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# Best Practices for the Changing Male Voice in Secondary Choir Classrooms

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in music.

By  
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Under the mentorship of Dr. David W. Langley

## Abstract

This research looks at the application strategies for addressing the changing male voice in secondary choir classrooms. The goal is to determine if the best practices described by scholarly literature on the changing male voice are being put into practice in secondary choir classrooms in Georgia and their perceived effectiveness. The research was conducted through a survey sent to all middle school choir directors in the state of Georgia with contact information listed through GMEA. Upon examination of the survey results, it is clear that choir directors are putting many of these strategies into effect in their classrooms and that they do consider them to be very effective. This research highlights the validity of current literature on the changing male voice.

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## **Introduction**

While the directors of secondary level choirs— grades 6 through 12— are always excited to recruit young men into their programs, these students pose unique challenges to classroom instruction. The adolescent male voice is constantly changing, particularly in late middle and early high school, and as these changes are occurring the singers must essentially relearn how to sing. Many young men, mistaking their developing voices for broken voices, give up on choir altogether. Unfortunately, males who do not continue to sing during the years of their voice change are significantly more likely to have problems with matching pitch later in life and are subsequently perceived as “tone deaf.” Therefore, in order to foster a lifetime love of music in their students and to ensure the success of their choral programs, it is crucial that secondary level choir directors find the most effective methods of helping young men navigate through this momentous transformation.

## **Literature Review**

Current research indicates that the maturation of men’s voices is determined by puberty, not age, and consequently no two voices will mature at the exact same time or in the exact the same way. However, these voices do develop in a predictable series of stages which all men will experience at some point. According the Cooksey (2000), this process occurs in five stages, beginning with the onset of puberty— which generally occurs between the ages of twelve and thirteen— and ending as the new voice begins to settle—generally between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. Each stage in the vocal transformation is accompanied by its own unique vocal range, tessitura, and struggles.

Prior to the onset of voice change, male and female vocal ranges are very similar, both falling on the treble staff. As the male voice develops, the vocal chords grow in both length and

thickness in the larynx. The growth of female vocal chords is nowhere near as drastic. One of the first signs of voice change is the gradual—or in some cases sudden— addition of lower pitches, along with the strain of the upper extremities of the range and a lower speaking voice. As they move through the later stages of voice change, young men will eventually develop an entirely new lower register which will produce a fuller sound, created by using the chest as a resonating chamber. Many young men will also retain the use of their old, upper register as well, which will produce a lighter sound (White & White, 2001). It is not uncommon for a temporary gap of a few pitches to form in between these two registers as the voice is changing. The voices of developing basses and baritones will typically experience far more drastic change than their tenor counterparts, and subsequently these students will often have a harder time matching pitch and maintaining vocal control until their voices settle (Leck, 2009).

While a young man's voice is changing, he is undergoing a psychological transformation as well. Middle school in particular is a time of identity formation, during which young males frequently become fixated on masculinity and the objects, people, and characteristics that they associate with this trait. They begin to seek out male role models—parents, teachers, athletes, movie stars— and try to mimic their actions. Middle schoolers are also heavily influenced by their friends and peers and will often espouse the mob mentality in order to fit in (White and White, 2001). With a vehement desire to avoid being perceived as “girly,” they will avoid activities stigmatized as feminine at all costs. This, unfortunately, often discourages young males from participating in choir, especially when the teacher is a woman.

It is the daunting task of the choir director to meet the challenges presented by the changing male voice and psyche with both mental and physical solutions. The general consensus of experienced secondary teachers is that the best practice is to take as individualized of an

approach as possible. The first step in this process is talking to young men about the voice-change process (Collins, 2012). This should be done in an all-male setting if possible, which will assist in lessening the embarrassment that inevitably accompanies the word “puberty.” Creating an open dialog about the changing male voice helps students to recognize that their voices are not broken, that the changes they are experiencing are completely normal, and that every male either has undergone or will undergo the same transformation—albeit in different time frames. Many experienced teachers have found that after having such conversations, their male students keep track of their own progress and eagerly anticipate what is to come (Leck, 2009). According to Cooksey (2000), when a young boy is “fully informed about the physical aspects of voice transformation and its concomitant effect on pitch range, tessitura, and voice quality, then voice change can be a true adventure—not a fearful nightmare.”

As much as possible, teachers should avoid labeling the voices of students who are experiencing voice change. A young boy with an unchanged voice would be mortified to be referred to as an alto, a soprano, or perhaps even a treble voice, as these terms all hold connotations of femininity (Dilworth, 2012). In a survey of 40 experienced middle school choral teachers, Barham (2000) found that 86 percent refer to men with changing voices as tenors, baritones, and basses, while only 38 percent use the terms soprano or alto. Using masculine terminology may be a better option for preserving the egos of young males. However, it can be equally damaging to refer to all boys with changing voices as tenors and baritones if we fail to treat their voices individually.

Another proven method of addressing the psychological challenges of voice change is the use of male role models who provide examples of excellence in terms of both character and vocal technique. This is especially important for female teachers to keep in mind. Vocal role

models can be other teachers, coaches, pop singers, and—perhaps most importantly—other students (Williams, 2012). Recordings by all-male choirs can be helpful teaching tools as well, exposing young men to the higher levels of musicianship that will be available to them if they continue participating in choir. Seeing and interacting with other men who sing encourages young males to remain in choir and helps to eradicate gender stereotypes surrounding singing (Dilworth, 2012).

