respect and value related to choirs. Question 16 asked respondents if the choirs were equally respected at their institution, while Question 17 asked whether people at their institution perceived the women’s choir to be more worthwhile than the mixed choir (Table 18). Over 59% (n=175) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that all choirs were equally respected. Almost 75% (n=217) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that people thought their women’s choir was more worthwhile than the mixed choir at their institution.

Table 18. Questions 16 and 17: Respect and Value

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
All choirs at my school are equally respected	32 (10.81%)	143 (48.31%)	94 (31.76%)	27 (9.12%)	296
People at my college/university perceive the WC to be more worthwhile than the mixed choir	28 (9.52%)	189 (64.29%)	63 (21.43%)	14 (4.76%)	294

Question 22 asked respondents about which choirs garner the most respect within their institution (Table 19). Of the 292 responses to this question, a majority of respondents (75%; n=219) chose mixed-gender choir.

Table 19. Question 22: What Choir Gets the Most Respect at Your School?

Choir type	Frequency	Percentage
Men's-only choir	6	2.05%
Women's-only choir	10	3.42%
Mixed-gender choir	219	75%
I don't know	57	19.52%

The next subcategory of Research Question 1 asked about community pride in choir. Question 20 was negatively phrased, asking respondents to rate the statement “My community should do more to recognize the importance of the women’s choir at my college/university.” The response rate was more evenly distributed than for previous questions, but the majority (64.14%; n=186) of respondents said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (Table 20).

Table 20. Question 20: Community Should Do More to Recognize My WC

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
My community should do more to recognize the importance of the WC at my college/university	28 (9.66%)	158 (54.48%)	89 (30.69%)	15 (5.17%)	290

Question 23 asked about their friends’ perceptions of their women’s choir. Of the 291 singers who responded, the majority of them (69.07%; n=201) agreed or strongly agreed that their friends were enthusiastic about their women’s choir (Table 21).

Table 21. Question 23: My Friends are Enthusiastic About My WC

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My friends are enthusiastic about the women's choir	15 (5.15%)	75 (25.77%)	163 (56.01%)	38 (13.06%)

Audience attendance at concerts was the next subcategory for the first research question. Question 24 had 292 respondents. Approximately two thirds of the respondents answered positively (61.65%; n=180) (Table 22).

Table 22. Question 24: My Friends Come to WC Concerts

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My friends come regularly to women's choir concerts	20 (6.85%)	92 (31.51%)	140 (47.95%)	40 (13.7%)

When asked about audience attendance size relative to choir performances within their institution (Question 25), 290 respondents answered. The majority of respondents (64.48%; n=187) indicated that mixed-gender choir performances had the largest attendance (Table 23).

Table 23. Question 25: Largest Audience Attendance by Choir

Choir type	Frequency	Percentage
Mixed-gender choir	187	64.48%
Women's-only choir	12	4.14%
Men's-only choir	7	2.41%
I don't know	84	28.97%

The final subcategory related to the first research question was about touring and recording. Questions 38 and 39 both had 289 respondents. When asked if any choirs at their school tour and/or record, 198 respondents (68.51%) said yes, 19 (6.57%) said no, and 72 (24.91%) said they did not know. When asked if their women’s choir toured and/or recorded, 63 (21.8%) said yes, 179 (61.94%) said no, and 47 (16.26%) said they did not know (Table 24). Almost the same number of respondents reported that while choirs at their institution toured or recorded, their women’s choir does not.

Table 24. Questions 38 and 39: Touring and Recording by Choir

Questions	Yes	No	I don’t know
Do any of the choirs at your school tour and/or record?	198 (68.51%)	19 (6.57%)	72 (24.91%)
Does your women’s choir tour and/or record?	63 (21.8%)	179 (61.94%)	47 (16.26%)

Research Question 2

The second research question of this study asks, “How do current members of college women’s choirs feel about singing in this group and about women’s choirs in general?” The subcategories for investigating this question included choice of choir, self-pride in choir, repertoire, sound and timbre, and feelings. The results will be discussed in this order.

When asked where would they rank their women’s choir if they had the option to choose the choir they would like to be in (Question 13), 141 (46.84%) said first choice,

122 (40.53%) said second choice, 26 (8.64%) said third choice/anything below third choice, and 12 (3.99%) said they would not choose to be in a women’s choir (Table 25).

Table 25. Question 13: Where Would You Rank Your Women’s Choir?

Question	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice/below	I would not choose WC
If you had the option to choose what choir you would like to be in, where would you rank your WC?	141 (46.84%)	122 (40.53%)	26 (8.64%)	12 (3.99%)

Question 14 followed up Question 13. Those who said that women’s choir was not their first choice in Question 13 were asked to list the types of choirs they would choose to sing in before women’s choir. Based on the answers to Question 13, 160 respondents should have replied to this question, however, there was a total of 207 respondents. Apparently, some people who listed women’s choir as their first choice in Question 13 also replied to Question 14, giving “N/A” or “none” as their response. There were 49 answers of this type. Subtracting those from the 207 total responses to this question means that two people responded to both questions with one of the choices (207-49=158). It is possible that some respondents misunderstood Question 14: “If you chose anything other than ‘first choice’ for question 13, please list what type of choir(s) you would choose to sing in before the women’s choir (list all that apply).” The responses can be found below (Table 26).

There were 235 total responses to Question 14 (above) because respondents were given the option to “list all that apply.” Twenty-seven respondents chose more than one

answer (20 people listed 2 choices, 6 people listed 3 choices, and 1 person listed 4 choices). One person did not list a choir, but instead provided this response: “Large amounts of women are hard both to interact with and to blend with vocally.” The majority of respondents preferred a mixed choir to the women’s choir. One respondent said she would choose to be in “mixed choir (the women’s choir at this particular school tends to get teased, unfortunately).” The researcher noted nine instances of negative perceptions about women’s choirs in this section. There were also three instances of positive perceptions about women’s choir, including choosing mixed as a first choice, but loving women’s choirs and singing in them.

Table 26. Question 14: What Choirs Would You Sing in Before WC?

Choir Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Advanced mixed / mixed	156	75.36%
N/A	49	23.67%
Pop / Jazz / Country ensemble	8	3.86%
Small ensemble	6	2.9%
A Capella, co-ed	6	2.9%
Women’s / Women’s Chamber choir	3	1.45%
Gospel choir (mixed)	3	1.45%
Freshman choir	2	.97%
Graduate mixed choir	1	.48%
Men’s choir / Glee	1	.48%
Don’t feel good enough for another choir	1	.48%

Self-pride in choir was the next subcategory related to the second research question of this study. Question 21 asked how respondents promote their women’s choir concerts, since promotion by the singer may be an indicator of pride. Although 292 respondents answered this question, they were asked to choose all that apply, so there

were multiple responses from some respondents. “Telling my friends and family” drew the largest response, with 260 (89.04%) respondents selecting this option. Of the other promotion activities, 30 (10.27%) respondents report that they hang flyers around their campus and community, 137 (46.92%) make and/or pass on social media posts, and 31 (10.62%) said they do not actively promote their women’s choir concerts (Table 27).

Three respondents (1.03%) gave other responses:

- Participating in a fundraiser
- I do it all because I am president
- Wearing my women’s choir t-shirt on concert days

Table 27. Question 21: How Do You Promote Your WC Concerts?

Answer Choices	Frequency	Percentage
Telling my friends and family	260	89.04%
Hanging flyers around campus and the community	30	10.27%
Making and/or passing on social media posts	137	46.92%
I do not actively promote women’s choir concerts	31	10.62%
Other	3	1.03%

The next subcategory related to research question 2 was about repertoire. Survey questions 28-32 assessed this aspect of the second research question. These questions were constructed in Likert-type scale format, and the number of respondents who answered each question was different, as noted in the table of responses below (Table 28). More than 3/4ths of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the positively-phrased statements about repertoire (Questions 28, 29, 30, and 32), and disagreed or strongly disagreed with the negatively-phrased statement (Question 31). The outlier is

Question 32. The majority of respondents (59.37%; n=171) agreed or strongly agreed that they wished their “WC sang more challenging music,” however, a large group (40.63%; n=117) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 28. Questions 28-32: Repertoire

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I enjoy the music my WC sings	2 (.69%)	26 (8.97%)	137 (47.24%)	125 (43.1%)	290
The difficulty level of the music my WC sings is appropriately challenging for the singers in the choir	3 (1.03%)	25 (8.62%)	170 (58.62%)	92 (31.72%)	290
The music my WC sings is just as interesting as that of the other choirs at my school	12 (4.15%)	57 (19.72%)	137 (47.40%)	83 (28.72%)	289
I wish that my WC sang music that was less difficult	123 (42.86%)	149 (51.92%)	12 (4.18%)	3 (1.05%)	287
I wish that my WC sang more challenging music	15 (5.21%)	102 (35.42%)	129 (44.79%)	42 (14.58%)	288

The penultimate subcategory related to the second research question of this study was about sound and timbre. Questions 34-37, all Likert-type scale questions, focused on sound and timbre. The response rates changed for each question, as noted below (Table 29). Question 34 assessed respondents’ opinions on the warmth and fullness of their women’s choir’s sound. The majority (82.99%; n=239) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Question 35 sought to gauge the respondents’ perceptions to this statement: “The sound of WCs are too similar without the addition of male voice parts.” The majority of respondents (78.2%; n=226) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the

statement. The responses to Question 36 were more evenly divided. When asked if “A WCs sound / timbre is equally as satisfying as the sound of a mixed choir,” 46.18% (n=133) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 53.82% (n=155) agreed or strongly agreed. Question 37 asked respondents if their WCs sound / timbre was “as well respected as that of other choirs” at their school. The majority of respondents (65.16%; n=187) agreed or strongly agreed, but it is worth noting that 34.85% (n=100) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 29. Questions 34-37: Sound / Timbre

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
The sound of my WC is warm and full	6 (2.08%)	43 (14.93%)	171 (59.38%)	68 (23.61%)	288
The sound of WCs are too similar without the addition of male voice parts	47 (16.26%)	179 (61.94%)	58 (20.07%)	5 (1.73%)	289
A WCs sound / timbre is equally as satisfying as the sound of a mixed choir	14 (4.86%)	119 (41.32%)	112 (38.89%)	43 (14.93%)	288
My WCs sound / timbre is as well respected as that of other choirs at my school	15 (5.23%)	85 (29.62%)	152 (52.96%)	35 (12.2%)	287

The final subcategory for the second research question concerned participants’ feelings about their women’s choir experience. The final four questions in the survey asked respondents about their feelings about their women’s choir, women’s choirs more generally, and about their best and worst days in a women’s choir. These open-ended questions sought to give respondents the freedom to speak in their own words about their

experiences and to articulate any feelings they may have been unable to express within the confines of a multiple choice, Likert-scale, or yes-no question format. The researcher read and categorized the responses. The categories and subcategories became codes to summarize the open-ended response information.¹⁵⁹

Question 41 asked respondents to tell about the best day they had ever had in any women's choir in which they had ever sung. The statements were coded and separated into six categories: experiences, non-musical/community, positive, negative, emotional/expressiveness, and other. Some responses fit into more than one category. For example, the response "When we toured to some high schools and then had a concert. A whole day with the girls" could be coded in the "Experiences" category ("singing for a high school" and "concert day") and also in the Non-musical / Community" category ("getting to know each other"). Figure 4 shows the codes and sub-codes in a mind map for the 248 responses to this question.

