

Secondary Choral Educator Traits and Characteristics that  
Support Adolescent Male Enrollment

by

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this pilot study was to examine which traits and characteristics secondary choral educators have in common that encourage male participation in a choral setting. The study focused on how choral music educators perceive themselves in regard to the recruitment and retention of male singers in their programs. While analyzing the data, similarities and differences of participants who had programs with a low male enrollment were compared to those with a higher male enrollment. A review of related literature was used to formulate an online survey instrument. A cover letter was sent via email to members of the Eastern, Middle, and Western Tennessee Vocal Music Educators Association. Data from the 35 participants were reported as frequencies and percentages. The results indicated that sex, classroom management, competitiveness, extroversion, conductor magnitude, and familial attitudes towards students support male enrollment, recruitment, and retention. Recommendations that are provided can help bring a greater self-awareness to secondary choral educators as they work on increasing the numbers of male participants in their programs.

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## **Secondary Choral Educator Traits and Characteristics that Support Adolescent Male Enrollment**

Through the course of my degree in music education, one of the most frequent topics of discussion has been the problem of the male voice. Whether it is in a class discussion regarding the voice change, attending conferences with innumerable interest sessions on working with adolescent males, observing ensembles with a disproportionate amount of females at festivals, or working with mentor teachers, the question of how to boost male enrollment is continually present. I have frequently found myself wondering just how much male enrollment is a result of teaching strategies versus a result of the teacher's traits and characteristics.

### **Review of Literature**

Recruitment and retention of male singers has been an issue perplexing secondary choral music educators for decades, as evidenced by Leonard Van Camp's 1987 landmark article calling it a "serious crisis" (1987; Freer, 2008; Quinn, 2004).

#### **Historical Overview**

A simple search in the library catalog reveals a multitude of articles from a variety of academic sources regarding this shortage of adolescent males in choral ensembles. Today, where males are sought after as a sign of a strong choral program, is in direct contrast to Colonial America (ca. 1600-1780). According to research done by Terry Gates in *Journal of Research in Music Education* (1989), men actually used to be the predominant sex in the world of vocal music. Music and singing classes were

traditionally male-centered. During the 1720s, “whole-congregation” worship ideals lead to actively expanded music literacy courses that included women in the hopes of convincing them to sing in church. Ultimately, this singing school movement led to the founding of music education in Boston.

Upon the founding of music education in the public school, there has been a gradual reversal of the gender divide in music. While the 1930s study by Reavis and Van Dyke found the ratio of men and women in choral music to approximately equal, by the late 1980s the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that females outnumbered men in secondary school choirs by a ratio of 5:2 (as cited by Gates, 1989). To this day, there has been little to no turnaround (Harrison 2004; Quinn, 2004).

### **Contemporary Overview**

Since the mid-1900s, choral educators have striven to understand better what attracts men to choir and how to keep them involved. Several professional journals, hundreds of articles, and countless books have focused on understanding the young male’s psyche and voice in regard to choral singing (Freer, 2008). With theories ranging from fear of homophobic bullying (Harrison, 2004; Freer, 2012) to a lack of connection to their future career (Freer, 2012), much of the research done to date has focused on why men do, and do not, join choir. There is limited data on what specific traits and characteristics choral educators have that may affect male enrollment.

Yet, studies have shown that adolescent males decide to enroll in choir not necessarily because of their friends, but because they love to sing, and perceive choir to be fun (Lucas, 2011). This is promising for choral educators because it shows that they are not necessarily fighting a losing battle with society. Rather, an educator who

understands “the reasons boys provide about why they sing, what attracts them to or discourages them from participation in choral music, and what factors facilitate continued participation beyond adolescence” lays the foundations for a male-strong choral program (Freer, 2010 p. 18).

In his essay in *Perspectives on Males and Singing*, Frank Abrahams agrees that the onus for recruiting and retaining males lies on the teacher to make choir a meaningful class where the young men feel valued (2012). This is the foundation of the theory known as the Critical Pedagogy for Music Education (CPME). CPME is the combination of many different self-identity theories such as Social Identity Theory and Performativity Theory. Its approach is to break down barriers between “in” groups and “out” groups “by honoring the world of each individual student” (Abrahams, 2012). In essence, CPME is characterized by

Teachers who embrace critical pedagogy for music education foster a teaching environment that encourages dialogue between teacher and student so that students take ownership of their learning . . . [it is the] opposite of direct instruction ... where teachers deposit information into the learner's memory (or bank account) where it is stored until the teacher asks the student to recall or withdraw it on a test. (Abrahams, 2012, p. 83)

When teachers and students collaborate in the style of CPME, the democratic environment creates a sense of choir being a part of the so-called “in-group.” This reinforces the young men’s esteem and their loyalty to the ensemble. In other words, the teacher’s philosophy on education has profound effects on the success of their ensemble in attracting both genders. Indeed, preliminary qualitative surveys indicate that successful choral educators have a diverse skill set and philosophy that are always student-centered. Successful choral educators must have passion for their subject, high standards, a sense of humor, boundaries, self-motivation, leadership qualities, professional understandings,

and a thorough understanding of the boy's changing voice, in addition to other teacher traits (Barresi, 2000).

Furthermore, a 1977 survey suggests that choral educators who have self-confidence, idealism, and sensitivity are more successful in their career than those who spend "extensive efforts in coping" with the inherent stresses of teaching (Slack). A 2010 survey on middle and high school band directors reveal that band directors similarly "perceived teacher affect to be a critical element of successful teaching" (Miksza, Roeder, & Biggs). Case studies have found that, regardless of subject, master teachers are purposive, perfectionists, have a sense of humor leaning towards self-deprecation, give lots of encouragement but limited amounts of praise, stressed self-discipline and responsibility, use time wisely, are family oriented, and believe in their students (Reavis, 1988). These three studies indicate that master educators tend to share similar traits and characteristics. More research is needed to know, however, what the actual effect these traits have on recruitment and retention.