This fact has led many experienced choir directors to advocate in favor of same-sex choirs. These settings permit younger singers to be mentored by older, more experienced singers, while also allowing the teacher to focus more attention on the issues that are specific to the male and female voice (Dilworth, 2012). Advocates suggest that same-sex choirs can also help to facilitate an environment in which students feel safe to experiment with their voices and in which students feel accepted by their peers. However, more significant research is needed to definitively support or reject these claims (Williams, 2012).

To address the physiological issues associated with voice change, directors should have a comprehensive understanding of each individual voice in their choirs. This can be achieved through periodic “voice checks,” which can be completed every few weeks or as often as time permits and can be done individually or in groups. During these checks, the teacher should find the pitch of the young man’s natural speaking voice and use this pitch as the starting point for a simple vocalise that covers a limited range (Dilworth, 2012). The goal of these exercises is to determine vocal range and tessitura, where the students can sing with the most comfort and where they experience discomfort. According to Dilworth (2012), the information gleaned from voice checks can be tracked visually as a classroom activity. This helps to emphasize the importance of each individual voice and often engenders comradery among male students. This

information should then be used in order to select both vocalises and repertoire that will allow all students to feel successful.

Warm-ups and vocalises assist in preparing the voice and the mind for singing. With an effective warm-up sequence, teachers can address both the foundations of good tone production and specific issues found in the repertoire to be rehearsed that day. For example, non-pitch-specific warm-ups provide students with a safe space to test their developing vocal ranges, and—when the proper scaffolding is included— improvisational warm-ups that let students pick their own pitches can be equally beneficial. These types of activities allow all students to feel successful and increase confidence for the remainder of the rehearsal.

Students should continue singing in their high voice before, during, and after voice change. Descending scalar patterns and glissandi can be used to bridge the gap between the old, high voice and the new, low voice. Due to the reduced ranges of many male students, vocalises that span between a minor third and a perfect fifth, are preferable (Leck, 2009). However, the teacher should make it clear to students that not everyone will be able to hit every single note in any given rehearsal, and that students should never sing pitches that are painful to produce. Students should be encouraged to use these exercises to test their continually developing ranges, but to drop out when the pitches become uncomfortable to sing.

The selection of repertoire is perhaps the most important decision that a choir director makes, as these pieces become the vessels through which almost all musical learning takes place. It is the responsibility of the teacher to pick repertoire that is both appropriate and comfortable for developing voices to sing, free of vocal strain. In an interview conducted by Collins (2012) among six experienced teachers, five respondents listed range and tessitura as the most important considerations when selecting literature for young men. Therefore, directors should spend a

considerable amount of time examining each piece to ensure that these aspects will be appropriate for all singers.

Freer (2010) suggests that when working towards educational goals—as opposed to performance goals—balance should not be a primary consideration. This means that it does not matter if a choir of fifty people only has four tenors and six basses. If an SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) piece suits the particular voices in the choir, it shouldn't be avoided on the basis of balance. Leck (2009) would disagree, stating that “when you have a choir with few tenors and basses, it is not possible to do SATB repertoire because there are not enough boys” (p. 56). However, he also claims that, when working with mixed choirs, SAB should also be avoided. This music is often written with ranges that are inappropriate for both changing and changed voices, too low for the former and too high for the latter. Freer (2010) and Leck (2009) agree that two and three-part treble pieces can be a much better option if the teacher is prepared to be flexible in adjusting parts. A teacher may even need to put her composition skills to use and adapt a voice part to better suit a single student. Although time consuming, this ensures that all students will flourish.

Whenever possible, a director should find pieces that allow the men to have the melody. At the very least, pieces should contain smooth voice leading, without large leaps. This will allow young men to focus their efforts on maintaining good tone and will make it easier for them to match pitch (Leck, 2009). The overall effect will be an increase in confidence. The text is also important. Middle school men want to be treated like young adults and therefore they want to sing serious music alongside fun music. They do not want to sing pieces that are “cute” or that poke fun at their youth (Collins, 2012).

Overall, the secondary choir director should strive to address both the physiological and

psychological aspects of male voice change. The best practices for addressing the psychological aspects include keeping boys informed about the voice change process, providing male role models, and creating a learning environment of trust and mutual respect. The best practices for addressing the physiological aspects of male voice changing include selecting warm-ups and vocalises that will help students to bridge the gap between their two registers, encouraging students to only sing notes that are comfortable, and picking and adapting repertoire with the appropriate range and tessitura for all students.

While current literature on the subject provides secondary teachers with a clear list of “dos and don’ts” for addressing the changing male voice, it does not address these practices being put into effect in real classrooms—other than those of the authors and a select few highly experienced teachers. The current literature does not provide an in-depth analysis of whether or not these practices are being put to use in classrooms or how effective they are when put into practice. It also does not address the fact that due to constraints beyond the control of the teacher, these practices might fall into the category of “easier said than done.” It does not discuss the validity of other ideologies or practices.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to determine if these best practices for the changing male voice—as determined by scholarly literature on the subject— are being put into practice by secondary level choir directors in the state of Georgia and, if so, whether or not these practices are perceived as effective. Barriers to supporting the development of the male voice will be explored, as well as alternative methods to addressing the challenges posed by these students. The ultimate goal is to determine both the practicality and efficacy of the current ideology for accommodating the changing male voice.

## **Methods**

To achieve this goal, a survey was composed addressing personal philosophies and practices concerning the changing male voice, hindrances to instruction, and the perceived success of these endeavors. Teacher experience and education, classroom demographics, and retention rates were also evaluated as part of the survey. Names of specific schools or teachers were not included on the survey in order to encourage honesty and eliminate bias. The survey was composed primarily in a questionnaire format, with each question being accompanied by a list of choices and the option to leave additional comments. The survey instrument is 22 questions long.

