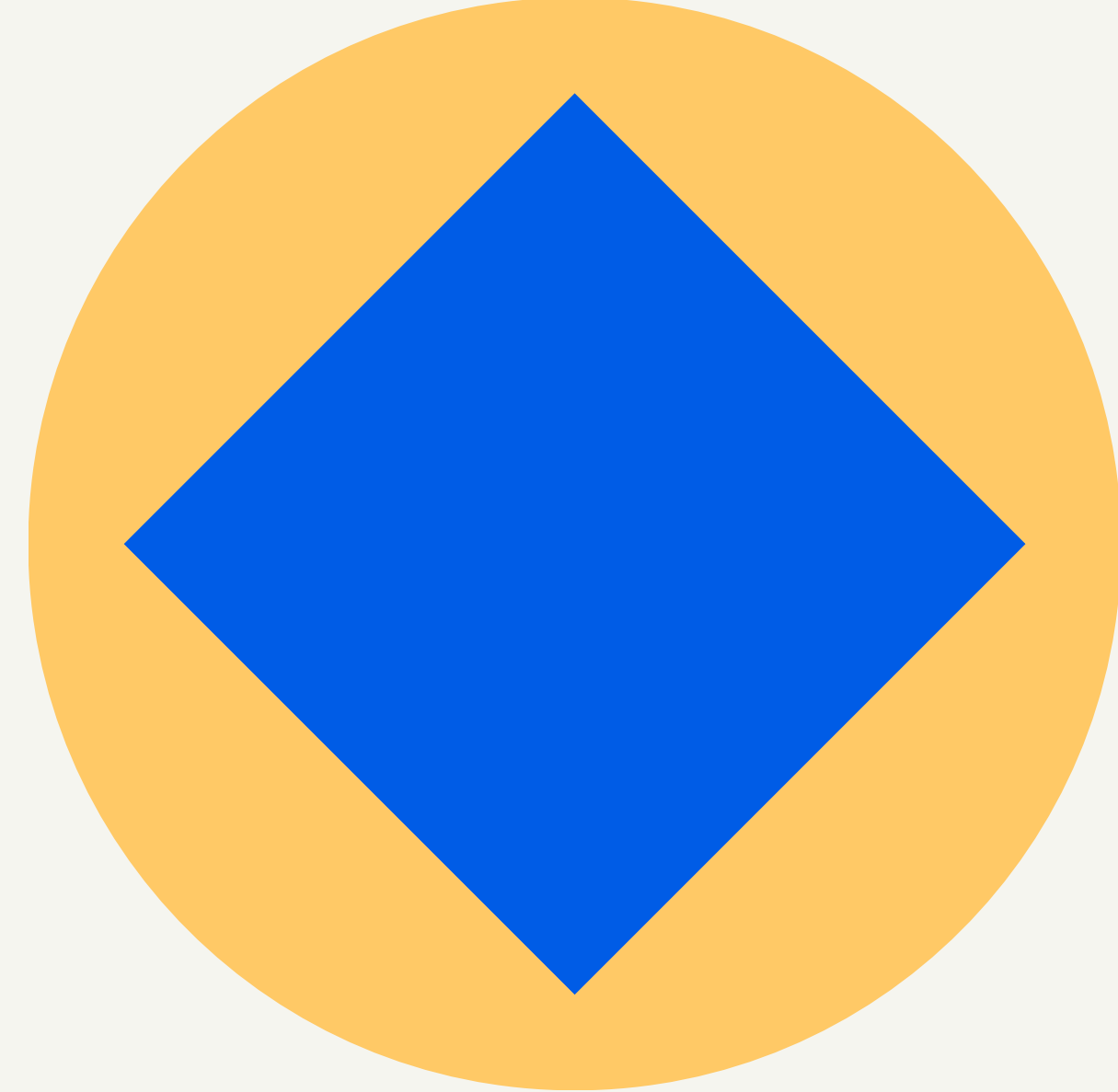


A Qualitative Exploration of Peer Influence and Participation in Middle School Choir

