

Going Beyond: Collegiate Choirs, Critical Pedagogy, and Community

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Abstract

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Much has been written on the topic of critical pedagogy since the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire brought his critical approach and theory of knowledge to the world stage in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968. As a self-reflexive pedagogy, it is in a near constant state of shaping and re-shaping. Through all of this, critical pedagogy remains guided by a foundational principle of challenging assumed norms and transforming oppressive systems. Critical pedagogy has been used to reexamine the entire spectrum of subjects within formal education. As it pertains to music education, there has been a considerable amount of study directed toward K-12 music education since the early 90s. However, the question of critical pedagogy within the specific context of the collegiate choral ensemble remains largely unexplored. It is my hope that this document is of use in critically considering an admittedly niche but vitally important area of formal music education.

This document is written in such a way to provide the reader with a foundational understanding of critical pedagogy, rather than a comprehensive understanding of the subject. It is for this reason that I chose to establish the presentation of the broad field critical pedagogy in the writings of Paulo Freire. These foundations are established in Section I of this document: first by briefly reviewing Freire's context in mid-twentieth century Brazil before turning to his guiding principle that all education is politics. Section II then considers four major concepts of Freire's critical pedagogy: conscientization, dialogue, praxis, and solidarity. The critical exploration culminates in the third and final section of the document which functions as an imagined round-table discussion of collegiate choral conductors. The discussion is derived from survey data administered to collegiate choral conductors to gauge their attitudes and values towards using elements of critical pedagogy with their collegiate choral ensembles.

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My interest in the field of critical pedagogy, the writings of Paulo Freire, and exploring the possibilities of choral music and community engagement have their roots in liberation theology. I was first introduced to this branch of theology while in the Master of Sacred Music program in Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. I would not have found myself there had it not been for the urging of my undergraduate choral mentor, Dr. Mark Bartel. My choral trajectory was transformed by my sacred music studies and for that (in addition to his guidance through my undergraduate years) I owe Dr. Bartel a great deal of thanks. And of course, I must extend a plethora of thanks to my professors at Southern Methodist University, most notably Dr. Christopher Anderson, Dr. Pamela Elrod Huffman, and Dr. C. Michael Hawn. Each of them challenged me in their own individual way and fed my inquiry of extending choral music beyond traditional performance. There are many other music educators in my life that I hold near and dear as I reach the end of this endeavor. To list them all might be a bit extreme, but there is one that will always have a place of honor in my life and that is the late Joan Robinson, my very first music educator and piano teacher. Her hope for me, my siblings, and all her students, was that music would be an intentional part of our lives in some way. My musical journey began with Joan and for that, I can never express thanks enough.

I would not have started piano lessons with Joan Robinson had it not been for my parents, Joe and Jeralyn Hill. My parents wanted my siblings and I to take lessons and we had very little say in the matter. In kindergarten, I would walk with my older siblings one day a week after school to Joan's house where I would sit and listen to them play. I was so eager to take part that after one year of sitting and listening I decided enough was enough. I was going to sign myself up and get the ball rolling. My parents have been supportive of my musical pursuits from the day I signed myself up for lessons to the day of my doctoral defense, in addition to every single

rehearsal, concert, audition, and musical moment in between. Also cheering me along each step of the way have been my siblings Aaron, Lauren, Ryan, Monica, and Aidan. Thank you to my parents, sisters, and brothers, for their love and encouragement in all things. Just as there are too many music educators to list here, there are too many family members, friends, colleagues, and loved ones to name and give proper acknowledgement in these brief pages. And, just like Joan Robinson, there is one person who deserves special recognition. To Chris, my partner and husband through this adventure, thank you. You witnessed more than anyone the ambitions and challenges of my academic pursuits and were with me through the highs and lows. You made sacrifices and helped turn possibilities into realities. I am forever grateful that you were by my side through it all.

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Introduction

At first glance critical pedagogy is fairly straightforward: it is a way of educating that challenges assumed norms with the goal of bringing about transformation. While this is the mission of critical pedagogy, it is anything but homogenous. In writing this document, I have come to view critical pedagogy as a complicatedly delicious plate of noodles. A dish with a variety of noodles from all over the world, intertwined, mixed up, running into, and intersecting with each other. To examine any one part of critical pedagogy is to try and examine one noodle on the plate without removing it. So too when examining any one subject through a critical lens is to examine it in its relation to its context. Viewing anything through a critical lens is a daunting task but it is deeply rewarding, bringing new flavor to the field, yielding new ideas and perspectives, and noticing previously unseen elements. Such has been my own experience of questioning both the traditions and untapped possibilities of the collegiate choral ensemble.

The Western choral tradition of the past has been one of entering a stage, standing in formation, and presenting music to a passive audience. This is the tradition that shaped collegiate choral practice and continues to dominate the field. However, choral music in the North American context is in the midst of being reshaped with a bend toward social justice (Hess, 2017). This new growth from a deep root is taking place in religious settings, community choirs, and formalized music education. Higher education is not exempt from this new era. As such, collegiate choral conductors must ask themselves why they do what they do and why choirs should exist on the college campus. These deeper “whys” are worthy of constant reflection and are imperative during times of change. This document is built on my own questioning and reflections on my experiences as a collegiate choral singer, student, and conductor over the last decade. I personally am of the belief that collegiate choral activity has been imbued with a

singular purpose of performance and a limited notion of what performance means. In my own questioning of the deeper why, and doing so through a critical lens, I have come to the hope that there are other unexplored possibilities for what the purpose and work of the collegiate choral ensemble could be. It is my hope that the research and discussions presented here will further facilitate discussions among collegiate choral conductors and singers during this time of change. And in doing so, lead to a reexamination of the purposes, contexts, and potentials of collegiate choral ensembles through a critical lens.

Much has been written on the topic of critical pedagogy since the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire brought his critical approach and theory of knowledge to the world stage in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968. Critical pedagogy has been developed by notable critical pedagogues such as Apple, Giroux, hooks¹, McArthur, McLaren, and Shor. It also has its share of critique from both detractors and advocates in figures like Ellsworth, Hao, Hayes, Ladson-Billings, Wheeler-Bell, and Freire himself. As a self-reflexive pedagogy, it is in a near constant state of shaping and re-shaping. Through all of this, critical pedagogy remains guided by a foundational principle of challenging assumed norms and transforming oppressive systems. Critical pedagogy, now a field just over fifty years young, has been used to reexamine the entire spectrum of subjects within formal education. As it pertains to music education, Regelski and Gates formed a concentrated effort to consider music education through a critical lens with the formation of the MayDay group in 1993. Regelski went on to become the editor for MayDay's journal, *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*. Critical music education perspectives have also emerged from Abrahams, Allsup, Butke, Campbell, Dexter, Freer, Poulin, Schmidt, and Shaw with a noticeable emphasis on K-12 settings. While there has been some

¹ The scholar bell hooks chooses to decapitalize her name in her works. As such, her name is also decapitalized here.

attention given to critical collegiate music education and critical pedagogy as an ensemble pedagogy, there is little to no consideration for the use of critical pedagogy within the specific context of the collegiate choral ensemble. It is my hope that this document is of use in critically considering the uniquely situated position of performance ensembles in higher education.

In writing this document, I do not assume that the reader has pre-existing or advanced knowledge of critical pedagogy. Therefore, it is written in such a way to provide the reader with a foundational understanding of critical pedagogy, rather than a comprehensive understanding of the subject. It is for this reason that I chose to establish the presentation of the broad field of critical pedagogy in the writings of Paulo Freire. As previously stated, critical pedagogy has grown since Freire's time and other liberating pedagogies have developed either from inspiration or sharp critique of Freire's own. Even so, it is impossible to say that critical pedagogy is free from the influence and ideas of Freire. As such, it is beneficial to understand these Freirean foundations.

These foundations are established in Section I of this document: first by briefly reviewing Freire's context in mid-twentieth century Brazil before turning to his guiding principle that all education is politics. Section II then considers four major concepts of Freire's critical pedagogy: conscientization (raising critical consciousness), dialogue, praxis (action and reflection), and solidarity. In each of these chapters, Freire's pedagogy is presented in his own words. Their implications, challenges, and critiques are then considered within the contexts of higher education and music education. In the final chapter of this section, I offer my own reflections on the collegiate choral ensemble and my interpretation of what it means to be a critical collegiate choral ensemble. The critical exploration culminates in the third and final section of the document which functions as an imagined round-table discussion of collegiate choral conductors.

The discussion is derived from survey data gathered from a survey I designed for collegiate choral conductors to gauge their attitudes and values towards using elements of critical pedagogy with their collegiate choral ensemble. The survey data is not intended to present a closed finding applicable to the entirety of collegiate choral education in this country. The purpose of the survey is to invite an opening for dialogue through reflecting on the responses shared by the participating conductors. It is my hope that the sharing of the data will spark questions about collegiate choral practice in conductors' own locality and action will be taken so that collegiate choirs will realize their own critical and transformative potential.

Chapter 1: Freire's Context

Introduction

For the purposes of this document, I do not intend to provide the reader with a complete biographical rendering of Freire and his career or an exhaustive exploration of philosophical influences in this chapter. This brief opening chapter is intended to provide the reader with a basic awareness of the social, historical, and political surroundings of Freire during his youth and the formative experiences that shaped his pedagogical philosophy. Understanding Freire within his own context is necessary to understanding his arrival to the politics of education and the primary components of his pedagogy. Much has been written on Freire's philosophical, theological, and spiritual influences, and they are worth further reading for the individual who wishes to go deeper into the study of Freire as an individual. However, for the purposes of this document considering critical pedagogy and the collegiate choral ensemble, an introduction will suffice.

Youth

Freire was born into a middle-class family in Northeastern Brazil and spent his childhood years in Recife before his family moved twelve miles to neighboring Jaboatão in 1931. Freire, like most Brazilians in the region, was familiar with the experience of poverty. Even then, Freire was aware of his family's middle-class status, recalling, "we shared the hunger, but not the class" (Mackie, 1981b, p. 3). The class beneath Freire was what Bernard (1981) describes as, "... a mass of largely illiterate, landless labourers who work for a small class of wealthy landowners in conditions of misery and poverty that defy description" (p. 18). His parents were his first teachers in both literacy and matters of faith. Freire's mother was deeply religious, his father a

self-described spiritualist, and both were committed to aligning personal faith with action. This last point was not lost on young Freire (Boyd, 2012).

The death of Freire's father put the family into dire financial straits. Freire was thirteen and the extreme poverty that followed his father's death had a profound impact on Freire's formal education. Freire would not attend school for the following two years and when he was able to return to formal education, he struggled severely with his studies (Boyd, 2012). It wasn't that Freire was unintelligent, uninterested, or noncommittal, the problem was that he was hungry. Freire would recall what it was like to not be able to focus despite his desire to learn because of extreme hunger. He, like so many others, experienced the withholding of an education due to social class despite being physically present in the classroom (Gadotti, 1994). Two years into his high school education, Freire's older brother quit his own formal education to work and provide the family with greater income. With basic needs for survival met, Freire's capabilities not just as a student and a thinker, but also as a teacher, began to come through. Starting at age fifteen and continuing to his early twenties, Freire developed a sense of vocation toward teaching (Gadotti, 1994). Early on, Freire became interested in studying the syntax of the Portuguese language in addition to linguistics and the philosophy of language. These were the intellectual areas which occupied his thoughts as a high school teacher in his early twenties. Freire credits Elza, his first wife, with encouraging him to pursue pedagogy. As he did, he reflected on the philosophy he read as well as the experiences of his childhood and those he witnessed in northeast Brazil. The poverty Freire experienced and continued to witness as an adult instilled in him a righteous anger directed toward the injustice of social class oppression (Freire, 1985).

After abandoning the faith he was raised in during his adolescent years, Freire found his faith renewed by the writings of Maritain, Bernanos, Mounier, Teilhard de Chardin, Henrique

de Lima Pe Vaz, Reinhold Nieburh, and Pope John XXIII. Their influence would also remain with him as he formed his pedagogical philosophy (Boyd, 2012). A renewed faith by no means meant a blind faith. Freire saw a class struggle within the Catholic church and perceived the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church as opting for silence over action and attempted neutrality over a preferential option for the poor (Boyd, 2012). However, Freire remained aligned with what he saw as the “prophetic church of the oppressed” which he describes in the following manner, “The prophetic church is the church of hope, hope which only exists in the future, a future which only the oppressed classes have, as the future of the dominant classes is a pure repetition of their present state of being the oppressors.” (Gadotti, 1994, p. 4).

Freire in Brazil

Freire’s years as a young professional coincided with a time of industrial and economic transition in Brazil’s history. The 1950s saw increased national pride and economic growth via the industrialization of major cities. However, the patriotic pride and economic benefit was enjoyed only by members within the upper and middle class. For the rest of Brazil’s population, indeed the outstanding majority, illiteracy and living to survive hampered patriotic sentiment (Ioris & Ioris, 2013). More than patriotic sentiment, Freire was concerned with, “. . . more serious implications, such as the castration of illiterates in their ability to make decisions for themselves, to vote, and to participate in the political process.” (Freire, 1985). Even halfway through the twentieth century, the Brazilian peasant population lived under a feudal system where their work for the landowners (and their treatment) was left unregulated by the government (Boyd, 2012). The roots of this system were planted centuries earlier when the Portuguese monarchy granted giant tracts of land to Brazilian nobility, granting them the status of landowners. However, the roots were weakening as workers movements (Peasants Leagues, or

Rural Workers Leagues) became more numerous, prominent, and had the backing of both the church and educational programs (Bernard, 1981).

While the movements took place and gained political strength in the rural areas, the industrialized city centers saw a historic wave of migration of Northeasterners which made the once invisible Northeast population now visible in cosmopolitan areas. Fontes (2011) argues that while the organization of workers in the northeast brought the issue of agrarian reform to the center of the political stage, it was the new migrant populations in the new industrial centers that had “a terrific political catalysing effect on the discussion of the evil effects of the power associated with large landholdings in Brazil” (p. 15). Increasing attention to the plight of laborers in the northeast coincided with the industrialization of Brazil’s economy. This economic shift caught the attention of corporate interests of developed nations who sought to become involved as Brazil transitioned from an economy that sustained itself on agrarian goods and exports to one which was an industrial contender in the international market as a developing country (Boyd, 2012; Ioris & Ioris, 2013). It is in this landscape of industrialization, international interests, agrarian reform, and religious politics, that Freire’s literacy work takes place.

In 1947, Freire began an eight-year stint with the Industrial Social Service (SESI) in their Regional Department of Pernambuco, headquartered in Recife. The SESI was brought into being under the Dutra presidency. This government agency directed its focus toward improving class relations and conditions in the wake of World War II. While Freire agreed to join the agency, it was not without considerable political differences. According to Freire, SESI was, “not to criticize the consciousness of the working class, but to confuse reality and to put obstacles in the way of the fact that the working class could achieve its own identity.” (Freire, quoted in Gadotti, 1994, p. 6). Ana Maria Araújo Freire (Paulo Freire’s second wife) also criticizes the purpose

behind the formation of SESI, “It “asks” a calm, passive acceptance of the crying discrepancies in material conditions between owners and employees. “Assistance” is offered, in lieu of honest confrontation.” (Freire, 1994, p. 199 footnote). Despite the awareness of the disingenuousness of the politics, Freire’s time with SESI afforded him time to further develop his budding pedagogy. Freire’s role within SESI involved studying the variety of relationships (teachers, students, and parents) in the educational system. It was in this work that Freire further saw how these interconnected relationships took shape in the world in and out of the educational setting (Freire, 1994). It is worth quoting Freire’s recollection of this time and the development of his early pedagogy at length.

. . . I began to develop a series of techniques that involved the meetings I used to conduct between parents and teachers in reference to the school and children . . . I tried to see these meetings as forums for critical thinking about what is real and concrete . . . Then I began to question. Why not do something that would follow the same principles, the same critical vision, and the same pedagogy I had been using to debate issues like discipline? What is discipline? What is the relation between freedom and authority? What is the relation between the father’s authority and the child’s freedom? Why should children not begin to read by rote, sounding out the A B C’s? In fact, using the sentence as a point of departure, they should begin with the totality of the word as a whole, and not the minimal part that is the grapheme . . . Why not write about the same themes I have been putting into practice when I talk with my adult students? What is underdevelopment? What is nationalism? What is democracy? Why not do the same thing when teaching people to read words? (Freire, 1985, p. 176)

At the same time as his involvement with SESI, Freire was also involved with the Movement for Popular Culture (MCP) and it was his involvement with MCP that Freire became convinced of the need to situate education in concrete reality and not impose education as a preconceived abstract practice without considering the material context of a learning population. The use of culture circles by the MCP would introduce Freire to the possibility of using similar practices for the purpose of building literacy. Freire began to apply and study his approach in greater effort in the late fifties while he served as director of the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife (Gadotti, 1994). Freire's growing concern for teaching illiterate adults was the focus of his doctoral thesis which explored pedagogical practices situated within concrete reality and the context of the learner. Shortly after submitting his thesis to Recife University in 1959, he was granted a chair position in the history and philosophy of education at that same institution (Mackie, 1981b).

As Freire was exploring the potential of a pedagogy that was non-elitist and began with the world of the student, education within Brazil was dominated by technical and efficient pursuits. Such was the case to accommodate a time of modernization and urbanization for the populous centers of Brazil whose migrant population had little to no industrial work experience and were largely illiterate (Fontes, 2001). The problem was so great that technical training and education were among the five priorities for President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira and his 1955 five-year plan for economic growth (Ioris & Ioris, 2013). That same year, the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies (ISEB) was formed. While the ISEB was a government institution, they were largely autonomous and frequently conflicted with Kubitschek's preferred plan of action. Members of the ISEB believed that development and nationalism were intrinsically related and, therefore, had to be articulated in tandem (Ioris & Ioris, 2013). Rather than inviting

international corporate interest to dictate Brazil's development, the interest and direction should come from within, not without.

Influenced by those associated with the ISEB and acting in opposition to the instrumental education driving the industrialization of Brazil, Freire noted that, "The tendency is for the model rural school in Latin America to develop competitive and authoritarian relationships, while alienating students from their environments" (Bernard, 1981, p. 38). It is noteworthy that Freire set up his culture circles and pedagogical efforts outside of the institutionalized system of formal education. The reason for this was not purely due to access, but in order to combat the alienation that students encounter in formal education. Bernard (1981), commenting on Freire's desire to expand the site of learning, writes that "Official education, however well-intentioned, has as its goal an acceptance of what is, rather than a mobilization towards what ought to be, that is domestication rather than liberation" (p. 38).

Freire's method reached greater attention in 1962 when the mayor of Recife Miguel Arraes invited Freire to implement his method with the workers in Recife. The success from this endeavor caught the attention of the national government under the presidency of Joao Goulart; so much so, that Freire was appointed the Director of the National Literacy Program and prepared to launch a mass literacy program and eradicate illiteracy using culture circles (Mackie, 1981b). In these culture circles, dialogue and the use of images from everyday life were foundational in teaching literacy skills in addition to raising social awareness. Students learned to read but they also learned how to be informed citizens aware that the problems introduced through familiar images (e.g. slums) were not one of static reality but were a dynamic problem (Beckett, 2018). With this new awareness, and the literacy skills required to vote, the social structures upholding the current reality could be questioned and acted upon.