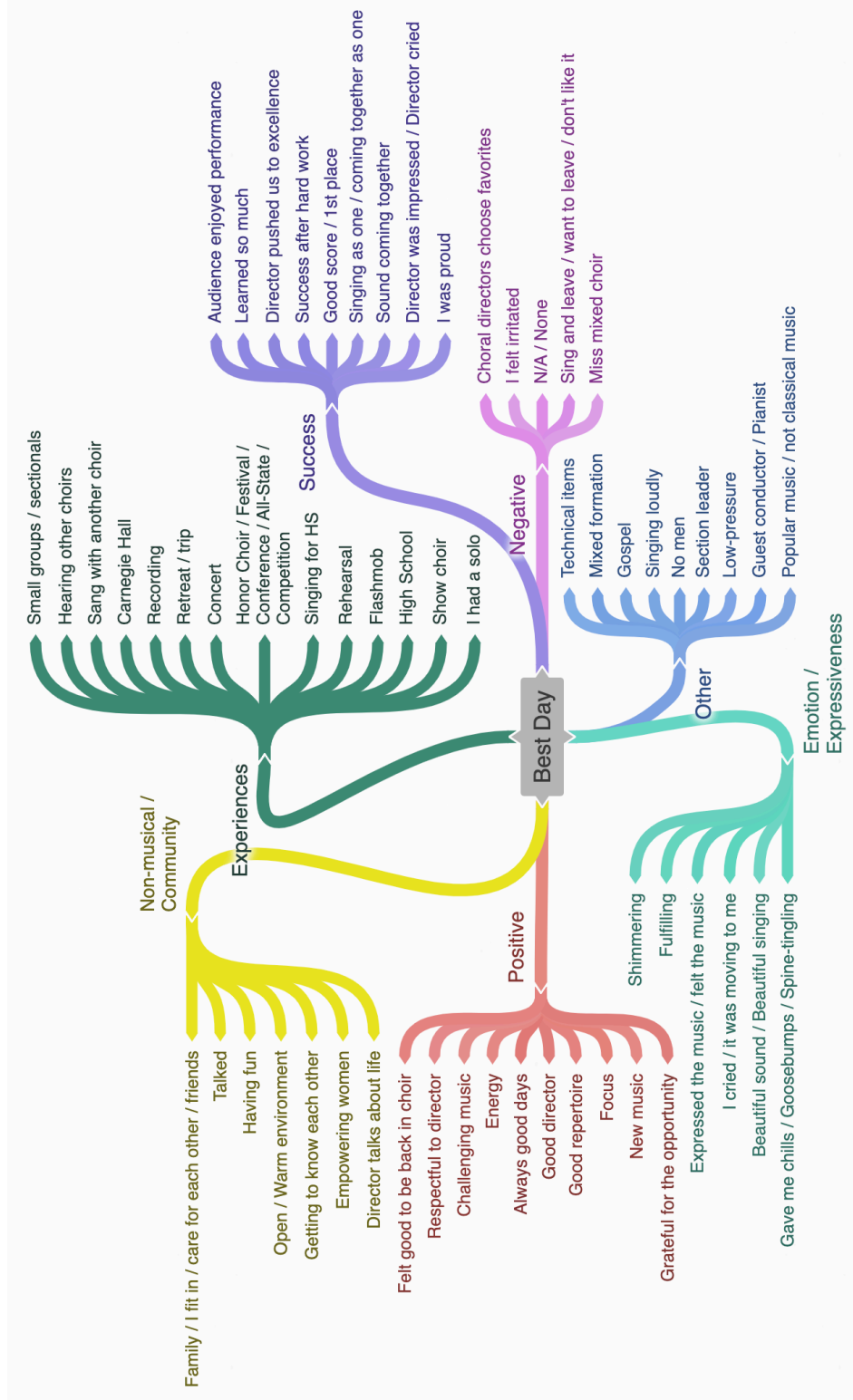
Even though Question 41 asked about the best day in a women's choir, there were some negative responses. Those were coded in the "Negative" category, and include the "Choral director choose favorites," "I felt irritated," "N/A / None," "Sing and leave / want to leave / don't like it," and "Miss mixed choir" codes.

There were 14 codes in the "Experiences" category, 10 in the "Positive" category, 9 in the "Other" category, 9 in the "Success" category, 7 in the "Non-musical /

¹⁵⁹ Craig A. Mertler, *Action Research: Improving Schools and Empowering Educators*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), 163.

Community” category, 6 in the “Emotion / Expressiveness” category, and 5 in the “Negative” category.

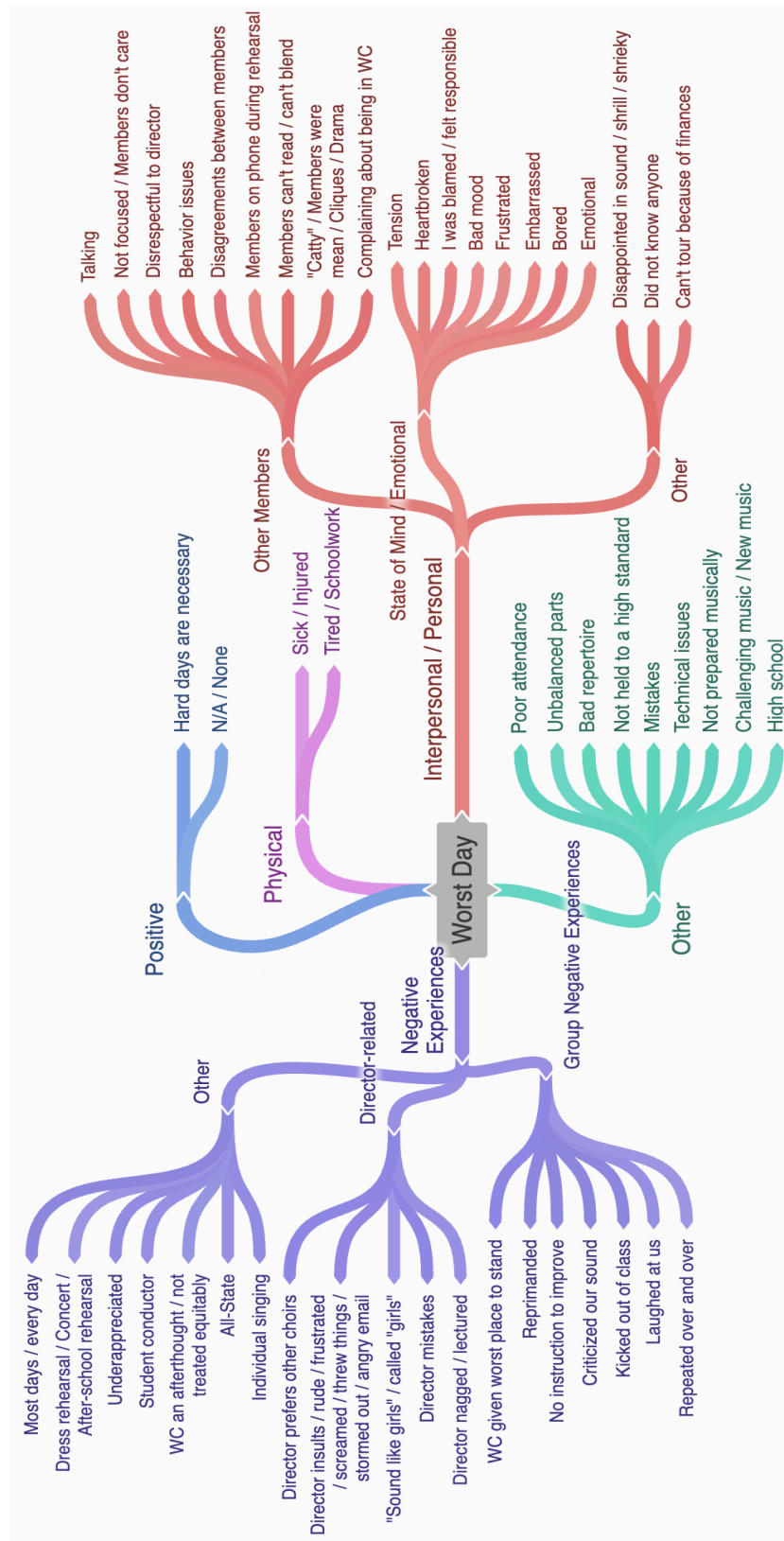
Figure 4. Question 41: Tell Me About the Best Day You Ever Had in a WC.



Question 42 asked respondents to tell about the worst day they had ever had in any women's choir in which they had ever sung. The responses were coded and separated into five categories: positive, physical, interpersonal/personal, negative experiences, and other. Responses for two of these five primary categories were further coded in sub-categories: negative experience sub-codes included group negative experiences, director-related, and other; interpersonal/personal included other members, state of mind/emotional, and other. Some responses fit into more than one category. For example, the statement "no one was focused and the head of the department sat in our rehearsal and laughed" could be coded in the "Other Members" subcategory of the "Interpersonal / Personal" category ("not focused / members don't care"), and also in the "Group Negative Experiences" subcategory of "Negative Experiences" category ("laughed at us"). Figure 5 shows the codes and sub-codes in a mind map for the 240 responses to this question.

There were 20 sub-codes in the "Interpersonal / Personal" category, 19 in the "Negative Experiences" category, 9 in the "Other" category, 2 in the "Positive" category, and 2 in the "Physical" category. Even though this question asked about the worst day in a women's choir, there were some positive responses. Those were coded in the "Positive" category and include the "Hard days are necessary" and "N/A / None" codes.

Figure 5. Question 42: Tell Me About the Worst Day You Ever Had in a WC.



Purple: Negative Experiences; Blue: Positive; Pink: Physical; Red: Interpersonal/Personal; Aqua: Other

Question 43 asked respondents how they felt about singing in a women's choir right now. The responses were coded and separated into four primary categories: sound, positive, negative, and other. Responses for two of these four primary categories were further coded in sub-categories: positive sub-codes included very positive, not totally positive, people, and what it allows members to do; negative sub-codes included interpersonal, respect, other, and musical. Some responses fit into more than one category. For example, the statement "I love it. It's not challenging though because a lot of the members have little musical background which means we have to learn the piece note by note in class" could be coded in the "Very positive" subcategory of the "Positive" category ("Like it / Love it"), and in the "Musical" and "Interpersonal" subcategories in the "Negative" category ("Not challenging" and "Members don't take responsibility"). Figure 6 shows the codes and sub-codes in a mind map for the 262 responses to this question.