Anne Crozier
2246692





Justification & Background

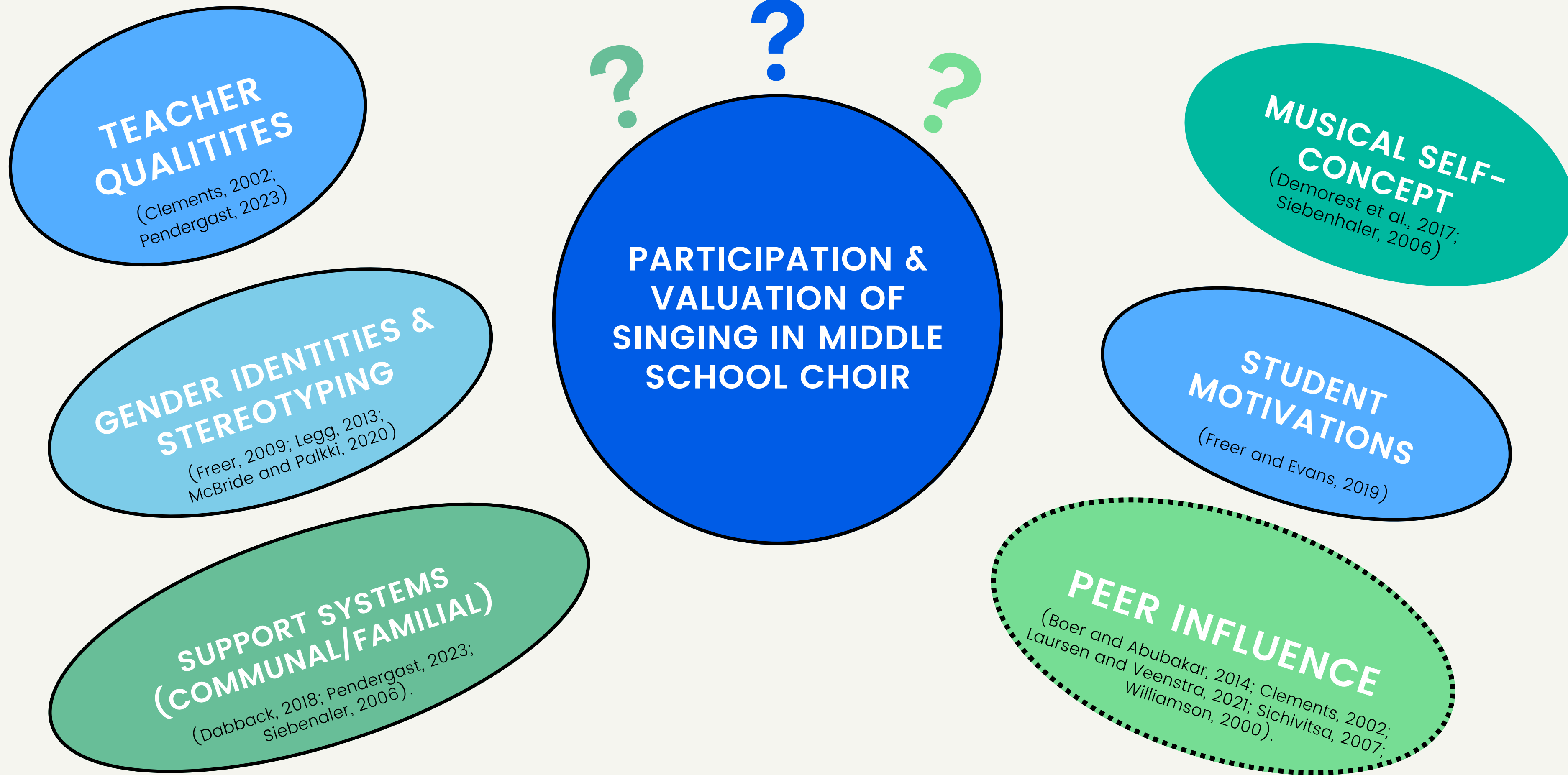
Justification & Background

- Music central to adolescent identity & expression (Evans and McPherson, 2017; Lamont *et al.*, 2003)
- Significant change in attitudes towards singing during middle school in the United States (Mizener, 1993)
 - Grades 7-8 (Siebenaler, 2006)
- Declining enrollment trends in secondary music ensembles (Elpus and Abril, 2011)
 - prior to COVID-19 (Grebosz-Haring et al., 2022)
 - valued less by in comparison to other academic classes (Casals et al., 2011; Freer and Evans, 2019; McPherson and Hendricks, 2010; McPherson et. al, 2015; Williams, 2011)
- Male underrepresentation 2:1 (Elpus, 2015)
- Ongoing challenges with participation in middle school choir (Demorest et al., 2017; Legette, 1998)



Previous Research

A COMPLEX ISSUE TO STUDY (LEGG, 2013; PENDERGAST, 2023)



Why study this?

Social identity & peer influence in shaping adolescent engagement with singing

(Barresi, 2000; Pendergast, 2020; Williamson, 2000)



Stereotypes/rejections of singing as a part of identity affects willingness to sing

(McBride and Palkki, 2020)

Students feeling socially connected foster a sense of belonging and active involvement

(Adderly et al., 2003; Pendergast, 2023)



Negative peer influence or fear of not fitting in can lead to disinterest or avoidance

(Elpus and Carter, 2016; Hawkinson, 2015)

Students must conform to group norms and collaborate in choir

(Dabback, 2016)



Negative behaviors undermine collective efforts, fostering a hostile learning atmosphere

(Elpus and Carter, 2016)

Perceived peer evaluation/fear of public humiliation

(Elpus and Carter, 2016)



Singing/performance anxiety

(Abril, 2007)

Peer influence is a “pervasive force”

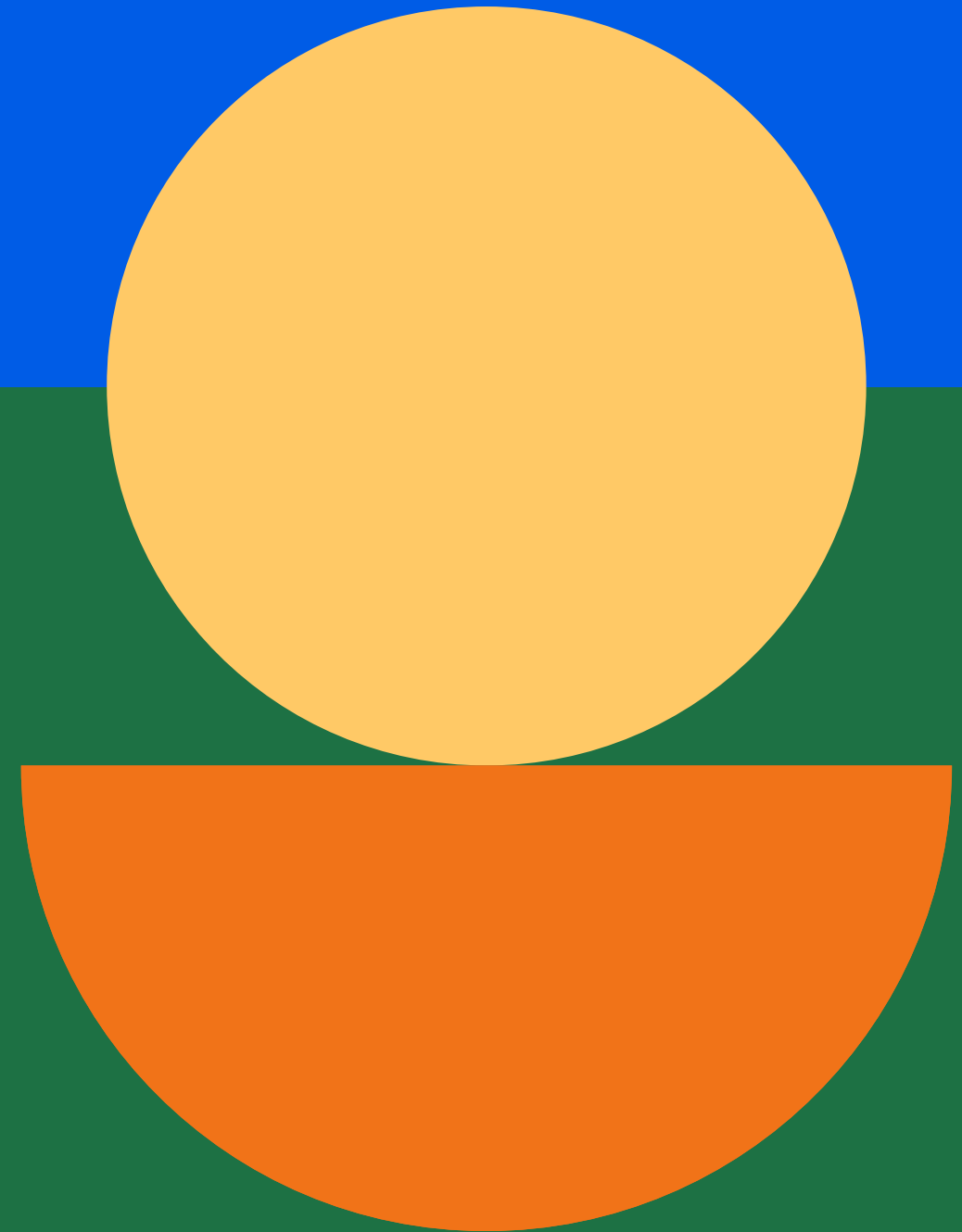
(Laursen and Veenstra, 2021, p.889)