### **Statement of Purpose**

In today's era of the sought-after male in secondary choirs, there is an increasing need for understanding not just why adolescent males are not enrolling in the same numbers as the 1930s or earlier, but also what effect the teacher has on their enrollment. There is a wealth of information pertaining to understanding the psyche of male adolescents as they decide whether or not to join choir, but very little research has been done to differentiate what traits and characteristics their teachers possess that influences their decisions. As Patrick Freer concludes in his 2012 *Choral Journal* article titled "The Successful Transition and Retention of Boys from Middle School to High School Choral

Music,” “The question is not just ‘why do boys drop out of chorus?’ The bigger question is ‘what can we do differently so that they stay?’” To answer this question, this pilot study examines which traits and characteristics secondary choral educators have in common that encourage male participation in a choral setting.

## **Method**

This study was designed to examine the traits and characteristics of secondary choral educators in relation to their programs' male enrollment. Therefore, a review of related literature was used to formulate an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved, 31-question online survey instrument. The website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) was utilized.

### **Selection of Participants**

Permission was requested and granted from the Eastern, Middle, and Western Tennessee Vocal Music Educators Associations to send a cover letter via email to its membership with a survey link. The target population for this survey was all high school choral educators who were a part of the Tennessee Vocal Music Educators professional organization. The presidents of each division was forwarded an IRB-approved cover letter via email with a link to the survey. After ten days, a follow up email was sent reminding educators of the survey in order to increase the response rate. The survey began May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and responses were collected until July 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Description of Participants**

Participants were instructed only to complete this survey if they were a high school choral educator (grades 9-12). Of the 35 participants, 15 were male and 20 were female. Participants reported a wide range of teaching experience and degree levels from newly hired to 20+ years, and from holding a bachelor's degree to a doctorate.

## **Instrumentation**

The 31-question survey consisted of four sections: six multiple choice demographic questions, 17 literature-based “I am...” questions that participants were instructed to “select the most appropriate response to each statement,” with responses ranging from “Not Accurate” to “Very Accurate,” four multiple-choice questions asking for self-classification in regards to extroversion and perception of leadership persona, and four open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were a) “do you feel that your overall persona encourages adolescent males to join your ensemble? Why or why not,” b) “Do you feel that your administration supports the recruiting and retention of males in your choral program,” c) “How do you recruit and retain men? If you find it difficult, what do you see as the major obstacles of recruiting and retaining men in your choral program?”

## **Protection of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to answer any questions. Additionally, they were informed that consent would be assumed from completion of the survey. All information was reported anonymously, and in no way could any individual be identified.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

Data were collected in frequencies and percentages. Open-ended questions were categorized for organization and examination, with Dr. Jamila McWhirter verifying the categorization of the responses. Analysis of the data compared and contrasted filtered data between participants with a low overall male enrollment (0-10%) with a higher male

enrollment (11-75%). All of the comments received are located in Appendix C. One limitation of the survey is that all data are the reflection of self-perception and reporting.

## Results

### Demographics

There were 35 participants to this study. Of these, 15 were male and 20 were female. The participants had a wide range of experience teaching choral music; 9 had taught for 1-3 years, 6 for 4-7 years, 7 for 8-15 years, 6 for 16-20 years, and 7 for more than 20 years. (See Table 1).

Table 1  
*Years of Teaching Experience*

Number of Years	Percent	<i>n</i>
1-3 years	25.7%	9
4-7 years	17.1%	6
8-15 years	20.0%	7
16-20 years	17.1%	6
20+ years	20.0%	7

By a slight majority, the highest level of completed education was a Master’s degree (50%). The second highest level of completed education was a Bachelor’s degree (41.18%), followed by a Specialist degree (5.88%), and a Doctorate (2.94%). One person omitted this question. See Table 2.



Table 2

*Highest Level of Completed Education*

Level of Education	Response Rate	Response Count
Bachelor's	41.2%	14
Master's	50.0%	17
Specialist	5.9%	2
ABD	0.0%	0
Doctorate	2.9%	1

*Note. One participant skipped this question.*

**Types of Choirs**

Mixed chorus was the most common type of ensemble reported by participants (94.17%). Female-only choirs outnumber male-only choirs at a 2:1 ratio. See Fig. 1 for a full list of types of choirs that participants selected being in their program. Within their combined programs, all but one participant reported that there were more females than males in their choirs. The majority of choirs (60%) had at least three times more female singers than male singers (see Figure 2).