First, a select few teachers were asked to take part in a pilot study in order to assess the overall effectiveness of the survey instrument. The survey was amended to reflect the suggestions presented in the pilot study. The revised survey was then sent to the Institutional Review Board for approval. Subsequently, an e-mail was sent to all middle and high school choral directors at public schools in the state of Georgia with contact information listed through the Georgia Music Educators' Association (GMEA), explaining the purpose of the survey and requesting their participation. The final version of the survey was administered electronically to those who agreed to participate.

## **Hypothesis**

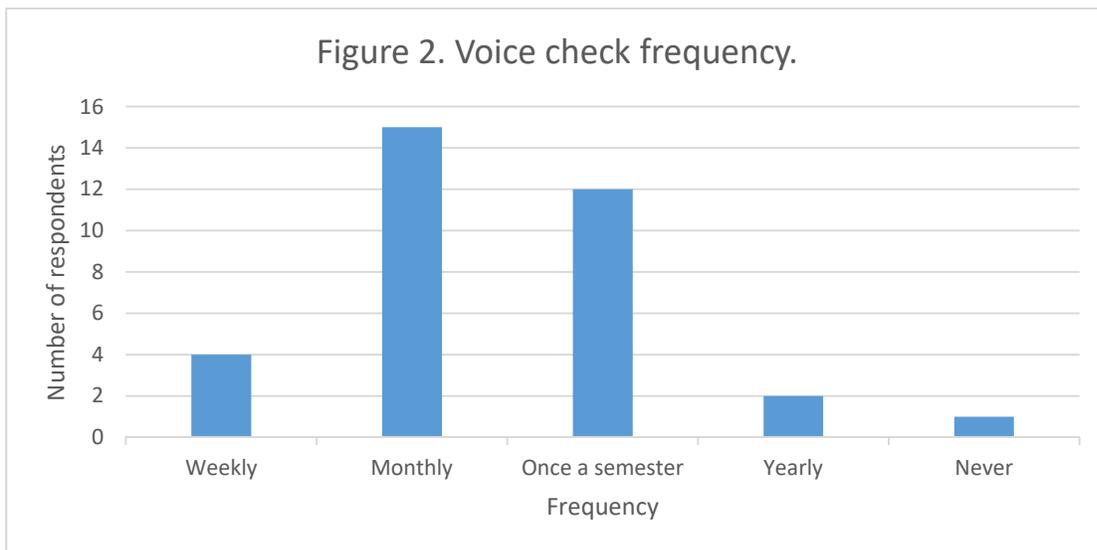
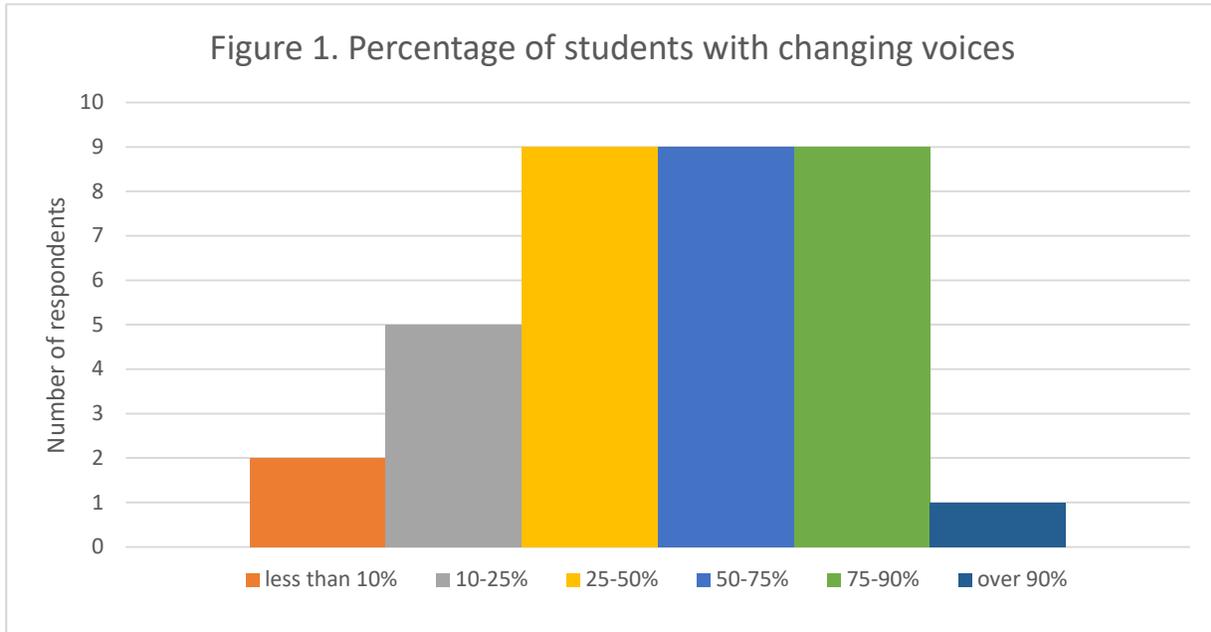
The hypothesis of the study is that a majority of secondary choir directors will agree with the best practices outlined in contemporary scholarly literature. However, a lack of both time and resources will be a major constraint upon their execution.