Aims

- Essential to recognize and address peer influences to encourage sustained participation in choral singing (Elpus and Carter, 2016)
- Investigate how peer influence impacts individual participation and overall valuation of choral singing among 7th and 8th-grade students
 - enhancing enrollment and retention in secondary school choir programs
- Utilize findings to implement effective peer engagement strategies within my own classroom as a secondary choral music teacher
 - (Siebenaler, 2006)
- Develop strategies to create a supportive and motivating environment for students in choir programs
 - (Barresi, 2000; Lucas, 2011)

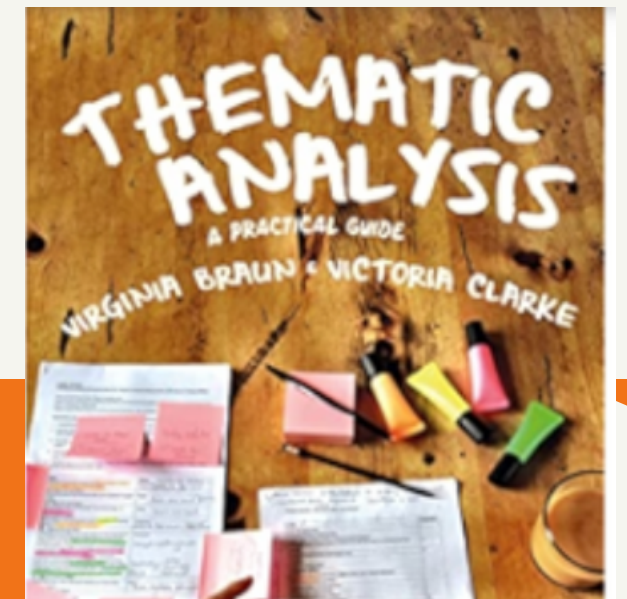


Methodology



Qualitative Research Methods

- Prioritizing depth and richness over traditional validity concerns (Yardley, 2000)
- Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022)
 - approached deductively and framed within a constructivist lens
 - meanings and understandings are developed collaboratively between the researcher and participants (Roulston, 2014)
 - Embraces subjectivity and insider status of the researcher (Berger, 2015)
 - method's flexible and iterative process supports a deep engagement with the data



Data Collection Methods

MAY 16 – JULY 1

PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

7 Total Participants:

From the same middle school

2 7th Grade, Female, Choir

2 7th Grade, Male, Opt Out

2 8th Grade, Female, Choir

1 8th Grade, Male, Choir

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Students A-F participated,
(one student dropped out)

15-20 min per interview

8 Questions (3 extra if
needed)

- singing background
- singing at school
- influencers & followers
- perceptions of peer effort
- peer pressure
- stereotypes in choir
- sense of belonging

Personal views recorded
first without the influence
of group dynamics (Gill et
al., 2008; RAND, 2009)



FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Group (A, B, E)
Focus Group (C, F G)