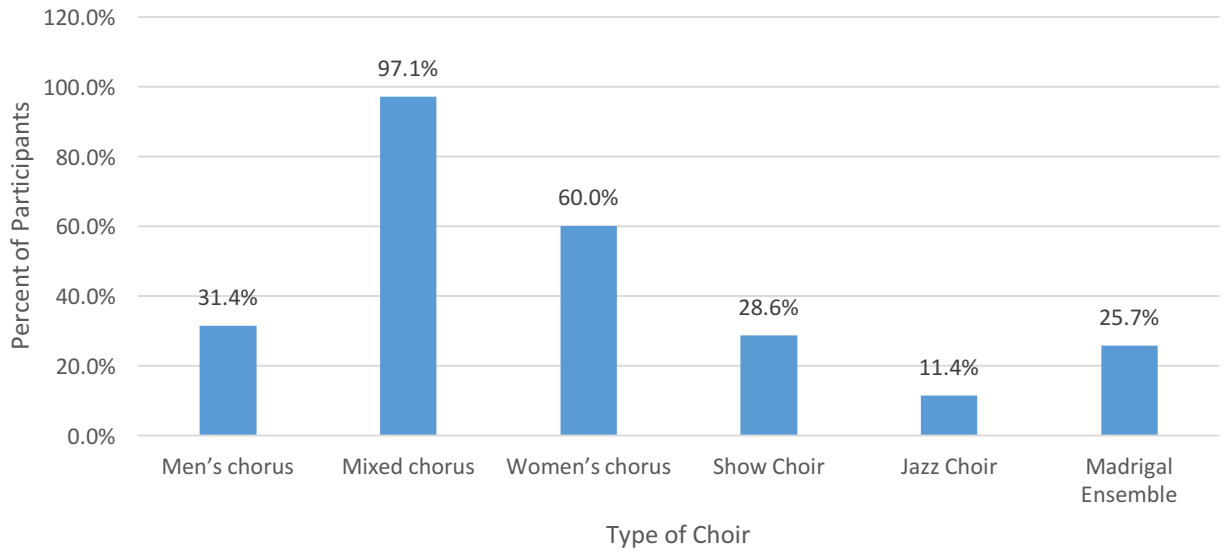


Figure 1. *Types of choirs in participants' programs*

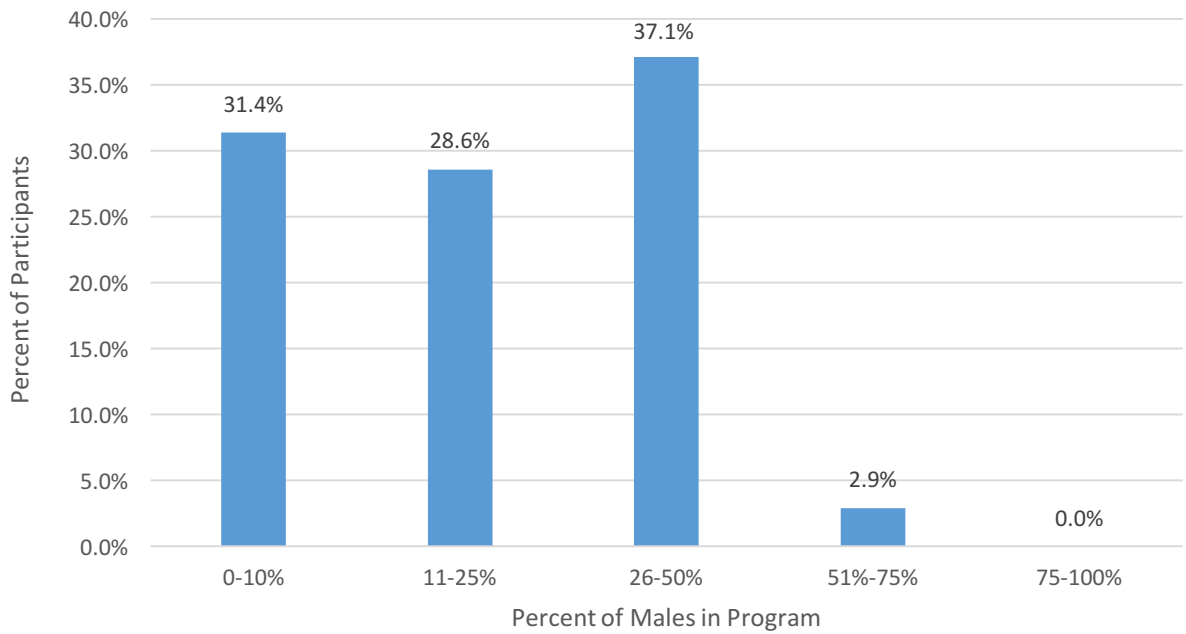


Figure 2. *Overall percentage of males enrolled in participants' programs*

Most participants (78.78%) selected that it was “very accurate” or “accurate” that they needed more males. The one participant that had more males than females in their choir selected it was “not accurate,” and the remaining 18.18% of participants selected “somewhat accurate.”

### **Teacher Traits and Characteristics**

Over half of the participants described their classroom management style as “authoritative” (52.94%), and over a third as “democratic” (35.29%). A minority described their classroom management as “passive” (11.76%). One person omitted this answer.

Although there were 35 participants in the study, two participants omitted responses to all of the following questions. It has been noted when additional participants omitted a response.

Roughly three-quarters of the participants answered either “very accurate” or “accurate” when asked to respond to the statement “adolescent males relate well to me” (75.76%). Several participants indicated that statement was only “somewhat accurate” (21.21%), or “not accurate” (3.03%).

All but one of the participants identified with “I am naturally enthusiastic/energetic in class” as “very accurate” or “accurate” (96.97%). The remaining participant selected “somewhat accurate.”

Most participants stated that they used physical movement during rehearsals to varying degrees. 81.82% of the participants said that it was either “very accurate” or “accurate,” and 18.18% said that it was “somewhat accurate.”

The majority of participants indicated that being goal oriented was either “very accurate” or “accurate” (96.97%). Only one participant felt it was “somewhat accurate” (3.03%).

All of the participants responded that they were confident in class (100%). Similarly, all participants who responded to the survey felt that they had strong leadership skills (100%).

An inclusive climate was perceived to be provided by a majority of participants (93.94%), although 6.06% indicated that that was only “somewhat accurate.”

The overwhelming majority “set high standards” for their students (96.97%). Two-thirds of the participants strongly identified with the statement (66.67%). One person said that it was “somewhat accurate” (3.03%).

All participants indicated it was either “very accurate” or “accurate” that they frequently give constructive criticism to their students/ensembles (100%).

When asked to respond to the statement “I am a perfectionist,” the majority indicated that it was “accurate” or “very accurate” (65.63). 25.00% reported that it was “somewhat accurate,” and 9.38% that it was “not accurate.” Three participants did not respond to this question.

There was a similar spread of data regarding “I am inherently competitive.” The majority of responders said that was “very accurate” (36.36%), and there were an equal number of “accurate” and “somewhat accurate” responses (30.30% each). Only 3.03% of the participants considered themselves to not be inherently competitive.

Most participants considered themselves to be positive, with a majority saying that was a “very accurate” statement (54.13%). A large minority considered it to be an

“accurate” statement (43.75%), and only 3.13% said it was “somewhat accurate.” Three people skipped this question.