Goulart Government & Military Coup

Under the Goulart government of the early 1960s, agricultural reform and the organization of workers and unions increased. Goulart (who was the protégé of former president and dictator Vargas) took a step further left with his Three-Year-Plan which was dedicated to the task of decreasing inflation and income inequality. Such goals would be achieved by means of land and tax reform (Loureiro, 2017). With Goulart's unapologetic alignment with the poor, it appeared as though the time for compromise was nearing an end and reform according to the demands of workers seemed to be on the horizon (Bernard, 1981). This new horizon was enabled not only with the leader of the country but also with the growing organization of workers and the promise of increased literacy. Landowners faced a loss of power not only through the organization of the workers, but through the possibility of the population becoming literate. A literate population meant a voting population as accorded by Brazil's constitution which banned illiterate voting (Mackie, 1981b) It wasn't just the landowners who were fearing Goulart's leftist reforms. The conservatives within the military ranks feared Goulart's leftist agenda and an embrace of socialism (Loureiro, 2017). Despite a lack of support from the ruling class and military, Goulart pushed forward with his Three-Year-Plan even though it exceeded Brazil's financial resources, turning to the U.S. and the Alliance for Progress for financial assistance.

Alarcón (2015) describes The Alliance for Progress as a "US defense strategy against the potential proliferation of the Cuban Revolution, by granting loans and foreign aid projects and promoting social and political reforms" (p. 200). The aid promised by Washington to help Goulart implement his Three-Year-Plan was in a precarious freeze-thaw pattern. To put it simply, the Kennedy administration in Washington was unsure of whether Goulart's loyalties were with the U.S., Castro, or the Soviet bloc (Loureiro, 2017). As the tensions rose around the

question of financial aid, Goulart moved further left on the political spectrum—he could not abandon his leftist political pursuits in exchange for domestication by international politics, lest he lose the support and political backing of the leftist groups. This move made Washington increasingly wary of Brazil under Goulart. This wariness was exacerbated when the Brazilian president openly threatened to ally Brazil with the Soviet bloc should Washington fail to offer financial aid to the Three-Year-Plan (Loureiro, 2017). Washington called the bluff. Goulart did not bring Brazil into the Soviet bloc and the funds from Washington would remain frozen.

Without the aid to see his Three-Year-Plan through, it was dropped in 1963. As it was, the U.S. was not the only entity Goulart's remarks threatened. The Brazilian military after World War II was, by and large, allied with the U.S. and fostered deep anti-Communist sentiment (Loureiro, 2017). While Goulart's threat to the U.S. was enough to raise concern among Brazil's military leadership, the fear of communism infiltrating the military was realized when Goulart denied the military the ability to punish sailors who attempted to form a Naval Union. Goulart even went so far as to strip the military of their ability to name their own admiral replacement and turned instead to unions, asking them to provide a list of candidates (Bernard, 1981). This proved to be too much. Outraged that military discipline was superseded by the unions, the Goulart presidency was overthrown in a military coup in April of 1964.

Freire was one of many Brazilian intellectuals who were imprisoned following the coup. He recalled being labeled an “international subversive,” and a “traitor to Christ and the Brazilian people” during his interrogations by the state (Gadotti, 1994, p. 35). The new ruling powers even went so far as to place his literacy methods alongside those used by Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and Péron so as to dissuade their use (Gadotti, 1994). Conservatives viewed Freire as a danger to society, an educator determined to rile the people and subvert order (Mackie, 1981b). While

Freire faced extreme backlash and his methods were used as anti-progressive propaganda, other educators faced none. Reflecting upon this moment in his life, Freire comments that, “The only difference is that their [other Brazilian adult literacy educators] politics furthered the interest of the dominant class. This is the real difference. There are no neutral educators” (Freire, 1985, p. 180). Following the April coup, Freire was imprisoned for a total of 75 days before finding sanctuary for twenty days in Bolivia—a short lived respite due to Bolivia’s own coup—before truly beginning his life as an exile in Chile where he would remain and work with the Chilean government for the next four and a half years.

Freire in Chile

By the time of Freire’s arrival in Santiago in November of 1964, the capital city had already become a gathering point for other progressive scholars and thinkers from across Latin America. (Holst, 2006). This confluence of thinkers, colleagues, and continued pedagogical work would prove to be of enormous influence upon Freire. While in Chile, Freire would write *Education as the Practice of Freedom, Extension or Communication?, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, On Cultural Action*, as well as the opening eight chapters of *The Politics of Education* (Holst, 2006). *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, while written and published in Chile, was informed by Freire’s work in Brazil pre-exile. Mackie (1981a) characterizes the text as “located firmly within a liberal, democratic framework” (p. 96). Freire’s treatment of critical consciousness in this framework was directed toward the active participation of adults within democratic practice and process and by extension, the open dialogue in a forum centered on, “the problems of their country, of their continent, their world, their work, the problems of democracy itself” (Mackie, 1981a, p. 96). The focus on democratic participation of the popular class is primarily developmentalist and less political (Freire, 1985; Holst, 2006). After Freire’s arrival in

Chile and his work with the rural Chilean population, his writings take a noticeably radical turn, abandoning the liberal democratic buttresses that upheld his previous work. Mackie (1981a) surmises that the coup which overthrew the “mildly reformist” Goulart presidency was one reason which brought about Freire’s disenchantment with the promise of possibility found in “militant democracy” (p. 104).

Freire’s arrival in Chile coincided with the election of a new president and a new party leading the country. The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) was progressive, but it was not nearly as far left as the socialist and communist based Popular Action Front. The conservative party was afraid the leftist candidate would win so they pulled their support from their own candidate and supported the PDC and their candidate of choice, Eduardo Frei. Agrarian reform, as well as capitalistic modernization, were central to the party’s agenda (Gadotti, 1994). Within days of his arrival in Santiago in November of 1964, Freire began work with the agrarian reform centered INDAP (*Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario/Institute for Agrarian and Livestock Development*). During his tenure with INDAP, Freire traveled the country and worked directly with the population for which agrarian reform was intended. He learned their language, customs, culture, political environment, and became intimately familiar with his new context. This continued as he began working with ICIRA in 1968, yet another venture focused on agrarian reform. The ICIRA was a program developed under the combined efforts of the Chilean government and both the Development Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Holst, 2006). Freire’s work was centered on the research and development of generative themes (a collection of core words grounded in the experiences of the Chilean peasant population), to be used as pedagogical points of departure for teaching literacy. His involvement came with some suspicion from those belonging to the more conservative spectrum of party

politics who, like Freire's opponents in Brazil, viewed his literacy approach as subversive and feared Freire's vision. Still, through the efforts of Waldemar Cortes (director of the Department of Special Planning for the Education of Adults) Freire was brought on to work with the Chilean Agrarian Reform Corporation (Mackie, 1981b)

Freire's work with INDAP through ICIRA occurred primarily in the field (literally) and Freire experienced first-hand for an extended period of time the lived reality of Chilean workers, their education, the local and regional implementation of agrarian reform. He also spent considerable time with the youth involved in the workers movements and was immersed in the increasingly radical sentiments of both the youth and the movements (Holst, 2006). The increased radicalization was a product of the attempted agrarian reforms. Agrarian reforms were taking place under the governance of the Christian Democratic Party. However, the bureaucracy of the reform caused unrest among those the reforms were attempting to help. Holst (2006), describes the tension existing:

As the agrarian reform under Frei [the new president] was increasingly unable to meet the rural demands from below for land and for better living conditions that its own reform helped unleash—due to its own ideological limits and a desire to transform the rural relations of power only to the extent that it would remain in control — the peasantry began to move to unions and other rural organizations affiliated with parties on the left and increasingly engaged in strike actions and unauthorized land seizures. (p. 258)

The growing sentiment for more radical reform and a left-leaning path toward socialism culminated in the election of Salvador Allende in 1970, a massive success for the Popular Unity party and their socialist vision. However, opposition by the previously ruling PDC party and North American allies resulted in a coup that ousted Allende in 1973 (Gadotti, 1994).

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Freire's exilic time in Chile. Freire himself acknowledges this when he writes, ". . . A month or two after being exiled, I had already changed completely. My experience of exile politicized me intensely. *It was Chile, moreover, that did that*" (Freire, cited in Holst, 2006, p. 260). In addition to the matured political attention upon pedagogy and education, Freire's solidarity also matured. Freire (1985) recalls that,

Chileans, not I, had to design and implement their own forms of education . . . I had to help them to the extent that I could . . . I learned that I could only help them if I began to understand them better. And I could not understand them better without understanding their culture and history. (p. 181)

While the function of the job may have required Freire to work with the people, it was Freire's faith that consistently compelled him. Freire acknowledges that it was his faith that drove him to work with people in their lived experience. It was this act of communion with the peasant population that brought his attention to Marx. Freire saw the concerns of Marx manifested in the material world of the peasant population and indeed the people he worked with reinforced to Freire what he was reading in Marx. More than meeting Marx among the peasant population, Freire professed to have met Christ in the people who knew Marx without ever reading the philosopher (Boyd, 2012). Christian spirituality and the Marxist framework centered Freire in a political struggle and continued him on a path of non-neutrality (Gadotti, 1994).

Freire's Pedagogy Matured

Freire made no attempt to hide his affinity for Marx and Marx's influence on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which would become one of the most important texts for education in the twentieth century and is considered "the most fully elaborated explication of Freire's educational philosophy" (Allman, 1994 p. 157). This is no small feat for any pedagogue, but it is even more

impressive given that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is not a manual for formal education, but a response to class oppression. Freire acknowledges that, “When I wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* I was so influenced by Marx’s class analysis, and given the incredibly cruel class oppression that characterized my developing years in Northeast Brazil, my major preoccupation was, therefore, class oppression.” (Freire & Macedo, 1993, p. 170). Though Freire was influenced by Marx, he was not a committed Marxist. Freire did not commit to Marx’s singular vision—the historical materialism which inspires revolution and the dissolution of the capitalist state—and contends that revolution is cultural, not economic (Mackie, 1981a). Furthermore, Freire is sure to distance himself from any philosophy which flirts with a predetermined outcome of history—even if the unavoidable outcome is believed to be as economically liberating as Marx (Freire, 1985).

Despite his unapologetically political approach toward education, Freire did not identify himself with any particular Chilean political party since he was Brazilian (an exiled Brazilian, but a Brazilian, nonetheless). Instead, Freire’s politics in Chile were formed by his relationships with those he worked with, primarily the revolutionary young Chileans involved with agrarian reform (Holst, 2006). His activity with young radicals and his revolutionary writing of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* increased the suspicion and resentment from the conservative corner of the ruling Christian Democratic Party. Conversely, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* brought Freire international acclaim. So much so, that Harvard University offered him a position as a visiting professor. He accepted Harvard’s offer and left Chile in 1969. Freire would continue to find refuge as an exile and refine his pedagogy across the globe (Geneva, Peru, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Canada, Italy, Iran, India, Australia, and Papua-New Guinea). He would continue to work on and reflect upon his literacy methods and educational philosophy in

various global contexts before returning to Brazil in 1980 when his government-imposed exile finally came to an end. He continued to work as an educator, notably at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo and as Secretary of Education of Sao Paulo, and remained committed to his vocation up unto his death in 1997.

Chapter 2: Politics of Education

This is a great discovery, education is politics! . . . After that moment, the educator has to make his or her choice, to go farther into opposition politics and pedagogy. (Freire, 1987 p. 46)

Introduction

To understand critical pedagogy, and any pedagogy really, is to understand its centrality in politics. Shor (2000) describes three perceptions of education and politics. These perceptions are derived from Freire's own reflection on his evolving awareness of the political nature of education. Shor names intransitive thought as the mindset most closely aligned with the politically neutral view of education. This is the belief that education and politics can be and remain separate. On the other end of the spectrum is critical transitivity which is aligned with Freire's sentiment and Shor's statement that education is "embedded in the politics of an unfinished and changeable world, and that single issues or problems are part of a systematic whole" (Shor, 2000, p. 10). Falling between these two ends is semi-transitive thinking which acknowledges the political connections to education and society beyond classrooms but isolates problems as individual issues to be explored and falls short of taking transformative action.

Any examination of syllabi, course material, or teaching practice reveals the micro-politics of education while larger issues such as funding and gatekeepers reveal the macro-politics tied to education (Shor, 2000). The choral context is not exempt from such micro and macro politics. Choral repertoire readily highlights this reality of micro-politics and their macro-political implications. When music students become music educators, they often return to repertoire that they did with their previous teachers and program the same material with their own students. The micro-political reverberations of a single choral classroom (who is represented in the music, texts,

themes, biases of “good choral music”) are reproduced and sent out into multiple choral classrooms to further generations. This is not to say that culling repertoire from previous experience is innately harmful. But it does draw attention to the need for conductors to examine what it is they are passing on to students and future educators. All education, and all choral music, is politics.

The notion that all education is politics can cause immediate uproar, especially in an American context where identity through party allegiance is strong and social concerns are characterized somewhere along the right-wing/left-wing spectrum. Freire views a difference between what politics is and what it means to be political, though the two are inextricably linked. Freire relates politics to the organizing of people to work as a collective, whereas political is the formation of an “us versus them” situation where one side is declared the enemy and neither side can exist without the other (Dalaqua, 2019). Such is the political situation of the oppressed and the oppressor.

The politics of how people are organized or choose to organize is done so in favor of something(s) over another thing(s). The favoring of one thing over another and the repercussions of these choices feeds the political beyond the simple demarcation of an “us versus them” or a “teacher versus students.” Take, for example, the choral ensemble. A group of people come together and organize to make music (politics). There is a conductor and an ensemble. How that conductor and ensemble engage in the rehearsal process could favor the authoritarian tradition or it could favor a collaborative choral practice (political). The selection of choral repertoire, how it is selected, who is represented, what themes are being sung, what styles are shared, presenting to a passive audience or with an active audience, are all basic political choices facing choral activity. Conductors are constantly engaged in choices such as these, supporting Freire’s assertion that,

“The teacher works in favor of something and against something” (Freire, 1987, p. 46). In this most basic way, the choral environment is political.

At the same time, the choral realm is not exempt from participation in the political as it pertains to social issues. Shor (2018), Freire’s close friend and colleague, poses these questions in the afterword to Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “What kind of world do we live in? Why is it like that? What kind of world do we want? How do we get there from here?” (p. 188). To answer these questions, educators and students must know the issues facing the world in which they live in order to understand and transform it. Many of these issues become politicized topics. It is the responsibility of the critical conductor—one that is committed to raising consciousness and transformative action—to acknowledge the political realities of the choir and then make a choice to act or not act. The conductor’s action/inaction will inevitably be in favor of something while working against another. To this point, Freire raises the rhetorical question, “How to be consistent in my teaching practice with my political choice?” (Freire, 1987, p. 46). He answers his own question with the following, “. . . I cannot proclaim my liberating dream and in the next day, in behalf of *rigor*, be authoritarian in my relationship with the students” (Freire, 1987, p. 46). He reiterates this point in a later text, saying that, “. . . there is the risk of not being consistent—of saying one thing and doing something else. And it is precisely the political nature of education practice . . . that requires of the educator his or her ethicalness” (Freire, 1994, p. 67). The political action of the educator begins with that educator’s own self-reflection of their beliefs and their visions of and for the world. Once the educator is honest with their identity, they have no choice but to bring their practice and their identity into alignment or split themselves into two identities: the person and the educator.

As for myself, my introduction to critical pedagogy (initially by means of liberation theology) gave me a framework and a field in which the theoretical met action and challenged the status quo. It excited me as a religious queer man and challenged me as a middle-class white cis-gender American male who benefits from an inheritance of privilege received through systems of domination and oppression. It also sparked my creative fire in questioning the choral norms I had been educated in throughout my life, especially as a choral student in predominantly white institutions of higher education for these last ten years. I have become increasingly dissatisfied with limiting a choir's social engagement strictly to repertoire choices and I am interested in what choral social engagement could look like when it occurs outside the concert hall. I also know myself to be comfortable in the theoretical and reticent towards action. I have a political choice to remain solely reflective or to pursue theory with action. This document is part of the beginnings of my attempt to unite critical choral reflection with critical choral action within the context of the collegiate choral ensemble informed by the framework of Freire's critical pedagogy. And what a political context that is.

Politics of Higher Education

Any educator in higher education knows that there are politics within academia. For purposes of this discussion, it is important to consider more deeply what higher education favors as an institution and what it works against. I find it beneficial to start this inquiry at the foundational level by asking "what is the purpose of higher education?" What do I as the individual educator believe the purpose is? What does evidence of the institution's actions and history imply the purpose is? Does higher education exist for the purpose of developing critical consciousness? Is its purpose fostering job security or technical training? Is it the maintenance of the middle class and career qualifications? Is it a way out of class inequity? Is it to feed the economy? Is it to create

a homogenous thought culture? Is it to relieve or repress issues of race? How do these intersect? The proposed and perceived purpose of higher education today is reflected in the reason students enroll and attend various institutions. When conductors look at their collegiate ensembles, they need to ask themselves why the singers are there, and ultimately, discover the answers from their students, looking past just why they are present in the ensemble, but also examining why they are interested in being a student in the academy. The reasons that brought them here are imbued with politics and the political. I know I may be preaching to a choir of collegiate conductors, but it bears repeating that understanding the politics of the institution, educators, and students, creates a more complete picture of the politics of a given institution.

The commodification of higher education in recent history is of great concern to critical pedagogues across fields (Apple, 2019; Giroux, 2020; McArthur, 2011; Patton, 2016). When education is commodified to feed the economy, students become commodities themselves with their purpose and significance determined by what they may contribute to the business of higher education and society afterward. In other words, what good are the humanities when the demand is for a supply of tech graduates? McArthur (2011) argues that when higher education prioritizes fueling economic demands for a product—in this case, trained individuals—it does so at the expense of developing the whole person as they relate to the world and its needs beyond the economy. Take the issue of race, for example. Though it is ever present in higher education it is all too often left unacknowledged and absent from a student's education, technical or otherwise. Patton (2016) argues that the racist and white supremacist foundations of higher education as a system in the U.S. are designed to work with imperialist capitalism to perpetuate oppression related to race and property, and the racist white supremacist knowledge is upheld and perpetuated in the higher educational institution. A critical lens, in this case a lens of critical race theory, does not

ignore these realities but chooses to address them in and out of the classroom. Any critical pedagogy engages with the entirety of a person's existence and context which includes *both* the economic and material concerns as well as the relational and social concerns. McArthur (2011) describes this dual attention to the personal/social and the material/technical as "expansive learning" (p. 745) which takes a holistic approach to the person and their context while teaching technical skills. To be clear, this both/and approach does not make education politically neutral. There are still choices that are made which favor and disadvantage. Saying that education is politically neutral is itself a political statement. It works in favor of the status quo by a refusal to work against it (Freire, 1994).

McArthur's political stance ultimately views higher education as a place to "challenge, provoke, and inspire . . . It should look rather like the world in which it exists and which it partly serves" (p. 746). I agree with McArthur's sentiment, but I would question and seek to clarify it as well. I agree that higher education should challenge, provoke, and inspire, but should it look like the world in which it exists? Or, put differently, which world should it look like? The world of the status quo or the world that the status quo keeps hidden? To answer this question as an individual or a field is unsurprisingly, political.