20-30 minutes

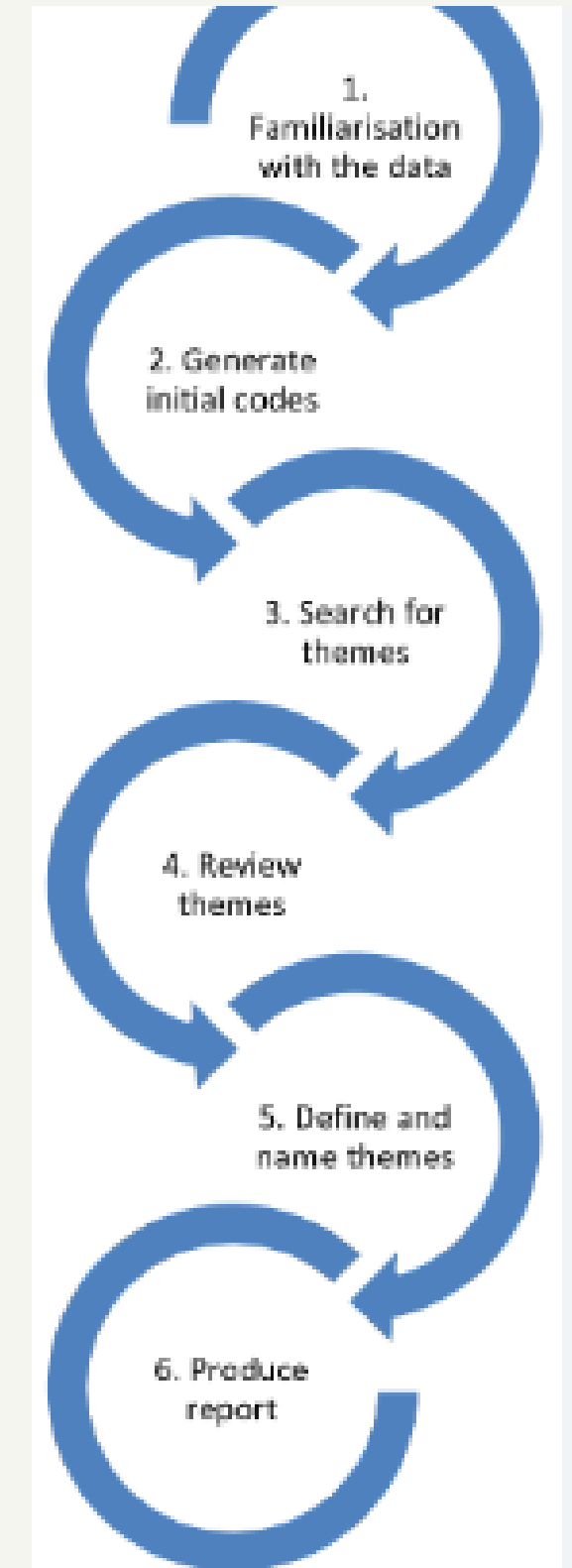
5 Questions (2 extra if
needed)

- developed after initial
transcribing and
analysis of interviews



REFLEXIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

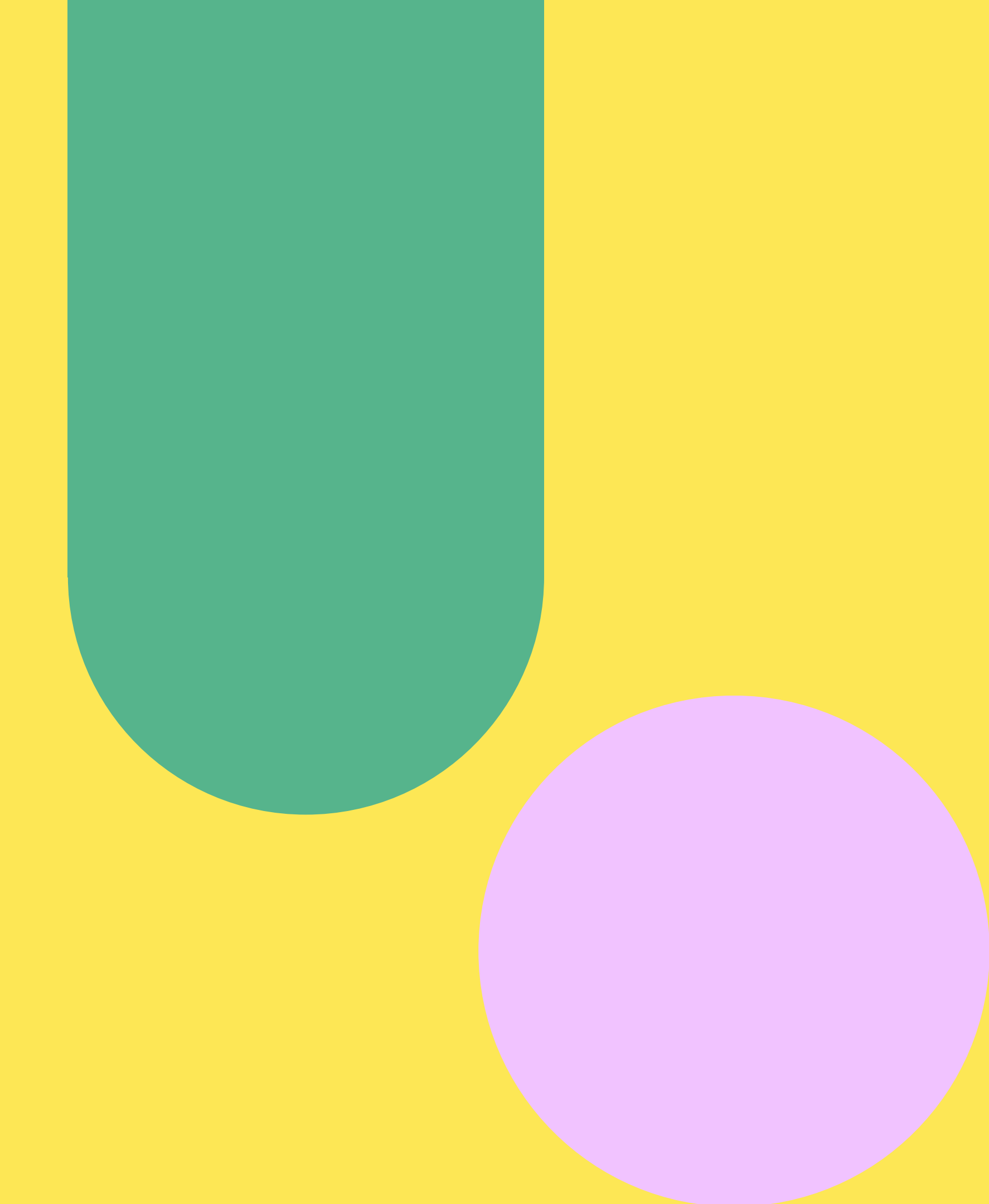
6 Phases of Braun and Clarke (2006)



Ethical Considerations

- Approval from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Ethics Committee
- Followed US Guidelines from the *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, (1979)
- Mindful of power dynamics between teachers and students (O'Reilly and Dogra, 2017)
- Used familiar and comfortable settings during the school day to encourage ease (Mertens, 2014)
- Anonymized data to protect identities
 - Ex: [SCHOOL] [TEACHER] [STUDENT A]
 - Used password-protected files to ensure confidentiality (BSA, 2017)