## Results

### Quantitative

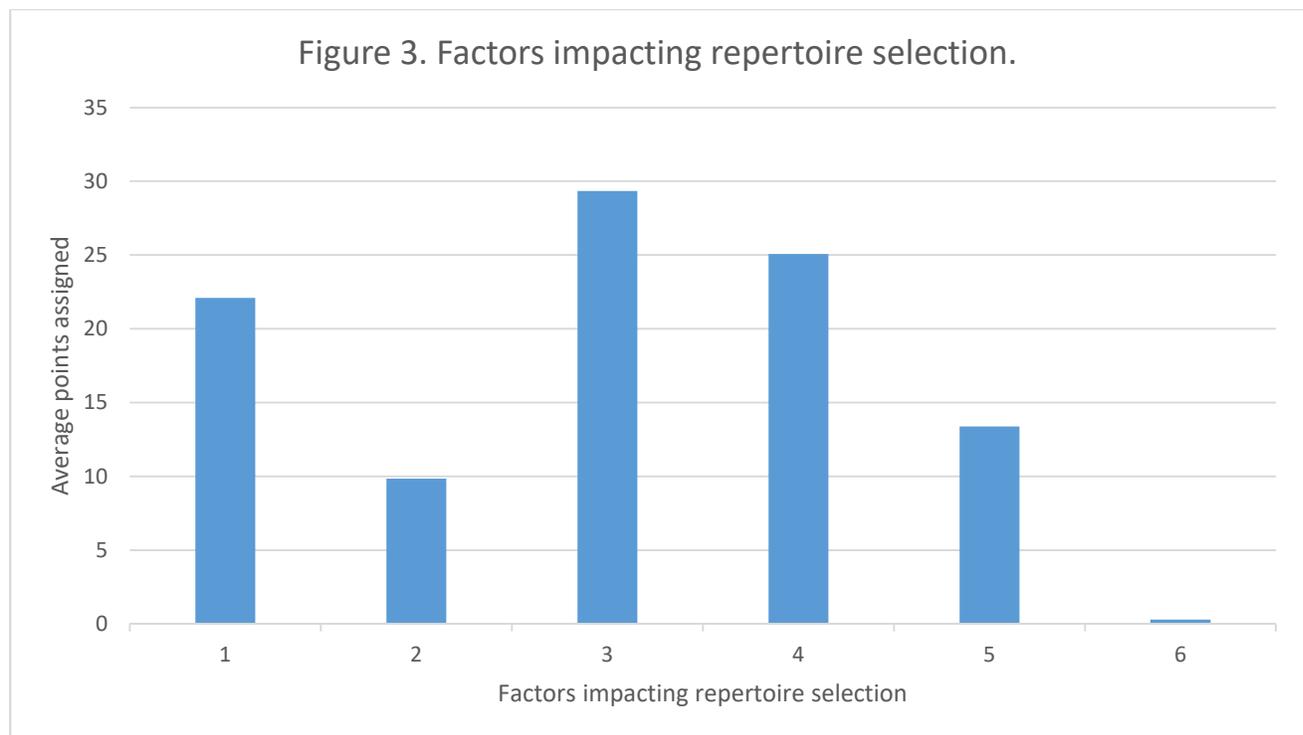
The survey had 35 participants, six of which were males and 29 of which were females. Approximately 92% of these participants teach middle school students. Of these middle school teachers, 32 respondents teach just grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, while one teaches a combination of middle and high school students. The average teaching experience of all participants was 10.5 years. Early career teachers (0-5 years of experience), consisted of 40% of respondents. Mid-career teachers (6-10 years of experience) made up 26% of respondents and late career teachers (11+ years of experience) made up 34% of respondents.

The average number of male students taught is 37. However, answers ranged from 130 male students to nine male students. The median number of male students was 27. This large variance in participation is likely related, in part, to the size of the student population at the respective schools, which was not addressed in the survey. When asked what percentage of these male students were in the voice change process, responses were widely distributed between the six answer choices (see Figure 1), with the majority of answers falling between 25% and 90%. Participants were then asked how often they are able to assess and keep track of individual voices in the choir. The most common selected answer choice was “at least once a month” and the least common answer was “never.” Over 91% of participants were able to perform voice checks *at least* once a semester (including once a week and once a month). This aligns with the recent literature on the subject, which states that teachers are able to serve their male students most effectively when they have knowledge of each individual voice. For more detailed results, see Figure 2.



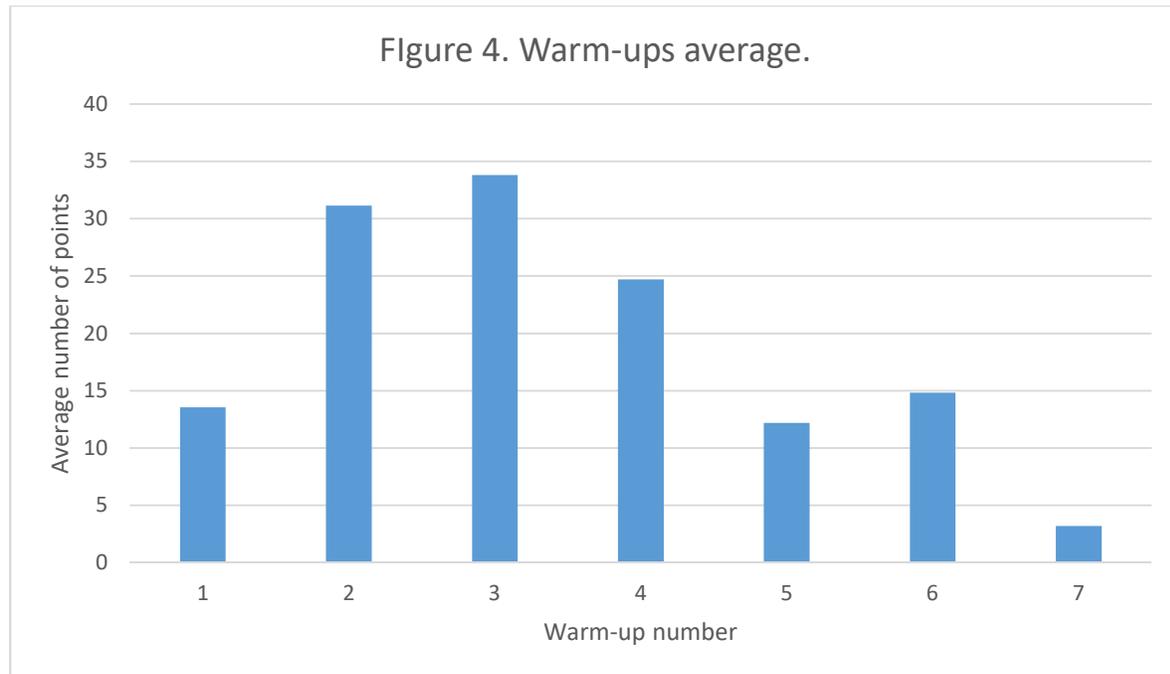
Participants were asked to delineate which factors are most influential when they are selecting repertoire for their choirs. To do so, participants were asked to assign a total of 100 points across six different answer choices, with the most influential receiving the greatest number of points and the least influential receiving the lowest number of points. Answer choices included: (1) musical concepts taught through the piece, (2) thematic content, (3) appropriateness