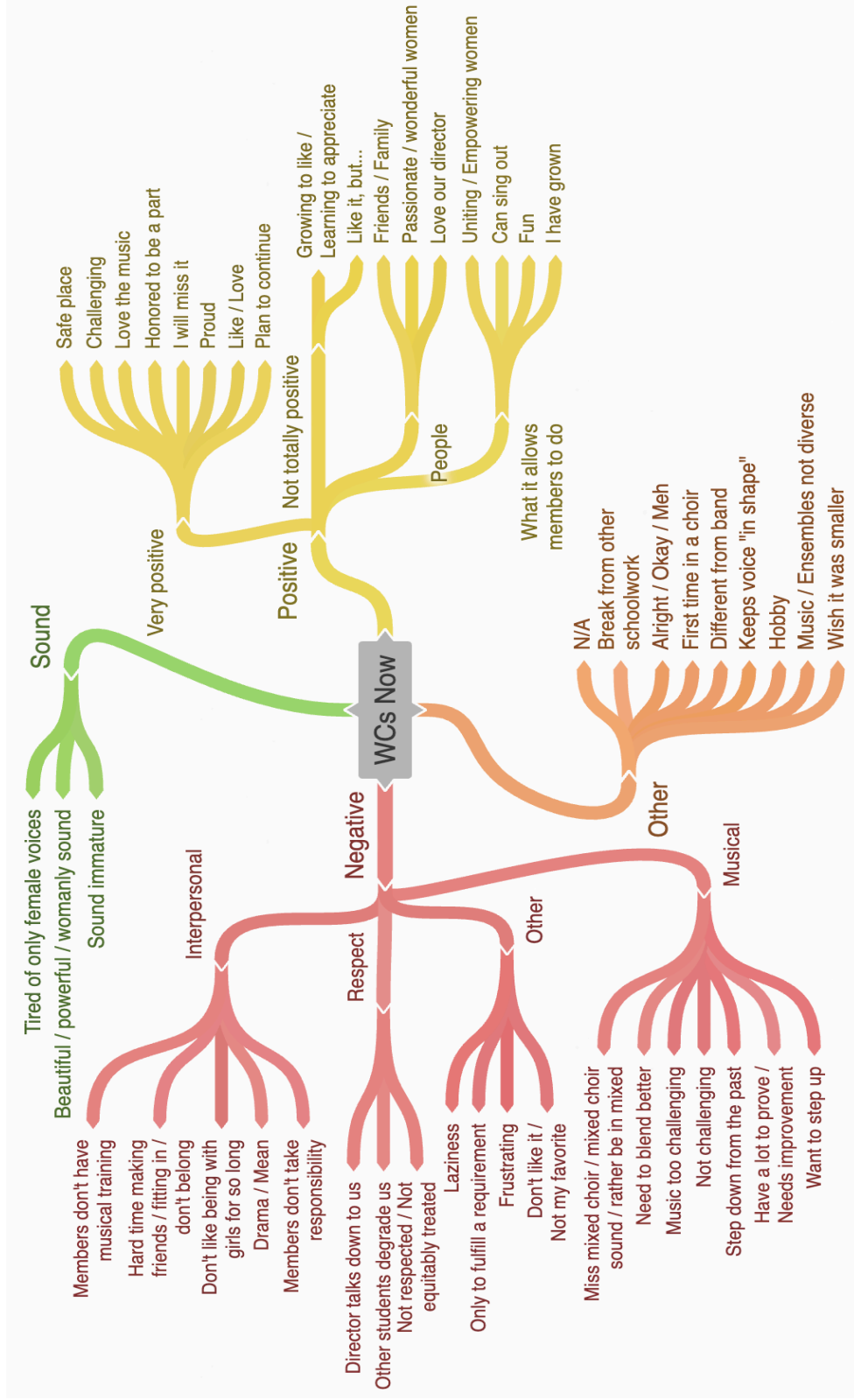
There were 19 sub-codes in the "Negative" category, 17 in the "Positive" category, 9 in the "Other" category, and 3 in the "Sound" category.

Question 44 asked respondents how they felt about women's choirs in general. The responses were coded and separated into three primary categories: positive, negative, and other. Responses for all three categories were further coded in sub-categories: positive sub-codes included very positive, people, and musical; negative sub-codes included interpersonal, sound, other, treatment, and musical; and other sub-categories included equality, preferences, and sound. Some responses fit into more than one category. For example, the statement "I think they can sound really good, but can also

sometimes be made to sound childish” could be coded in the “Musical” subcategory of the “Positive” category (“Sound good / blend / beautiful”), and in the “Sound” subcategory of the “Negative” category (“Sound immature / childish”). Figure 7 shows the codes and sub-codes in a mind map for the 257 responses to this question.

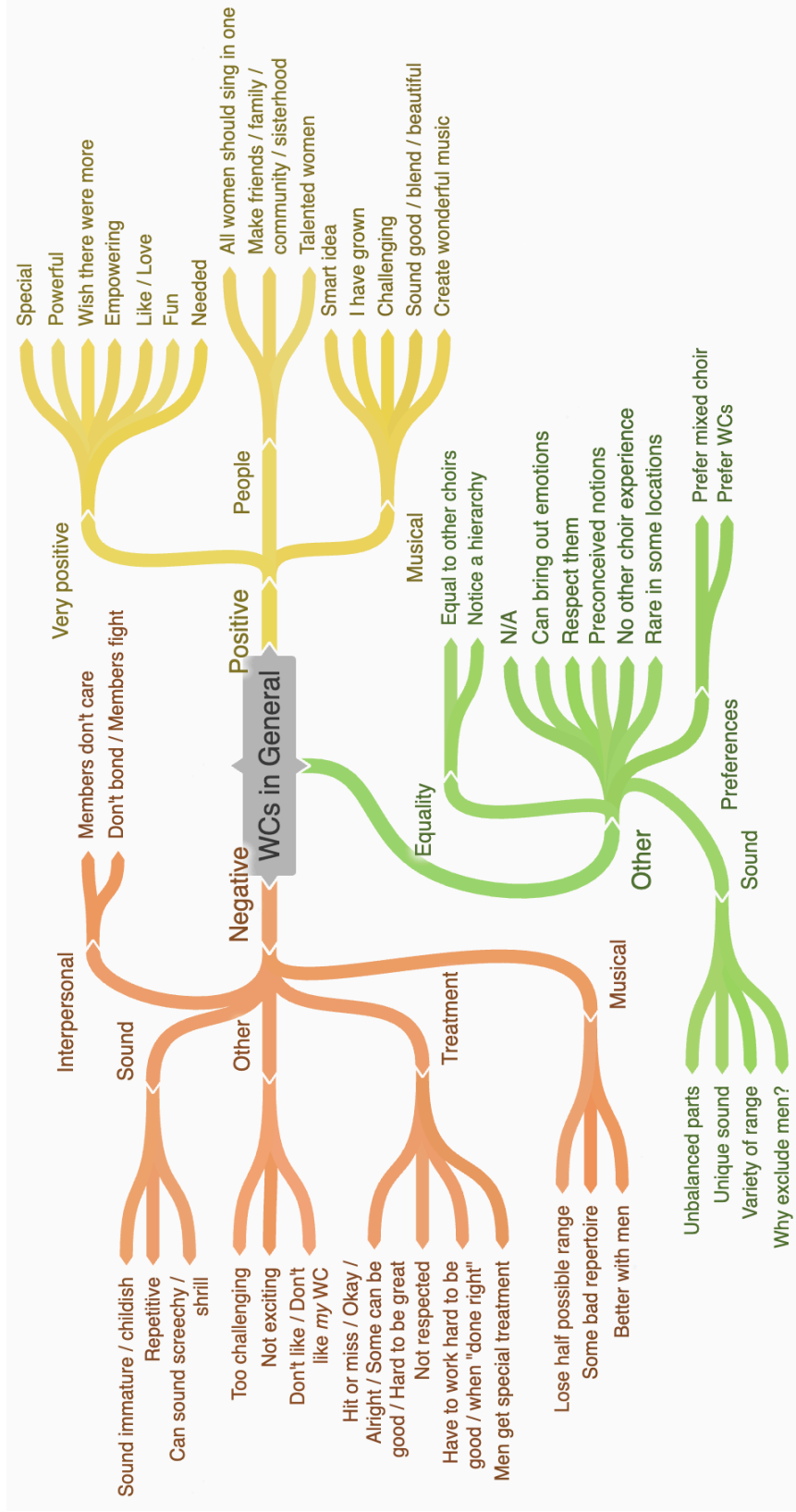
There were 15 sub-codes in the “Positive” category, 15 in the “Negative” category, and 14 in the “Other” category.

Figure 6. Question 43: How Do You Feel About Singing in a WC Right Now?



Green: Sound; Yellow: Positive; Orange: Other; Red: Negative

Figure 7. Question 44: How Do You Feel About Women's Choirs in General?



ANOVA Tests

The researcher chose four survey questions (15, 18, 19, and 33) that most directly addressed the research questions on which to run analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Questions 15 and 19 correspond to the first research question: “How do current members of college women’s choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?” Questions 18 and 33 correspond to the second research question: “How do current members of college women’s choirs feel about singing in this group and about women’s choirs in general?” The independent variables used in this study were major, age, experience singing in women’s choirs, and audition status.

One-way ANOVAs were conducted for Questions 15, 18, 19, and 33. The null hypotheses were:

H₀₁ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of singers about the respect of their women’s choir by major, age, experience, or audition status.

H₀₂ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of singers about being a proud member of their women’s choir by major, age, experience, or audition status.

H₀₃ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of singers about their women’s choir being highly valued in their community by major, age, experience, or audition status.

H₀₄ There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of singers about the sound of a women’s choir by major, age, experience, or audition status.

Research Question One: Question 15

Question 15 was a Likert-type scale question assessing this statement: “I believe that my women’s choir is highly respected at my school.” The researcher ran ANOVA tests about this question with each of the four independent variables (major, age, experience, and audition status). Table 30 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who were music majors or non-music majors. Non-music majors had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “my women’s choir is highly respected at my school.” Those respondents who did not answer this question (n=22) were eliminated. The mean for the music majors was 1.28 (SD .449) and the mean for the non-music majors was 1.25 (SD .433). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between music majors and non-music majors at the .05 significance level ($F(1,294) = .274, p = .601$).

Table 30. Question 15a: My WC is Highly Respected, by Major (n=296)

I believe that my women’s choir is highly respected at my school	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Music Majors	92 (31.08%)	35 (11.82%)	127
Non-music Majors	127 (42.91%)	42 (14.19%)	169
Total	219	77	296

Table 31 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents by different ages (18-19, 20-22, and 23+). The youngest age group had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement, “my women’s choir is highly respected at my school,” but the 23+ age group had the highest number of positive responses within its own category (11 positive responses of 14 total, or 78.57%). The mean for 18-19-year olds was 1.24 (SD .426), the mean for 20-22-year olds was 1.29 (SD .457), and the mean for 23+ year olds was 1.21 (SD .426). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between different age groups at the .05 significance level ($F(2,292) = .664, p = .515$).

Table 31. Question 15b: My WC is Highly Respected, by Age (n=295)

I believe that my women’s choir is highly respected at my school	SA & A	SD & D	Total
18-19	113 (38.31%)	35 (11.86%)	148
20-22	94 (31.86%)	39 (13.22%)	133
23+	11 (3.73%)	3 (1.02%)	14
Total	218	77	295

Table 32 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who had sung in a women’s choir before and those who had not. Those who had not sung in a women’s choir before had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement, “my women’s choir is highly respected at my school.” The mean for those who had sung in a women’s choir before was 1.27 (SD .446) and the mean for those who had not sung in a women’s choir before was 1.26 (SD .441). The results of the ANOVA showed that there

was no statistically significant difference between groups with different experience singing in a women’s choir at the .05 significance level ($F(1,280) = .035, p = .852$).

Table 32. Question 15c: My WC is Highly Respected, by Experience (n=282)

I believe that my women’s choir is highly respected at my school	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those who had sung in a WC before	94 (33.33%)	35 (12.41%)	129
Those who had <i>not</i> sung in a WC before	113 (40.07%)	40 (14.18%)	153
Total	207	75	282

Table 33 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents whose women’s choir required an audition and those whose did not. Those whose women’s choir did not require an audition had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement, “my women’s choir is highly respected at my school.” The mean for those whose women’s choir required an audition was 1.26 (SD .442) and the mean for those whose women’s choir did not require an audition was 1.26 (SD .439). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups according to audition requirement at the .05 significance level ($F(1,294) = .011, p = .915$).