Likewise, most choral directors felt that they are thoughtful listeners, with the majority saying it was an “accurate” statement (57.58%), or “very accurate” (33.33%). About 6.06% of the people said it was “somewhat accurate,” and 3.03% said it was “not accurate.”

All participants felt that their students respected them, with an equal amount of respondents saying it was “very accurate” or “accurate” (39.39% each). 21.21%, however, felt that it was only “somewhat accurate.” No participant indicated that their students disrespected them.

There was a wide range of responses to the statement “I consider myself to be a high magnitude teacher and conductor.” 34.38% felt that that was a “very accurate” statement, 50.00% said “accurate,” 9.38% said “somewhat accurate,” and 6.25% said “not accurate.” Three participants skipped the question.

While the vast majority of participants selected that their students viewed them as being extroverted (80.65%), a sizeable minority thought they were viewed as ambiverted (12.90%) or introverted (6.45%). However, when asked to self-evaluate their extroversion, the numbers are much more spread, with a roughly equal number of extroverted and ambiverted responses (39.39% and 36.36%, respectively). There is a dramatic increase in the percentage of self-described introverts when compared to how they think their students seek them. See Table 3.

Table 3

*Comparing Perceived Extroversion with Self-Identified Extroversion*

Term	Perception of Students' View	Self-View
Extrovert	80.65%	39.39%
Introvert	12.90%	36.36%
Ambivert	6.45%	24.24%

In two multiple choice questions, the respondents were asked to first choose how they thought their students perceived their role in the classroom, and then how they viewed themselves. In both cases, the majority response was as a “teacher” and “mentor.” 51.61% of participants selected that their students viewed them as a “teacher,” whereas 66.67% selected that they considered themselves a “teacher.” A similar increase happened in regard to the term “mentor”: 48.39% perceived their students viewed them as a mentor while 58.58% viewed themselves as a mentor. The term “coach” received a roughly equal number of responses in both questions. A large difference emerged between the perceived student’s view and the participant’s self view for both the terms “parental figure” and “friend,” with substantially less participants viewing themselves in that way. The full break down of the responses to this question can be seen in Table 4. It’s important to note that four people skipped “my ensemble males view me as more of a” but only two people skipped “I view myself as more of a...”

Table 4

*Participants' Perceived Role in the Classroom*

Term	Perception of Students' View		View of Self	
	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	percent	<i>n</i> <sup>b</sup>	percent
Teacher	16	51.61%	13	66.67%
Mentor	15	48.39%	22	57.58%
Coach	11	35.48%	19	39.39%
Parental Figure	11	35.48%	5	15.15%
Friend	5	16.13%	2	6.06%

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> *N*=31. <sup>b</sup> *N*=33

**Traits and Characteristics in Relation to Enrollment**

To differentiate the traits and characteristics of participants who had an unusually low male enrollment in their programs (0-10%) with those who had a higher male enrollment (11-100%), I filtered to show only those subgroups. There were no notable differences between the low male and high male enrollment programs in the the areas of

- years of experience
- educational level,
- types of choirs offered,
- perception of how well males relate to participant,
- level of enthusiasm/energy,
- physicality in rehearsals,
- goal orientation,
- confidence,
- leadership strength,
- philosophy of inclusivity,

- levels of expectation for programs,
- frequency of constructive feedback,
- stress management,
- attention to detail,
- perfectionism,
- positivity,
- listening skills,
- or perception of students' respect.

However, there were several traits and characteristics that were substantially differently between the subgroups. These are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Multiple-Choice Responses as Percentages*

Traits and Characteristics	Male Enrollment	Male Enrollment
	Low (n=11)	Higher (n=24)
Gender		
Male	18.18	54.17
Female	81.82	45.83
Classroom Management		
Authoritative	20	66.67
Democratic	60	25
Passive	20	8.33



Traits and Characteristics	Male Enrollment	Male Enrollment
	Lower	Higher
Competitive		
Very Accurate	27.27	40.01
Accurate	18.18	36.36
Somewhat Accurate	45.45	22.73
Not Accurate	9.09	0
Teacher Magnitude		
Very Accurate	27.27	38.19
Accurate	54.55	47.62
Somewhat Accurate	9.09	9.52
Not Accurate	9.09	4.76
Perceived Extroversion		
Extroverted	90	76.19
Ambiverted	10	14.29
Introverted	0	9.52
Actual Extroversion		
Extroverted	27.27	45.45
Ambiverted	63.64	22.73
Introverted	0.09	31.82
Ensemble's View of Participant		
Coach	20	42.86
Teacher	60	47.62
Mentor	50	47.62
Parental Figure	40	33.33
Friend	20	13.29
Participant's View of Self		
Coach	45.45	36.36
Teacher	63.64	68.18
Mentor	54.55	59.09
Parental Figure	9.09	18.18
Friend	0	9.09

## **Categorization of Written Comments**

Within the written responses, the most common types of humor reported were sarcasm (19.05%) and silliness (19.05%). The majority of participants (89.52%) stated that they used humor frequently (46.66%) or often (42.86%). As participant 23 stated, “A day without laughter is a day wasted.” The most cited purpose of humor was to engage students (36.37%), although many participants listed classroom management (27.27%) and relief (27.27%). Participant 17 stated “I try to use it to keep the rehearsal light – to give a moment of relief/brevity from the high standards we have for our musicianship.”

Responses regarding participant perspectives on if their persona was a factor in male enrollment resulted in three main categories: effectiveness (n=27), type of persona (n=23), and perception on what influences boys to join choir (n=25). The majority of those responding expressed that their persona was effective in recruiting males (66.66%), although the remaining 33.33% were either unsure or considered it ineffective. The most referenced type of personae were “masculine” and “encouraging” (17.39% each), followed with disciplined, fun, confident, and relatable (13.04% each). Participant 22 wrote that “my maleness (in particular, my masculinity) is a definite benefit.” The primary reason teachers thought that adolescent males joined choir was not necessarily their persona, but rather due to a safe environment (44%). Participant 4 response that he/she “make[s] it okay for men to sing” was one that was echoed by many participants.