Let's assume for a moment that we are working towards reflecting what remains hidden in our educational context. What does that look like? Less euro-centric? A greater representation of diversity? Patton (2016) addresses the politics of diversifying higher education through offering courses in diversity. Patton argues that such courses are offered for and catered to white students. Not only do diversity courses frequently end up centering white students, but when they become tokenized and uncritical, they also run the risk of turning diversity into a commodity for students to purchase. This is immediately applicable to how diversity is represented in collegiate choral

practice. Singing diverse repertoire without developing a critical understanding of the web in which it exists may check a box for diversity, but it does not educate. The diverse repertoire is performed but it is not understood. It is literally performative. A choir may do a joint concert with a group from outside of the institution and their only encounter with each other is the concert. This may draw a wider audience, a larger audience, but if the partnership is limited to the concert, what within the status quo is transformed? There are politics at play during the repertoire process when a conductor chooses to prioritize performance preparation over extra-musical understanding. This is not an easy dynamic to balance. But it is time we as conductors are honest with ourselves and the political implications of our choices, especially when they are problematic.

Allsup (2003) identifies a problematic music education as one that reinscribes one culture as dominant over another, coercing students into a cultural amalgamation. When we consider the ensembles we work with, we must ask ourselves the following: What culture is already present? What culture is missing? What kind of world do we want? Gould (2009) and Hess (2017) provide further frameworks for how choices made within the music educational setting are political. Gould (2009) addresses four types of musical literacy—functional, cultural, progressive, and critical—and how they manifest in music education. Each form of literacy provides an advantage and a disadvantage. Functional literacy favors the building of essential skills needed to understand Western music in a Western music classroom. Cultural literacy favors an awareness and appreciation of compositional works deemed essential to the musical canon while progressive literacy is student-centered and prioritizes active engagement with musics of various cultures. Hess (2017) counters the euro-centric functional and cultural literacies with the critical practice of “eschewing the canon” (p. 175) and de-centering the privilege held by Western musical works enabling them to dominate what we consider “classics.” Gould’s critical literacy is most closely

aligned with critical pedagogy as its primary purpose is to “transform society as it acknowledges the inherently political nature of educational content and context” (p. 48). Similarly, Hess advocates for “putting inequity on the table” (p. 178). This critical musical practice prioritizes the understanding of the systems in which we exist, both musical and social. In this instance, “Music was the medium, but the discussion was political” (p. 178). Just as critical pedagogy provides a framework for a critical lens, these various forms of musical literacy can be a starting point for conductors evaluating the politics of their educational practice.

Within all of these practices is the political question of who is the teacher educating in favor of and against? Issues of race and socioeconomics play an immediate factor. Students of color and students of lower socio-economic status are placed at a further disadvantage if they do not receive an education in functional literacy while white middle class students have the status quo reinscribed if the traditional canon is not eschewed (Hess, 182). Hess (2017) understands these complexities within Collins’ matrix of domination which “considers individuals’ positionalities in relation to factors such as race, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, size, immigrant and refugee status, and religion” (p. 177) and argues that educators must account for these various intersections if they are to attempt a critical musical pedagogy. “Accounting for positionalities” (p. 177) draws awareness to the fact the critical pedagogy is fallible and is capable of reinscribing that which it attempts to dismantle. However, when “practitioners can engage in anti-oppressive work with a critical eye on their every action and its consequences, to vigilantly guard against re-inscription of the very conditions we seek to undo” (p. 185).

Freire warns that, “. . . separating education from politics is not only artificial but dangerous” (Freire, 1985, p. 170). Baranowski (2020) highlights this danger in their critique of a neo-liberal product-based education. Whether it is in the choral hall or elsewhere on campus,

“education devoid of elements of critical analysis of current reality, focused only on providing the ‘skills’ needed in the labour market... ‘produces’ an exemplary consumer. An unreflective consumer” (p. 396). And in doing so, Baranowski supports Apple’s (2013) critique that the purpose of higher education is an attempt to maintain the status quo by making sure that its members think and do the right thing as dictated by the institution (p. 45).

Critical pedagogy values context, and for some collegiate educators, fear remains a factor in an academic’s political decisions. A study authored by Crean & Lynch (2013) investigated why some academics choose to not partner and work directly with social justice projects or experimental programs directed towards the advancement of social justice, despite their desire to do so. As it happens, the politics of an institution can overpower the politics of an individual educator. Crean & Lynch (2013) characterize the struggle in the following:

One has to be prepared not just to be defeated in the struggle but to be dismissed and emotionally ‘beaten up’ by those in power if the change is not deemed desirable or important at the time, or if it challenges powerful interests . . . The costs of resistance at the emotional and personal level are not trivial and are too often ignored in the theorization of change (p. 63).

Fortunately, conductors who participated in the survey for this document (see chapter 7) expressed that they feel supported by their institutions and that fear of repercussion from the institution does not contribute to a fear of questioning choral norms. However, fear of negative repercussions from the ensemble contributes more to an avoidance of challenging norms than fear derived from the institution.

Conclusion

Freire acknowledges the political risk associated with engaging in any kind of radical pedagogy, such as his own, within the academic institution (or in this case, with the choir). He describes educators as needing to have, “one foot inside the system, and strategically . . . have the other foot outside the system” (Freire, 1985, p. 178) Still, Freire does not fault other educators who choose to, “keep both their feet squarely inside the system” (p. 178) because they are aware of the risks and potential repercussions of radical pedagogical action. Critical pedagogy does not always have to be noticeably disruptive within the institution or choral ensemble. It can be subtle, and it can be grand, as I hope will be indicated in the coming chapters. With the politics of education in mind, it is time we ask the most fundamental question of Freire’s work: what is the purpose of critical pedagogy?

Chapter 3: Conscientization

Conscientization . . . must be a critical attempt to reveal reality, not just alienating small talk. It must, that is, be related to political involvement. There is no conscientization if the result is not the conscious action of the oppressed as an exploited social class, struggling for liberation (Freire, 1985, p. 125).

Introduction

In the following chapters regarding Freire's pedagogy, I will follow the approach taken by Allman (1994) of frequently citing Freire directly when discussing his pedagogy. This is so that when the discussion turns to critical pedagogy within the specific contexts of music education, higher education, and the collegiate choral ensemble in the following chapters, the reader may examine Freire's words, my interpretations of those words and their implications, and consider whether my conclusion bears weight on their work as a collegiate choral conductor. I will also do my part to write against sexism and bring more inclusivity to Freire's quoted words, particularly those of his earlier works. Freire (1994) expresses his own disdain for his male dominant language in earlier texts. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, he writes "I had rather write an unattractive line sometimes than omit to express my rejection of sexist language...changing language is part of the process of changing the world" (p. 57-58). Therefore, inclusive language for all people will be added in brackets within the necessary quotations.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Freire's concept of education includes the notion of formal schooling as well as learning which occurs outside of the formal structure. When Freire was developing his literacy method, its intended use was outside of formal education although he was concerned with the literacy methods of formal education. His texts were written as pedagogical texts for community action and organization (Peters & Besley, 2015). The following

chapters will explore Freire’s pedagogy in depth, drawing heavily on Freire’s writing with support from scholars and educators who wrote concurrently and after him. These voices will elaborate on Freire’s pedagogy and provide further illustration of his pedagogy in formal education.

Freire’s *Conscientização*

“*Conscientização*—by means of which the people, through a true praxis [union of reflection and action], leave behind the status of *objects* to assume the status of historical *Subjects*—is necessary” (Freire, 2018, p. 160). Conscientization (the anglicized version of *conscientização*), defined as the development of consciousness in and with the world, is a process directed toward the task of unveiling the world not as an unchangeable reality inherited from those who came before, but as one that is dynamic and constantly unfolding with the possibility of expanding toward liberation rather than oppression (Freire, 1985). This process unveils the world on both the macro and micro level, the societal and personal structures that systematize current lived reality. In Freirean pedagogy, the educator is tasked with guiding the process of conscientization and inviting students to take part in recognizing and unveiling their reality. This guidance is not to be mistaken for or warped into what Freire describes as “idealist manipulation” (Freire, 1985, p. 106). Nor should it be misconstrued that individual awareness brought about by conscientization is equivalent with societal transformation. Freire incessantly reiterates that awareness alone does not bring about societal transformation (Freire, 1994). This may be due, in part, to an early misunderstanding and misapplication of conscientization due to Freire’s self-acknowledged incomplete analysis of the concept.

Freire’s concept of conscientization is the cornerstone of his pedagogy. Despite the importance of this concept, Freire admits at the time of writing *The Politics of Education* (1985),

that conscientization was “one of the weakest points of my work” (p. 152). He attributes this to what he saw as an early misconception of the topic which gave way to a misinterpretation and an improper application of the concept of conscientization from the beginning. Freire faults himself for not properly characterizing the political nature of education in his earlier writings. By failing to acknowledge the political nature of education, he felt that he “opened the door to every sort of reactionary interpretation and practice, leading to many distortions of what conscientization must really be” (Freire, 1985, p. 152). One of the ways conscientization was distorted was the assumption that transformation occurs simultaneously with the unveiling of reality without need for further possible action or transformation (Freire 1985). In short, there was not a healthy tension within conscientization maintaining the unity and necessity of consciousness (theory and the abstract) and the world (action and the material). Here is why this is problematic for Freire. Without a dialectic (opposing forces simultaneously united) transformation of consciousness is granted primacy over transformation of the material. In doing so, consciousness is separated from reality with the claim that consciousness can transform the world without actually interacting with it. The removal of consciousness from the world results in an idealistic, incomplete engagement with the material world (Freire, 1985). Freire writes that the idealistic appropriation of conscientization has led to an attempt to “offer magic remedies for healing the hearts of [hu]mankind without changing the social structures...” (Freire, 1985, p. 123). Freire goes on to write that in this idealistic treatment of conscientization, “. . . there would be neither oppressor nor oppressed, for all would love each other as brothers [family], and differences would be resolved through roundtable discussions—or over a good whiskey” (Freire, 1985, p. 124). This appropriation shares similarities with the general notion of the “healing power of music” that is experienced in the immediate moment of singing together but going no

further than that moment. I have in my own choral past, experiences of singing songs of unity and justice in a predominantly white and socio-economically privileged choir. But the choir's engagement with these social themes were limited to singing the words presented as they are in the music. I could be wrong, but I would wager my experience is not an uncommon one. Do conductors encourage the ensemble to sing of the beauty of our shared humanity without addressing the consciousness of their own ensemble community? How can conductors work against an idealistic simplification of the complexities of choral conscientization?

Freire eventually addressed his own idealistic and simplistic construction of consciousness during his time in exile. Rather than resolve the dialectic between consciousness and world, he maintained it. Teachers and students, leaders and community, reflection and action, subject and object, also formed key components of this dialectical basis. Unlike traditional dialectics (arguing two contradictions to uncover truth), Freire did not attempt to synthesize or resolve the duality of the previously mentioned pairings. In fact, he took issue with previous attempts to do so. Freire believed that approaches which did not hold the dialectical relationship in tension and instead tried to resolve or synthesize it (such as pre-Hegelian idealism, mechanical objectivism, or behaviorism) inevitably resulted in an incomplete understanding of the original dialectic (Freire, 1985, p. 153-154; Freire, 1998, p. 501).

Freire's conception of consciousness as a dialectic allows for the "objectification of and action upon the world" (Freire, 1998, p. 500). Such an engagement with the concrete does not imply that consciousness is a reflection of the material world, but that consciousness reflects upon the material world. Situated as a dialectic, consciousness and the related process of conscientization contributes to the work of a utopian vision through the denunciation of dehumanization and annunciation of the transformation of the situation (Freire, 1998). Freire's

pedagogy is utopian in the sense that the future is open rather than closed. Utopia is not the inevitable destination of an unrelenting world spirit or unending pursuit of reason. It is a possibility fueled by hope, fed by imagination and dream inspired by the current unfinished state of humanity (Sacadura, 2014). A utopian vision is necessary for Freire's pedagogy because, "When education is no longer utopian . . . it is either because the future has no more meaning . . . or because men [people] are afraid to risk living the future as creative overcoming of the present, which has become old" (Freire, 1998, p. 492). Freire argues that the utopian vision and the education it inspires should not be brushed aside as "idealistic or impractical" (p. 492). Rather, the utopian vision challenges educators and students to actively engage in the denunciation of dehumanizing realities of the present and announce the possibility and emergence of a new more humane reality for all (Freire, 1998).

The pedagogical implication here is that learners with the "capacity for critical knowing...[are] established in the process of unveiling their relationships with the historical-cultural world *in* and *with* which they exist" (Freire, 1998, p. 489). The utopian vision and dialectical relationship of being in the world and with the world comes to form the backbone of Freire's matured process of conscientization as a pedagogical tool.

With the dialectical unity of conscientization established, another complexity of conscientization must be addressed. That is, the liberation of an individual conscience does not bring about social transformation if that liberation is kept within the confines of the individual. To this point, it is worth quoting Freire (1987) at length:

Let us suppose that his [the educator's] pedagogy develops in students a certain level of independence. What I want to say is that this level of autonomy is not enough to transform them for making the necessary political and radical transformation of Brazilian

society . . . If you are not able to use your *recent* freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (p. 109).

The point here is not to take on the impossible task of individually transforming all of society. The point is to go beyond oneself and continue the work after the moment of personal awareness. If an individual finds themselves liberated from the entrapments of the dominant social ideology through conscientization, they must then take this empowerment back into the social realm. Shor, in a dialogue with Freire, suggests newfound empowerment should reflect upon the following questions, “For whom and against whom do they use their new freedom in learning. How does it relate to other efforts to transform society?” (Freire, 1987, p. 110). After emphasizing the point that individual liberation alone does not equal social transformation, it must be said with equal emphasis (albeit more succinctly) that the liberation of the individual is a necessary step in the process of social transformation (Freire, 1987). It is in this stage of becoming aware that liberation takes root.

The efforts of conscientization are articulated as a call to action in Freire’s landmark text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, wherein he writes, “This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (Freire, 2018, p. 44). Freire goes on to write that for an oppressive reality to be overturned, “people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (Freire, 2018, p. 47). It is, in essence, coming to know the ‘why’ of a situation as an autonomous person free from manipulation. This is understood within the broader field of critical theory as the autonomy thesis. In critical theory, any research is to be present and utilized as part of a deliberative

process inviting reflection on the current reality. The purpose of such material is not to tell individuals they are oppressed under a system of domination, but to invite them to consider if such a claim may be the case (Rostboll, 2009). As Rostboll (2009) describes it, “In order to be autonomous, citizens must not only give laws to themselves but must do so on the basis of the best available reasons” (p. 134). These best available reasons are derived in critical theory through *immanent critique*; a process through which the benefits purported by an ideology are set against its actual practices and results. In doing so, contradictions within the ideology and its structure are made known (Forchtner, 2011; Regelski, 2005). In a pedagogical setting, uniting theory with action, it is only when students “*learn to learn*” the essential why of the matter that teaching someone how to learn finds its justification. Teaching is not a matter of depositing or manipulating (both are issues to be taken up in detail later), it is a matter of uncovering the reason for why something is (Freire, 1994). With the deeper why or reason for being uncovered it can then be susceptible to transformation.

Considering Freire within the context of formal education presents a need to consider his use of language regarding the oppressed and the oppressor. At times this language transitions into the classroom and the ensemble easily when discussing oppressive systems of racism, sexism, and other isms. However, using this language to describe the relationship between the ensemble and the conductor may be jarring. This warrants an exploration of Freire’s analysis of oppression.

Oppression

Freire defines oppression as any situation in which, “‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation...” (Freire, 2018, p. 55). This hindrance is, in Freire’s eyes, always an act of violence even if it is not physical because it, “interferes with the

individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human" (p. 55). He goes on to write that, "The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects" (p. 85).

The alienation Freire is addressing is derived from Marx. Alienation, as expressed in the writings of Marx, describes the separation of humankind from nature. In the case of the previous statement by Freire, alienation is a direct attack on the nature of a human person, their internal autonomy. Internal autonomy comes under attack when ideological forces inhibit the full freedom of a person's consciousness to make choices and act freely based on their own beliefs and desires. Ideology presents a threat to liberatory efforts in that it can convince the mind of the individual to become complacent, failing to see the need or possibility for anything to be different. As a result, ideology has reifying power, further solidifying the systems and institutions currently in place as inescapable realities of life. This immobilizing power of ideology is what gives it the power of domination. The allure of ideology as an instrument of domination is that when it successfully implemented, it is physically non-violent. The appearance of a peaceful takeover and manipulation coerces submission with minimal questioning and resistance. It is the non-violent takeover of the intellect and an unquestioning acceptance of reality through which ideology becomes self-imposed, self-destructive, and socially reproduced (Rostbull, 2009).

Alienation leads to a distancing of oneself from their humanity and the humanity of others. It also coerces people into what Freire describes as a *culture of silence*. The culture of silence is one in which, "the masses are "mute," that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society and therefore prohibited from being" (Freire, 1998, p. 486). This is evidenced by communities and societies that are dependent upon larger,

more controlling powers for their existence at the cost of silence. “The dependent society is by definition a silent society . . . in every way, the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens” (Freire, 1998, p. 504). Freire, though he is addressing global politics in this statement, could easily be describing a conductor-ensemble relationship. For example, in an authoritarian choral model, the conductor holds control in all things. The conductor speaks, programs, and instructs, while the ensemble listens, performs, and obeys. The curiosity of the authoritarian model is that it makes the ensemble a miniature dependent society when in reality, it is the conductor who is absolutely dependent on the ensemble to continue their work as a conductor.

In a silent society, there is violence due to the dominating practice of inhibiting individuals from participating as autonomous beings capable of transformative action. The life destroying behavior of the oppressor in Freire’s analysis is dependent upon the implementation and continuation of a culture of silence. Is it possible that our choirs exist within a micro-culture of silence or that they themselves contribute to a macro-culture of silence? In what way do collegiate choral practices foster situations of oppression? Are conductors and ensembles participants as oppressors within a larger social structure? If a choir does community outreach, are they working as members of the oppressed or the oppressor? What implications does this have for musical and community outreach activities of the choir? These questions should not elicit straightforward answers as they are situated in complex contexts and intersectionalities of identity, power, and politics. These questions are not posed to be answered immediately at this moment but will be explored in this and following chapters. They are presented here as points of reflection as we continue an exploration of Freire’s pedagogy and the critically conscious collegiate choral ensemble.

Conscientization in Practice

Freire's (2018) theory of conscientization as political-educational practice takes place in two stages.

In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation . . . In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (p. 54).

The first stage involves a process of discovering *generative themes* through an exploration of the present *thematic universe*. The generative themes are specific pedagogical points of departure.

For Freire, these were a collection of words, for the choral music educator their generative themes are easily accessible through music or poetry. Regardless of the medium, the generative themes should teach the practical skills needed to develop literacy. What sets this technical component apart in Freire's pedagogy is the centering of themes within the universe of the students, the students' current *here and now*, in order to spark a curiosity in deeper social currents. Once selected, themes can then be codified. Freire codified themes through images, a music educator might codify them through repertoire or have individuals relate their own feelings and experiences to the music. The codification presents the learner with a readily recognizable object that they can then dialogue about with other learners and educators. In Freire's context, this took place within culture circles (Freire, 1998).