Table 33. Question 15d: My WC is Highly Respected, by Audition Status (n=296)

I believe that my women’s choir is highly respected at my school	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those whose WC required an audition	98 (33.11%)	35 (11.82%)	133
Those whose WC did not require an audition	121 (40.88%)	42 (14.19%)	163
Total	219	77	296

Research Question One: Question 19

Question 19 was a Likert-type scale question assessing this statement: “My women’s choir is highly valued in my community.” The researcher ran ANOVA tests about this question with each of the four independent variables (major, age, experience, and audition status). Table 34 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who were music majors or non-music majors. Non-music majors had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “my women’s choir is highly valued in my community.” Those respondents who did not answer this question (n=23) were eliminated. The mean for music majors was 1.28 (SD .449) and the mean for non-music majors was 1.25 (SD .433). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between music majors and non-music majors at the .05 significance level ($F(1,294) = .274, p = .601$).

Table 34. Question 19a: WC is Highly Valued in Community, by Major (n=296)

My women’s choir is highly valued in my community	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Music Majors	92 (31.08%)	35 (11.82%)	127
Non-music Majors	127 (42.91%)	42 (14.19%)	169
Total	219	77	296

Table 35 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents by different ages (18-19, 20-22, and 23+). The youngest age group had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “my women’s choir is highly valued within my community,” but the 23+ age group had the highest number of positive responses within its own

category (11 positive responses of 17, or 78.57%). The mean of 18-19-year olds was 1.24 (SD .426), the mean of 20-22-year olds was 1.29 (SD .457), and the mean of 23+ year olds was 1.21 (SD .426). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between different age groups at the .05 significance level ($F(2,292) = .664, p = .515$).

Table 35. Question 19b: WC is Highly Valued in Community, by Age (n=295)

My women’s choir is highly valued in my community	SA & A	SD & D	Total
18-19	113 (38.31%)	35 (11.86%)	148
20-22	94 (31.86%)	39 (13.22%)	133
23+	11 (3.73%)	3 (1.02%)	14
Total	218	77	295

Table 36 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who had sung in a women’s choir before and those who had not. Those who had not sung in a women’s choir before had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “my women’s choir is highly valued in my community.” The mean for those who had sung in a women’s choir before was 1.27 (SD .446) and the mean of those who had not sung in a women’s choir before was 1.26 (SD .441). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups with different experience singing in a women’s choir at the .05 significance level ($F(1,280) = .035, p = .852$).

Table 36. Question 19c: WC is Highly Valued in Community, by Experience (n=281)

My women’s choir is highly valued in my community	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those who had sung in a WC before	94 (33.33%)	35 (12.41%)	129
Those who had <i>not</i> sung in a WC before	113 (40.07%)	40 (14.18%)	153
Total	207	75	282

Table 37 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents whose women’s choir required an audition and those whose did not. Those whose women’s choir did not require an audition had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “my women’s choir is highly valued in my community.” The mean for those whose women’s choir required an audition was 1.26 (SD .442) and the mean for those whose women’s choir did not require an audition was 1.26 (SD .439). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups according to audition requirement at the .05 significance level ($F(1,294) = .011, p = .915$).

Table 37. Question 19d: WC is Highly Valued in Community, by Audition Status (n=296)

My women’s choir is highly valued in my community	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those whose WC required an audition	98 (33.11%)	35 (11.82%)	133
Those whose WC did not require an audition	121 (40.88%)	42 (14.19%)	163
Total	219	77	296

Research question one: “How do current members of college women’s choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university

and in their community?” was assessed by questions 15 and 19. The ANOVA tests showed no statistical significance between any of the independent variable groups for either question.

Research Question Two: Question 18

Question 18 was a Likert-type scale question assessing this statement: “I am proud to be a member of my women’s choir.” The researcher ran ANOVA tests for this question with each of the four independent variables (major, age, experience, and audition status). Table 38 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who were music majors or non-music majors. Non-music majors had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “I am proud to be a member of my women’s choir.” Those respondents who did not answer this question (n=23) were eliminated. The mean for music majors was 1.10 (SD .304) and the mean for non-music majors was 1.08 (SD .268). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between music majors and non-music majors at the .05 significance level ($F(1, 293) = .559, p = .455$).

Table 38. Question 18a: Proud to Be a Member, by Major (n=295)

I am proud to be a member of my WC	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Music Majors	114 (38.64%)	13 (4.41%)	127
Non-music Majors	155 (52.54%)	13 (4.41%)	168
Total	269	26	295

Table 39 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who were different ages (18-19, 20-22, and 23+). The youngest age group had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “I am proud to be a member of my women’s choir,” however, all respondents in the 23+ age group answered this question positively. The mean for 18-19-year olds was 1.10 (SD .295), the mean for 20-22-year olds was 1.09 (SD .288), and the mean for 23+ year olds was 1.00 (SD .000). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between different age groups at the .05 significance level ($F(2,291) = .720, p = .488$).

Table 39. Question 18b: Proud to Be a Member, by Age (n=294)

I am proud to be a member of my WC	SA & A	SD & D	Total
18-19	133 (45.24%)	14 (4.76%)	147
20-22	121 (41.16%)	12 (4.08%)	133
23+	14 (4.76%)	0	14
Total	268	26	294

Table 40 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who had sung in a women’s choir before and those who had not. Those who had not sung in a women’s choir before had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “I am proud to be a member of my women’s choir.” The mean for those who had sung in a women’s choir before was 1.12 (SD .323) and the mean for those who had not sung in a women’s choir before was 1.07 (SD .259). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no

statistically significant difference between groups with different experience singing in a women’s choir at the .05 significance level ($F(1,279) = 1.701, p = .193$).

Table 40. Question 18c: Proud to Be a Member, by Experience (n=281)

I am proud to be a member of my WC	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those who had sung in a WC previously	113 (40.21%)	15 (5.34%)	128
Those who had <i>not</i> sung in a WC previously	142 (50.53%)	11 (3.91%)	153
Total	255	26	281

Table 41 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents whose women’s choir required an audition and those whose did not. Those whose women’s choir did not require an audition had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “I am proud to be a member of my women’s choir.” The mean for those whose women’s choir required an audition was 1.09 (SD .289) and the mean for those whose women’s choir did not require an audition was 1.09 (SD .281). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups according to audition requirement at the .05 significance level ($F(1,293) = .023, p = .880$).

Table 41. Question 18d: Proud to Be a Member, by Audition Status (n=295)

I am proud to be a member of my WC	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those whose WC required an audition	120 (40.68%)	12 (4.07%)	132
Those whose WC did not require an audition	149 (50.51%)	14 (4.07%)	163
Total	269	26	295

Research Question Two: Question 33

Question 33 was a Likert-type scale question assessing this statement: “The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me.” The researcher ran ANOVA tests about this question for each of the four independent variables (major, age, experience, and audition status). Table 42 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who were music majors or non-music majors. Non-music majors had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me,” with music majors having, proportionately, a slightly higher percentage of positive responses (87.2% for music majors compared to 82.8% for non-music majors). Those respondents who did not answer this question (n=30) were eliminated. The mean for music majors was 1.13 (SD .335) and the mean for non-music majors was 1.17 (SD .378). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between music majors and non-music majors at the .05 significance level ($F(1,286) = 1.044, p = .308$).

Table 42. Question 33a: WCs Sound Beautiful, by m=Major (n=288)

The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Music Majors	109 (37.85%)	16 (5.56%)	125
Non-Music Majors	135 (46.88%)	28 (9.72%)	163
Total	244	44	288

Table 43 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents by different ages (18-19, 20-22, and 23+). The youngest age group had the highest frequency of positive

responses to the statement “The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me.” In the 23+ age group, 92.86% of the respondents (13 of 14) provided positive responses to this question. The mean for 18-19-year olds was 1.18 (SD .382), the mean for 20-22-year olds was 1.14 (SD .346), and the mean for 23+ year olds was 1.07 (SD .267). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between different age groups at the .05 significance level ($F(2,284) = .768, p = .465$).

Table 43. Question 33b: WCs Sound Beautiful, by Age (n=287)

The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me	SA & A	SD & D	Total
18-19	117 (40.77%)	25 (8.71%)	142
20-22	113 (39.37%)	18 (6.27%)	131
23+	13 (4.53%)	1 (0.35%)	14
Total	243	44	287

Table 44 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents who had sung in a women’s choir before and those who had not. Those who had not sung in a women’s choir before had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me.” The mean for those who had sung in a women’s choir before was 1.17 (SD .379) and the mean for those who had not sung in a women’s choir before was 1.14 (SD .352). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups with different

experience singing in a women’s choir at the .05 significance level ($F(1,279) = .414, p = .521$).

Table 44. Question 33c: WCs Sound Beautiful, by Experience (n=281)

The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those who had sung in a WC before	106 (37.72%)	22 (7.83%)	128
Those who had <i>not</i> sung in a WC before	131 (46.62%)	22 (7.83%)	153
Total	237	44	281

Table 45 shows frequencies and percentages of respondents whose women’s choir required an audition and those whose did not. Those whose women’s choir did not require an audition had the highest frequency of positive responses to the statement “The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me.” The mean for those whose women’s choir required an audition was 1.17 (SD .376) and the mean for those whose women’s choir did not require an audition was 1.14 (SD .347). The results of the ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups according to audition requirement at the .05 significance level ($F(1,286) = .493, p = .483$).

Table 45. Question 33d: WCs Sound Beautiful, by Audition Status (n=288)

The sound of a women’s choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me	SA & A	SD & D	Total
Those whose WC required an audition	108 (37.5%)	22 (7.64%)	130
Those whose WC did not require an audition	136 (47.22%)	22 (7.64%)	158
Total	244	44	288

The second research question, “How do current members of college women’s choirs feel about singing in this group? About women’s choirs in general?” was assessed by questions 18 and 33. The ANOVA tests showed no statistical significance between any of the independent variable groups for either question.

Summary

This chapter reported the results from the researcher-developed survey instrument. Research questions were investigated using Likert-type scale, multiple choice, and yes-no questions, as well as open-ended response questions. Frequency and percentage charts, mind maps, and ANOVA tests were used to examine the data gathered from respondents. The results of the analyses will be discussed further in chapter 5, which also includes present implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

"It is important to encourage women to express what they think and feel directly, openly, in the here-and-now."¹⁶⁰

Summary

This study sought to determine how southeastern college women's choir participants feel about women's choirs in general and their own choir in particular. The research questions that framed this study were:

1. How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?
2. How do current members of college women's choirs feel about singing in this group? About women's choirs in general?

The researcher developed a 44-question survey to discover the respondents' perceptions about various aspects of women's choirs:

- auditions
- the choral hierarchy at their institution
- the respect and value their choir has in their community and at their institution
- concert promotion
- their friends' perceptions of the choir
- attendance at concerts

¹⁶⁰ Phyllis Chesler, "Psychological Ethics," 483.