of range and tessitura, (4) difficulty of the piece in relation to student abilities, (5) whether or not students will enjoy the piece, and (6) other. Participants were later given the opportunity to elaborate on other factors. The most influential factor affecting repertoire selection was making sure that the range and tessitura was appropriate for all students ( $M=29.34$ ). The least influential factor, besides other, was the thematic content of the piece ( $M=9.84$ ). For detailed information, refer to Figure 3.



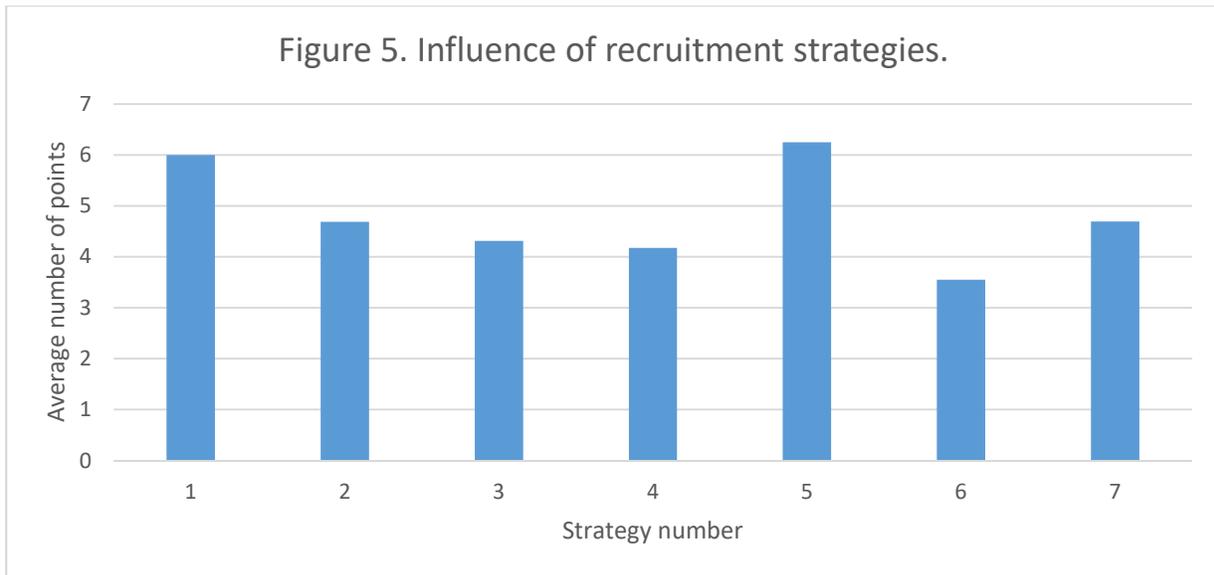
When questioned about their warm-up processes with male students, participants were given seven choices and asked to assign each choice a percentage, representing the amount of time spent using that particular type of warm-up. Given the fact that some choices might overlap, participants were told that the total did not have to equal 100%. Choices included: (1) Non-pitch-specific warm-ups, (2) warm-ups that span less than a P5, (3) warm-ups that span more than a P5, (4) warm-ups that remain in mode 1, (5) warm-ups that remain in mode 2, (6) warm-ups that switch between mode 1 and mode 2, and (7) other. The warm-ups that participants spent the most

time on were exercises that span more than a P5 ( $M=33.79$ ). The warm-ups that participants spent the least time on were exercises that remain in mode 2 ( $M=12.18$ ). For more detailed information, see Figure 4.