Analyses of administrative support yielded only two categories: support (n=28) and perceived administrative focus (n=7). The majority of responses pointed to ambivalent or no administrative support (53%). As Participant 11 replied, the administrators “do not discourage it, but I often feel unsupported.” The primary perceived

administrative focus was athletics (42%), with 28.57% citing scheduling and 28.57% saying the administration was pro-music.

The most prevalent recruiting method utilized by teachers was through relying on peer pressure (30.23%), followed by male-focused ensembles (13.95%) and through connection with quality elementary/middle school programs (13.95%). The approach by Participant 19 was a commonly reported example of how they tried to build the male presence in their ensembles: “I have used two methods: 1 – told girls to convince the guys to join which was moderately successful. And 2 – I have told guys to convince their friends to join. Men are pack animals and follow each other around... Get the alpha and the others follow!”

When the open ended questions were filtered by subgroup, there were no subgroup-specific trends that emerged for humor and recruitment. The responses regarding administration support were roughly equivalent between the two subgroups, while notable trends emerged when asked if participants considered their persona as an aid to their enrollment (see Table 6).

Responses in their entirety are listed in Appendix C.

Table 6

*Open-Ended Responses as Percentages*

<i>Written Comments</i>	Male Enrollment	
	Low <i>n=9</i>	Higher <i>n=19</i>
Administrative Support		
Yes	44.44	52.63
No/indifferent	55.55	47.37
Does your persona help male enrollment		
Yes	20	68.42
No/Unsure	80	31.58

**Discussion**

This pilot survey was undertaken to explore the traits and characteristics that secondary choral educators have that encourage male enrollment.

The results of the survey showed that the vast majority of participants sought to increase the number of males in their ensemble (78.78%). Despite this recognized need, the ratio of females to males remains about the same as it did when Gates wrote about the declined number of males in choirs. Then, in 1989, the ratio was 5:2. Within the scope of this survey, the ratio was 6:2.

With that need in mind, the analysis of the data hoped to answer the question posed by Patrick Freer: “The question is not just ‘why do boys drop out of chorus?’ The bigger question is ‘what can we do differently so that they stay?’” (2012).

To answer that, I separated the results between the 11 programs with low male enrollment (<10% males) and 24 programs with higher male enrollment (>11% males).

To ensure that teacher traits and characteristics were isolated, the study included demographic information regarding participants' experience, educational level, and perceived administrative support. Interestingly, none of these appeared to be correlated to male enrollment. A limitation here is that this study did not measure a program's overall size, which an administration would certainly play a role. This aligns with Frank Abrahams' essay regarding how the burden of recruitment and retention lies primarily on the teacher and the environment he or she creates (2012).

Indeed, the filtering of categorized written responses showed that the majority of participants acknowledged that their persona was a factor in why males did or did not join their program: 68.42% of participants with higher male enrollment said that their persona aided in their recruitment/retention of males, whereas 80% of participants with low male enrollment acknowledged that their persona was not helpful.

One facet of the teacher's persona that appeared to have a heavy influence on male enrollment was his or her classroom management philosophy. Based on literature regarding Critical Pedagogy for Music Education (CPME), Frank Abrahams stated that teachers who democratically manage their classrooms are more likely to have higher male enrollment compared to those who are authoritative (2012). The findings in this pilot study contradicted this statement. In actuality, over half (60%) of the programs with low male enrollment were directed by teachers with a democratic classroom management style whereas two-thirds (66.67%) of high male programs were directed by teachers with an authoritative classroom management. In another way of viewing the data, only 11.11% of participants with an authoritative philosophy had low male enrollment.

A trait that was disproportionally represented in the low male enrollment group was the gender of the director. Over four-fifths of the participants (81.82%) with low male enrollment were female. By contrast, the majority of participants (54.17%) with higher male enrollment were male.

Another disproportionally represented trait in the low male enrollment group were ambiverts. While most participants stated that they displayed an extroverted persona while teaching, 63.64% of participants with low male enrollment identified that they were ambiverts compared to only 22.73% in the high male enrollment group.

Many of the other traits and characteristics that emerged as being correlated to higher male enrollment have previously been assigned as traits and characteristics of master teachers by studies such as Slack (1977), Reavis (1988) and Barresi (2000). These traits and characteristics associated with both high male enrollment and masterful teaching included being competitive, and caring about students like a parent or a friend. Participants with higher male enrollment tended to be more confident in their teacher magnitude.

It should be noted that many other “master teacher” characteristics were held by all of the participants in this study regardless of male enrollment. These other characteristics included being confident, enthusiastic, positive, kinesthetic, goal oriented, perfectionistic, and good stress managers, in addition to having an inclusive classroom philosophy, good listening skills, and providing constructive feedback frequently.

Interestingly, there were no trends that emerged in regard to recruitment methods or humor, suggesting perhaps that there is no “one right way” to use humor or recruitment strategies.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

To summarize the analysis, it appears that while most secondary choral educators share “master teacher” characteristics, there are several traits and characteristics that distinguish programs with higher male enrollment from programs with low male enrollment. Higher male enrollment is correlated to secondary choral educators that are male, authoritative, not-ambiverted, competitive, have high conductor magnitude, and relate to students as a parent or friend.

With this preliminary data, future investigation needs to continue exploring the correlation between teacher traits/characteristics and male enrollment. A possibility would be to create a survey distributed to multiple states to investigate if this preliminary data can be applied to a larger population. Another aspect not investigated in this pilot study but closely related is comparing overall school enrollment with male enrollment in the choral program. Future study may also include interviews as well as observation rather than reliance on the perception of teachers through the survey instrument. Another route of inquiry would be surveying the students within the choral program.