- repertoire
- the sound of women's choirs
- touring and recording

Following a pilot study, the survey was distributed to institutions in the southeastern U.S. The American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) has 11 states in its Southeastern Division. The five largest institutions in these states that had women's choirs were determined through collegestats.org. Permission to survey singers was sought from the Director of Choral Activities (DCA or equivalent title) at each institution. The communications took place according to this timeline:

- The initial contact email was sent on September 29, 2017 seeking permission for singers to participate in the study (see Appendix A, p. 140).
- An email was sent on October 25, 2017 that marked the start of the survey window. This was sent to the 24 institutions that responded to the initial email (see Appendix A, p. 141).
- A follow-up email was sent to all institutions who had responded to say they sent the initial email to their students, two weeks later, on November 8, 2017 (see Appendix A, p. 143).
- Because all the directors had not responded to the October 25th email, a reminder email was also sent on this day to those who had not yet responded (see Appendix A, p. 142).
- November 8, 2017 became the new initial contact date.

- Another follow-up email was sent on November 27, 2017 to serve as a two-week reminder (see Appendix A, p. 143)
- The survey window closed two weeks following the final reminder email, December 11, 2017.

Data gathered by the responses to the survey were analyzed through frequency counts, percentages, ANOVAs, and mind-maps. These analyses are described in Chapter Four. The next section is a discussion of these findings.

Discussion

Discussion of Demographic Data

The largest number of respondents were first-year undergraduates (36.51%) between 18 and 19 years of age (51.32%), and respondents were also primarily non-music majors (49.69%). These data suggest that choral programs may be maintaining the hierarchical status quo. Carp says, “Because many choral programs have far less boys than girls, younger and less experienced boys are frequently given the opportunity to be in more advanced classes (typically mixed ensembles) while the girls are required to participate in a less experienced group (typically an all-female group).”¹⁶¹ Palkki notes how treble and bass clef choirs can be devalued and seen as only stepping-stones to advanced co-ed choirs.¹⁶² Jackson reminds us that “young females in many women’s choirs come to the conclusion that they are only valuable as singers when they sing with

¹⁶¹ Carp, “Single Gender,” 3.

¹⁶² Palkki, “Gender Trouble,” 32.

men.”¹⁶³ These data suggest that younger women and non-music majors might be asked to sing in a women’s choir because women’s choirs at many schools are “beginner” types of ensembles. In the open-ended response section of this research study, respondents reported that some schools do not allow first-year singers to audition for upper level choirs.

Most respondents were white (84.54%; n=257) and not of Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish origin (90.13%; n=274). The rest identified as Black or African American (9.21%; n=28), Asian (4.61%; n=14), Other (4.61%; n=14), American Indian or Alaska Native (1.32%; n=4), and those who chose “I prefer not to answer,” (1.64%; n=5). No respondents chose Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Those who identified as Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin (5.59%; n=17) and those who chose “I prefer not to answer” (4.28%; n=13) made up less than 10% of the respondent population. When asked in the open-ended response section of this survey how they felt about singing in a women’s choir right now, some respondents noted a lack of diversity in their ensembles. Racial demographic data may be different in different parts of the country or with a different makeup of respondents. While beyond the scope of this study, the racial makeup of traditional choral ensembles at the college level warrants further study.

Most respondents were assigned to sing their self-identified voice part. Those who were assigned to sing soprano (53.62%; n=163) almost exactly mirrors those who self-identify as soprano (54.93%; n=167). The alto numbers were slightly different. Those

¹⁶³ Jackson, “Always a Bridesmaid,” 2.

who were assigned to sing alto (44.41%; n=135) numbered about 10% higher than those who self-identified as alto (34.54%; n=105). The remainder responded with “Other” (1.97%; n=6) for their assigned parts, and when asked how they self-identified, 2.96% (n=9) said they did not know and 7.57% (n=23) said “Other.” The respondents who described their voice parts in their own words mostly listed middle-range voice parts (mezzo / S2/A1), while others said they could sing all voice parts. In the open-ended response section of this survey, some respondents noted that there were “unbalanced parts.” This could be because of the difference between the numbers of singers on each part or because the respondents were not singing their preferred (or self-identified) voice part.

Most respondents said their current women’s choir did not require an audition (Yes – 45.36%; n=137; No – 54.64%; n=165), but some may have understood “audition” to be a different process than what they experienced. For example, directors may do one-on-one hearings of choir members for any number of reasons, and some singers may not think of this as an audition. Major and Dakon say that mid-level choristers are more influenced by the perception of the quality of the ensemble rather than the particular voicing, and that they preferred singing in an auditioned ensemble because it helped them feel “chosen.”¹⁶⁴ This feeling of being chosen by audition could make a significant difference in the perception of women’s choirs, both by their members and by the communities surrounding those women’s choirs.

¹⁶⁴ Major & Dakon, “Singer Perceptions,” 121.

A small majority of respondents did not sing in a women's choir in high school (No – 54.26%; n=153; Yes – 45.74%; n=129). Gauthier says “Single-gender ensembles are increasingly being offered in high schools and in many of these programs the women's choir is the top ensemble.”¹⁶⁵ Spurgeon quotes Gackle, saying, “In America, most choral programs in high schools and universities today offer at least one all-female ensemble. Unfortunately, these ensembles are sometimes not as highly regarded as mixed choirs, even though that attitude has changed somewhat in the past two decades.”¹⁶⁶ The proclivity for women to sing in a high school women's choirs seems to have increased over time. If these choirs are the top choir at the high school level, it would make sense for their second-place status to seem insulting at the college level.

Discussion of Research Question 1

“How do current members of college women's choirs feel their choir is perceived compared to other types of choirs at their college or university and in their community?” To investigate this research question, the researcher posed survey questions about a wide range of topics, including audition procedures, respect, value, community pride in their choir, audience attendance, and touring and recording.

In response to a question about whether audition procedures were the same between the women's choir and those of other choirs at the same school, 38.21% (n=115) chose “I don't know.” Of those who were able to compare the audition procedures, more

¹⁶⁵ Gauthier, “I'm Only in Women's Chorus,” 65.

¹⁶⁶ Spurgeon, “The History of Women,” 24.

respondents said that the procedure was different for the women's chorus from those for other ensembles (35.88%; n=108). Fewer said that the procedures were the same for all ensembles (25.91%; n=78). Based on this, the researcher posits that audition procedures for all choirs are *not* the same at each school. Since this study did not include independent verification of audition procedures (by asking the directors of the choirs to describe their procedures, for instance), it is not possible to state this with absolute certainty.

Forty-three percent of respondents reported that their women's choir did not have an audition; they simply joined (n=130). A different survey question asked, "If there are some choirs that you believe have more skilled singers in them, how are those singers chosen for that choir?" Most respondents said skilled singers were chosen by audition, but some believed there was biased selection or that the director chose singers they knew or recruited directly for certain choirs. Still, a majority of respondents felt that the placement of singers, on the whole, is fair at their institution.

When asked about respect and value, respondents seemed to believe that not all choirs garner the same level of respect at their institutions. Mixed choirs were far and away perceived as receiving the most respect (75%; n=219). Still, a larger than expected number of respondents said that people at their school thought the women's choir was more worthwhile than the mixed choir (26.19%; n=77). The term "worthwhile" is somewhat problematic because it can mean different things to different individuals. However, in the open-ended response section, respondents showed that they believe their women's choirs are worthwhile because they provide a sense of community, a break from

other schoolwork, and a sense of emotional fulfillment. It is important to note that not all of these reasons are musical. The sense of community is an important factor for women singing in women's choirs.

Community pride in choir was the next subcategory assessed. While the majority of respondents said their friends regularly come to their concerts (Agreed or Strongly Agreed – 61.65%; n=180), respondents identified the mixed-gender choir as having the largest audience attendance at concerts (64.48%; n=187). Whether or not the attendance is actually larger, the belief that it is gives another indication of the relative prestige of the mixed-gender choirs at their institutions.

Touring and recording was the last subcategory assessed. Almost the same number of respondents said that while choirs at their school tour and/or record, their women's choir does not (61.94%; n=179). Anecdotally, the researcher has observed this at institutions before, though usually it is because of budget or time constraints that the mixed choir (usually the "top" choir) is the only group that tours or records. There are many possible reasons for this, and they vary widely between institutions. Alternately, touring and recording are not the only activities that ensembles can do to show relevance or have meaning. In the open-ended responses, many respondents spoke of non-musical events or interactions that made them feel a connection to the other members and to the ensemble as a whole.

The responses to Questions 15 and 19 were assessed by frequency charts and ANOVA tests of means. While ANOVA tests revealed no significant differences, frequencies showed that non-music majors, 18- and 19-year olds (and 23+-year olds

within the “23+ year old” category, as opposed to the total of all respondents), those who had not sung in a women’s choir before, and those whose women’s choir did not require an audition felt most strongly that their women’s choir was highly respected at their school (Question 15) and that their women’s choir was highly valued in their community (Question 19).

Through experience and related literature, this is what the researcher expected. Kinney told stories by women’s choir members about what they do for their community, the activism and outreach in which they participate, and how their communities support them.¹⁶⁷ Women’s choir members, on the whole, seem to feel supported and valued by their communities, while at the same time often feel inferior to the mixed choir at their school. Sherban demonstrated that elementary-aged girls feel inferior to boys in music classrooms.¹⁶⁸ Wilson states “...the status of the high school treble clef ensemble is often viewed as inferior to the mixed ensemble.”¹⁶⁹ The feeling of support by local communities and inferiority at school may contribute to the feeling of community that is so important to women in women’s choirs.

Discussion of Research Question 2

“How do current members of college women’s choirs feel about singing in this group? About women’s choirs in general?” To answer this research question, the

¹⁶⁷ Kinney, “Making Church,” 63, 108, 111.

¹⁶⁸ Sherban, “Peering Through,” 112.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, “Advancing the Status,” 2.

researcher posed survey questions about a wide range of topics, including choice of choir, self-pride in choir, repertoire, sound / timbre, and feelings.

Respondents were asked “If you had the option to choose what choir you would like to be in, where would you rank your women’s choir?” The largest block of respondents said that women’s choir was their first choice (46.84%; n=141). However, those who chose “2nd choice” were almost as numerous (40.53%; n=122). As a follow-up to that question, respondents were then asked, if they chose anything other than “1st choice,” to list the types of choirs they would sing in before women’s choir. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they would rather sing in the mixed choir (75.36%; n=156). This survey did not assess the reasons for the respondents’ answers. The respondents may find mixed repertoire more interesting or challenging or may prefer the opportunity to sing with men. It is equally likely that they have internalized the choral hierarchy message that SATB choirs are preferred or “better,” while all other choir music is secondary. In the open-ended responses to this survey, respondents corroborated these ideas with statements like “bad repertoire,” “better with men,” and some said they “notice a hierarchy.”

Self-pride in choir was the next subcategory assessed. One measure of this was the willingness of members to promote their concerts; 90% of respondents report that they work to publicize their concerts in some way. Their willingness to generate publicity for their performances may indicate their pride in their ensemble as well their belief that the community is interested in hearing them perform. In the open-ended response section

of this survey, respondents listed concerts as some of their best days in a women's choir. They also noted the feeling of success when the audience enjoyed their performance.

When asked about repertoire, more than half of the respondents answered the same way about each question. While they enjoy the repertoire their women's choir sings and believe the level of difficulty is appropriately challenging for their choir, they would like to sing more challenging music. They also believe that the repertoire they sing is just as interesting as that of other choirs at their school. This may be an indication that these directors are choosing quality repertoire for their women's choirs that excites their singers. However, in the open-ended response section of this survey, some respondents say that they would like more diverse music and note that one of their best days in women's choir was when they were singing popular or non-classical music. This indicates a desire to go beyond Western European classical music to sing music of other traditions and in other styles.