Generative themes may eventually be decided upon by the teacher, but they are not selected by the teacher in a vacuum. Generative themes are found through what Freire describes as *co-intentional* education, in which, "Teachers and students . . . are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality . . . but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 2018,

p. 69). This partnership is based in communal reflection and action and results in an understanding of the students' world that is essential for the educator as they construct a thematic program. Through this process of co-intentional education, teachers become what Freire describes as teacher-students and the students become students-teachers. The teacher is "taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 2018, p. 80).

One thing that is not a requisite for co-intentional education is the conflation of teachers and students into the same role. Teachers and students maintain distinct roles. But, the teacher, whose knowledge and authority were previously unquestioned and unchallenged, is no longer totalitarian. The recognition of available knowledge and areas of expertise are shared dialogically among all roles present. Specialized educators choose the generative words for the development of literacy, but those words were only chosen after the educators knew the here and now of the students (Freire, 1998).

After the generative themes are developed through co-intentional education, the teacher and students enter the descriptive stage of the learning process. The descriptive element lies in how the codified situation is presented to the group. Freire would often present the codified theme in a photograph or a sketch that would be readily recognizable to both the teacher and the student and would serve as the impetus for de-codifying dialogue. Once codified, the generative themes are decoded through problematization and the source of their existence within the deeper social structure is understood (Freire, 1998). Freire clarifies decodification as "dissolving the codification into its constituent elements . . . relationships that were formerly unperceived" (Freire, 1998, p. 488). Where codification represents reality, decodification is the process of coming to know how each codified element is interwoven with the other, bringing the larger

structure into an immediate understanding within the concrete context of the present. This process is sometimes present in discussions around formalized choral arrangements of musics from non-Western cultures. An educator may choose a piece outside of the Western soundscape because it is representative of the students or because it draws the students beyond what is familiar. Both are valid reasons. The selection likely builds on functional literacy skills such as rhythm, melody, articulation, text, etc. in addition to building cultural literacy. These are the codified themes. These codified themes are then decodified when questions of ownership, colonization, appropriation, tokenization, among other issues are raised. The relationship between the representation of sound on the page and the music as it is in the real world is problematized.

Problematizing is not intended to present the world as a bleak array of unsolvable problems. Rather, there is hope in problematizing as the source is shown to be a product of systems and practices, not a given fact of life. In the previous choral example, it could be that better practices are taken up when selecting repertoire. Maybe there is an appropriate manner to recontextualize the music in a choral environment. Or, perhaps a piece of repertoire is used for classroom dialogue but not public performance. In other words, the coded music as it arrives in octavo form, and any problems therein, is not a closed story.

It is possible that an educator may have difficulty in coming to know the generative themes with learners due to a seeming lack of engagement on the part of the students. This may lead an educator to think there are no generative themes to be discovered and no deeper understanding to be uncovered. Freire is inclined to suspect that in these moments, a group of learners are presenting the educator with the theme of silence. For Freire, “The theme of silence

suggests a structure of mutism in the face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations” (Freire, 2018, p. 106).

Freire finds the basis for limit situations in the work of Brazilian philosopher Alvaro Viera Pinto and quotes Pinto’s description of limit situations as, “the real boundaries where all possibilities begin” rather than “the impassable boundaries where possibilities end” (Freire, 2018, p. 99, footnote 15). In other words, it is not the fault of the oppressed that they are oppressed. Conquering the obstacle of a limit-situation is not a matter of ‘pulling yourself up by the bootstraps.’ Furthermore, these obstacles cannot be thought away through theorizing or having awareness. They are felt in the lives of those who experience them and, once they are perceived fully, organized action (what Pinto describes as *limit-acts*) is required to overcome and dismantle them (Freire, 2018). Examining the presence of limit-situations in educational practice and policy reveals the political nature of education. When a limit-situation (e.g. a prescribed concert uniform, increased tuition) is discovered, the question must be asked: who benefits? If the obstacles were an impediment to every person, they would not be in place. However, the mere existence of them indicates a politics of power intended to benefit some while subjugating others into a fixed situation (Freire, 2018). Overcoming limit-situations is a prominent feature of Freire’s *untested feasibility*. Freire defines his concept of untested feasibility as, “the future which we have to create by transforming today, the present reality. It is something not yet here but a potential, something beyond the “limit-situation” we face now, which must be created by us beyond the limits we discover” (Freire, 1987, p. 153). More simply put, it is taking on and transforming the obstacles of today to usher in a future more humane than the present. The decodification of themes, dismantling of limit-situations, and pursuit of untested feasibility all

work toward the transformation of the current reality. The transformative endeavor naturally flows from Freire's belief in the historicity of human action.

Hegel, Marx, Freire, and Historicity

The question of whether history is a closed given, or whether it is open and susceptible to human change is a key feature of both Freire's critical pedagogy and the philosophical foundations of critical theory upon which critical pedagogy is based. The openness of history stands in sharp contrast to the positivism of the late Enlightenment. Positivist empirical philosophy of the Enlightenment relied on the collection of data to inform knowledge through observation and enumeration. The recording of data derived from the natural world was for the purpose of discovering natural laws of cause and effect, thereby maintaining the proposition that true knowledge was a product of science, not the intellect (Regelski, 2005). This view reduced humans to immobilized units in an unquestionably static line of history, merely existing within a set of laws governed by the universe (Giroux, 1997).

Logical empiricism of the early twentieth century held the belief that a statement and its meaning can only be verified as true or false through the method it employs. The "how-to" obsession of this instrumental reason saw no use in making normative statements about how the world should be, only what the world is, and brushed aside any notion of transcending the current reality (Regelski, 2005). Running contrary to logical empiricism, idealist thought introduced the notion that nothing within the world is a given. As a result, idealism refused to accept any proposition that destiny (whether secular or religious) imposed itself upon humanity. Idealism maintained that reality was not fixed but had within it the possibility of "being transformed by action imbued with a positive purpose" (Bronner, 2002, p. 11-12).

The idealist proposition of transformative human action was conceptualized by Hegel and his notion of a world spirit. Hegel's world spirit comes into reality through the process of history in the pursuit of freedom (e.g. revolutions). As such, the world spirit has the ability to unconsciously take external form in space and time through nature and humanity (Bronner, 2002). Hegel provided critical theory with a historicist premise that reason comes forth from the material context of human situations as humans take an active role in history. Reason is not a decontextualized abstract given and humans are not helplessly passive (Regelski, 2005). It is in the context and engagement of human history the world spirit manifests through human consciousness. Tormey (2002) describes this in lay person's terms as, "changes in values and ideals" (p. 55).

With this, Hegel's idealism introduced history and human action as no longer static but suggests they are active in the process of the world spirit coming to full realization through the pursuit of freedom. Hegel describes this pursuit as one that is seen throughout history, "marked by intense conflict and the emergence of new institutions that impels awareness of the universal notion of freedom..." (Bronner, 2002, p. 22). Viewed in this manner, reason finds its purpose in freedom. As such, Hegel believed that philosophy is best equipped to take on the question of freedom since philosophy is the realm of reason (Bronner, 2002).

Marx took Hegel's emphasis on the historicity of action in pursuit of freedom one step further in his critique of Hegel's idealism. Marx challenged Hegel's proposition that freedom stems from the intellect. Marx ends up inverting Hegel and asserts that the material circumstances in which humans exist inspire the liberatory ideas within human consciousness. Rather than an idealist world spirit centered in the intellect of humans claiming responsibility for the unfolding of progress (that is, the pursuit of freedom), Marx's historical materialism

designated the material world as the impetus of human transformative action which “determines and transforms reality in light of historically conditioned desires, needs, and impulses that are grounded in physical existence (*CT* 42; *KT* I, 62-3)” (Rush, 2004, p. 20). Put simply, “Ideas are reflections of economic and social relations rather than vice versa” (Connell, 2002, p. 44). In line with this premise, Marx opined that philosophy ought to engage in political action and to be present in the world not just through interpretive thought but also through transformative action (Connell, 2002).

Freire, though informed by them, pushed back against Hegel and Marx’s historicity of human action. Their views of historicity limited human action. For Freire,

The idea of the inexorability of a history that will necessarily come in a predetermined manner constitutes what I call “liberation fatalism” or “fatalistic liberation”— liberation to come as a kind of gift or donation of history: the liberation that will come because it has been said that it will come” (Freire, 1994, p. 91).

Informed by and reforming Marx and Hegel, Freire takes the view that humans make and change history independent of a fixed destination.

Freire held the view that humankind's “relationships with the world are per se historical . . . Not only do men [people] make the history that makes them, but they also can recount the history of this mutual making” (Freire, 1998, p. 502). Recounting history in a critical manner is key to transforming the future and working against the twice historical nature of domination as put forth by the critical theorist Marcuse. According to Marcuse, domination is first historical in that its foundation and development can be viewed in the history of a given society (much like the human capability to recount history). Domination is twice historical in that it is ingrained in individuals living within their societal history and, whether or not it is perceived by the

individual, the system of domination in which they exist continues to exist within themselves. This is a failure to make history and instead be made by history. It is due to this particular feature of domination that human need is replaced with habit (Giroux, 1997). If the state of domination is left unquestioned and unchallenged, then the question of existing reality ceases and an acceptance of the fact as suggested by ideology becomes the default.

Freire is aware of the twice-historical component when he writes that, for the oppressor “The present is something that should be normalized; whereas the future, as a repetition of the present, becomes the maintenance of the status quo” (Freire, 1985, p. 103). This view is not only bleak, but those who hold it also negate “people as beings of praxis, and in so doing they also reject history. It exists in the absence of hope” (p. 103). However, if humans can actively make and reflect upon history (including systems of domination and oppression), they can also transform history and free the future from a fixed determination. Freire’s treatment of history and human transformative action has implications for the formal classroom educator. Freire speaks directly to the classroom instructor when he writes, “. . . whenever the future is considered as a pre given . . . There is no room for education. Only for training” (Freire, 1994, p. 82). This training reinforces the norms of standardized society. Specifically, for the purposes of this document, the norms of art and education.

Giroux (1997) describes the pitfall of positivist art, art which remains unquestioning of the fact. When sedentary and resigned, “art becomes simply a mirror of the existing reality and in doing so affirms it” (p. 49). False art, as critiqued by critical theorists Horkheimer and Adorno in *The Dialect of the Enlightenment*, acts in service to the existing ideology. Its purpose is to maintain the complacent and conformist mindset of individuals in mass society through mind numbing amusement and uniform artistic preference produced through the entertainment

industry all the while turning a profit (Roberts, 2004; Babe 2012). Of course, not all art acts in service to domination. Marcuse describes the power of art when channeled as critique.

According to Marcuse, “The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality” (Marcuse cited in Giroux, 1997, p. 49). Another cultural industry capable of mass reproduction is the educational system.

Schools play an unfathomably large role in setting the standard norm of what society is. Like the family, schools are incubators of society where norms are instilled, nurtured, and eventually released into the world for further reproduction (Allsup, 2003). Giving attention to the social reproductive nature of school, schools may either remain places of social reproduction, or they could be a reprieve from society, not reproducing norms but instead showing what the world could be and what the world ought to be (Apple, 2019; Allsup, 2003; Breault, 2003). Marx yet again takes philosophy a step further into the world through action. This time through bridging critique constructed in schools with lived experience. Educators, in Marx’s view, must allow themselves to be educated through their own material circumstances. In doing so, the educator is not only aware of the material formations of their world but can then act within the world to effect transformative change (Gadotti, 1994). Whether it is through art, entertainment, or education, a lack of critical engagement inevitably leads us to,

. . . accept the norm as it is without questioning or considering the possibility of a different system, acting as if we are free within an ideology which unbeknownst to us is dictating our beliefs and actions, we end up just reproducing the situation and allow the ideology to continue to exist and work unquestioned and uncoerced (Rostboll, 2008, p. 139).

In our ensembles and classrooms, do we educate, or do we train to fit into what is predetermined? Do we view the future of our field as capable of change or is it fixed? Consider these two statements, “I am a trained singer” and “I am an educated singer.” What does each of these statements imply? What do they say about the expectations of the singers we encounter in an academic setting? These questions will be explored in the following discussion on the critically conscious choral ensemble. Before moving on, I would like to avoid any confusion and clarify that I am not suggesting we should not prepare our students with the skills necessary to financially support themselves in their chosen field. However, if we only train our students to function within a current system then we have failed to provide them with an education in their field. It bears repeating Baranowski’s (2020) critique of a worthless education, “. . . education devoid of elements of critical analysis of current reality, focused only on providing the ‘skills’ needed in the labour market . . . ‘produces’ an exemplary consumer. An unreflective consumer . . .” (Baranowski, pg. 7). What skills do students learn in the collegiate choral ensemble? How are choral conductors building critical connections between technical skill, performance practice, and the world outside of the academy? How does the collegiate choral ensemble as it currently exists contribute to commodification and an uncritical acceptance and pursuit of what is deemed fashionable and desirable? Conscientization is necessary if conductors and their ensembles are to be aware, question, unveil, and act within history toward a utopian vision.

The Critically Conscious Choral Ensemble

Becoming critically conscious necessitates that conductors and ensembles *know they know* the reason for their existence. Vodicka (2015) posits the following questions regarding the deeper why of a choir’s existence: “Why do people sing in choral ensembles? What is the aim of the choral rehearsal? Does this change depending on the type, age, or experience of the

ensemble? Do all choirs exist for the same reason? What is the purpose of teaching choral music in schools?” (p. 178). When we understand why we as an object (a choir) exist within higher education then we can act as subjects (conductors and singers) to transform the object. Knowing our collective history provides a framework for knowing the reason for being of the collegiate choral ensemble. A complete history of the collegiate choral ensemble is beyond the scope of this work. What follows is an extremely brief summary of how collegiate choirs came to be and what drove their place on collegiate campuses.

As with many American traditions, the choral music education tradition has been formed and shaped by the positivist tradition of the Enlightenment (Regelski, 2005; Schmidt, 2005). The positivist concern with universality is deeply embedded in the collegiate choral tradition’s emphasis on functional and cultural literacy. Functional literacy concerns itself with developing basic skills of Western music literacy required to participate in general music and ensemble programs within schools. This form of literacy prioritizes standardization, structure, and efficiency. Cultural literacy is described as reifying the canon and the performance of Western aesthetic standards without questioning their place (Hess, 2017). Functional and cultural literacy have been part of choral music education in America since the 1830s due to Lowell Mason and his singing schools. He took it upon himself to teach musical literacy so that singers young and old could, “reap the great moral and aesthetic harvest of European art and religious music” (Applegate, 2013, p. 12). This was reflective of the general trend across Western societies of the nineteenth century to “consolidate and industrialize” (Applegate, 2013, p. 9). This consolidation manifested in performance driven glee clubs (also known as Orpheus or Apollo clubs). Glee clubs gave rise to the existence of choral ensembles on college campuses in the second half of the nineteenth century. The oldest of these groups were formed at Ivy League schools beginning

with Harvard in 1858 and by the final decade of the century, collegiate choral ensemble existed in both large universities and smaller liberal-arts institutions (Orr, 2013). These collegiate groups co-existed with community singing groups in American society, for a time. Unlike the present day, the mid-twentieth century saw a decline in community ensembles as more universities established standard music programs and institutions of higher education became the primary locale for ensemble music making (Dexter, 2014).

The white, Eurocentric, and mostly male ensembles of early collegiate choral programs carried on the functional and cultural agenda of Lowell Mason and contributed to a “well-rounded” education. The revolutionary spirit and democratic excitement that gave rise to choral singing in the 18th century had been tamed by patriotic and reformist temperament (Applegate, 2013). Historically Black Colleges and Universities offered something different. These institutions contributed to the rise of the collegiate choral ensemble, and they did so by challenging the euro-centric paradigm (while being forced to assimilate for white audiences) through their preservation of spiritual tunes shared through concert arrangements tailored to the musical tastes of white audiences (Orr, 2013). These ensembles gave a new purpose for the collegiate choral ensemble. The collegiate choral ensemble could bridge worlds and work to transform society. The revolutionary choral spirit persisted. Unfortunately, the functional and cultural white choral tradition dominated, and these norms became *the* choral tradition of higher education.

The dominating character of the tradition continues to this day. It is true that there have been significant improvements within choral practice. Choral arrangements of non-Western music are under increased critical evaluation. Conductors and ensembles are experimenting with staging and expanding concert performance beyond standing in a single formation and singing a

series of songs. More colloquially, moving beyond the choral “park and bark”. Composing and singing songs with themes of social justice and texts specific to our time are defining the first quarter of choral music in this century (Hess, 2017). Even in growth, perhaps especially in times of growth, the gatekeepers of the collegiate choral ensemble must continue to take a stance of refusal towards uncritically reproducing the past.

Housing the Oppressor and Resisting Liberation

What if students do not want to go through the process of conscientization? How can an educator impose a critically conscious curriculum upon students and claim to be liberating rather than totalitarian? Freire encountered Chilean peasants who were resistant to liberatory efforts due to a “certain lingering nostalgia for their old masters . . . Conditioned by dominant ideology, those who remain nostalgic not only wipe out their capacity to see their reality, but sometimes they sheepishly submit themselves to the myths of that ideology as well” (Freire, 1985, p. 16). This conditioning leads to what Freire describes as housing the oppressor, a situation in which the oppressive myths and messaging become so deeply internalized that the oppressed believes them to be true resulting in self-hatred and a drive to mold oneself into the image of the oppressor to obtain a sense of worth or superiority (Dalaqua, 2019). Housing the oppressor is one factor which may contribute to student resistance of critical or liberatory pedagogies in formal educational settings.

Alemán & Gaytán (2017) build upon the body of literature studying student resistance to critical race pedagogy. However, where most of the literature studies the negative response of white students, Alemán & Gaytán studied the negative responses of Students of Color in a collegiate course designed within the liberatory pedagogical framework of critical race pedagogy. They found that student resistance was rooted in triggers that caused students to shy

away from the decolonizing process. For some students, these triggers had roots in oppressive mainstream myths (e.g. the American dream). Other students resisted facing new awareness on how they had been oppressed and believed that they were exempt from racial oppression while other students were fully aware of their racialized oppression. Students of the latter category were resistant to the critical framework because they did not want to relive their trauma in class. Like Freire's encounter, students of the former category had bought in to oppressive myths of American society. The authors describe this process of resisting awareness as "resisting decolonization" (p. 129).

Other factors which can feed resistance to critical pedagogies is the practical and economic needs and expectations of the students. Shor (1987) points to the fact that students are often annoyed by required courses. Students perceive required courses unrelated to their major as a waste of time and money, providing no further training in their chosen field nor any benefit to their marketability. Freire addresses this reality and does not argue for the abolition of technical training and competence. The collegiate educator is obligated to do their part so that students are qualified with the skills needed for the jobs they seek after graduation (Freire, 1987). Still, Freire insists that such technical training can be done in a liberatory and critical manner, "The liberating educator will try to be efficient in training, in forming the educatees scientifically and technically, but he or she will try to *unveil* the ideology enveloped in the *very* expectations of the students" (Freire, 1987, p. 68). Shor responds to this statement by Freire by putting it another way, saying, "Training does not reveal the politics of doing such work . . . Job skills must be criticized at the same time they are learned because the current conditions of society require students to enter a predatory job market" (Freire, 1987, p. 69). We must ask ourselves what role

the choral ensemble plays in the education of our students. What does it mean for the non-music major and the music major?