Findings & Analysis

Themes

1

**Fear of Mistakes and Negative
Peer Evaluation in Choir**

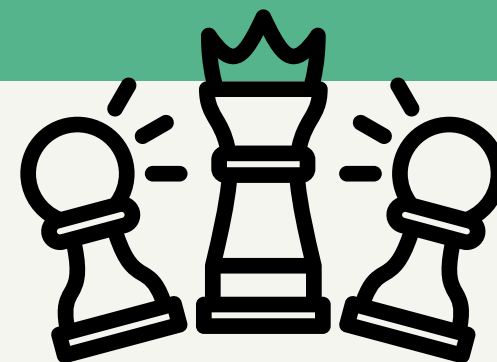
*Stigmatization and Othering
of Choir Participants*



2

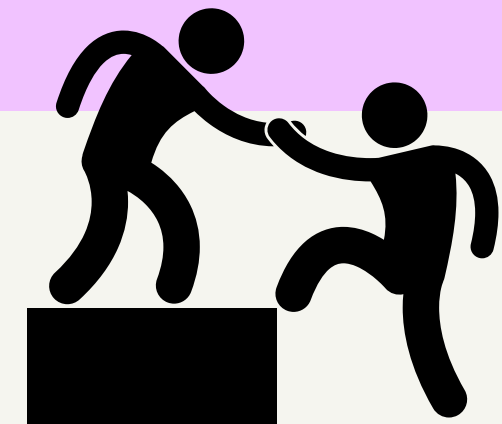
**Social Dominance in Choral
Ensemble Participation**

Perceptions of Peer Effort



3

**Support Systems Fostering
Resilience in Choral
Participation**





Fear of Mistakes and Negative Peer Evaluation in Choir

“HA
HA”
HA”

1

Fear of negative evaluation can lead to reduced participation in classroom activities

(Ryan, 2000; Wentzel, 1998)

“it's funny if it happens to
somebody else and then if it
happens to you, it's not funny”

(Student C, FG)

“kids like worry about their
reputation in chorus and if
people are gonna laugh at
them or something”

(Student D, INT)

“because everybody's
watching you...if you-
you mess up, you know,
then you got that on
your shoulders”

(Student E, FG)



Stigmatization and Othering of Choir Participants

Students may avoid choir to prevent being marginalized or ridiculed

(Ashley, 2006; Harrison, 2007; McBride and Palkki, 2020)

Kids who don't participate are "a waste of space"

(Student C, INT)

"just like geeky in kind of like their own way. Not really into sports..."

(Student D, INT)

"people could think it's almost like a soft thing rather than playing an instrument..."

(Student E, INT)

"some people would think that like, if you like singing like and you're male, like you'd be gay."

(Student C, INT)

...really shy kids. Awkward kids"

(Student F, INT)

Social Dominance in Choral Ensemble Participation

2

Positive & Negative behaviors present...but the **most dominant presence** is what influenced others

(Allen et al., 2006; Durlak et al., 2011; Goldstein, 2020; Sweet, 2016; You, 2011).

"there's this one kid in the Alto group which is [STUDENT], and like she was singing out...I guess that kind of like, inspired everyone just to really like focus right now and just sing out"
(Student D, INT)



"If one person actually puts in the effort to be good at choir, a lot of people will put in the effort. But if one person skips, then a lot of people would skip" (Student F, INT).



Perceptions of Peer Effort

2_a

Individual effort calculated and fluid dependent on perceived peer effort and the dominant social behavior

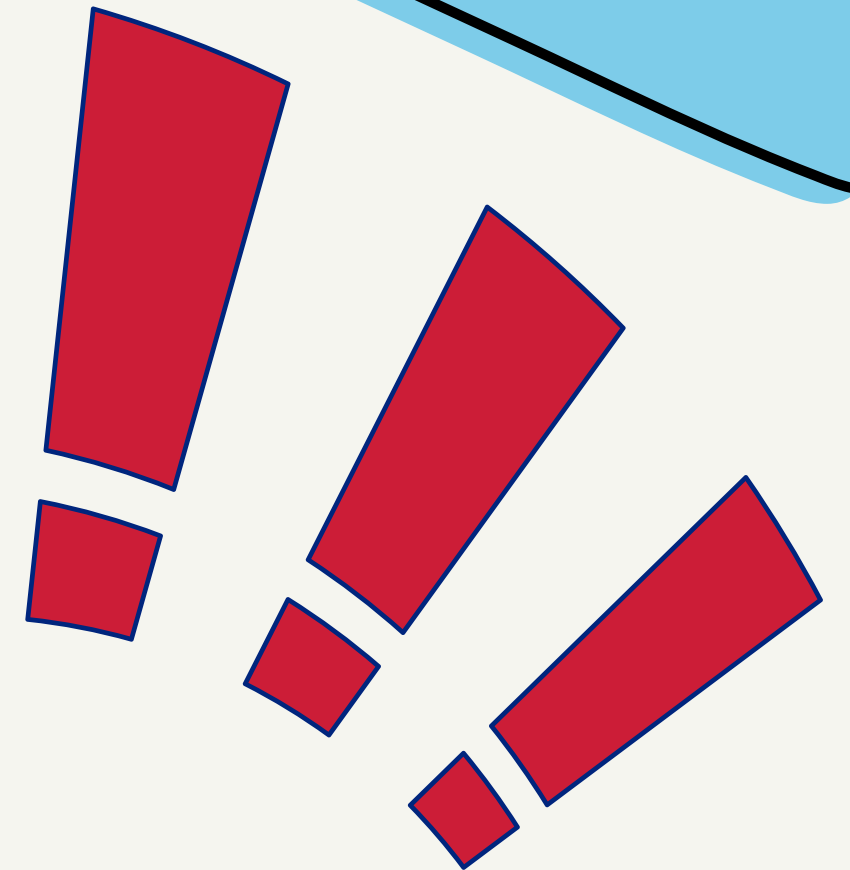
(Sweet, 2010)