When asked about the sound and timbre of their women's choir and women's choirs in general, the majority of respondents believed their choir sounded warm and full (83%), and that the sound of women's choirs was not "too similar" without men's parts (78.2%). There was wide consensus among these responses. When asked if a women's choir's sound was as equally satisfying as a mixed choir and if their women's choir's sound was as respected as that of other choirs at their school, only 53.82% agreed or strongly agreed that women's choirs' sound was equally as satisfying as a mixed choir, and 65.16% of respondents believe their women's choir's sound is equally respected at their school. So, while the majority of respondents agreed and feel positively about the

sound of their women's choir and women's choirs in general, the percentage of respondents that answered positively is notably smaller when asked about the sound being equally satisfying and as well respected as that of other choirs.

These percentages show that singers find women's choirs less satisfying and that the women's choir sound garners less respect than that of mixed choirs. This may be a by-product of choral hierarchy. Apfelstadt says "Some people perceive women's choirs to be timbrally monotonous, and for that reason it is helpful to vary the timbre within a concert."¹⁷⁰ She goes on to suggest varying the voicing and accompaniment options during a concert to lessen the monotonousness. None of the literature describes the timbre of a mixed choir as monotonous, so this may be a learned perception, rooted in the idea that the mixed choir is the standard choral sound and all others are less desirable.

Analyzing the open-ended responses through mind maps to assess feelings showed that respondents had very strong feelings about their women's choir experiences and were willing to express them candidly. The affirmative responses seemed very heartfelt and sincere. The critical responses were sometimes disheartening and shocking. However, getting a glimpse into the experiences of women's choir members through their written comments is fascinating.

When asked about the best day they ever had in a women's choir, some themes began to appear. The members of these women's choirs spoke frequently about experiences, both musical (retreats, trips, honor choirs), and non-musical (talking, getting to know each other, having fun). They discussed emotions and their intense drive for

¹⁷⁰ Apfelstadt, "Practices of Successful," 36-37.

success. They shared positive and negative thoughts and some that were not classified in any of the above categories. Overall, these women enjoyed connecting with each other, striving for success, and opportunities to make music outside the typical concert or rehearsal experience. Vanderlinden's study points out three common themes in the women's responses: community, repertoire selection, and having men vs. women conducting the programs. The respondents in this research study voice similar themes. They mentioned community and repertoire on several occasions, and while they did not talk about the gender of the director, they did discuss their directors' behaviors.

Farris said "Patty [Jennings] and the PWC [Peninsula Women's Chorus] have taught us to think about 'communal creativity' as being fostered, not created, by the conductor."¹⁷¹ As directors of women's choirs, we should harness the creativity and passion of our singers and help create that "communal creativity."

Hopper begins by sharing an anecdote from student evaluations: "the most common written positive comment is about the community they experienced as being a part of the women's chorale."¹⁷² She discusses how to build community within a women's choir, how particular music selections can help build that community, and how rallying behind a common cause can bring forth an even stronger bond. The open-ended responses in this research study mirrored Hopper's ideas very closely.

The researcher was dismayed to read some of the comments describing respondents' worst day in a women's choir. Many of these were familiar stories, but the

¹⁷¹ Farris & Ager, *Take Up the Song*, 104.

¹⁷² Hopper, "Building Community," 117.

researcher had hoped these were a thing of the past. Several respondents addressed the behavior of the director through such revealing comments as “laughed at us,” “director insults / screamed / threw things / stormed out / angry email,” “kicked out of class,” and “director talks down to us.” This type of behavior is categorically unacceptable. The survey did not ask about the gender of the director, so there is no way of assessing whether these behaviors are more common among either male or female directors. It is highly possible that these kinds of behaviors go on in other types of choirs, but the fact that the related literature in this study has shown that women feel like second-class citizens¹⁷³ makes this behavior especially abusive. The choral field can no longer tolerate or excuse abusive behavior of any kind from conductors.

Respondents also talked about relationships between members (cliques and drama, tension) and about their own condition (not being focused, and physical reasons such as being tired or sick) for their worst day. The language respondents used was revealing. Cliques and drama were described as “catty”; other comments used words like “shrill” and “shrieky” to describe the sound of the women’s choir. Such words are usually related to internalized sexism. The respondents may not realize that they are perpetuating sexism when they speak of other women in this manner.

Some items were not categorized anywhere else (poor attendance, unbalanced parts). Several turned their worst day into a positive (hard days are necessary, none / no bad days). Poor attendance could be a symptom of a larger problem: if the women’s choir

¹⁷³ Gackle, *Finding Ophelia’s Voice*, 116; Hopper, “Building Community,” 118; Menk, “Re-Evaluating,” 11; Spurgeon, “A Paradigmatic Change,” 65; Spurgeon, “Building Excellence,” 252, and others

is seen as a throwaway group, members might not view attendance as important.

Unbalanced parts can be remedied, but this may require singers to sing a part with which they do not identify. It could also be remedied by either recruiting singers for certain voice parts, or by only admitting a certain number to each voice part. A drawback to a more selective approach, however, is that it perpetuates the pattern of rejection that women may have experienced in auditioning for a mixed choir. Those who were excluded might feel doubly rejected, possibly at the cost of their ever singing in another choir.

Respondents also discussed how their current feelings about singing in a women's choir in the open-ended questions. Overall, there was a more critical tone to these comments, but there were also quite a number of very positive comments. The critical comments included "not respected," "director talks down to us," and "members don't have musical training." Respondents also noted the sound, saying it was "beautiful / womanly," while others said they were "tired of only female voices" and the "immature" sound of the group. Other comments mentioned the choir being a "break from other schoolwork" and that singing in the choir was their hobby. Respondents called women's choir their "safe place," said it was full of "passionate / wonderful women," and said that they loved the music and their director. Some of the critical comments and experiences were seemingly driven by the treatment of the choir. Positive comments had to do with how the members were learning and growing in the choir. This brings into focus the idea that music is not the only important factor in any choir, but especially women's choirs. In the open-ended responses, the respondents in this study spoke frequently about

community and non-musical factors that they enjoyed about their women's choir and women's choirs in general. It is possible that if women's choirs were treated equitably and humanely, the experiences might be more positive overall. While some women will prefer mixed choirs, these comments show that there are women who love women's choirs just as much.

When asked how they feel about women's choirs in general, the tone of the comments was again more critical, but there were a larger number of affirmative comments, which played a large part in the overarching feeling. Members brought out ideas such as the "unique sound" and "variety of range" of women's choirs. They also noted women's choirs were "equal to other choirs," while some said they "noticed a hierarchy." Affirmative comments discussed "sisterhood," how they were "empowering" and some respondents really love their choir despite feeling that others don't appreciate it as much. Critical comments observed that women's choirs have to work harder to be good, and some said that women's choirs find it "hard to be great." One respondent even questioned why women's choirs needed to exist since they exclude men and "lose half the possible range." While not all respondents wrote critical responses, there was greater variation in the critical responses. Hopefully, the negative experiences change so that women's choir members can have a more positive experience across the board.

Questions 18 and 33 were assessed by frequency counts and ANOVA tests. Analysis of the statement "I am proud to be a member of my women's choir" (Question 18) showed that non-music majors, 18- and 19-year olds (and 23+-year olds within the "23+ year old" category, as opposed to the total of all respondents), those who had not

sung in a women's choir before, and those whose women's choir did not require an audition felt most strongly that they were proud to be a member of their women's choir. The 23+ year olds might have been graduate students, teaching assistants, or simply older undergraduates. These respondents could have different life experiences from those of some younger respondents. Directors should be cognizant of these different experiences when directing a women's choir.

Analysis of the statement "The sound of a women's choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me" (Question 33) showed that non-music majors (and music majors within the "music major" category, as opposed to the total of all respondents), 18- and 19-year olds (and 23+-year olds within the "23+ year old" category, as opposed to the total of all respondents), those who had not sung in a women's choir before, and those whose women's choir did not require an audition felt most strongly that they sound of a women's choir, in general, was beautiful to them.

Summary

Based on the survey results, women on the whole like the music they sing in women's choirs, but would like more challenging and varied music. They like the sound of women's choirs and the sound of *their* women's choirs, but they were not as sure that the sound of women's choirs was as satisfying as that of mixed choirs or that their women's choirs' sound was equally respected at their schools. They enjoy opportunities to make music, hearing other choirs, alternate types of activities (flashmobs, honor choirs, festivals, and conferences), learning and growing, and getting to know fellow

members. For the most part, they like their directors as well. They strive for success and enjoy being challenged.

They do not like when the director mistreats them. They are unhappy when cliques form and there is drama among the members. Other critical comments mention personal shortcomings, poor attendance, and unbalanced parts. The majority would rather sing in the mixed choir, and while 90% publicize their concerts, the majority believe that mixed choirs at their schools have the largest audience attendance at concerts.

Younger members, non-music majors, those who had not sung in a women's choir before, and those whose choirs had no audition thought their choir was more highly valued in their community and highly respected in their school, and they were proud to be members of their women's choir. This leads the researcher to believe that those with more experience (older members, music majors, those who have sung in a women's choir before, and those who had to audition for their women's choir) might be less happy in their women's choir. This may be evidence of a persistent hierarchy that grants lower status to women's choirs in many choral programs, thus making more experienced singers dissatisfied with their placement. Alternately, it may indicate desire for change or a desire to socialize with males and females together.

The open-ended responses seem to contradict the findings in the survey. This may be the phenomenon observed in Greenawalt's study: respondents feel they must respond in a more "socially acceptable" way to survey questions, but share their real feelings in open-ended responses.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Greenawalt, "Modern Sexism."

Implications

The results of this study show that there is still work to be done in regard to the perception of women's choirs. Respondents showed some very positive attitudes toward women's choirs, but also continue to show some stereotypically negative attitudes that have been documented before.¹⁷⁵ While some work has been done to relieve the stigma against women's choirs, more is clearly required. Directors of choral programs might consider reconfiguring the ensembles offered. Palkki suggests having a beginning mixed choir, mid-level men's and women's choirs, then advanced men's and women's choirs.¹⁷⁶ An alternative to Palkki's suggestion would be to have advanced men's and women's choirs with beginning and mid-level singers going into either a mixed choir or beginning single-sex choirs. If there are significantly more female singers, perhaps the advanced choir should be a women's choir. Alternatively, the presence of two advanced choirs, one mixed, one all women, might take away some of the stigma a "beginning" women's choir might garner. If "beginning" ensembles are a necessity, directors of choral programs might consider sorting singers by audition score. The highest scoring singer goes into choir A, the next highest scoring singer goes into choir B, the third highest scoring singer goes into choir A, and so forth. Assigning singers by score avoids placing all of the "high scoring" singers in the mixed choir and relegating the "leftovers" in the men's or

¹⁷⁵ Gauthier, "I'm Only in Women's Chorus," 45; Major & Dakon, "Singer Perceptions," 110; Wilson, "Practices of and Attitudes Toward," 140.

¹⁷⁶ Palkki, "Gender Trouble," 32.

women's choir. This would ensure that they are sorted into choirs evenly, giving each choir a more balanced roster of skilled singers.