In addition to the fear of the future and securing a living within the economy, there is also a fear held by students that may be awakened by the risk of giving the wrong answer or an inability to answer in a way that conforms to the teacher's manner of speaking (Freire, 1987). There is a very real fear of getting it wrong, the ensuing fear of ridicule and embarrassment, and a fear of being challenged or attacked. Hayes (2015) suggests that the best free exchange of ideas and challenges to those ideas occurs outside of the classroom because once students are inside the political power dynamics of the classroom, the fear of a "critical attack" (p. 321) inhibits their desire to engage with the material in class. There may also be resentment from the student's when challenged to engage in a pedagogy that asks them to question and challenge the status quo. The findings of Alemán & Gaytán (2017) lend credence to Hayes' concerns. O'Shea (2013) further highlights the difficulty of students beginning the critical process when a significant power dynamic is present or perceived. Students are likely to turn to cynicism when they are suddenly faced with a critical challenge and are expected to toss aside their conditioning as students in submission to the right answer, the expected answer. When this occurs, Freire (1987) writes that, "people may feel manipulated when asked to reflect on such a difficult subject, because it is something they do not want to think about or they want to deny, their fear of becoming free, taking responsibility for their freedom" (p. 173). Students need time to "process their individual experiences before they can perceive them within a wider context" (O'Shea, 2013 p. 97).

In some cases, temporarily abandoning a liberatory pedagogy may be the best course of action. Shor (1987) recalls his experience with students resisting a liberatory pedagogy to the

point that education of any sort was not possible. In these cases, he saw a need to resort to a form of non-liberatory teaching. He cites the reason for this regression in pedagogical practice as a one of respecting student autonomy, “I had to respect the distance they wanted . . . I can’t impose liberatory pedagogy against anybody’s will to receive” (p. 25).

The challenge of overcoming the oppressor within is no small task and Freire’s analysis of housing the oppressor is more than abstract theory. It is rooted in real and common experiences. If we as educators and learners can overcome this fear and be open to the possibility of a liberating critical pedagogy, we can get closer to the deeper ‘whys’ of our world and our choral practice through the medium of choral engagement. We can participate in the disruption of assumed norms, conventions, and expectations of both ensemble and society. What we can learn most from critical pedagogy and Freire is not a prescribed way of doing things or even basic tenets, but the ability to reflect on our own practice and name, with specificity and detail, our own pedagogical choices, their benefits, shortcomings, and why we choose to employ these pedagogical tools with our ensemble. Ryan (2013) describes the work of conscientization as an art due to the “explorative and creative nature” of conscientization (p. 86). It is an art that critiques, interrupts, and raises the individual and collective consciousness. The critical choral ensemble is more than a place set aside for music making. It is a collective committed to the art of critical consciousness through the chosen medium of music, and the making of music is for the transformation of society in the making.

Chapter 4: Dialogue

Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation (Freire, 2018, p. 84).

Introduction

Freirean dialogue is a virtuous endeavor in that it requires the constant presence of love, humility, faith, and hope. Dialogue is a form of loving people in that the act of unveiling the world (naming the world) and transforming it is an act of love for the world and humanity. Freire firmly believes that love is inseparable from critical pursuits as he writes, “The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love” (Freire, 2018 p. 89). Humility allows the teacher to step away from equating knowledge with authority and makes room for a sharing of knowledge between subjects. Maintaining a critical dialogue is to maintain faith in humanity, and to believe in the capability of the human family to “make and remake, to create and re-create...” (Freire, 2018, p. 90). In other words, pursuing dialogue is to have faith in what could be possible. Dialogue as hope “is rooted in [humankind’s] incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search...” (Freire, 2018, p. 91). While dialogue is born out of love, cultivated through humility, and held fast in faith, it is rooted in the hope that human incompleteness can be transformed through committed praxis. Without hope, a removal from the world is almost inevitable. Hope is inspired to action and is not content to sit and wait for humanization to occur. Freire’s emphasis upon hope yet again reveals his discontent with the fallacy of a predetermined history.

Dialogue is aided by the aforementioned virtues, but it does not live on lofty ideals alone and it certainly is not sustained by passing conversation. The virtues of dialogue are realized in

its intentional and critical engagement. When dialogue is not taken seriously or is not treated critically, it can quickly fall short of the liberatory aim. Even with that risk, Freire is unequivocal in his insistence upon the need for critical dialogue in any liberatory pedagogy. Dialogue is what makes non-manipulative pedagogy possible, and it is needed for both teachers/leaders and students/members of the community. For those in a leadership position, Freire describes dialogue as, “The correct method for a revolutionary leadership to employ in the task of liberation” (Freire, 2018, p. 67). Freire also writes that, “Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building...” (Freire, 2018, p. 65). Dialogue counters savior complexes as it brings subjects (teachers and students) together with an object (music) both can relate to as a medium for the dialogue (Freire, 1998). Freire contrasts the liberating capability of dialogue with less effective domesticating pedagogies which seek to conform and condition students using prescriptive methods. Prescriptive methods are any forms of teaching which simply transmit teacher knowledge to students without question (e.g. the maestro choral model). Prescriptive method practices domesticate students by conditioning them to accept the knowledge and world view of the teacher as the sole reality and are thus groomed to dwell within that singular reality. Prescriptive methods have a *narrative* character in which the teacher gives their narration on the topic of reality (as represented through literature, language, music, etc.) while students listen and are expected to accept it as the sole narrative of what is real (Freire, 2018). Acceptance and regurgitative repetition are the goals of a domesticating pedagogy and curriculum. The narrative character of these prescriptive methods for domestication is at the core of what Freire describes as the banking model of education.

The Banking Model of Education

Freire (2018) construes the banking model as one in which, “. . . knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (p. 72). This form of education perpetuates the oppressive ideology of *absolutizing of ignorance* which, “implies the existence of someone who decrees the [absolute] ignorance of someone else” (Freire, 2018, p. 133-134). This form of education is problematic when viewed through a critical lens because it intentionally suppresses any possibility of challenging knowledge and removes curiosity from the purpose and process of education (Freire, 2018). This ideology gives way to silencing others due to the belief that only some people have knowledge that can contribute to the good of society. This silencing inevitably leads to a need to control the words and speaking capabilities of others. Educators entranced by this ideology find themselves relying on giving commands and believe that if they are not commanding and students are not accepting, then they are not educating. As such, dialogue cannot exist in an ideology of absolutizing ignorance (Freire, 2018).

In addition to its silencing purpose, the banking model sustains the notion that people are “adaptable, manageable beings” (Freire, 2018, p. 73). Being adaptable is not necessarily a negative capability of humans, but human adaptability can be exploited. What is it that students are adapting to in the banking model? Freire (2018) argues at length that,

The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them (p. 73).

This exploitation of adaptability convinces students of their passive role, contributes to naive thinking, rejects critical inquiry, and removes from students the drive to participate in the transformation of the world and the humanization of all people. (Freire, 2018; Freire, 1987). As students are adapted, they become preservers of the status quo in the absence of questioning. Freire goes so far as to describe the banking model as being necrophilic due to its commitment to the creation of the mechanical, the memorized, and the possession of an object to understand that object (Freire, 2018, p. 77). The creative power of students is left to wither and studies are compartmentalized rather than enmeshed in critical inquiry which uncovers the interconnectedness of the world and its problems (Freire, 2018).

The banking model is most readily associated with lectures. The traditional choral rehearsal is like the lecture format in that it is instructive from the mouth of a single individual. The conductor speaks, the singers accept and sing accordingly. The choral rehearsal readily accommodates the elements of the lecture format and there are times where lecture is a useful tool in rehearsal (e.g. teaching diction). Even Freire does not equate lectures absolutely with the banking model. Freire presents the dialogical teacher as one who, “first asks herself or himself *what* she or he will dialogue with the latter *about* . . . preoccupation with the content of dialogue is really preoccupation with the program content of education” (Freire, 2018, p. 93). The similarities between preparing a lecture in this way and preparing a rehearsal plan are clear on the surface. The key difference is that the dialogical rehearsal plan is intentionally topical and not solely instructional or prescriptive. There is something present to be uncovered together whether it be through vocal technique, text, contextualization, performance, interpretation, or any number of problems present in the music. In a Freirean lecture or rehearsal plan

A liberating teacher will illuminate reality even if he or she lectures. The question is the content and dynamism of the lecture, the approach to the object to be known. Does it critically reorient students to society? Does it animate their critical thinking or not?

(Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 40).

In other words, does it challenge students in the ongoing process of unveiling their world or does it deposit information and present the world as a fixed and already completed work? If a conductor is lecturing on diction, are they only presenting sounds or are they connecting these sounds in some way to actual people and cultural contexts? While lectures and the choral rehearsal are not innately oppressive models of sharing knowledge, they can easily be taken hold of by the banking model which in turn limits the critical capabilities of the ensemble. Freire (2018) lists a total of ten traits of the banking model of education. Of the ten traits, five stand out as particularly relatable to the choral conductor and the ensemble (p. 73).

1. “The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;”
2. “The teacher talks and the students listen—meekly;”
3. “The teacher chooses and enforces his [their] choice, and the students comply;”
4. “The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;”
5. “The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;”

To what extent are students asked to think critically about musical interpretation? How receptive is the conductor to the thoughts and insights of the students? Does the conductor share their expertise, or do they dominate the artistic process with their knowledge? How does the

conductor program a concert? Do students have a voice in the process or are their voices treated as instruments for the conductor's control? Do students have a say in any element of the choral agenda? These questions and any questions that are inspired by them should be points of reflection for the critical choral conductor as the exploration of Freire's critical dialogue and its implications for the critical collegiate choral ensemble continues.

The banking model, as with all educational practice, has ramifications beyond the classroom. The banking model and narrative character is passed on to students, who become teachers in the same pedagogical tradition, who are trained in the ability to "simply repeat what he [they] has read, and often misunderstood, since education . . . does not mean an act of knowing" (Freire, 1985, p. 55). Schmidt (2005) sees evidence of this in music educators who identify primarily as technicians. The banking model encourages the production of musical objects rather than an education of subjects through music. Abrahams (2017) observes this same phenomenon in young conductors and freshly minted music educators who do not learn to be conductors or educators during their time as singers in an ensemble. Abrahams asserts that what most conductors learn or end up resorting to when placed in real life conducting situations, are proper methods, cookie cutter gestures, and mechanical steps in a process of rules and restrictions. Instead of this musicalized banking model, Abrahams believes the alternative should be, "a journey that the conductor and singers take together toward the acquisition of choral agency" (p. 2). A similar pattern of mechanically passing on the choral inheritance is found in concert programming whereby a choral banking model uncritically perpetuates recycled repertoire. Butke (2003) found that choral music educators frequently program the same repertoire that they experienced as students. This finding is a clear example of how the micro-politics of repertoire selection has macro-political implications for the field of choral music. The

choral environment easily adapts to the banking model of education. However, the ease of the banking model for the sake of production comes at the cost of a passive reproduction of the choral tradition. Breault (2003) makes the danger of this act clear when they write, “To simply reproduce the past is to reproduce the oppression to which it gave birth” (p. 6). The choral field is at a moment of reckoning as it confronts its legacy of domination in various forms. Freire’s framework offers a counter to dominating practices through what he describes as an *education for freedom*, an education that is, “an act of knowledge and a process of transforming action that should be exercised on reality” (Freire, 1985, p. 102). This approach takes the form of problem posing education grounded in the practice of critical dialogue.

Problem Posing Model of Education

Freire advocates for a problem posing model of education. He upholds the problem posing model as being far more critical than the banking model because,

Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed (Freire, 2018, p. 81).

Unlike the banking model, problem posing education intentionally works to unveil reality through conscientization and action within reality (Freire, 2018). Problem-posing dialogue is concerned about dialoguing with students to develop specific content. It is the “organized, systematized, and developed ‘re-presentation’ to individuals of the things about which they want

to know more” (Freire, 2018, p. 93). The teacher’s role in this is to “re-present” the world of the students as a problem capable of being acted upon, rather than a fixed reality to be aware of or navigated (Freire, 2018, p 109). Freer (2017) finds that college students learn better through the investigation of real problems in the formal classroom rather than an attempt at demonstrating mastery of decontextualized informational knowledge. The problems posed to students are problems that relate directly to the lives of the students and invites them into a deeper engagement with their world and their situation within the world. One of Freire’s more famous statements springs from this idea, that, “people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire, 2018, p. 83).

Dialogue in problem-posing education is used as a tool to critically unveil reality through an engagement with problems faced in the present. Vodicka (2015) reminds critical educators that problem posing is not just problem solving, but it is uncovering biases, the politics present in the object of study, and “analyzing whose voices are included in a deep, meaningful way.” (p.184).

Just as it was with the purpose of decodification, the act of dialogue is to begin with what is familiar in the student context in order to investigate relevant problems faced by the students (Freire, 2018, p. 84; Schmidt, 2007). Critical dialogue can then relate the local problem to the larger network of a regional, national, or international analysis of the problem (Freire, 1994 p. 78). Drawing connections between problems is fundamental to any use of critical dialogue (Abrahams, 2005b; Allsup, 2003; Breault, 2003). One approach to drawing musical connections attempts to bridge the disconnect between the music students hear and enjoy outside of the classroom, within the home, or with friends, and the music they are expected to learn at school. Abrahams’ (2005b) definition of critical music pedagogy stems directly from this as it “seeks to

break down the barriers that exist between what students enjoy listening to outside the classroom and the music their teachers want them to learn” (p. 62). Abrahams contends that when music education is bridged in such a way, the music studied in school becomes empowering rather than dogmatic (Abrahams, 2007). Allsup (2003) also notes the disconnect between the musical culture of students outside of the traditional music classroom as compared to within the classroom. As music educators approach this disconnect and work to make connections between classroom and broader culture, Allsup stresses the need to “review critically the meaning of culture, particularly the relationship between education, formal or otherwise, and our society’s dominant culture” (p. 6). Anytime music from the outside is brought inside the regime of formal music education, it is appropriated to accommodate the needs and requirements of the formal educational setting (Hess, 2014). Doing so inevitably places restrictions on the music brought into the learning space and how students can engage with it. Hess (2018) describes the formal music classroom as a striated space, one that “regulates movement, restricting possible moves and directions” (p. 26). While it may not be possible to remove all such restrictions from sites of formal learning, the rigidity of the space should be questioned. Otherwise, maintaining a strictly striated space leads schools to function as, “*modes of production*, and culture, a mechanism by which domination is exerted” (Allsup 2003, p. 8).

Simply bringing in music from outside the Western choral canon without further question or examination does not make for a critical choir or a critical conductor. What is needed is a more contextualized basis of repertoire and performance for both music from within and music from without. I look to one of my mentors as setting an example in this practice. They recently programmed a set of Indian choral music with their collegiate ensemble to reflect the students of Indian descent in the ensemble. This was done in collaboration with the students. Students

played a key role in the selection of the repertoire and in doing so uncovered problems regarding repertoire and performance. Some of these problems included difficulty in finding and ordering the music, discussions of ownership and who gets to sing whose music, as well as questions about concert performance and attire. This collaborative effort went well beyond simple contextualization. Hess (2017) is an advocate for this deeper contextual approach, arguing that

In putting forward a contextual music education, music educators might constantly consider ways to draw relationships between musics, whether through examining organizing principles of the music, tracing musics through multiple iterations, or building on contextual knowledge from past years of music class (p. 183).

This calls for going beyond sharing with the ensemble the basic context of the composer. What is needed is a relational musical and social web of intersections facilitating the dialogue around context (Hess, 2017, p. 184). Understanding these relationships and their interconnectedness of both the music and the singers is key to understanding the Freirean shift from *here* to *there*.

Tintiango-Cubales et. al (2016) cites the use of Critical Performance Pedagogy (based in Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*, which is heavily informed by Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) to remove the central consolidation of power in performance groups through the use of "collaborative, dialogic, and creative learning between teachers and students" (p. 1311). This approach resembles what Freire describes as cultural synthesis. "In cultural synthesis, the actors become integrated with the people, who are coauthors of the action that both perform upon the world" (Freire, 2018, p. 180). Culturally synthesizing the performance process through collaboration and dialogue moves pedagogical practice away from instructional passivity and toward problem-based engagement.

Some critical pedagogues take the approach of including students in the formation of curriculum and syllabi to make the process more democratic and representative of the students' here and now. Campbell (2018) suggests that an equitable curriculum should be formed with students deciding the specific injustice that is to be studied. Poulin (2019) takes this a step further and advocates for non-teacher participants to take on meaningful leadership roles in addition to shaping the program. Curriculum formation should also take into consideration questions regarding what Saul (2018) specifies as the "dreams of the school community" (p. 1198). What may be important within the community context of the educational site, not just what takes place within the walls of the classroom, should inform the curriculum. (Saul, 2018). Collaborative curriculum building in the choral context most readily translates as collaborative programming of repertoire.

Collaborative programming and involving students in the selection of repertoire is one way to have greater democracy in the ensemble, but this democratic practice must be tempered in a critical manner. Allsup (2003) found that using this process with youth highlighted students' affinity for bringing music from the entertainment industry into the ensemble rehearsal. What is achieved when the cultural dominance of one (the formally educated music instructor programming Western composers) is replaced with the cultural dominance of another (student affinity for the dominant entertainment culture)? Students may have agency in programming but the presence of a critical collaboration toward transformation is illusory if cultural domination is reinscribed despite the change in genre or style. Critical dialogue can be used to invite the students into a wider awareness of their *here* to arrive at a new *there*. Allsup (2003) poses the following questions to encourage critical reflection that could also be dialogic, "What songs do you consider a masterpiece? How do they inspire you? What do these works say about who we

are? Are we allowed to perform them differently? How does your contribution reflect who you are?” (p. 11). These questions can lead to a sharing of stories from individuals as well as informing the stories told collectively as an ensemble through repertoire. Kaufmann (2010) found that storytelling as a means of understanding identity has the capability to bring about an awareness of systems of domination, oppression, and privilege and an individual’s place within those systems (Kaufmann, 2010). Telling stories as choral artists goes hand in hand with understanding the world. Allsup (2003) suggests the sharing of stories and dialogue as a best practice for teachers and students beginning a critical inquiry together. In doing so, music educators can work to connect the student’s world to the classroom without passively bowing to a different dominant culture. By engaging in critical dialogic reflection concerning the musical culture within and outside of the classroom, conductors may see which cultures are lifted up as the dominant culture at the expense of another culture. Students and conductors can engage with the problem of repertoire and together find a new and more critical programming practice. This is one way critical pedagogy within music education can examine music in a social, political, and cultural context through dialogue.

Freire (1994) makes it clear that, ““*Starting* with the “knowledge of experience had” in order to get beyond it is not *staying* in that knowledge” (p. 60). Freire goes on to write that, “A respect for both knowledges [popular and formal] . . . must never mean . . . that the educator must stick with the knowledge of living experience” (p. 76). This is by no means an easy or uncomplicated task. An attempt to dilute critical dialogue will inevitably lead to an uncritical approach to student knowledge (Bartlett, 2005). Educators must be bold enough to push back against student voices as necessary when engaging them in their present. The educator also has a responsibility to challenge when knowledge shared by students is lacking or simply incorrect. In

the choral rehearsal, this could manifest in a singer sharing advice on vocal technique that may in fact be incorrect or misguided. One of my mentors had a singer who wanted to place a sforzando on the final chord of a piece to give it a bit of dramatic ‘umph.’ Adding this to the interpretation would have been contrary to the style of the piece and my colleague followed through on their responsibility to share why adding a sforzando was problematic. In these cases, there is a contradiction between the conductor’s schooled knowledge and the student’s experiential knowledge. The conductor has a responsibility to educate the student and direct them to a new state of knowing (White, 2014).