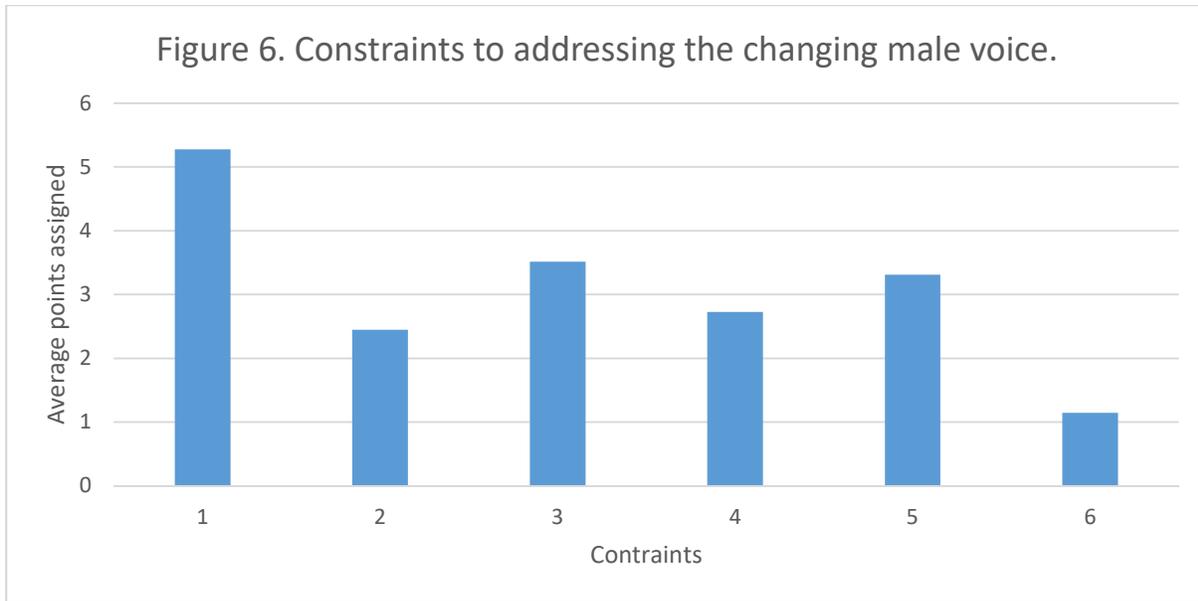


Using a Likert scale from one (least influential) to seven (most influential), participants were asked to delineate the how influential they believed the following recruitment and retention practices to be with male students: (1) the presence of male role models who are either in choir or who sing, offering fun choir field trips, (2) both day and over-night trips, (3) the selection of repertoire that is “manly” and tailored to male interests, (4) offering genre-specific ensembles, (5) creating a classroom environment of trust and respect, (6) competing in choral competitions, and (7) other. Of these choices, creating a classroom environment of trust and respect was listed as the most influential ( $M=6.25$ ), with the presence of male role models being listed as the second most influential ( $M=6$ ). The least influential practice was listed as competing in choral competitions ( $M=3.55$ ). When discussing other factors that influence their recruitment and

retention practices, 10 participants gave answers that included recruiting students' friends and/or popular male students, and eight participants said that praise and affirmation can play an important role in retention. For more detailed information, see Figure 5.



Participants were asked to elaborate on the factors that prevent them from spending more time addressing the changing male voice. Answers were given using a Likert scale of one (least influential) to seven (most influential). The constraints listed included: (1) a lack of class time, (2) a lack of funds and resources, (3) not enough male students, (4) a lack of training or professional development on the male voice, (5) learning repertoire and developing music literacy is more important, (6) the changing male voice is not something that needs to be directly addressed, and (7) other. The factor that was listed as most influential was a lack of class time ( $M=5.26$ ). The least influential factor was listed as the changing male voice does not need to be directly addressed ( $M=1.14$ ). This corresponds with the current ideology proposed by scholarly literature on the changing male voice that the male voice should not only be addressed but that students should be kept informed of their individual voice change process. For more information, see Figure 6.



### Qualitative

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to list the terminology that they use with their students when discussing unchanged male voices. The most frequent answer, given by six participants, was that they do not discuss the unchanged male voice unless necessary.

Combinations of modal voice/chest voice and falsetto/head voice were used by three participants. An additional three participants simply used the term unchanged voice and three participants used the terms soprano and alto. According to Dilworth, the terms soprano and alto—and sometimes even treble—often hold connotations of femininity in the minds of male students and being labeled with these terms can often be discouraging. Single participants gave answers such as tenor, treble, and allowing the students to choose team names (instead of soprano and alto).

In a similar question, respondents were asked to list the terminology that they use with their students when discussing the changing male voice. The answer listed most frequently, by seven respondents, was a combination of the terms falsetto/head voice and chest voice. Five

participants mentioned the vocal break, a term that— according to recent literature— can cause young men to think of their changing voices as broken and to subsequently become discouraged. The term *cambiata* was mentioned twice. Two participants said that they discuss the stages of voice change with their students and one even mentioned Cooksey's six stages as a tool for explaining the voice change process to students.

Overall, the terminology used by male participants when discussing both the unchanged and changing male voice did not differ drastically from that of the female participants. The terminology most frequently listed by males included head voice/falsetto and chest voice. It is noteworthy that none of the male participants utilized the terms break or soprano/alto in their answers.

Participants were asked to list the three most important pedagogical—in order of importance starting with Tool 1—that they believe a teacher can use to help male students navigate through the voice change process. The most frequently listed answers, with a total of 13 responses each, were vocal warm-ups/exercises and keeping the students singing (both in general and specifically in Mode 1). Seven of the participants who cited warm-ups and exercises said that they considered this to be the most important pedagogical tool, the highest total for Tool 1.

Explaining the voice change process to students was also listed as an influential tool, with seven respondents. Although, of these respondents, four listed this as the least influential of the three tools. The importance of other males role models in choir was listed a total of six times. Praise and affirmation was also mentioned five times, four of which were for Tool 3. Both keeping students informed of the process and male role models are both tools that are highly compatible with the ideas espoused in current literature on the changing male voice. Gradually working for the expansion of the vocal range was cited a total of four times, as was the selection

of repertoire that is appropriate for the changing male voice. These ideas are also consistent with the current literature. Interestingly, only two individuals gave responses that mentioned the importance of addressing individual voices and needs.