In conclusion, both the literature and this study support the need for increasing the number of male participants in choral programs.

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## **Appendix A**

Cover Letter/Informed Consent

## Appendix A

### Cover Letter/ Informed Consent

May 1, 2015

Dear ---- member,

My name is Matthew Pyles. I am a junior Buchanan Fellow at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), pursuing a Music Education degree. Additionally, I serve as the MTSU collegiate American Choral Directors Association chapter president.

I am conducting a survey of high school choral music educators with regard to the traits and characteristics high school choral music educators have that support the recruitment and retention of men.

The survey can be located on the website <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/traitsandcharacteristics> . Please visit the website by May 18<sup>th</sup>. The survey will take no more than 15 minutes to complete because I know your time is valuable. Your part is voluntary, and your consent to be a part of this survey will be inferred based on your participation. You may refuse to answer any question you do not wish to answer. All information will be confidential and in no way can any individual be identified.

I am looking forward to receiving your perspectives on this important issue.

This study is being conducted as part of an approved honors college thesis at MTSU. For additional information regarding human participation, please contact the Institutional Review Board at 615-494-8918, or my thesis advisor Dr. Jamila McWhirter at 615-898-5922.

Thank you,

Matthew Pyles

## **Appendix B**

Replication of Survey

## Appendix B

### Replication of Survey

Please complete this survey only if you are a high school choral educator (grades 9-12). As a reminder, your participation is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question(s) or to discontinue the survey at anytime. All information will be confidential and in no way can I identify any individual. By submitting responses, you are giving informed consent to participate in this research. I am looking forward to receiving your perspectives on this important issue. Please hit the submission button at the end only one time.

Please answer the following questions by clicking on the appropriate circle

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to answer
  
2. How many years have you taught choral music?
  - a. 1-3 years
  - b. 4-7 years
  - c. 8-15 years
  - d. 16-20 years
  - e. 20+ years
  
3. What is your highest level of completed education?
  - a. Bachelor's
  - b. Master's
  - c. Specialist
  - d. ABD
  - e. Doctorate
  
4. Select all the types of choirs that are in your program:
  - a. Men's chorus
  - b. Mixed chorus
  - c. Women's chorus
  - d. Show Choir
  - e. Jazz Choir

- f. Madrigal Ensemble
5. Of all your choirs combined, what percentage is made up of males?
- a. 0-10%
  - b. 11-25%
  - c. 26-50%
  - d. 51%-75%
  - e. 75-100%
6. Which best describes your classroom management style
- a. Authoritative
  - b. Democratic
  - c. Passive

Select the most appropriate response to each statement:

7. My ensembles need greater amounts of males.
- a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
8. Adolescent males relate well to me
- a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
9. I am naturally enthusiastic/energetic in class
- a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
10. I involve physical movement during rehearsals
- a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate

11. I am goal oriented
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
12. I appear confident in class
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
13. I have strong leadership skills
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
14. I promote an inclusive climate.
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
15. I set high standards for my students
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
16. I frequently give constructive criticism to my students/ensembles
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate
  - c. Somewhat Accurate
  - d. Not Accurate
17. I manage stress well
  - a. Very accurate
  - b. Accurate

- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

18. I think holistically.

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

19. I am detail orientated.

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat accurate
- d. Not accurate

20. I am a perfectionist

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

21. I am inherently competitive

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

22. I am a positive person

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

23. I am a thoughtful listener

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

24. I feel that my students respect me

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

25. I consider myself to be a high magnitude teacher and conductor

- a. Very accurate
- b. Accurate
- c. Somewhat Accurate
- d. Not Accurate

26. My students view me as

- a. Extroverted
- b. Ambiverted
- c. Introverted

27. I view myself as

- a. Extroverted
- b. Ambiverted
- c. Introverted

Select all that apply

28. My ensemble males view me as more of a

- a. Coach
- b. Teacher
- c. Mentor
- d. Parental figure
- e. Friend

29. In regards to my ensembles, I view myself as more of a

- a. Coach
- b. Teacher
- c. Mentor
- d. Parental Figure
- e. Friend



Please give brief responses to the following open-ended questions.

30. How do you describe your use of humor in the classroom?
31. Do you feel that your overall persona encourages adolescent males to join your ensemble? Why or why not?
32. Do you feel that your administration supports the recruiting and retention of males in your choral program?
33. How do you recruit and retain men? If you find it difficult, what do you see as the major obstacles of recruiting and retaining men in your choral program?

## **Appendix C**

### Responses to Open-Ended Questions

## Appendix C

### Responses to Open-Ended Questions

*Question 30: How do you describe your sense of humor in the classroom?*

Participant	Response Text
1	I use humor often. I feel I use it appropriately.
2	Frequent but could be more frequent, and semi-effective. This often helps soften a requirement or instruction to which my students may otherwise take offense. Also, immature: the sillier sarcasm and physical silliness often catches on with students more easily than thoughtful cleverness.
3	I try and use humor daily in the classroom. I tell stories or laugh at myself. I also use humor when giving criticism or correcting behavior.
4	My class is full of humor. I couldn't teach if I couldn't be funny.
5	humor rather than overt, cutting sarcasm is more effective
6	I use it daily and frequently. I'm miserable if I have to teach without it.
7	dry
8	effective
9	I use humor to keep students interested or as relief in a stressful rehearsal when things are not going well.
10	I inject some humor on most days.
11	fun and light hearted
12	I am awkward and that usually translates to humor. I also tell cheesy jokes and make silly puns.
13	Very dry.
14	encouraging, engaging
15	I love to laugh and have an at ease atmosphere in the classroom. But we get the job done
16	minimal
17	I try to use it to keep the rehearsal light-to give a moment of relief/brevity from the high standards we have for our musicianship. I also use it to let the kids know that I like them (that I like teenagers) and that I think they're funny. They seem to respond well when I laugh at their humor instead of acting like they're a troublesome nuisance.
18	I try to remember that getting a student to laugh is more valuable than making them scared; however, laughter harder to control. I'm currently working on ways to cue my students when it's ok to goof off and we need to be serious because they currently don't know the difference.
19	High
20	Somewhat sarcastic

Participant	Response Text
21	When you've taught as long as I have you have to be able to laugh at yourself
22	I often will tell funny stories about my family ("You wouldn't believe what Elijah did last night...") to break up stressful work in rehearsal.
23	A day without laughter is a day wasted.
24	I use puns and turns of phrases. I have done a practical joke or two to drive home a point about singing. I attempt to NEVER make a joke at the expense of a student.
25	sometimes sarcastic
26	use all the time
27	often
28	Somewhat sarcastic. Sometimes silly. Often used.