Artfully and actively maneuvering these situations is what sets a critical student-centered learning apart from student-directed learning. Freire (1987) maintains that student empowerment derived through self-directed learning falls short of the critical agenda. Freire argues that individualism, rather than social transformation, is the dominant goal of education when students are given absolute autonomy in the learning process. He explains this stance in the following:

Even when you individually feel yourself *most* free, if this feeling is not a *social* feeling, if you are not able to use your *recent* freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (p. 109).

Shor (1987) builds on Freire’s sentiment by connecting individualism with the pervasive myth of the self-made, self-improved, self-successful achiever of the American dream. Shor argues that the American obsession with individualism muddies self-directed learning in that the “emphasis on ‘self’ is the educational equivalent of the capitalist infatuation with the lone entrepreneur...” (p. 110).

Even so, Freire (1987) acknowledges that for some students, such individual empowerment is necessary, just as the experience of personal transformation in the pursuit of social transformation is necessary. And that is the critical difference between student-directed and student-centered learning. Student-directed learning removes the educator from the collaborative process and emphasizes the importance of self-reliance and achievement. In the choral context, this would be a student ensemble with a conductor who stepped in only to help with the issues identified by the students. Student-centered learning occurs in the current “here” of the students. The teacher, knowing their students, involves the students in the process of their education while still maintaining their directive role as an educator and together they create new knowledge. For example, Vodicka (2015) employed student-directed sectionals when it came time for singers to learn basic notes and rhythms. Doing so remained a critical endeavor because it allowed all singers to work at a pace that was appropriate for them. Singers could take the time to ask questions and those students who were more proficient in functional literacy could help decode the notation or assist at the piano. Certain priorities such as dynamics or phrasing became clear among the different sections. When the choir came back together as a whole, the conductor remained part of the educational process in partnership with the students. Perhaps most importantly, Vodicka found that this approach to securing notes upheld the social component of learning and music making. Community singing is a social activity and conductors must take care to not de-socialize it through their choral rehearsal practices. Otherwise, according to Vodicka, singers “stop being fully functioning, thinking humans and instead just do as they’re told” (p. 9). A case study by Hess (2014) further supports student-centered education as it was found to be a major theme among critical elementary music educators. In this theme, student-centered learning was characterized by a safe classroom environment, prioritizing relationships

over music, and validating students as individuals through a variety of channels (e.g. repertoire representation, recognizing success, and student leadership). Student-centered learning also places new importance on the awareness of the politics of education and which voices within students end up being centered, silenced, or need to be challenged. Sometimes, centering students and meeting them where they are requires a boldness on the part of the educator to push back against bigoted forms of ignorance.

The conductor must also be prepared and bold enough to push back against bigoted forms of ignorance. Rapp (2011), a critical professor of history, asserts that this challenge is best remedied through transparent honesty on the part of the teacher. Rapp views their role of a critical dialogic educator as one who, “is open to learning from her students but one who will not hesitate to press her students to confront white supremacy . . . I must constantly challenge myself and my assumptions about race and racism in a public and transparent way” (p. 45). Whether it is confronting vocal technique or white supremacy, the educator has a responsibility to challenge students in their *here*.

Any such challenge stems from a place of non-neutrality. Because of this, education is unavoidably directive. Freire (1987) writes that,

There is a directiveness in education which never allows it to be neutral. We must say to the students how we think and why . . . Even if students have the right to bad dreams, I have the right to say their dreams are bad, reactionary or capitalist or authoritarian” (p. 157).

Shor (1987) responds to Freire’s statement, saying “Negative [bigoted] consciousness has to surface, or be allowed to surface, or be provoked to the surface, if the teacher is to get authentic information on the levels of student thought . . . How can you study anything kept silent?” (p.

183). The risk involved here is challenging students without scaring them into silence while at the same time upholding the safety and well-being of students who have been harmed directly by such negative consciousness (racism, sexism, transphobia etc.). Recalling that student silence can be a product of fear of saying the wrong thing or of confrontation, the educator engaged in critical dialogue must be committed to challenging without silencing. What is needed is what Hayes (2015) labels as *interpretive charity*. Hayes' interpretive charity is the result of a critique of Freire's critical dialogue as one that relies too much on debate and argument. I find that interpretive charity bolsters critical dialogue and reinforces ideas of conscientization. Interpretive charity resists the urge to take every word from the students and find something positive and it does not punish students for speaking honestly (even if the words are problematic). Instead, interpretive charity seeks to understand what is behind students' words. I view this as conscientization in the midst of dialogue; an effort to understand the deeper why behind the words of the student. Of course, understanding or having awareness of the why is still part of the student's *here*. Drawing again upon the experience of my colleague and the problematic *sforzando*, they knew that the singer had a background in show choir and that ending an exciting number in their show choir often meant ending with a *sforzando*. Interpretive charity within critical dialogue assists the educator to understand the student's current *here* and through dialogue enter a new *there*. This shift in location is necessary to avoid resigning critical dialogue to uncritical relativism.

Challenges of musical interpretation may be overcome in the moment. However, enacting this dialogue in an educational setting is not always a matter of conversing about technique or performance practice. Dialogue, when only conversational, is limited in both scope and emotional complexity. Schmidt (2007) also acknowledges the conversational limitations within

the framework of rhetorical discourse. These discourses only refer to past experiences or future references and refrain from engaging with or addressing the present (p. 292). These conversations acknowledge everything except the problem itself. Bartlett (2005) observed in classrooms claiming to be critical how an obsession with friendship and empathy posed a significant hindrance to problem-posing and social critique. Bartlett found many educators attempting critical dialogue failed to address the problems head on and in doing so, failed to engage students in a “straightforward discussion of the way unequal power and wealth relations operate in everyday social interaction” (p. 359). This more direct approach is the kind of dialogue that Widersheim (2013) advocates for through critical communicative pedagogy. In critical communicative pedagogy, “participants engage in conversation to bring attention to unquestioned rules and assumptions, question whose interests the rules serve and whose interests they neglect, and understand how the rules came about” (p. 5). What are the unquestioned rules and assumptions of collegiate choirs? How might critical dialogues with singers bring about a better understanding of the norms and transformation?

Extending the Choral Dialogue

Choral music as dialogue includes, but is not limited to, repertoire. Dialogue is a useful tool for repertoire as it can also inform rehearsal practices. The challenge is how to incorporate dialogical rehearsal techniques and still keep the ensemble singing. Singers, especially collegiate singers, don't want to spend their time in choir talking. They are in a choir because they want to sing and rightfully so. Without singing, the choir ceases to exist as a choir. Still, it is not impossible to incorporate dialogue into a performance-based classroom. Abrahams (2017) promotes reciprocal teaching strategies as tools which can encourage inductive moments leading to conscientization through dialogue. Reciprocal teaching allows students to be involved in the

music making process by responding to questions about decisions made by the composer, contextual elements of the song, and recontextualizing repertoire. Vodicka (2015) facilitated singer collaboration by having sectionals where students learned the notes together without the conductor. Furthermore, when they came back as an ensemble, the student singers sat in a circle rather than in the traditional four rows. Altering the spatial structure in this way encouraged a collaborative focus with singers and the conductor, rather than demanding sole focus on the conductor. Abrahams' (2017) "Circle All Around" provides another example of circular collaboration in rehearsal. This dialogical rehearsal practice pairs students (Abrahams uses two circles with students facing each other) and the students make predictions, sing, check their predictions, offer suggestions, etc. Abrahams employs "What would you do?" to better understand why a composer made certain choices. Students discuss what other possibilities a composer could have explored (poetic, harmonic, textural, etc.) to better understand why the composer made the choices they did. Shaw (2012) observed a similar practice in a choral classroom, but instead of understanding compositional technique students grappled with culturally problematic repertoire. In this case, students consider what would or could be done to reclaim a piece of music marred by histories of racism, colonialism, sexism, nationalism, etc. This process may not result in repertoire being performed in concert, but it can still be part of a critical choral process of dialogue facilitated through repertoire.

The purpose of reciprocal teaching is not to replace one unchallenged voice (the conductor) with another (the students). The purpose is to establish a dialogue between the knowledge of the conductor and the knowledge of the students to bring about a deeper understanding of the music from a multiplicity of angles and ideas with the understanding that the ensemble as a whole has a stake in the interpretive process. This stands in opposition to the

ensemble being objectified as a tool for the conductor's interpretation. Reciprocal teaching practices can also be used regarding voice pedagogy in the choral rehearsal. For example, if the vocal challenge presents itself as an [a] vowel in the *pasaggio* of the tenor line, a conductor could have a singer demonstrate that line, work with the singer on the challenge, and upon success, ask the singer what it was they felt in their body or changed in their technique to make the [a] sound effortless. These practices support what Freire (1987) describes as the *inductive moment*. The inductive moment is, "a moment undertaken by students themselves and not only by the teacher" (p. 157).

The inductive moment was a key component of Freire's culture circles that made extensive use of dialogue to develop literacy skills. Culture circles are not original to Freire—they are a nineteenth century European development by the Danish educator Nikolaj Grundtvig—and Freire does not claim to have created the idea (Stromquist, 2014). Freire used culture circles to develop literacy skills, but they have since expanded to include musical literacy skills. Chaib (2010) studied music listening circles in Spain and how they are used to remove classical music as a music reserved for elite, learned, listeners. The process begins with naming activities that participants felt confident in in any area of life. These skills are then recognized in academic areas (e.g. listening to music in the car relating to listening symphonic music). Finally, confidence replaces fear in discussing the music and sharing opinions and interpretations. Through this exchange of dialogical reinterpretation among listeners facilitated by the teacher as a co-investigator, the music once reserved for affluent attendees of Western classical concerts is removed from its socially constructed pedestal and becomes a music for all listeners. A choral musical circle could help students build connections between music students hear outside of the rehearsal and what the conductor wants them to sing. They could also be used to facilitate a

dialogue between ensemble and community members. The conductor could organize and facilitate culture circles outside of the rehearsal to bring members of the community and concert attendees together to engage with the repertoire beyond the hour or two spent listening during the performance. This would add to the demands of the conductor and require extra time but making opportunities for critical dialogue outside of rehearsal is just as important as dialogue during rehearsal, if not more so.

Abrahams (2017) suggests that conductors explore ways to cultivate moments of dialogue outside of the choral rehearsal for both the practical reason of reserving time to sing and the critical reason of allowing students to take time to reflect before responding in the moment. If the dialogue occurs outside of rehearsal time via an online discussion board, it also allows an opportunity for all students to participate in the dialogue rather than only a handful during limited rehearsal time. Dialogue outside of rehearsal may be more important and more critical than the dialogue that occurs in the classroom or rehearsal itself. Ellsworth (1989) found that affinity groups (akin to cultural cohorts or trusted thought partners) naturally formed in her class which stimulated honest dialogue outside of class time. Ellsworth writes that,

Affinity groups were necessary for working against the way current historical configurations of oppressions were reproduced in the class. They provided some participants with safer home bases from which they gained support, important understandings, and a language for entering the larger classroom interactions each week... (p. 317)

Ellsworth (1989) also found that a dialogue with the entire class, during class time, was not necessarily the best approach to facilitating dialogue between instructor and students. What was more beneficial were the “informal conversations with one or two students at a time who were

extremely committed on personal, political, and academic levels to breaking through the barriers we had encountered and understanding what had happened during the semester” (p. 315).

Ellsworth and the students in their class agreed that a safe space was necessary, but that declaring a space to be safe did not in fact make it so. The students and Ellsworth agreed that it was moments outside of class that built the trust necessary to have a safe space for honest critical dialogue. Suggestions of possible moments included “potlucks, field trips, participation in rallies and other gatherings. Opportunities to know the motivations, histories, and stakes of individuals in the class should have been planned early in the semester” (p. 316-317). One of the key features here is intentionally planning ahead for these moments. This could be done in collaboration with a full choir cabinet. Or perhaps there is a subcommittee that takes the lead on planning opportunities for “choral chats” whether they be something as simple as a sectional lunch on the lawn with the conductor or a group of students attending a rally and bringing that experience back to the choir.

Hayes (2015) supports this approach and finds that dialogue which yields the best results and critical engagement is found in conversations outside of the classroom. Hayes attributes this to the fact that students do not feel as pressured to get it right or voice an opinion that they think the teacher does not want to hear. Small group work outside of class without the instructor has also been found to develop solidarity among students through critical dialogue (Kaufmann, 2010). It is important for educators to remember the importance of the experiences outside of the classroom in their absence, and it is equally important for educators to look for the changes in the classroom brought about by these outside moments. The fruits of critical dialogue in and out of the classroom may not yield immediate changes, but they comprise a series of actions leading to transformation (Kaufmann, 2010). This should be comforting to the choral conductor.

Cultivating critical dialogue with the ensemble is not limited to rehearsal time. It is just as beneficial for dialogue to occur outside of the precious and limited time of rehearsal. However, choral conductors have a responsibility to plant the seeds of dialogue and provide opportunities to engage in dialogue outside of rehearsal. Kaufmann (2010) offers words of encouragement to educators, saying “one needs to have faith that critical seeds have been planted because one does not know when, where, and how critical consciousness will manifest” (p. 471). What we do know, as Schmidt (2005) attests to, is that a lack of critical dialogue is perpetuated if it is not experienced by future educators while in their collegiate choral education. Whether it is inside or outside of the rehearsal setting, if the choral conductor makes no attempt whatsoever to foster critical dialogue, then they are impressing upon the singers an acceptance of passive silence. This silence is in turn passed on until the cycle is interrupted through an encounter with authentic critical dialogue.

Resistance to Dialogue

Student resistance due to unfamiliarity can be an initial obstacle in the dialogical classroom. Freire (1987) notes that, “[students] are so used to following orders that they don’t know how to be responsible for their own formation. They have not learned how to organize their own reading of reality and of books, understanding critically what they read” (p. 77). In other words, students don’t know what they don’t know. It is difficult to participate in critical dialogue when the bulk of a student’s education may have been anti-dialogical or dedicated to producing the ‘right answer’. Shor (1987) follows up Freire’s statement by suggesting that the perceived lack of rigor may be due to the fact that “Participatory learning begins from a history of their non-participation . . . We have been allowed to know only *one* definition of rigor, the authoritarian, traditional one, which mechanically structures education, and discourages us from

the responsibility of recreating ourselves in society” (p. 77). Alemán & Gaytán (2017) found the perceived lack of rigor presents a considerable hurdle to some students in the critical collegiate classroom. A similar situation occurred with the students observed by Tintiangco-Cubales et al (2016). When students did not recognize the rigor of the tools within the critical classroom, or what they thought was going to be simple participation, they expressed frustration (p. 1317). These findings support Shor’s observation even decades later. When students only know one definition of rigor, one that is characterized by the decontextualization of study material and fails to acknowledge the lived reality and experiences of students, the suggestion that contextualization and re-cognition can be equally and more rigorous may seem absurd. For college students, the financial cost further exacerbates the frustration. Students want to get what they pay for, and a perceived lack of rigor or worthwhile class work does not spark a critical interest. In my experience, singers know *one* definition of collegiate choral activity and when non-dialogical rigor is de-centered, singers feel they aren’t getting what they signed up for, what they have come to know and love as choir. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the collegiate choral conductor balances dialogic practices with singing and treats dialogue with the same rigor as they would any other rehearsal technique. When dialogue is not treated as a rigorous act and is considered last minute or remains on the surface level of the topic, the consequences may lead to indirective teaching, which can lend support to the notion that the authoritarian way is the best way (Freire, 1987, p. 80).

On the other hand, dialogue can be overly direct to the point that it forsakes critical engagement and becomes manipulative. Shor (1987) makes the observation that discussion in the classroom follows a predictable tri-part form following the pattern of, “question-response-evaluation, with the teacher asking a short-answer question and the students giving minimal

replies” (p. 154). Shor labels uncritical dialogue such as this “infantilizing” (p. 154), showing little respect for the academic capabilities of students who respond with silence. A well-intentioned educator who would like to utilize dialogue but perhaps is inexperienced or is even short on time may find themselves stuck in question-response-evaluation discussion. The challenge here is to go beyond infantilizing discussion and go further into critical dialogue.

Still, other educators may be inhibiting dialogue knowingly or unknowingly through cultural invasion. Freire (2018) defines cultural invasion as a phenomenon in which, “the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter’s potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression” (p. 152). As Freire continues to discuss cultural invasion, the potentiality of this anti-dialogical action within the ensemble becomes clear.

In cultural invasion . . . the invaders are the authors of, and actors in, the process; those they invade are the objects. The invaders mold; those they invade are molded. The invaders choose; those they invade follow that choice—or are expected to follow it. The invaders act; those they invade have only the illusion of acting, through the action of the invaders (p. 152).

And finally, “For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority” (p. 153). These statements have a profound impact on how conductors perceive cultural invasion in the ensemble setting as well as choral-community engagement.

Before going further, I would like to calm any rage that may have flared at the suggestion that choirs are “convinced of their intrinsic inferiority” at the hands of the conductor. I would venture to say that most conductors do not intentionally promote an inferiority complex within

their choirs. But is it possible that the way in which conductors mold their choirs, select material, and make decisions creates an environment in which invasion occurs under the guise of collaboration? An invasion that is accepted because it is not the choristers place to question, challenge, or dialogue with the conductor about how the choir is molded, material is selected, and decisions are made about the ensemble; the very ensemble who the conductor is dependent upon for their very existence?

I was once a member of a choir where I was the Vice President of the choral cabinet. My primary job was to ensure that concert attire rules were followed. This included finding acceptable shades of red lipstick to match the red dresses that all altos and sopranos were required to wear and having those shades on hand for performances in case a chorister showed up wearing the wrong shade of red. The choir had been active for a century with decades of tradition built into its bones and yes, attire had become one of those unquestioned traditions. To be honest, the conductor at the time was probably not concerned about the lipstick. There were other parts of the choir's obedience obsessed tradition that they were slowly undoing. At the time, I enjoyed the extreme uniformity. However, such uniformity emphasizes the collective and all but abolishes the individual. There is no relation between the particular and the whole. I should say, this choir probably did more for my personal growth than any other choir and I cherished my time with them beyond words. However, I think of it anytime I think about uncritically repeating traditions of the past. Traditionalism welcomes invasion.

Freire (2018) writes that cultural invasion is a product of extensive conditioning, allowing it to be both a tool and a product of domination. "Homes and schools (from nurseries to universities) exist not in the abstract, but in time and space. Within the structures of domination they function largely as agencies which prepare the invaders of the future" (p. 154). The

inherited Western choral tradition is the tradition collegiate conductors are most apt to recreate. Cultural invasion has deep implications for how we understand the relational working between conductor and ensemble as well as ensemble and community. In both cases, there is the risk of invading a targeted population with our preconceived ideas, methods, and goals. Freire presents *cultural synthesis* as a liberatory counter to cultural invasion. He contrasts the two in the following way,

In cultural invasion . . . their starting point is their own world, from which they enter the world of those they invade. In cultural synthesis . . . they do not come to *teach* or to *transmit* or to *give* anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world . . . In cultural synthesis, the actors become integrated with the people, who are co-authors of the action that both perform upon the world (p. 180).