Directors should be sensitive to the more experienced choir members. Those with less experience (those who had not sung in a women's choir in high school) showed more satisfaction with their women's choir in this research study. Perhaps challenging those members with more experience or giving them leadership roles would increase the satisfaction those members feel. Respondents to the survey given in this study noted that they liked to be challenged. Directors should be careful to program challenging, educational repertoire and spend equal time advocating for and displaying the work of their women's choir.

Another topic about which the respondents agreed was extracurricular opportunities. These opportunities might include a women's choir festival, or traveling to a competition. Non-musical opportunities also create a sense of family and emotional connection in women's choirs. The respondents to this survey said numerous times that community and connection to the other women's choir members was important to them. Other types of events can be a draw for women's choir members, and these need not always involve singing: social justice events, visiting local nursing care facilities or hospitals, concerts (both classical and non-classical), meals, and other social bonding activities to name a few. Retreats are also important bonding experiences that create a positive atmosphere between members. If funds are not available for this, directors of choral programs might consider allowing members to have an overnight retreat in the

choral rehearsal room, or inquire with local churches or facilities about free or low-cost retreat spaces.

The survey showed that respondents knew that ensembles at their institution toured and/or recorded, but that their women's choir did not. In this age of technology, touring could be done virtually, but touring to local high schools can be a fun activity that also shows potential members how enjoyable it is to be in the women's choir. Recording can be done with cell phones and laptops, but some singers may have never heard their choir professionally recorded before. This can be a great experience for them and can project the hard work the women's choir has put forth for others to benefit from. Directors and administrators might show the elevated status of the women's choir by budgeting to allow women's choirs to tour and record.

The survey also showed that while women promote their concerts, they believe the largest audience attends the mixed choir's concerts. Purposeful advertising by the music department and co-designing a media campaign with the singers could potentially affect the number of audience members that attend women's choir concerts. Also, scheduling choirs to perform together so everyone may have a significant audience presence could be a simple change with a large impact.

Internalized sexism is still being perpetrated in women's choirs. Work has been done, but still more needs to be accomplished to remedy this problem and the stigma it creates within women's choirs. In the open-ended response section to this survey, respondents said things like "catty," "don't like being with girls for so long," "tired of only female voices," and "better with men." These women may not even realize

they are perpetrating sexism. Amrhein and Bearman report that women are conditioned to both live in and perpetuate internalized sexism by gender role conditioning.¹⁷⁷ This role conditioning is expected by women and enforced by women, mostly unknowingly. When some of the women in these choirs were not acting (or sounding) like they “should,” other women were frustrated with them or did not like being with them. The idea of being incomplete without or better with men seems to only be a problem if singing with men is the “norm.” Focusing on the community and sisterhood aspect of women’s choirs might help to reduce the stigma that some women feel about all-female choirs. Also, hosting open discussions about these stigmas with women’s choirs could lead to productive conversations about this topic.

When asked what type of choir they would choose to sing in before the women’s choir (Question 14), many respondents expressed interest in participating in country, jazz, and pop ensembles. Providing ensembles of these types or incorporating more varied music, including non-classical and non-Western European styles of music, into the repertoire of existing choirs could help with recruitment and retention of singers who do not identify with the typical classical choral ensemble.

While respondents to this survey all attended Southern U.S. colleges and universities, the survey did not ask about their home state. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the ideas discussed in the analysis are commonly held views of people from the South. The results found in this survey only speak for those who took the survey and their institutions at the time of the survey.

¹⁷⁷ Amrhein and Bearman, “Girls, Women and Internalized Sexism,” 195-197.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted at large, co-ed institutions that had women's choirs. Future research might include other types of institutions (smaller schools, women's colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs], etc.), institutions with advanced, or multiple women's choirs, and in other areas of the country. Another idea for future research might be to change the Likert-type scale questions to a 7-point scale, to create greater variability in responses. Different kinds of statistical analyses are also possible, with different independent and dependent variables. Respondents who did not complete the survey might have done so because of the length. A shorter survey instrument could potentially yield a higher response rate.

Comparing the responses of this survey with other groups (women in mixed choirs, men's choirs, high school choirs, adult choirs) about their views of women's choirs might yield different findings and insights. Also, asking directors, composers, audience members, administrators, and musicians in other fields (musicians in orchestras, jazz bands, marching bands, world music ensembles, etc.) for their views about women's choirs might yield different results. Another version of this study might include how members of other types of choirs rate their satisfaction with their choir compared to women in women's choirs (members of mixed choirs, men in men's choirs). Conducting interviews, either instead of or in conjunction with this survey, might also yield interesting and instructive results.

Another interesting topic that presented itself in the results was the behavior of the director. Future research could study whether the behavior of directors (as noted in

this study) is typical between choirs, age groups, in religious or secular settings, and in school or community settings. Does the gender, age, race, religion, or any other factor influence the behavior? Do some directors feel that being assigned the women's choir is demeaning or degrading?

Conclusion

This study sought to determine the perceptions of college women singing in women's choirs in large, co-educational schools in the southeastern United States. Women's choir members affirmatively responded to statements about their choir being highly valued at their institutions and in their communities. While the singers feel inferior to those in mixed choirs, they enjoy the repertoire they sing but would like to be challenged more. Respondents answered affirmatively about their women's choirs and women's choirs in general, but answered slightly more critically in the open-ended response questions about the same topics. Overall, the picture of how women's choir members perceive women's choirs is similar to what has been found in related literature and in the experience of the researcher. More work needs to be done to facilitate positive perceptions of women's choirs.

While there is room for further and more detailed research about women's choirs, we do not need more research to tell us that change is urgently needed. The research clearly shows that without exception, high school and college women's choirs are viewed as second place. These same observations have been written about for *years*, yet there has been no meaningful change. This research study inevitably found the same results as all

the others: women in women's choirs often feel like "leftovers" and that their choir is inferior to the mixed choir at their institution.

We cannot continue the status quo and expect different results. Those not in a position to make large decisions for their choral programs can consider small but meaningful changes. These might include playing women's choir recordings as examples of pure tone or blend (Vox Femina, Sweet Honey in the Rock, the Bulgarian Women's Choir, Lorelai Ensemble, and Maintou Singers of St. Olaf College are a great starting place), placing the women's choir at the end of a concert (the old adage "save the best for last" still holds weight), budgeting to afford the women's choir the same touring and recording opportunities as other groups on campus, spending adequate time planning rehearsals and musical experiences, and choosing quality, educational repertoire that challenges and excites women's choir members. Touring and recording are not the only markers of success, but still hold weight in many choral circles.

Those in a position to make bigger changes should consider making the women's choir the premiere choir at their institution, submitting recordings of the women's choir for conference performances, commissioning a piece for the women's choir, advocating for the women's choir to have the best-known conductor at the district honor chorus or all-state chorus event rather than always making the mixed-choir director the "headliner," and coordinating a women's choir-only festival.

There are a number of "complexities" that need to be listed here. These issues, which are beyond the scope of this document, are possible barriers to change that merit consideration. Some of these include:

- Some directors of women's choirs are not in the position to make changes to their choral program and therefore may have little ability to affect the choir's place in the institutional hierarchy.
- Some women will always prefer to sing in a mixed choir. The reasons for this may be social (a desire to mix with males or a distaste for all-female company), acoustic (a preference for lower voices, partly because of how human bodies respond to lower pitches), or due to other factors. To some extent, this preference may be an indication of internalized sexism.
- Budgets can limit the degree of change that is possible.
- There will be different problems depending on location and type of institution (i.e. a college in the Midwest might have different issues from one in the Southeast, community colleges may have different issues from private universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs] could have different issues from primarily non-HBCUs, etc.).
- Challenging the notion of the hierarchical choral system altogether may prove too broad for some programs. It requires asking necessary but difficult questions: How does a hierarchy of choirs benefit our students? How does competition serve our students? and many other questions.
- There may be pushback from the highest performing men if placements are done differently. In many cases, the highest-performing men are at a lower skill level than the highest-performing women at a given institution. Tradition has trained the best male singers to expect to perform with the best female singers, even if

they are not actually on par with one another. Placing the most advanced men with the mid-level women (whose skills might be comparable to those of the highest-performing men) might well cause conflict.

- Differences of skill level generally between women and men, the perceived shortage of male singers overall, and the lower numbers of skilled men are only problems if mixed choirs are considered the “norm” and all other types of choirs are considered “other.” There are more women than men interested in singing at almost every level. The perception of imbalance that results only exists if the standard is for women and men to perform together and if performing the music for mixed choir is deemed the most worthy activity.
- All change is difficult, but cultural change is the most difficult. In order to address the concerns of women singing in women’s choirs, we have to be prepared to undertake cultural change.
- Entrenched thinking is another challenge. When we are used to the way things are, it can be difficult to see what needs to change.

I myself fall victim to these complexities. The traditional language we use to discuss choirs is often problematic and has embedded assumptions. For example, we speak of choosing repertoire *for* singers. This assumes that the power to choose repertoire lies solely with the conductor. Yet this study reveals that women’s choir members have clear ideas about the kinds of music they like to sing. Since we are including their voices here, should we not include their voices in the process of selecting repertoire?

The language surrounding “quality” or “good” repertoire is also problematic. Too often, “quality” is associated with music written by White males in the European tradition, but there is a great deal more music that has artistic, cultural, and educational merit. We tend to assume that “good” music is written down, even though pedagogy in many cultures does not include notation to learn or transmit music. These are just a few examples of the ways our language reinforces underlying, problematic attitudes that keep women’s choirs “in their place” and the women in them from feeling fully valued. I will continue to question the often-destructive notions hidden in the language of our field and will challenge myself to learn and grow, just as the women who participated in this study say they are proud to do in their women’s choirs.

To my high school, all-state self: I want to help make a world where you would be proud to be in the women’s all-state group from the very beginning. You could not see it before, but that choir changed your life. Women’s choirs often have that power for those fortunate enough to join them.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Initial e-mail (sent on September 29, 2017) seeking participation:

Hello! I am a DMA Candidate in choral conducting from Arizona State University. My dissertation is going to be based on a survey I'd like to give to women's choir members at institutions throughout the Southeast. I will be asking them about their perceptions and attitudes about their choir compared to other choirs at their institution and in their communities. I will also ask them about their feelings toward singing in a women's choir. I would like your permission to enroll your students to be a part of this study.

They need to be a member of the women's choir, 18 years old or older, and self-identify as female. There is no remuneration for their participation, but no foreseeable risks or discomforts either. Their answers will remain totally anonymous and their participation is completely voluntary, but much appreciated.

The only thing I'll ask from you is to send an initial email (with a document explaining the study and with a link to the survey), and a reminder email 2 weeks later (I'll email you a script you can copy and paste in an email).

If there are any questions I can answer, I'd be happy to! You can call me at [REDACTED] or email me any time.

Let me know your decision on participation from your students when you get the opportunity. If they may participate, please let me know how many women are enrolled in your choir.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
Ashley Conway

Ashley Conway, MMEd
Doctoral Candidate, Choral Conducting
Arizona State University

ashley.conway@asu.edu

E-mail (sent on October 25, 2017) serving as the initial start of the survey collection period sent to the 24 interested institutions:

Hello!