*Question 31: Do you feel that your overall persona encourages adolescent males to join your ensemble? Why or why not?*

Participant	Response Text
1	No, I expect students to behave and be on task and because of that, I think adolescent males have a difficult time in my class.
2	I hope so, though so far it is difficult to tell because I have only taught one year. The students who met and worked with me this year will either stay or go depending on their schedule needs and on my persona, and will recommend it to others (or not) based largely on the same things. I would feel more equipped to answer this question once the 2015-2016 school year has begun, so I would have some idea of my retention and recruitment outcomes.
3	Yes, definitely. I think my students think I am fun and so they want to join choir.
4	I think my persona is the ONLY reason I have any males. I make it ok for men to sing. I try to make a big deal and feature them as often as possible.
5	yes. They see me openly and proudly singing the parts.
6	Not sure. I don't have many males in my choir so maybe my persona doesn't encourage them.
7	I do feel it does. I relate well to the guys that I have in the program.
8	yes, being a former athlete helps get that genre of males.
9	No, I think males view me as too demanding.
10	I don't think it encourages or discourages.
11	Yes. I am a parent/teacher who encourages her "children".
12	I do not. I feel like I am not "cool" enough to get some to join choir.

Participant	Response Text
13	No. The boys sign up for the class if they want to. There may be a case or two that I seek out and encourage to join, but for the most part I don't try to encourage or discourage participation
14	yes, I show guys that singing is cool no matter whether you voice is high or not
15	Yes, I make music fun. It is the thing to do and be a part of
16	Evidently not since I have few. In my school it's not "cool" to be in chorus and I have not had success in helping change that perception.
17	I think the smart, male musicians have no problem in my ensembles, but I have a lot of trouble recruiting males that are on the fence. At our school, there is a definite culture that choir is a feminine thing. I work hard to combat it, but it's systemic, starting at the middle school. I work hard to change it: I always choose musicals that aren't too feminine, I started an A Cappella group that features beat boxing and fun solos for guys, and I've asked my male friend who teaches with me and has a joint certification in choral music to co-teach a men's choir with me. (Our administration won't yet approve this joint class. I'm about to raise hell about it though...so we'll see... I think this is the key to changing the culture at my particular school, so I really want to make it happen.)
18	Somewhat. Guys at my school respond well to me but peer pressure is far more powerful than them liking me. I have had limited success convincing students to join just because i'll be the teacher.
19	Yes. I am the former baseball coach. I also dress well. I am former military. I am interested in the things the males find interesting.
20	Yes. I have a no nonsense approach but one that allows fun.
21	Students tell me I'm too kind some say tough but kind. They all say they know I care about them as people.
22	Yes. It's hard to maintain the "choir is gay" conception when I step in the room. My maleness (in particular, my masculinity) is a definite benefit.
23	Yes. I want them to do well and they know that.
24	built balcony
25	Yes. I am at ease conversing with and getting to know male students and their interests. I encourage them, and try to show them how being a choir member is in their best interest.
26	I'm new to this position and school so it is hard to tell but I'm hoping that my persona will encourage them to join.
27	I feel that my personality does help recruit and also word of mouth.
28	yes
29	Yes. I keep singing a masculine activity.

*Question 32: Do you feel that your administration supports the recruiting and retention of males in your choral program?*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Response Text</b>
1	Yes, I do.
2	Somewhat. For example, our scheduling this school year made it exceedingly difficult for our men, (splitting the 6-8 beginning male singers into TWO periods of beginning choir) most of whom will not return both because they probably had not planned to originally, and because the challenge of learning and improving in that atmosphere was so great to begin with.  However, my administration has been highly supportive of all the events I have endeavored to put together (like taking a choir on a field trip to our feeder elementary schools to sing for them, in hopes that children will see early that high school men can sing).  Overall, they could be more supportive, but are very supportive of our successes. I think that on a point of contention, they would be swayed by the point that efforts to recruit and retain males are basically necessary to the success and very existence of our choral program.
3	Absolutely.
4	My administration is indifferent about the recruiting of males or females.
5	no.
6	Yes, but our school is definitely sports oriented so it's tough to recruit males in a rural school.
7	I do not. They push the sports most.
8	Yes
9	Yes
10	They see recruiting and retention as my responsibility.
11	They do not discourage it, but I often feel unsupported.
12	Yes they do. I wish that together we could do more, but I'm not sure how.
13	No. Nor do they support recruiting and retention of females. If anything, it's discouraged.
14	no.
15	Yes
16	yes
17	NO. ABSOLUTELY NOT. THEY ARE EXTREMELY FOCUSED ON ATHLETICS.
18	Yes! Absolutely!
19	The administration is ambivalent.
20	Yes
21	No. I was told recently they just need classes to put people. Scheduling at my school is a nightmare.
22	Yes.