Co-authorship is a point of entry for critical dialogue in the formal educational setting. Hao (2011) rightfully points out that just because a student hears their voice and has their voice heard in discussion, it does not mean that they have agency in the classroom. The student voice (however it may be voiced) must also be voiced in the curriculum. A synthesized curriculum that is reflective of students and their input not only turns dialogue into recognizable action, but it also builds substantive trust between the students and the teacher (Hess, 2014). Dialogue as cultural synthesis is not merely a conversation or a process of getting to know students, it is intentional action for change.

Dialogue, Privilege, and Silence

Silence, in terms of dialogue, is nothing new to the choral environment. The tradition is steeped in singing more and speaking less. However, there is more to dialogical silence than awaiting instruction. Furthermore, if conductors are to facilitate dialogue either in or out of

rehearsal, they must also have an understanding of silence as dialogue. The elevation of dialogue as a critical practice has been criticized for contributing to the perpetuation of the oppressive power dynamics that critical dialogue is proposed to dismantle (Ellsworth, 1989; Hayes, 2015) while others challenge dialogue for its dismissal of silence (Kauffman, 2010; Hao, 2011).

Critical dialogue is a product of a Western pursuit of reason where all things can be subjected to rational debate and critique. Upholding dialogue as the practice par exemplar for the uncovering of reason maintains the primacy of Western reason (Kauffman, 2010; Hao, 2011; Hess, 2017).

This critique draws attention to the influence of critical theory (Western in its origins) upon the field of critical pedagogy (a global pedagogy with Western roots). The goal of the critical theorists of the early twentieth century was to save reason from what they saw as the suffocating grip of the late Enlightenment. The need among critical theorists to rescue reason so was so great that, “what was called for was a deep, historical transformation akin to the transformation that took place from the Middle Ages to the modern world” (Chamber, 2004, p. 227). This task, while admirable and not without its merit, reinscribed Western reason as the arbiter of critical thought. As a result, critical pedagogy approaches problematizing from a Western rational standpoint and in doing so, the critical pedagogue becomes the one who reinscribes Western reason as the singular mode of critical discourse in the classroom (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 304).

Ellsworth (1989) details at length how rational dialogue is unable to address issues such as an open confrontation of racism in the modern classroom:

The literature on critical pedagogy implies that the claims made . . . against racism could rightfully be taken up in the classroom and subjected to rational deliberation over their truth in light of competing claims . . . to call on students of color to justify and explicate

their claims in terms of the master's tools—tools such as rationalism, fashioned precisely to perpetuate their exclusion—colludes with the oppressor... (p. 305).

This critique echoes Freire's own critique of an uncritical application (and acceptance) of critical practices. In no way does Freire suggest that simple dialogue will bring about a world where "all would love each other as brothers [family], and differences would be resolved through roundtable discussions—or over a good whiskey" (Freire, 1985, p. 124). Still, it is important to recognize that rational dialogue, even critical dialogue, exists within the larger influence of a dominating and limited Western understanding that privileges some and works against others. The Western influence is clearly seen in Freire's adaptation of culture circles and the inductive moment as a verbal, sounding moment. However, not everyone is in a position to participate in a verbalized inductive moment. Kafumann (2010) found that in college classrooms, intersections of race, social class, and gender factored heavily into who spoke and who remained silent. Ellsworth (1989) details at length the various intersectionalities that contributed to a lack of critical dialogue in the college classroom, recalling that,

Things were not being said for a number of reasons. These included fear of being misunderstood and/or disclosing too much and becoming too vulnerable; memories of bad experiences in other contexts of speaking out; resentment that other oppressions . . . were being marginalized in the name of addressing racism—and guilt for feeling such resentment; confusion about levels of trust and commitment surrounding those who were allies to another group's struggles; resentment by some students of color for feeling that they were expected to disclose "more" and once again take the burden of doing the pedagogic work of educating White students/professor about the consequences of White

middle-class privilege; and resentment by White students for feeling that they had to prove they were not the enemy (p. 316).

Agency is more than allowing students to voice their experiences. Agency involves a relational understanding of how the exercise of agency, in this case critical dialogue, may affirm or silence (Hao, 2011). White students are often unaware that their dialogue is silencing, while students of color are aware of being silenced through dialogue (Kaufmann, 2010). Acknowledging and confronting this is necessary if dialogue is to have any possibility of being critical (Hess, 2017). Dialogue as a Western practice naturally privileges students experienced in the Western-European paradigm of dialogue. This manner of speaking is characterized by speech patterns that include “short wait times, fast pace, interruptions, and . . . the centering of one’s own story” (Kaufmann, 2010, p. 472). When left unchecked, white students from a Western-European lineage expressing their agency in a Western centered dialogue silences other students, particularly minority students (Ellsworth, 1989; Kauffman, 2010; Hao, 2011).

To be clear, there is a difference between silencing and silence. Silencing is what has been described so far; the conscious, unconscious, or systemic act of coercing a person into a state of silence. However, silence is not necessarily the absence of dialogue. When educators dismiss silence and reward the spoken, they privilege Eurocentrically trained voices and maintain the status quo of the systems of power that dialogue is intended to uncover and overturn. Hao (2011) draws attention to the practice of silence as resistance through intentional disengagement or by not performing the standard expressions of submission (e.g. a lowered head) when being reprimanded. Silence as active resistance is also a feature of Ellsworth’s critique of critical pedagogy against verbal dialogue. Ellsworth (1989) writes that minority and oppressed members:

are not silenced in the sense implied by the literature on critical pedagogy. They just are not talking in their authentic voices, or they are declining/refusing to talk at all, to critical educators who have been unable to acknowledge the presence of knowledges that are challenging and most likely inaccessible to their own social positions (p. 313).

When educators commit to understanding the here and now of their students, they must be mindful of the voices they are privileging in the process. Educators must also recognize there are some voices they want to hear and other voices they do not want to hear (Cook-Sather, 2007). The failure of the educator to do so coerces dissenting voices into silence which the uncritical educator presumes to be an inactive silence, a failure on the part of the student to engage in a dialogue they have already been turned away from. Educators need to listen to this silence and consider what is happening within the silence. In addition to resistance, silence may also contain sincerity, encouragement, sympathy, respect, or a deeper engagement (Kim & Markus, 2005). Teachers need to be receptive to silence and okay with allowing for silence while students take time to think deliberately, formulate fully, and encourage students to take their time in the silence (Hao, 2017). This, in line with the rest of critical pedagogy, takes time. However, when critical dialogue is limited by the collegiate timetable, dialogue becomes limiting if not handled with extreme critical care.

Critical dialogue has a lot working against it. Intersections of power and privilege threaten to reinscribe oppressive power dynamics while time constraints are often the ultimate arbiter of what can be reasonably accomplished in a college setting. With all of the risks and restraints, is it worth it? How can a critical conductor engage in critical dialogue with singers while knowing the dialogue may very well be flawed in practice? I would propose that the

dialogical conductor should be honest with students about the shortcomings within pedagogical practices. At the same time, the conductor should share as to why they are still choosing these practices over another. Conductors as educators should discuss the politics of dialogue with their students and raise awareness with them, rather than leaving them to fend for themselves. In short, be honest about all critical practices. This honesty could start on the first day of rehearsal with the syllabus. The conductor could briefly detail their choral educational philosophy, the rehearsal practices they use to make that philosophy a reality, and why they choose to do so. For example, I might write something like the following:

I believe that choral music is a dialogue. Because of this, I try to incorporate dialogue through various means during rehearsal, outside of rehearsal, and through collaboration with the singers. I choose to be a dialogic conductor because I believe dialogue can be a useful, even if imperfect, tool for taking a more critical approach to making choral music. It also helps me as a conductor get to know you the students and cultivate an ensemble that is truly ours!

In addition to including blurbs like this in writing on day one, the conductor could set some time aside at the start of the year to talk about these points more fully with new singers and hear their concerns, questions, suggestions, responses, etc. This could even part of a full choir retreat. Something akin to a critical choir orientation could be useful for new singers so they aren't thrown into something that doesn't look like the choir they know and become immediately frustrated.

Dialogue, in its rigor, virtues, action, and examination of problems, is more than making space for verbal communication. Freire's critical dialogue is one where, "the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible . . . within the word we find two dimensions,

reflection and action . . . there is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis” (Freire, 2018, p. 87). It is praxis that gives life to dialogue through theory and practice, that is, critical reflection and critical action.

Chapter 5: Praxis

. . . praxis, which, as the reflection and action which truly transform reality, is the source of knowledge and creation (Freire, 2018, p. 101).

Introduction

The knowledge that is produced through praxis (the coupling of reflection and action) is what makes the transformation of the future not only a possibility, but an experienced reality (Freire, 1985). Without praxis, overcoming any limit-situation is impossible because “human beings do not get beyond the concrete situation, the condition in which they find themselves, only by their consciousness or their intentions, however good those intentions may be” (Freire, 1985, p. 154). To better understand Freire’s position on the union of theory and action one can look to the inaction of critical theorists of the early twentieth century.

Critical Theory: Action or Inaction?

The critique of ideology and culture present in the here and now was a distinct feature of critical theory. It was not a matter of comparing the present *here* to the envisioned *there* (i.e. Marx), but a commitment to making normative statements as to the present state of inhibited freedom (Weber, 2014). While critical theory excelled in its efforts to describe and interpret what the world is in the present, it fell short of making statements regarding what the world ought to be and how to arrive at that place (Chambers, 2004; Blackburn, 2016; Wheeler-Bell, 2019). The critical theorist Horkheimer argued that it is not the purpose of philosophy to dictate calls to action, spurring the question: does philosophy bear the burden of proposing change (Chambers, 2004)? Chambers (2004) claims that “Asking Critical Theorists to propose policies or a political program to bring about this transformation would be like asking Francis Bacon to suggest policies to bring about the Enlightenment” (p. 227). As far as philosophy’s involvement, it is

limited to identifying contradictions in what is proclaimed and what is promulgated by ideology, thereby showing what is possible, not instructing what is to be done (Chambers, 2004; Rush, 2004; MacDonald, 2017). Furthermore, many early critical theorists made it a point to not partake in party based politics. They offered critique, but they avoided throwing their weight behind any specific political movement or reform agenda. This was due, in part, to the second reason for political inactivity; many of the early theorists had arrived at such a forlorn conclusion of humanity that any action toward liberation was futile (Chambers, 2004).

To this last point, the theorists Horkheimer and Adorno were particularly pessimistic. Because they maintained that ideology is all pervasive, any foray into the world of political action is at once tainted and is rendered incapable and insufficient, unable to resist the overwhelming control held by the reified ideology (Chambers, 2004; Wheeler-Bell, 2020). Marcuse's response to this was his "great refusal" as found in *One-Dimensional Man*. His refusal was one in which he dedicated the remainder of his life to deliberately avoiding any participation with late capitalism including the efforts of reformist politics. Marcuse maintained the belief that transformation, even in the smallest step forward, within the current system was impossible (Chambers, 2006). This is a significant break from Marx and his challenge for philosophy to engage in the world beyond interpretation.

Freire's Praxis

This exceptionally brief summary of the inaction of early critical theorists provides us with a contrast which helps us better understand Freire's view of praxis as well as our own choral praxis. Does our choral praxis reside in a purely theoretical analysis of our world, or does it seek to unite theory with action in a critical understanding of our world? While theory alone does not provide liberation from the physical limit-situation it is an invaluable necessity for

praxis (Freire, 2018, p. 125). Freire (1985) writes of “a unity between practice and theory in which both are constructed, shaped, and reshaped in constant movement from practice to theory, then back to a new practice . . .” (p. 124).

The mandate of praxis within context is the result of critical thought that pushes back against universally applicable laws. And it is for this reason that Freire does not provide a step by step method for liberatory teaching. The closest thing we get to a Freirean method is codification and decodification in culture circles (as discussed in chapter 3). Even then, the illustrations Freire provides for his work with this is situated in a context. What Freire advocates for is the use of dialogue, not the use of images for every process of decodification in culture circles everywhere. Praxis does not dismiss technical skill, but it sees the humanity within and beyond technical training and does not reduce human need or interaction to formulas (Regelski, 2005). Simply put, praxis is not and cannot be prescriptive. Critical pedagogue Giroux (1985) writes that theory rooted in praxis “emerges from specific contexts and forms of experience in order to examine such contexts critically and then to intervene on the basis of an informed praxis” (p. xxiii). The context of the theoretical is the place where decodification occurs and is in relation to the context of the concrete, the place where the codified elements are experienced and felt (Freire, 1998). In a collegiate choral ensemble, the theoretical is initiated through music and the concrete is embodied in the tangible elements of music making and community action which in turn leads to transformation.

The transformation of the world through critical praxis requires both action and reflection. Without action, one is left developing deep intellectual thoughts in the comfort of fireside philosophy or what Freire (2018) describes as “armchair revolution” while reflection—true reflection—leads to action” (pp. 65-66). Freire goes on to describe the ongoing act of

reflection with unfolding action. “When the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection . . .

Otherwise, action is pure activism” (p. 66). Freire regards activism as action separated from dialogue and void of reflection, resulting in, “action for action’s sake” (p. 88). Freire stresses the need to reflect upon the reality that is being actively worked upon, writing that “Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence . . . Humankind *emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled . . . “ (p. 109).

The teacher has to be prepared and able to dwell simultaneously in reflection and action. The academic environment encourages the theoretical but acting upon theory is far more difficult and many teachers are not equipped to move from critical thought to critical action (McLaren, 1999).

If the teacher is to encourage both reflection and action in their students, then they themselves must be participating in their own critical praxis both within and beyond the rehearsal space.

Only through reflection can we critically intervene in the unfolding historical action of humanity.

Freire (1985) understands the difficulty of the union of reflection and action and writes,

It’s not that strange, then, for verbalists to retreat to their ivory tower and see little merit in those who are committed to action, while activists consider those who conceptualize an act as “noxious intellectuals,” “theoreticians,” or “philosophers” who do nothing but undercut their work (p. 11).

It is also not that strange for departments within the academy to be viewed and valued along a division of job training and cultivation of the human person (Freire, 1987). The collegiate choir is not necessarily a career oriented program. It is of career benefit to those studying music and education, but for non-music majors, it is of a different educational benefit. One of the critical strengths of the collegiate choral ensemble could be precisely that it is not a career oriented space

on campus. What that allows it to be then, for all members regardless of their degree program, is a designated space for critical praxis. It may be the only such space for students in a given major, year, semester, or quarter, thereby making its existence on campus all the more necessary. As we consider collegiate choral praxis through a Freirean lens, I suggest the following questions be kept in mind: Is our choral practice reactionary? Is it primarily theoretical? Do we sing at the world? Does our music shed light on the world while simultaneously engaging with the world? I invite the reader to keep these questions in mind as we explore the constitutive elements of praxis: reflection and action.

Reflection

For Freire, it was necessary that students become aware of the possibility of other systems in the process of conscientization. The fact that the system in which they exist is not the only reality is a liberating realization. Critical reflection as praxis then goes further in reflecting on what could be possible and questioning what action could lead to a new system (Cordero, Mascareño, & Chernilo, 2017). Reflection also maintains the agency of the individual uncovering reality rather than the teacher manipulating the student. Rostboll (2009) writes that critical reflection works in favor of liberation through its, “role of *provoking* such processes of deliberation by *initiating* processes of self-reflection. In this way, ideology critique can be seen as part of public autonomy rather than as undermining it” (p. 147). Without reflection, the liberatory education provided by the teacher becomes another ideology that is deposited into students without their critical questioning or development of critical awareness. Rostboll goes to say that “It is crucial, then, to distinguish between the theory of ideology as a way of showing people what their real interests are and as a means of triggering *self-reflection*” (p. 147). People should be given the best available information, it should be derived through only the most ethical

research practices, and it should take into account the context of sources, interpretation, and dissemination. Doing so grants individuals the best material with which to reflect upon without force of acceptance (Rostboll, 2009; Wheeler-Bell, 2019). Reflection preserves the autonomy of the individual. Without reflection, individuals are coerced into uncritical action without pausing to reflect for themselves and to form their own critical awareness.

A common (or, perhaps uncommon) form of reflection in the collegiate environment is the act of studying. Whether it be texts or compositions, students are asked to study a significant number of materials. Study is undoubtedly a worthwhile and necessary task, and it should without question be part of a collegiate student's education. However, let us educators honestly ask ourselves this: are we challenging our students to study or are we challenging them to skim? Freire (1985) has much to say about the act of studying. Freire finds that study is impossible if the reader behaves passively and becomes "domesticated," trying only to memorize the author's ideas; if the reader lets himself or herself be "invaded" by what the author affirms; if the reader is transformed into a "vessel" by extracts from an internalized text (p. 2).

On the other hand, serious study requires

an understanding of the sociological-historical conditioning of knowledge. And it requires an investigation of the content under study and of other dimensions of knowledge. Studying is a form of reinventing, recreating [sic], rewriting; and this is a subject's, not an object's, task (p. 2).

Freire (1985) concludes that "The act of study should not be measured by the number of pages read in one night or the quantity of books read in a semester. *To study is not to consume ideas, but to create and re-create them*" (p. 4). It could be added that the act of studying is not

measured by how many concerts or how much repertoire is performed in each term, but how deeply the repertoire and the conditions surrounding it are understood. Shor (1987) echoes Freire's sentiment, finding that the purpose of study is, "to make critical reflection on society the fundamental activity" (p. 86). This activity is grounded in uncovering the deeper why, the reason for the object to exist.

Reflecting upon the "why" may appear to present critical reflection as a repackaged Socratic method. Freire (1998) takes a different view. He writes that, "Socratic intellectualism—which mistook the definition of the concept for knowledge of the thing defined and this knowledge as virtue—did not constitute a true pedagogy of knowing, even though it was dialogic" (p. 49). He goes on to critique Plato's efforts as insufficient due to Plato's view that knowledge was a matter of coming to recollect knowledge that was once held but forgotten at birth. Instead, what Freire's theory of knowledge supports is a coming to know of the reason for the why, thereby uncovering the reason behind individual and collective beliefs and attitudes (Freire, 1998). Genuine study allows for reflection in which the individual can view the object of study from a distance in an attempt to see the larger picture of the object within the whole. However, if reflection were to remain entirely removed from the whole it would not be critical. It is necessary to develop self-reflexive practices that enable us to see ourselves in relation to the object of study and situated within the whole.

The reflexive process of becoming aware has been found to be beneficial to conductors in their musical settings (Butke, 2003; Durrant & Varvarigou, 2015). Critical reflection on action also helps teachers realize the ideological foundations of their teaching, their constant evolution as a teacher, and the ways in which their teaching can be more democratic. (Butke, 2003). Butke (2003) finds three forms of critical reflection available to the choral music educator: reflection-

in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-fore-action. Reflection-in-action is what choral music educators do in every rehearsal. This form of reflection is spontaneous and involves problem-solving in the moment. In other words, the choral conductor hears something, notes it as a problem, diagnoses the problem, and then fixes the problem. In contrast, reflection-on-action occurs outside of the moment through practices such as writing, internal dialogues, and external dialogues with colleagues. Reflection-fore-action considers forces outside of the teaching moment such as home life, life history, as well as educational philosophy, and how this may manifest in rehearsal plans and technique. Also of great benefit to the reflective conductor are the singers themselves. Conductors have a constant source of reflective material in how their singers engage or disengage in rehearsal and in talking with singers outside of the rehearsal setting (Durrant & Varvarigou, 2015). Vodicka (2015) asked their singers to reflect through journaling. The journal entries gave the conductor insight into singers' experiences and perceptions and further informed the conductor's critical practice.