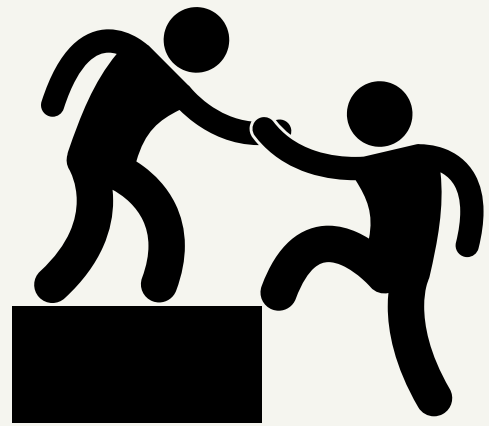
"in my class, a lot of people like zoned out, like, didn't sing or just like. You like didn't sing that much"
(Student G, FG)

"I feel like the people who don't sing have more room to make fun of the people who do sing"

(Student E, FG).

"I don't want to be the only one singing...because I'm gonna seem weird" (Student C, INT)





Support Systems Fostering Resilience in Choral Participation

3

A positive support system, especially from family, can provide the encouragement needed for students to participate
(Crosnoe, 2000; Eccles and Roeser, 2011; Hamm and Faircloth, 2005; Ryan, 2000)

"my parents signed me up
for like another, um...
music class outside of
school"

(Student A, INT)

"...with like my family like there's
always music going and [BROTHER] is
always singing. And then he's always so
happy about it. And then if it's like a
good song, I like a genre I like, and I'm
singing too, it's just like a fun time"

(Student D, INT)

Conclusion

Complex Social Dynamics

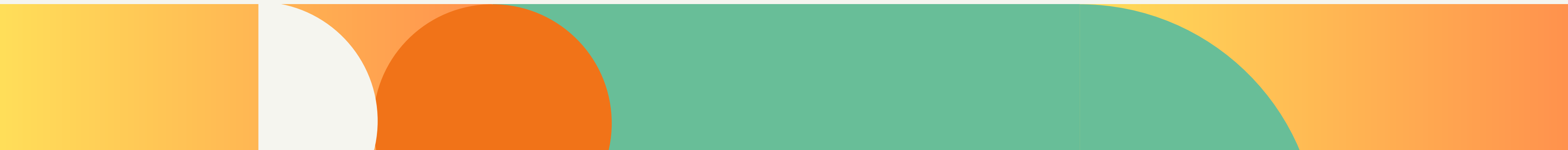
- Student participation in choral ensembles shaped by complex social dynamics

Barriers to Engagement

- Anxiety from negative peer evaluation and societal norms
- Impact of social dominance: supportive vs. disruptive behaviors

Role of Support Systems

- Critical for enhancing student participation and resilience



Limitations & Recommendations

Future Research Directions

- Implement strategies to address social anxieties in choir
- Challenge stereotypes and promote positive peer interactions/building community
- Explore targeted interventions to enhance resilience and support systems

Limitations

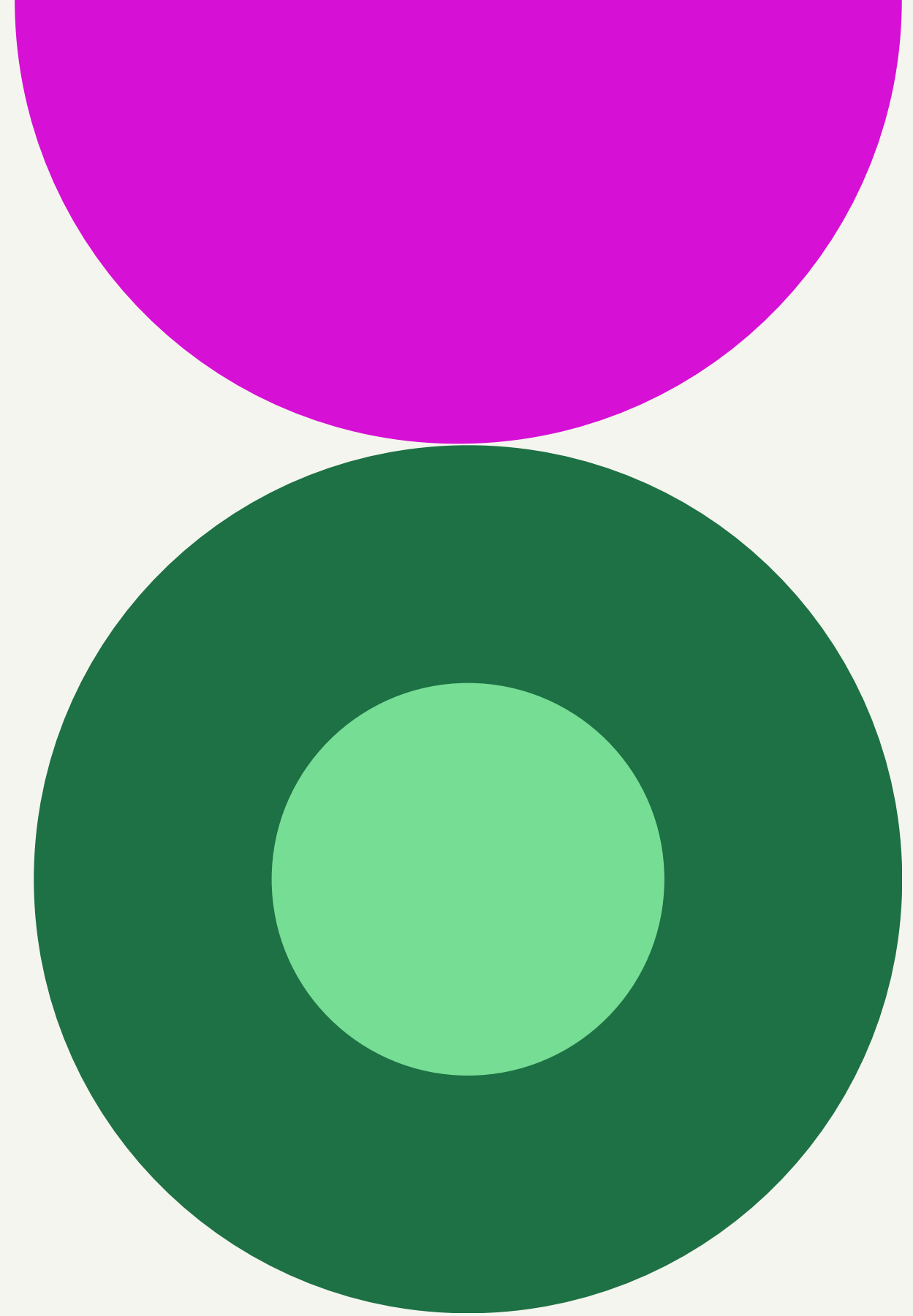
- Limited understanding of specific mechanisms of peer influence
- Need for broader studies on peer influence dynamics across different educational settings
- Examine other factors contributing to participation (self-determination theory, cultural values, etc)