Participant	Response Text
23	Yes. My administration is very supportive of my program.
24	Not as much. We haven't had the opportunity to do as many displays for the school/middle schools.
25	somewhat....I don't believe it is really on their radar
26	not really
27	yes
28	No. Nor do they support recruiting and retention of females

*Question 33: How do you recruit and retain men? If you find it difficult, what do you see as the major obstacles of recruiting and retaining men in your choral program?*

Participant	Response Text
1	Building their confidence in their own voice and abilities.
2	<p>So far I have simply taken a choir to our elementary schools to reach children and get the idea of choir in their heads before they head to middle school (where they are unable to take choir - tragically, our feeder middle school has no choir program). Next year, I plan to create a barbershop ensemble with the men of my top choir (and any other male singers who want to be involved) which would give them the opportunity to sing in a male-centric situation. Ideally, if this group is fairly successful, they will tour our feeder school within the first semester and REALLY demonstrate to younger kids that male high schoolers really can sing.</p> <p>The main obstacle I find is the general perception which is MUCH HIGHER among our male students that they cannot sing, the fear of getting on stage to sing and dance like our show choir (though they do that at only ONE performance in a year, and simply stand and sing at many more), and the simple fact of four years of teacher turnover at my school. I will be the first teacher to teach choir at my school for two straight years since the 2010-2011 school year, and the potential male singer sees this (and the associated chaos in the program) as a bigger reason to avoid the program than female singers seem to. The number and proportion of male singers in my program are one of the clearest indicators to me of my success (and how apparent that is or is not) with the overall student body.</p> <p>One final obstacle, though less detrimental than some listed above, is simply scheduling. Some students have expressed interest, but are also involved in JROTC and band and have simply run out of elective options. This has led me to consider running an after-school choral ensemble of some kind, but I have not been able to find the time to work that out at this point.</p>

Participant	Response Text
3	I do a trip every year. I also am my own feeder program because I am at a K-12 school. I have a middle school choir. The males in high school began to grow as I began to attract more guys in middle school. That is a huge advantage for me.
4	For me the hardest thing is competing with sports. My classes are during the day but our performances are at night and often this conflicts with practices or games. I think the biggest obstacle is society. It is not considered cool for men to sing in choirs.
5	peer influence and lack of opportunities due to sports requirements are the main problems
6	I get my guys to talk with other guys and get the girls to talk guys into it. My middle school doesn't have a feeder program so it's hard to get guys interested at a young age.
7	I tell the girls to bring them to me.
8	I encourage them and my current guys help recruit their classmates. Also, I feature my men on songs which sets an example of positive male singing.
9	I try to use the successful males I already have in my program to encourage and be an example for others who may be interested. I think the stereotyping of males in chorus is a huge obstacle for me teaching in a rural area. There are many talented singers who are male, but they are pressured to be involved in more perceived "masculine" activities.
10	I recruit them more differently from girls. I live in a "football town" Singing is perceived as being sissy. This comes through peers and fathers.
11	have a program that is fun and energetic, where they have some say in what they get to do
12	I have other men from the program encourage their friends to come. I also have a very good middle school feeder program.
13	Travel, singing TTBB songs, offering honors credit. The biggest challenge is that (in the younger years - 9th and 10th), they want an easy A, but we are a strong program and work hard. They do not want to come to choir and have to do "work." In the older grades, many choose to take AP classes and although we are offering fine arts honors credit next year, it still does not have the same GPA boost as an honors class.
14	I let the quality of my program speak for itself.
15	I listen to guys talk when on lunch duty (I walk around through the table and talk to kids). I get guys active in sports to join choir, then have them find another guy.
16	I also have some athletes in the choral groups at my school. Other boys will join when they see that the sports minded boys enjoy the choir.
17	Many of the males I have had in the past were placed in my class with them not making the decision. They would not "buy on" to learning - rather their decision was to make life miserable for others.



Participant	Response Text
18	I think I already covered this above. Best of luck to you.
19	I have used two methods:  1-told girls to convince the guys to join which was moderately successful. And  2-I have told guys to convince their friends to join. Men are pack animals and follow each other around... Get the alpha and the others follow!
20	1. I encourage the types of music that interests male. 2. I encourage the females to recruit the males. 3. I engage the males with the things that interest them. 4. I model the personal of a strongly male person engaged in the choral arts. 5. I also model a strong male persona in the other activities of the school. 6. I drive a big red pick up truck. 7. The major obstacles are the public perception of singing by men and the school's very limited schedule.
21	I appeal to a lot of athletes and work well with school coaches
22	Men in our area do not view singing in choir as manly, however I have a bluegrass class and the majority of students in that class are men?
23	I tell the freshmen girls that the size of the Advanced Mixed Choir (juniors and seniors) is limited by the number of qualified men that try out, and that, if they want to make sure they have a spot in the Jr/Sr mixed choir, they have to get busy recruiting guys. They get together and brainstorm a list of boys to go after and bring into the program.

## **Appendix D**

IRB Approval

## Appendix D

### IRB Approval



4/28/2015

Investigator(s): Matthew Pyles, Jamila McWhirter  
Department: Music  
Investigator(s) Email Address: mtp3n@mtmail.mtsu.edu; jamila.mcwhirter@mtsu.edu

Protocol Title: Secondary Choral Educator Traits and Characteristics that Support the Retention and Recruitment of Adolescent Males

Protocol Number: #15-315

Dear Investigator(s),

Your study has been designated to be exempt. The exemption is pursuant to 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations.

We will contact you annually on the status of your project. If it is completed, we will close it out of our system. You do not need to complete a progress report and you will not need to complete a final report. It is important to note that your study is approved for the life of the project and does not have an expiration date.

The following changes must be reported to the Office of Compliance before they are initiated:

- Adding new subject population
- Adding a new investigator
- Adding new procedures (e.g., new survey; new questions to your survey)
- A change in funding source
- Any change that makes the study no longer eligible for exemption.

The following changes do not need to be reported to the Office of Compliance:

- Editorial or administrative revisions to the consent or other study documents
- Increasing or decreasing the number of subjects from your proposed population

If you encounter any serious unanticipated problems to participants, or if you have any questions as you conduct your research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Lauren K. Qualls, Graduate Assistant  
Office of Compliance  
615-494-8918

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