Thank you, once again, for allowing your students to participate in this research study. As I stated in my initial email, I am emailing to remind you to please send out the link to my survey and the attached letter one more time, in case some of your students missed it the first time. Two weeks from now, I will close the survey and the link will no longer work. I appreciate your time and cooperation!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7T3HQ9Z>

If you would like to use this, here is an e-mail script you may use when you send the link and letter:

Dear students,

In this e-mail, you will find the link to the survey I sent you two weeks ago for the research study by Ashley Conway from Arizona State University. If you have already taken the survey, disregard this e-mail. If you have not yet taken the survey and would still like to, the link is listed in the document attached to this message.

Thank you!

—

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ashley Conway



Recruitment
Letter t...ts.docx

Ashley Conway, MMEd
Doctoral Candidate, Choral Conducting
Arizona State University

ashley.conway@asu.edu

E-mail sent on October 25, 2017 to institutions I had not heard from after initial agreement to participate. This inevitably served as the initial contact, and the e-mail message below (p. 143) was sent as a new 2-week follow-up on November 27, 2017 (survey closed 2 weeks after that, on December 11, 2017):

Hello!

Thank you, once again, for agreeing to help me complete my dissertation by sending this survey to your students. I sent the survey link and letter to you on October 25th and requested that you let me know when it had been sent to your students so I might follow up two weeks later.

I did not get an email response from you at that time, but you may have sent the email on to your students. If that is the case, please let this serve as the two week follow-up email. If you have not yet gotten to send the email to your students, please let this serve as the initial email and I will follow up with you again in two weeks.

I have attached the letter for your students and the link to my survey can be found below.

Please let me know when this goes out to your students either for the first time or the second time so I don't clog your email with reminders you don't need.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and help completing this stage of my doctoral study!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7T3HQ9Z>



Recruitment
Letter t...ts.docx

Best,
Ashley Conway

Ashley Conway, MMEd
Doctoral Candidate, Choral Conducting
Arizona State University

ashley.conway@asu.edu

Email sent on November 8, 2017 to the institutions that replied and sent the initial email to their students on October 25, 2017. This served as the two-week reminder email. This was also sent to the institutions that needed an extension, on November 27, 2017, and served as their two-week reminder email:

Hello!

Thank you, once again, for allowing your students to participate in this research study. As I stated in my initial email, I am emailing to remind you to please send out the link to my survey and the attached letter one more time, in case some of your students missed it the first time. Two weeks from now, I will close the survey and the link will no longer work. I appreciate your time and cooperation!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7T3HQ9Z>

If you would like to use this, here is an e-mail script you may use when you send the link and letter:

Dear students,

In this e-mail, you will find the link to the survey I sent you two weeks ago for the research study by Ashley Conway from Arizona State University. If you have already taken the survey, disregard this e-mail. If you have not yet taken the survey and would still like to, the link is listed in the document attached to this message.

Thank you!

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ashley Conway



Recruitment
Letter t...ts.docx

Ashley Conway, MMEd
Doctoral Candidate, Choral Conducting
Arizona State University

ashley.conway@asu.edu

Recruitment Letter (attached to e-mails):

October 25, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral candidate at Arizona State University in choral conducting. My final document is an investigation into the perception of women's choirs by collegiate women who participate in them. Participants must meet the following criteria: 1) be a member of a collegiate women's choir, 2) be age 18 or older, and 3) self-identify as female. Both music majors and non-music majors can participate.

Your answers will remain completely anonymous and there will be no specific identifying information taken about you during the course of the survey.

If you would like to participate in this study, please follow the link below.

If you have any questions now, or at any point in the future, please feel free to email me at ashley.conway@asu.edu. You may also contact my committee chair, Dr. David Schildkret at (480) 965-3706 or david.schildkret@asu.edu. We would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

When you click the link below, you will be taken to the survey, which will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your help with this research study. It will further the knowledge of women in music, of which you will be a part!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7T3HQ9Z>

Sincerely,

Ashley Conway, MMEd
Doctoral Candidate, Arizona State University

David Schildkret, DM
Professor, Arizona State University

APPENDIX B

SURVEY

Informed Consent Form

Informed consent

Title of Project: THE PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S CHOIRS IN COLLEGIATE CHORAL PROGRAMS IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES: ASKING WOMEN'S CHOIR MEMBERS HOW THEY FEEL

Informed Consent:

I am Ashley Conway, a doctoral candidate in choral conducting at Arizona State University. This survey is gathering evidence as part of my final document. I would like permission to enroll you as a participant in a research study. You need to be 18 or older, enrolled in the women's choir at your institution, and self-identify as female to participate in this study. You will only be asked to complete this survey and will not be contacted again for further questioning. The survey will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The purpose of the study is to learn more about how collegiate women view the women's choir they sing in. You will be asked to answer questions based on your opinions and perceptions of your women's choir. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study. You will not receive any remuneration for participation in this survey, but you will be contributing to the field of research on women in music. Your answers will be completely anonymous. You will be asked to provide some demographic information, but no other identifying information will be collected or stored. Your answers will be reported in a composite form, not individually. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

If you have questions regarding this research either now or at any time in the future, please feel free to contact me at ashley.conway@asu.edu. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Questions may also be addressed to my committee chair, Dr. David Schildkret, at (480) 965-3706 or david.schildkret@asu.edu. I appreciate your participation.

Thank you!

___ I have read the statement above and agree to participate in this study.

Final Document Survey

Demographic Questions:

2. What is your level in school?

- First-year undergraduate
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student

3. What is your major?

4. What is your minor (if applicable)?

5. In terms of race, how do you self-identify? (choose all that apply)

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American
- d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- e. White
- f. Other
- g. I prefer not to answer

6. In terms of ethnicity, how do you self-identify?

- a. Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin
- b. Not Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin
- c. I prefer not to answer

7. How old are you?

8. What voice part have you been assigned to sing in your women's choir?

- a. Soprano
- b. Alto
- c. I don't know
- d. Other (please list)

9. With which voice part do you self-identify?

- a. Soprano
- b. Alto
- c. I don't know

- d. Other (please list)

Survey Questions:

10. Does membership in your women's choir require an audition?
a. Yes
b. No
11. At your school, are the audition procedures for all choirs the same?
a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know
12. Were you placed in your women's choir after an audition for any choir or did you audition for women's choir, specifically?
a. I auditioned to sing in whatever choir possible and was placed in the women's choir
b. I was placed in the women's choir after my audition for the women's choir
c. I was placed in the women's choir after my audition for another choir
d. There is no audition for my women's choir, so I simply joined
e. Other (please specify): _____
13. If you had the option to choose what choir you would like to be in, where would you rank your women's choir?
a. First Choice
b. Second Choice
c. Third Choice/anything below third choice
d. I would not choose to be in a women's choir
14. If you chose anything other than "first choice" for question 5, please list what type of choir(s) you would choose to sing in before the women's choir (list all that apply) : _____
15. I believe that my women's choir is highly respected at my school.
a. Strongly disagree
b. Disagree
c. Agree
d. Strongly agree
16. All choirs at my school are equally respected.
a. Strongly disagree
b. Disagree
c. Agree
d. Strongly agree
17. People at my school perceive my women's choir to be more worthwhile than a mixed choir.
a. Strongly disagree
b. Disagree
c. Agree
d. Strongly agree

18. I am proud to be a member of my women's choir.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
19. My women's choir is highly valued in my community.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
20. My community does nothing to recognize the importance of my women's choir at my school.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
21. I actively promote women's choir concerts by (select all that apply):
 - a. Telling my friends and family
 - b. Hanging flyers around campus and the community
 - c. Making and/or passing on Facebook events or other social media posts
 - d. I do not actively promote women's choir concerts
 - e. Other (please list)
22. Of the following types of choirs, which group at your institution do you feel gets the most respect within your college/university?
 - a. Men's-only choir
 - b. Women's-only choir
 - c. Mixed-gender choir
 - d. I don't know
23. My friends are enthusiastic about my women's choir.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
24. My friends regularly come to my women's choir concerts.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
25. Of the following types of choirs, which group do you feel has the largest audience in attendance at concerts at your school?
 - a. Mixed-gender choir
 - b. Women's-only choir
 - c. Men's-only choir
 - d. I don't know

26. If there are some choirs that you believe have more skilled singers in them, how are those singers chosen for that choir?
- By audition
 - By class level (undergraduates vs. graduate students)
 - I don't know
 - Other (please list)
27. The placement of singers in choirs at my school is extremely fair.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
28. I enjoy the music my women's choir sings.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
29. The difficulty level of the music my women's choir sings is appropriately challenging for the singers in the choir.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
30. The music my women's choir sings is just as interesting as that of the other choirs at my school.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
31. I wish that my women's choir sang music that was less difficult.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
32. I wish that my women's choir sang more challenging music.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
33. The sound of a women's choir, in general, is especially beautiful to me.
- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
34. The sound of my women's choir is warm and full.

- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
35. The sound of women's choirs are too similar without the addition of male voice parts.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
36. A women's choir's sound/timbre is equally as satisfying as the sound of a mixed choir.
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
37. My women's choir's sound/timbre is as well respected as that of the other choirs at my school.
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Agree
 - d. Strongly agree
38. Do any of the choirs at your school tour and/or record?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
39. Does your women's choir tour and/or record?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
40. Did you sing in a women's choir in high school?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
41. Tell me about the best day you ever had in any women's choir you've ever sung in.
- _____
42. Tell me about the worst day you ever had in any women's choir you've ever sung in.
- _____
43. How do you feel about singing in a women's choir right now?
- _____
44. How do you feel about women's choirs in general?
- _____

APPENDIX C
IRB EXEMPTION FORM



EXEMPTION GRANTED

David Schildkret
Music, School of
480/965-3706
David.Schildkret@asu.edu

Dear David Schildkret:

On 9/26/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	The Perception of Women's Choirs in Collegiate Choral Programs in the Southern United States: Asking Women's Choir Members How They Feel
Investigator:	David Schildkret
IRB ID:	STUDY00006942
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informed consent document.pdf, Category: Consent Form;• Recruitment Letter to Students.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Reminder Email Script.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Social Behavioral Protocol Document, Category: IRB Protocol;• Recruitment Phone Call Script.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Survey, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ashley Conway completed her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting at Arizona State University in July, 2020. She studied with David Schildkret, William Reber, and Gregory Gentry. Her cognate studies were in opera and musical theatre conducting. While at ASU, her teaching assistantship (2011-2013) duties included conducting the Women's Chorus, teaching beginning choral conducting, and serving as the assistant conductor for the Men's Chorus, and the Barrett Choir. In 2013, she was the chorus master for the Lyric Opera Theatre's production of *Die Fledermaus*, and directed the Women's Chorus in a workshop with Eric Whitacre. Her successful tenure as a teaching assistant led to her appointment as a Faculty Associate (2014-2015). The focus of her doctoral research is about the perceptions of women's choirs. Ashley has taught choirs at the elementary, middle school, collegiate, and adult level in Georgia, Arizona, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Her choirs have consistently received superior ratings at performance evaluations. Each year, her students were represented at All-State Chorus, honor choirs, and performances and assemblies. She presented at the Arizona Music Educators Association convention in 2013 and has led choral workshops in Georgia and Arizona. In 2010, while teaching middle school chorus, Ashley completed the Master of Music Education degree at the University of Georgia. She completed the Bachelor of Music Education degree at Brenau University in 2008. When she is not teaching, Ashley loves to spend time with her husband, Bradley, and their daughters, Amelia and Zoe. She is excited to go back to her alma mater and begin her new position as adjunct professor of music education at Brenau University this fall.