Holistic Approach

- Encourage choral directors to take a holistic approach that considers both musical skill development and social dynamics



Personal Reflection



Learning Outcomes

Enhanced Research Skills

- Improved proficiency in qualitative research methods and data analysis techniques
- Gained experience in transcribing and coding using reflexive thematic analysis

Deeper Understanding of Peer Influence

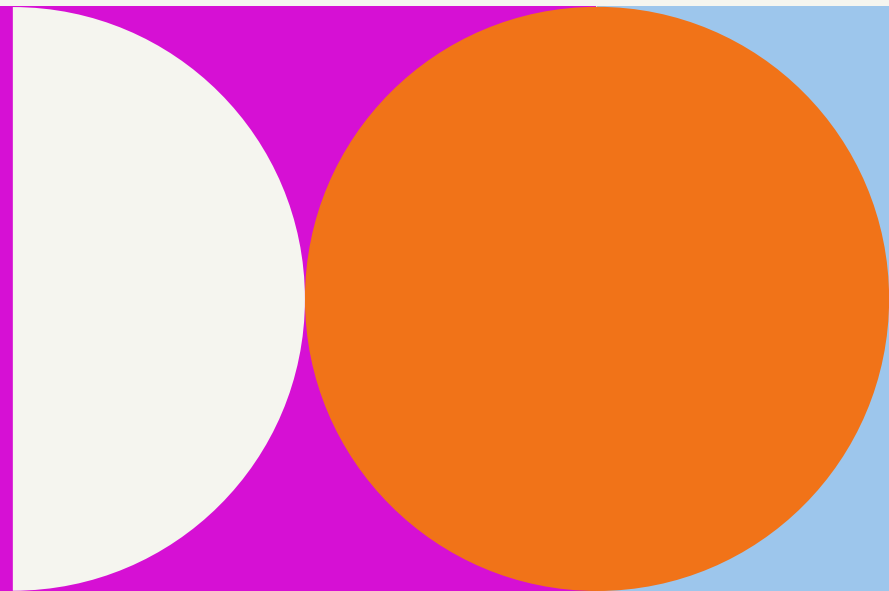
- Gained insights into how peer influence shapes student participation and engagement in choir
- Better understanding of the social dynamics within middle school choral settings

Professional Development

- Enhanced ability to implement effective peer engagement strategies in my classroom
- Developed strategies to foster a supportive and motivating environment for students

Application of Findings

- Plans to apply research findings to improve student participation and retention in choir programs
- Use of insights to create a more inclusive and positive choral experience for all students
- Sharing this research with colleagues at an upcoming local music educators conference



References

Adderley, C., Kennedy, M. and Berz, W. (2003) 'A home away from home: The world of the high school music classroom', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 51(3), pp. 190-205. DOI: 10.2307/3345373.

Ashley, M. (2006) 'You sing like a girl? An exploration of 'boyness' through the treble voice', *Sex Education*, 6(2), pp. 193-205.

Allen, J.P., Porter, M.R. and McFarland, F.C. (2006) 'Leaders and followers in adolescent close friendships: Susceptibility to peer influence as a predictor of risky behavior, friendship instability, and depression', *Development and Psychopathology*, 18(1), pp. 155-172.

British Sociological Association (BSA) (2017) Statement of Ethical Practice. Durham: BSA.

Barresi, A.L. (2000) 'The successful middle school choral teacher', *Music Educators Journal*, 86(4), pp. 23-28.

Berger, R. (2015) 'Now I see it now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), pp. 219-234.

Boer, D. and Abubakar, A. (2014) 'Music listening in families and peer groups: benefits for young people's social cohesion and emotional well-being across four cultures', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, pp. 1-15.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Sage.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Clements, A.C. (2002) The importance of selected variables in predicting student participation in junior high choir (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3062930).

Casals, A., Vilar, M. and Ayats, J. (2011) 'I'm not sure if I can... but I want to sing!' Research on singing as a soloist through the art of improvising verses', *British Journal of Music Education*, 28(3), pp. 247-261. doi:10.1017/S0265051711000192.

Crosnoe, R. (2000) 'Friendships in Childhood and Adolescence: The Life Course and New Directions', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 17(1), pp. 1-28.

Dabback, W. (2016) 'A community of singing: motivation, identity, and communitas in a Mennonite School choir programme', *Music Education Research*, 20(2), pp. 242-251. doi: 10.1080/14613808.2016.1257593.

Demorest, S.M., Kelley, J. and Pfordresher, P.Q. (2017) 'Singing Ability, Musical Self-Concept, and Future Music Participation', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 64(4), pp. 405-420.

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D. and Schellinger, K.B. (2011) 'The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions', *Child Development*, 82(1), pp. 405-432.

Eccles, J.S. and Roeser, R.W. (2011) 'Schools as developmental contexts during adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), pp. 225-241.