When asked, the majority of respondents claimed to be able to use all three tools that they listed in their own classrooms. Participants were then asked to rate the effectiveness of the tools they listed using a Likert scale from one (least effective) to seven (most effective). Although participants were asked to list tools from most influential (Tool 1) to least influential (Tool 3), the average score for each tool was approximately six points, indicating very high perceived effectiveness for all three tools.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to determine if secondary school choirs in the state of Georgia are utilizing the best practices for the changing male voice proposed in current scholarly literature on the topic and, if so, how successful these tactics are perceived as being. A majority of teachers who responded to the survey gave answers that are consistent with the techniques propounded by current literature for addressing the psychological challenges presented by the voice change process. A majority of participants also gave answers that are consistent with the best practices for addressing the physiological challenges of the male voice. However, there was some dissension and confusion in regards to technical terminology. All teachers reported high levels of success in addressing the needs of their male students and a majority cited a lack of time as their largest constraint.

According to experts such as Williams and Dilworth, male vocal role models can be extremely beneficial to recruiting, retaining, and supporting the vocal development of male students. The benefits that these role models can pose are both psychological and physiological.

The vast majority of respondents to the survey are females, meaning that they cannot serve as vocal role models to their male students. Fortunately, the majority of participants cited the presence of male role models who either sing or are in choir as being very influential in recruiting and retaining students. When elaborating on other effective recruitment strategies, 10 teachers cited the influence of recruiting either students' friends or popular male students. These answers indicate that teachers have a strong understanding of the desire that middle school students feel to conform and to feel that they are socially accepted.

Survey responses also indicate that participants try to take as individualized an approach as time permits when addressing the needs of their male students, including praise and affirmation, frequent voice checks, selecting repertoire that addresses students' vocal and musical needs, and keeping students informed of the voice change process. According to survey responses, a majority of teachers are able to assess individual voices at least once a month. This indicates that teachers should be able to take individual voices into account when selecting repertoire and planning instruction, something that experts say is crucial to ensure that all students are successful. When asked to delineate the main factors affecting repertoire selection, teachers listed range and tessitura and the ability level of students as the two most influential factors. A few teachers even mentioned rewriting vocal lines to support the needs of specific students, a very individualized and effective approach. The frequency of voice checks suggests that teachers are in a good position to make these calls when selecting repertoire. Taking an individualized approach will help students to feel they are valued, while also ensuring that students receive instruction that is tailored to their vocal strengths and weaknesses.

Because almost all participants in the survey teach exclusively 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade, one would expect to find similar answers when looking at the percentage of students with changing voices

in these teachers' classes. However, this was not the case. Teachers' answers varied greatly when describing the percentage of students in the voice change process. In fact, 25-50%, 50%-75%, and 75%-90% all tied as the top answer. Possible explanations for this difference in answers could be the specific grade that the majority of male students are in. For example, a teacher whose population of male students is primarily made up of sixth graders should show significantly less students in the voice change process than a teacher whose population of male students is primarily made up of eighth graders. Given the fact that a large majority of teachers claim to be able to perform individual voice checks at least once a semester, one would expect teachers to be able to report the percentage of students in the voice change process with accuracy. However, this disparity in answers could also be an indicator that teachers aren't as informed about their students' voices as they would like to suppose.

Many participants did not show an entirely accurate understanding of the warm-up sequence they utilize with their students. They were asked to assign points to each answer choice representing a percentage of the warm-up sequence, with no required limit to the total number of points as some choices would clearly overlap. However, some answer choices should have added up close to 100%. For example, exercises that remain in Mode 1, exercises that remain in mode 2, and exercises that switch between Mode 1 and Mode 2 should total close to 100%, but instead they total to approximately 52%. This indicates either a lack of understanding of the technical terminology used or a lack of understanding of their own process. A similar situation occurs with non-pitch specific warm-ups, warm-ups that span less than a perfect fifth, and warm-ups that span greater than a perfect fifth, which totaled to approximately 78%.

Regardless, the majority of respondents listed vocal warm-ups and exercises as one of their top three tools for addressing the physiological challenges presented by the changing male

voice. Survey results show that participants spend a similar amount of time on exercises that span less than a perfect fifth and exercises that span greater than a perfect fifth, with slightly more time being spent on the latter. Henry Leck claims that the most effective warm-ups are generally those that span between a minor third and a perfect fifth, as they allow male students to feel more successful while slowly building the vocal range. Warm-ups with larger ranges can be beneficial, when used to bridge the gap between the high voice and the low voice. However, participants only cite exercises that switch between Mode 1 and Mode 2 as accounting for 14% of their warm-up sequence, implying that many of these large range exercises only access either Mode 1 or Mode 2. These exercises should not constitute a majority of the warm-up sequence and could encourage vocal strain.

Although the average warm-up sequence presented in the survey does not correspond with that proposed by current literature, teachers cite the warm-ups and exercises that they utilize as being highly effective with their male students. Without a quantitative assessment of student success—as opposed to perceived student success—it is impossible to know for sure how successful this warm-up sequence is. Further research could ask participants to outline their warm-up sequence in their own words, as this might provide a more accurate representation.

There was also some dissension in the terminology used when describing the unchanged and changing male voice. A majority of participants listed technical terminology and avoided specific labels, which is exactly what experts suggest is most beneficial. However, a significant number of participants showed a lack of understanding of appropriate terminology. Three teachers labeled the unchanged voices in their choirs as either sopranos or altos, which can be damaging to the male psyche. The term break or gap was utilized five times. The terms heavy and light, which can be highly misleading for students whose minds are still highly literal, were

utilized twice. This indicates that there is a need for more education on the technical terminology relating to the changing male voice.