Elpus, K. and Abril, C.R. (2011) 'High School Music Ensemble Students in the United States', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59(2), pp. 128-145.

Elpus, K. (2015) 'National estimates of male and female enrolment in American high school choirs, bands, and orchestras', *Music Education Research*, 17(1), pp. 88-102. doi: 10.1080/14613808.2014.972923.

Elpus, K. and Carter, B.A., 2016. Bullying victimization among music ensemble and theatre students in the United States. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 64(3), pp.322-343. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429416658642> [Accessed 1 July 2024].

Evans, P. and McPherson, G.E. (2017) 'Processes of musical identity consolidation during adolescence', in Hargreaves, D.J., MacDonald, R.M.R. and Miell, D. (Eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Musical Identities*. pp. 213-232. Oxford UK: Oxford University Press.

Freer, E. and Evans, P. (2019) 'Choosing to study music in high school: Teacher support, psychological needs satisfaction, and elective music intentions', *Psychology of Music*, 47(6), pp. 781-799.

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. and Chadwick, B. (2008) 'Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups', *British Dental Journal*, 204(6), pp. 291-295.

Goldstein, S.E., Lee, C.S., Gunn, J.F., Bradley, S., Lummer, S. and Boxer, P. (2020) 'Susceptibility to peer influence during middle school: Links with social support, peer harassment, and gender', *Psychology in the Schools*, 57(1), pp. 91-110.

Grebosz-Haring, K., Schuchter-Wiegand, A.K., Feneberg, A.C., Skoluda, N., Nater, U.M., Schütz, S. and Thun-Hohenstein, L. (2022) 'The Psychological and Biological Impact of "In-Person" vs. "Virtual" Choir Singing in Children and Adolescents: A Pilot Study Before and After the Acute Phase of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Austria', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, pp. 1-21.

References (Continued)

Hamm, J.V. and Faircloth, B.S. (2005) 'Peer Contexts in Middle and High School: The Linkages between Peer Experiences and School Engagement', *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 107, pp. 33-43.

Harrison, S.D. (2004) 'Engaging boys overcoming stereotypes: Another look at the missing males in vocal programs', *The Choral Journal*, 45(2), pp. 24-29.

Hawkinson J. (2015). *A mixed methods investigation of student nonparticipation in secondary school music* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Lamont, A., Hargreaves, D.J., Marshall, N.A. and Tarrant, M. (2003) 'Young people's music in and out of school', *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(3), pp. 229-241.

Laursen, B. and Veenstra, R. (2021) 'Toward understanding the functions of peer influence: A summary and synthesis of recent empirical research', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(4), pp. 889-907.

Legg, R. (2013) 'Reviewing the situation: a narrative exploration of singing and gender in secondary schools', *Music Education Research*, 15(2), pp. 168-179.

Legette, R.M., 1993. Causal attributions of music majors and nonmusic majors regarding success and failure in music: A study of motivation and achievement. *Research Perspective in Music Education*, 4, pp.3-6.

Lucas, M. (2011) 'Adolescent Male Attitudes About Singing in Choir', *UPDATE: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 30(1), pp. 46-53. doi:10.1177/8755123311418623.

McBride, N.R. and Palkki, J. (2020) 'Big boys don't cry (or sing) ... still?: a modern exploration of gender, misogyny, and homophobia in college choral methods texts', *Music Education Research*, 22(4), pp. 408-420. doi: 10.1080/14613808.2020.1784862.

McPherson, G.E. and Hendricks, K.S. (2010) 'Students' motivation to study music: The United States of America', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 32(2), pp. 201-213.

McPherson, G.E., Osborne, M.S., Barrett, M.S., Davidson, J.W. and Faulkner, R. (2015) 'Motivation to study music in Australian schools: The impact of music learning, gender and socio-economic status', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 37(2), pp. 141-160.

Mertens, D.M., 2014. *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity With Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979. The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research. Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Available at: https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/sites/default/files/the-belmont-report-508c_FINAL.pdf [Accessed 14 March 2024].

O'Reilly, M. and Dogra, N. (2017) *Interviewing children and young people for research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Pendergast, S., 2023. Research-to-Resource: Two motivation frameworks for encouraging school choral participation. *Applications of Research in Music Education*, 41(2), pp.5-14. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/87551233221082507> [Accessed 23 April 2024].

RAND (2009) *Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups*. RAND Corporation.

Roulston, K. (2014) 'Analysing Interviews', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*. 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications Inc., pp. 297-312. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243> (Accessed 10 Apr 2024).

Ryan, A.M. (2000) 'Peer Groups as a Context for the Socialization of Adolescents' Motivation, Engagement, and Achievement in School', *Educational Psychologist*, 35(2), pp. 101-111.

Sichivitsa, V.O. (2007) "The influences of parents, teachers, peers and other factors on students' motivation in music", *Research Studies in Music Education*, 29(1), pp. 55-68.

Siebenaler, D.J., 2006. Factors that predict participation in choral music for high-school students. *Research & Issues in Music Education*, 4(1), Article 5. Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/rime/vol4/iss1/5> [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Sweet, B. (2010) 'A case study: Middle school boys' perceptions of singing and participation in choir', *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 28(2), pp. 5-12. doi: 10.1177/8755123310361770.

Sweet, B. (2016) *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music in Middle School and Beyond*. Oxford University Press.

Wentzel, K.R. (1998) 'Social Relationships and Motivation in Middle School: The Role of Parents, Teachers and Peers', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(2), pp. 202-209.

Williamson, S. (2000) "Positively Adolescent!", *Music Educators Journal*, 86(4), pp. 29-32.

Williams, D.A. (2011) 'The Elephant in the Room', *Music Educators Journal*, 98(1), pp. 51-57.

Yardley, L. (2000) 'Dilemmas in qualitative health research', *Psychology & Health*, 15(2), pp. 215-228. doi: 10.1080/08870440008400302.

You, S. (2011) 'Peer influence and adolescents' school engagement', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, pp. 829-835.



Thank You!



Q & A