As predicted, a lack of time was listed as the main constraint to addressing the changing male voice. With the pressure of public performances, choral competitions, and Large Group Performance Evaluation, it can often be difficult to dedicate time to tasks such as listening to and working with individual voices. Directors often find themselves cutting their warm-ups and vocal exercises short in favor of perfecting repertoire. A possible solution to provide some relief for the time constraint would be to have students sign up for 5-10 minute time slots, either in the morning or after school—when the teacher is required by contract to be there, but students are not in class. The teacher could then use this time to work with individuals without eating into valuable class time. The director could also schedule a regular men's sectional during this time in order to address male-specific problems and discuss the voice change process. Contrary to predictions, funds and resources were not listed a major constraint to addressing the changing male voice.

Although all teachers cited high levels of success with the tools they use with their students, it is impossible to know for sure how effective these tools actually are without assessing student perceptions and performance. For future research, Large Group Performance Evaluation scores could be assessed as quantitative criteria for determining the general success of choral programs. A more specific assessment of success would require the direct evaluation of classroom practices, teaching techniques, and student progress.

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## Appendix: Cover Letter and Survey

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a questionnaire for my research study entitled Best Practices for the Changing Male Voice in Secondary Choir Classrooms. I am currently enrolled in the Music Department at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Ga, and am in the process of writing my Honors Capstone Thesis. My mentor is Dr. David Langley, Assistant Professor of Music Education and Choral Activities. The purpose of this project and the questionnaire is to determine if these best practices for the changing male voice—as determined by scholarly literature on the subject— are being put into practice by secondary level choir directors in the state of Georgia and, if so, whether or not these practices are perceived as effective.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or leave blank any questions you don't wish to answer. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researchers will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

If you agree to participate in this project, please answer the questions on the questionnaire as best you can. It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Emily Deyton at [ed01719@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:ed01719@georgiasouthern.edu) or 478-334-8283. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-5465. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number H18196.

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,  
Emily Deyton

Q1 What grade levels do you teach?

P-5th

6th

7th

8th

9th

10th

11th

12th

Q2 How many years have you been teaching?

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Q3 What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Q4 Approximately how many male students do you teach?

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*Display This Question:*

*If What grade levels do you teach? = 6th*

*Or What grade levels do you teach? = 7th*

*Or What grade levels do you teach? = 8th*

Q5 Approximately how many of these students are in the 6th-8th grade?

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*Display This Question:*

*If What grade levels do you teach? = 9th*

*Or What grade levels do you teach? = 10th*

Q6 Approximately how many of these students are in the 9th-10th grade?

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Q7 Approximately what percentage of these male students are in the process of voice change?

- Less than 10%
- 10%-25%
- 25-50%
- 50%-75%
- 75%-90%
- More than 90%
- Unsure

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Q8 Approximately how many of your male students have unchanged voices?

- Less than 10%
- 10%-25%
- 25%-50%
- 50%-75%
- 75%-90%
- More than 90%
- Unsure

Q9 How often are you able to assess and keep track of individual voices in your choir?

- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- At least once a semester
- At least once a year
- Never

Q10 Distribute 100 points between the following answer choices with the most important receiving the greatest number of points. (Please do not give any two choices the same number of points.)

When selecting repertoire, what do you consider to be most important?

- \_\_\_\_\_ The musical concepts that can be taught through the piece
- \_\_\_\_\_ The thematic content of the piece
- \_\_\_\_\_ Making sure the range and tessitura is appropriate for all students
- \_\_\_\_\_ The difficulty of the piece compared to students' differing abilities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whether or not students will enjoy the piece
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

*Display This Question:*  
*If When selecting repertoire, what do you consider to be most important? [ Other ] > 0*

Q11 Please elaborate on what other factors affect your repertoire selection.

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Q12 In considering your vocal warm-up with your male students, what percentage of time is spent on each of the following:

(Note: some choices may overlap, so the total does not need to equal 100%.)

- Non-pitch-specific warm-ups : \_\_\_\_\_
- Warm-ups that span less than a P5 : \_\_\_\_\_
- Warm-ups that span more than a P5 : \_\_\_\_\_
- Warm-ups that remain in Mode 1 : \_\_\_\_\_
- Warm-ups that remain in Mode 2 : \_\_\_\_\_
- Warm-ups that switch between Mode 1 and Mode 2 : \_\_\_\_\_
- Other : \_\_\_\_\_
- Total : \_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If in considering your vocal warm-up with your male students, what percentage of time is spent on ea... [ Other ] > 0*

Q13 Please elaborate on what other warm-ups you utilize with your male students.

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*Skip To: End of Block If How influential do you believe each of the following factors would be in persuading young men to... = The presence of male role models who are either in choir or who sing.*

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Q15 Please elaborate on what other factors you believe might persuade young men to join and remain in choir.

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Q16 To what extent do the following factors prevent you from spending more time addressing the changing male voice?

	1 (least influential)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (most influential)
A lack of class time	<input type="radio"/>						
A lack of funds or material resources	<input type="radio"/>						
Not enough male students	<input type="radio"/>						
A lack of training or professional development on the male voice	<input type="radio"/>						
Learning repertoire and developing music literacy is more important	<input type="radio"/>						
The changing male voice is not something that needs to be directly addressed	<input type="radio"/>						
Other	<input type="radio"/>						

*Skip To: End of Block If To what extent do the following factors prevent you from spending more time addressing the changi... = A lack of class time*

Q17 Please elaborate on what other factors prevent you from spending more time addressing the changing male voice.

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Q18 What terminology do you use with your students when discussing the unchanged male voice?

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Q19 What terminology do you use with your students when discussing the changing male voice?

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