If being intentional with reflection is beneficial for the conductor, how much more beneficial would it be to have a reflective ensemble? Consider the three previously mentioned forms of reflection. These can easily translate into forms of reflection with the entire ensemble, not just the conductor. Suppose the conductor hears an incorrect bass entrance and feels it is worthwhile to stop and fix it. It is well within the conductor's role to make that decision. However, rather than stopping and immediately reflecting in the moment, the conductor (who most likely already has a plan of action) can ask the ensemble why they chose to stop. The information received from the ensemble can further inform the conductor on a variety of levels. No response could indicate the ensemble isn't listening critically, is unaware of other parts, or are focusing on their own lines. Alternatively, and as discussed in the previous chapter, silence

could also suggest a perceived lack of rigor in posing the question in the first place or they are afraid of giving the “wrong” answer. But truly, there is no wrong answer. Responses that don’t involve the specific bass line can show the conductor what the choir is hearing and even what the conductor is *not* hearing within sections. Responses that do identify the bass problem indicate that the choir is hearing what the conductor is hearing and we are all listening critically. If the conductor so chooses, they could involve the ensemble in how to fix the problem now that the problem has been diagnosed (while also making a note of the other reflections shared by the ensemble). To be clear, reflecting in action with the ensemble rather than for the ensemble takes significant time and it might not be the best rehearsal strategy to use every time there is a problem. However, it can be a useful tool and should be used intentionally to encourage and develop critically reflective capabilities of reflection-in-action with the ensemble.

Both reflection-on-action and reflection-fore-action are useful ensemble activities for continuing reflection outside of rehearsal and reflecting on extra-musical influences. Reflection-on-action can be used with the ensemble to consider performance practice and traditions, as well as musical contextualization. Reflection-fore-action could be done as individuals while the ensemble is gathered at the end of rehearsal. It could be done at the end of each rehearsal or at the end of the final rehearsal of the week. Students could reflect in a manner of their choosing (silent reflection or writing may be best suited for this) and the conductor could dedicate five minutes at the end of rehearsal to give everyone the opportunity to reflect on the forces outside of rehearsal that have impacted their work in and out of rehearsal. What were they able or not able to achieve during rehearsal? Why? What is going on in their life or in the world that intersects with their choral work? One of my mentors recently began using Google Surveys with their collegiate ensemble for purposes of reflection and rehearsal planning. This approach can

allow for greater anonymity if that is a concern among students. A survey also provides a form of guided reflection where students are encouraged to reflect and participate without feeling like they have yet another writing assignment. Reflections also don't have to be written. A student could draw a picture, simple or complex, and that is reflective. Or a student could share a song title that represents the week and that is a form of reflection. Whether it is through formally designed small groups, online discussion posts, surveys, or informal conversations, reflection-on-action extends the critical inquiry necessary for a critically aware choral ensemble and can be done in such a way that it does not overly burden the collegiate singers who already shoulder a demanding and often restrictive workload.

Action

Without action, the word is reduced to what Freire (2018) decries as *verbalism*, turning the word, “into an alienated and alienating “blah . . . there is no transformation without action” (p. 87). Freire (1985) expands on the uselessness of verbalism, warning against “a simple verbal denunciation of social injustice, preaching the transformation of consciousness while still leaving intact the structures of society . . .” (p. 155). The academic setting can easily encourage such behavior and reduce critical praxis as a pursuit of theoretical knowledge. New awareness is not paired with transformative action (Crean & Lynch, 2013). Verbalism, with its suffocation of the word, is incapable of naming the world.

Freire (2018) affirms that “To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it” (p. 88). In order to exist humanely, individuals must be able to act within the world. He goes on to emphasize the importance of steering clear of the trap of naming the world for another person as doing so is a “prescriptive act which robs others of their words.” (p. 88). This is why dialogue within praxis is essential to Freire, for “If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the

world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings” (p. 88). Through dialogue, individuals can look at reality and name what is real rather than fatalistically accept the present. This activity must necessarily be accompanied by reflection and action (Freire, 1998). A failure to do so results in the previously discussed shortcomings of verbalism and activism.

After discussing the pitfalls of reducing dialogue to verbal expressions in the previous chapter, it is important to note that Freire (2018) clarifies in a footnote that he is not opposed to active silence wherein “men [people] only apparently leave the world, withdrawing from it in order to consider it in its totality, and thus remaining with it . . . not when the retreat signifies contempt for the world and flight from it... (footnote 3, p. 88). Both the act of verbally speaking the word and reflecting on the world are components of dialogue in Freire’s theory of critical praxis.

Critical pedagogue hooks² (1992) opines, “I think that so many progressive political movements fail to have lasting impact in the United States precisely because there is not enough understanding of ‘praxis’” (p. 146) and goes on to write, “I believe that revolution begins precisely with revolution in our daily lives” (p. 147). hooks’ sentiment echoes Freire’s (2018) description of witness as it applies to dialogue as action. Freire characterizes dialogical witness as requiring consistency, boldness, radicalization, courage to love, faith, daring, and active (p. 176). The witness of dialogical action requires the witness to be consistent in both word and deed while realizing the risk that may come with boldly witnessing a radical pedagogy. This presents a challenge to the task of loving courageously. Courageous love seeks to transform an oppressive state out of an abundance of love rather than accommodating the oppressive state to keep the

² The scholar bell hooks chooses to decapitalize her name in her works. As such, her name is also decapitalized here.

peace. This is especially challenging in higher education. Educating through a critical lens requires time, which means time is taken away from working on products that meet traditional evaluative criteria and standards. There is a real and legitimate hesitation among teachers that deviating from the traditional expectations will hinder their ability to meet standards which results in a poor evaluation of their work as educators (Abrahams, 2017).

It bears remembering that the action to not act can remain a critical action if it derives from critical reflection. Put another way, critical reflection, whether it results in an immediate, an eventual act, or no act, is always action (Freire, 2018). Some possible actions such as protests, community marches, or singing about topics like gun violence or immigration may appear to some as overtly political and closely aligned to partisan politics. The extent to which conductors and their choirs participate in these actions and topics should be left to the ensemble and their conductor to consider within their specific context. Is it innately wrong for a choir to decide against the act of marching in protest? Not necessarily. Freire (2018) himself acknowledges this when he writes, “A critical analysis of reality may, however, reveal that a particular form of action is impossible or inappropriate *at the present time*” (p. 128). What is inexcusable, however, is for a choir and their conductor to decide against a specific action without naming the political consequences. That is, who does their decision favor and who does their decision work against?

For example, a hypothetical choir is preparing for a spring tour this academic year. They are receiving no financial assistance from the university, so the choir has been doing several fundraisers. Despite their best efforts, there is a substantial balance left and students will now need to cover the remaining costs out of pocket. This places an extra and stressful financial burden on a significant number of students. A member of the choir cabinet suggests taking a free-will donation at the upcoming winter concert. The choir can raise some more funds and

share about their spring tour with the audience. Another cabinet member mentions that the winter concert traditionally has a free will donation taken up with all proceeds going toward a local non-profit that the choir has partnered with for the year. The partnership this year is with a brand new non-profit and funds are desperately needed as the organization gets established. Does the choir take action that favors the financially burdened students, or do they take action that favors the financially strained non-profit? What are the consequences for both groups if they don't get funds from the winter concert? Are other actions available to the choir to help both students and non-profit? Asking these necessary questions (among many others) and exploring them in depth is the critical reflection on action that maintains the critical nature of praxis and frees action from reactionary activism.

When ensembles and conductors unite in critical action, they are doing so as partners but in distinct roles of conductor and ensemble. In this partnership, conductor and ensemble are, “equally the Subjects of revolutionary action, and reality serves as the medium for the transforming action of both groups” (Freire, 2018, p. 129). In this partnership, critical action can take place both within the ensemble and outside of itself. Freire (1998) writes that, “. . . for action to work, it must result in significant products . . . and become the object of his [their] reflection” (p. 502). With this, we might ask ourselves the following questions: What is the work of choral music? What is the work we reflect on?

Critical Choral Praxis

The first quarter of the twenty first century has heralded a new epoch in North American music education which finds a close alignment with critical praxis. A care for social justice has and continues to take root in choral music education in the North American context (Hess, 2017). One of the challenges of implementing a critical pedagogy directed towards social justice is the

ambiguity of the term ‘social justice’. As it pertains to the classroom, Campbell (2018) describes social justice as it relates to, “a movement . . . critically concerned with the complexities of race, ethnicity, and social class in the design and delivery of curriculum” (p. 70). Campbell goes on to cite Nieto’s (2008) call for equity as a central component of multicultural music education, “advocating for equitable education for students of all backgrounds, and that it goes beyond the classroom walls to implicate societal change as a fundamental goal” (cited in Campbell, 2018, p. 71). Responding to such a call requires that opportunities are made available to students for them to understand the implications and actions of social change beyond the campus and time in the classroom.

For schools to develop a culture of social justice, they must build trust, engage in cultures present, take on social domination and injustice, actively transform the practices of the educational institution, and engage the entirety of the school community (White, 2014). These are large and challenging calls with equally large and challenging requirements for addressing them. However, the choral ensemble may be uniquely suited to respond to these calls. Harley (2017) contends that singers of a self-actualized choir (self-actualization being akin to conscientization) can accurately judge themselves and the world around them. In the choral environment, this manifests as an awareness of their own voice as it relates to the voice of the choir. Because of this critical self-actualization, the choir members are drawn to solve problems beyond their own. The choral ensemble is already a place which fosters acute awareness and a desire to engage in problems within and outside of oneself. Situate this problem-posing environment within Poulin’s challenge to music educators to develop, “in you, the learners, the creative capacities to solve society’s greatest challenges” (p. 29), and it requires choral music educators to pause and reflect on how this can be done. What does the choral ensemble do? What

ought the choral ensemble do? For many, the answers to these questions lie in what choirs do best, singing and presentation of choral music.

For the choral ensemble, matters of social justice and social concern are primarily addressed through repertoire (Campbell, 2018). When it comes to programming repertoire, Shaw (2012), writing as a culturally responsive pedagogue, poses the following questions for the critically conscious conductor: “What music would build upon my students’ prior experiences? What pieces would capitalize on their cultural knowledge? What selections could my students experience through their preferred learning styles? Which would showcase their culturally informed performance styles?” (p. 76). Critical conductors would do well to respond to Shaw’s questions in their own contexts. Singing choral repertoire is what choirs do, and it can be done critically as suggested by Shaw, but is repertoire all they do? Is that all they can do? If choirs are only addressing matters through repertoire and abandoning them post-concert, they are at best bringing awareness to themselves and others. However, “a change in understanding . . . does not of itself, however, mean a change in the concrete” (Freire, 1994, p. 19). Furthermore, it is insufficient to rely on the emotional capabilities of music and performance to inspire change (Campaign Choirs Writing Collective, 2019). Critically selecting repertoire and engaging with music critically during the rehearsal process may foster awareness, but it falls short of concrete transformation. I would argue that, in the collegiate context, limiting critical action to repertoire and performance is the equivalent of the inaction taken by early critical theorists in their ideological critique of society.

Does current collegiate choral practice only interpret the world? Do conductors limit themselves and their ensembles to theorizing through repertoire and relegate action steps to other disciplines and locations? Shaw (2012) again challenges choral music educators in their use of

repertoire and urges educators to go beyond the traditional practice. Shaw suggests using repertoire as part of a process (praxis) in which students recognize and challenge systems of oppression, inequity, and injustice (conscientization). Repertoire can also be used to open a dialogue with students and empower students to take social action beyond their singing in a concert. Following Shaw's guidance, the collegiate choral ensemble can more closely resemble Marx's oft quoted eleventh thesis in *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." Through a critical lens, this change is brought about through praxis.

Critical Collegiate Choral Praxis

One of the distinguishing factors of critical pedagogy in collegiate education is the accessibility of acting in and with the world outside of the classroom. Rapp (2011) argues that critical pedagogy in higher education should be used to break down barriers between the academy and society. Reconstructing the classroom to go beyond the walls of the school building opens the intersection between lived experiences (of both teacher and students) and new knowledge. This is particularly true when the discipline concerns itself with matters of "real life." Freire (2018) illustrates this need for practical and real action with the simple observation that a person learns to swim in the water, not in a library. Physically encountering experiences which relate to the theoretical is an action that aids in the transformation of the individual and is essential to the transformative process of conscientization (Freire, 1987). Steiger (2011) draws inspiration from American playwright Naomi Wallace and cites them as saying, "we are not only ourselves. We are who we interact with" (p. 21). I would also suggest that we are *how* we interact with others. Who we take choral action with and how it is done (the latter to be explored further in the following chapter) informs the critical action taken by an ensemble as part of their

praxis. If we consider who the choir is interacting with as well as who they are not, then we might better understand what is missing and what is possible in collegiate choral action.

Critical pedagogy in the academy is uniquely situated to break down boundaries by literally going past physical walls. Crean & Lynch (2013) propose that shifting physical locations, “. . . goes some way towards bridging the divide between experiential and academic knowledge. It involves taking the outside in and putting the inside out, and changing the character of both in the process” (p. 56). Findings by Freer (2017) lend support to the benefits of going beyond the classroom. Freer implemented a Problem Based Learning curriculum for a choral methods course and, like Freire’s pedagogy, the course began with the immediate here and now of the students and the problems surrounding their reality. Freer found that this approach to collegiate music education was largely successful. However, it was hindered by an inadequate amount of micro-teaching opportunities in PreK-12 schools. If collegiate educators have a desire to bridge the real world with the theoretical world of the classroom or rehearsal, then educators and the students must actually cross over that bridge and travel back and forth between concrete action and classroom theoretical, action and reflection. Steiger (2011) also built and crossed bridges in their critical process with a collegiate theater ensemble. Steiger taught a collegiate course titled “Community Based Acting” that was based around principles of critical pedagogy. The course was intentionally offered to, “have students think critically about theatre training by engaging with approaches that they had not yet encountered in the department’s acting courses” (p. 24). Ensemble members interviewed members of the local community, then incorporated parts of their community interviews with other texts to develop critical character studies. They held open rehearsals and encouraged members of the community to attend and see the interviews take shape as pieces of theater performance. However,

community participation in this way was minimal. Reflecting on the course, Steiger suggests that “Perhaps it would help to have a community of people already interested in the process before the class begins” (p. 29). The culmination of the work was a performance of the final character studies alongside scenes from the playwright Naomi Wallace. This process bridged the academy and community, formal repertoire with newly composed repertoire, art with the immediate reality, contextualized and recontextualized theater in a meaningful and critical way. Steiger’s work is reflective of Crean & Lynch’s (2013) suggestion for the need for a “development of alliances between the university and social movements and groups working outside the university” (p. 56). These alliances may take the form of the university extending outward and reaching out, or it may take the form of bringing others into the academic setting, but either way the boundaries of the university become porous and remain so. Both instances are also built upon the premise that those on the inside are learning from those on the outside rather than teaching the ignorant outsider. However, developing such alliances is no small task.

The issue of time once again proves to be a considerable obstacle. Most collegiate courses are experienced by a new set of students each time the course is offered. Critical pedagogy is already a time intensive pedagogy. Using it within a ten or sixteen week course magnifies that challenge and questions the possibility of effectively critically engaging a class of students. Rapp (2011) bluntly asks,

In the context of a single class, can students unlearn lifelong assumptions . . . which reinforces systems of oppression institutionally and pervasively? Is it possible for those students who are intellectually and emotionally transformed to extend this new learning into their personal and professional lives?” (pg. 55).

Solorzano (1989) sought to remedy the time restraint by developing a year-long course and intentionally advertised it to be socially and politically active. The course was divided into three phases which consisted of the educator entering the student community, analyzing the cause of the problem selected by the students through dialogue with the students, and culminating in action taken by the students and teacher to address the named issue of negative media representations of Chicanos. Solorzano reported that the work of this class not only engaged students with pertinent real-world issues and action off campus, but it also broke down internal divisions on campus and brought about partnerships with other campus organizations. Students in the year-long course also developed confidence, greater commitment to their ideas, research skills, organizational skills, and communication skills.

The critical collegiate choral ensemble can learn valuable lessons from other departmental courses attempting a critical praxis. At the same time, the choral ensemble is in a context of its own and there are elements which set it apart from other critical spaces on the collegiate campus and as such, impact critical choral praxis. For starters, it is not as limited by trying to achieve critical transformation in a single quarter, semester, or even academic year. The choral ensemble is unique in that it is one of the few academic offerings on campus that has significant student carry over across years. While it is important to remember that the world's problems will not be uncovered and transformed in a single class or during a student's collegiate career, it is equally important to embrace and celebrate the fact that students remain with an ensemble for a longer period of time. It is not uncommon for students to remain in an ensemble for the majority or even entirety of their collegiate career (Major & Dakon, 2016; Dakon & Major, 2017). Even with this benefit of built-in retention over an extended period of time, the critical ensemble can learn from critical courses that have functioned on a greater time restraint.

The example of Solorzano (1989) sheds light on the strengths of a critical ensemble as well as the possibilities. The year-long course was purposefully designed and advertised to be socially and politically active. Choir isn't advertised as such. Should we purposefully have a critically political and socially active choir? Should all academic choirs be involved in the same critical manner? Would it benefit collegiate choral programs to have a choir with the specific purpose of community action alongside a concert-based choir? Or is it possible to combine the purpose of community action and concert performance within a single ensemble without overwhelming or overburdening the conductor and singers? Solorzano's class formed three groups to investigate the problem of negative media representation of Chicanos asking, "Why are Chicanos portrayed negatively in the mass media?" and "Whose interests are served by these negative portrayals of Chicanos?" (p. 220). Is it possible to have a small critical ensemble within the choir? This ensemble could take responsibility for the critical analysis of the questions, share their work with the choir, and then the choir as a collective develop repertoire choices for a concert that reflects on a larger scale what the small group critically uncovered.

No matter how critical engagement takes shape, choral music educators at the collegiate level must ask themselves what it is they are teaching their students and through what actions? If a conductor and their choir is concerned with issues of the "real world," how does that manifest through choral action? Is it possible for the collegiate choral ensemble to extend their music education and performance to outer sites of learning? Campbell (2018) suggests that not only is such learning possible, but that there is immense opportunity for involvement in social action beyond the classroom walls at the university level. Can choirs do this? If a collegiate choir makes a transition into community, what is it the choir is wanting to learn from the community and what are the terms of reciprocity (Hess, 2013)? What are the interests of the students? How

is reflection incorporated with community action? What implications does such activity have for concert performance? How can an added task to collegiate students be done democratically and not simply passed down from an authoritarian conductor? Each of these questions, while applicable to all collegiate choirs discerning a move into community, must be critically examined, and applied within each specific context. Critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework often provides more questions than instruction. Heron & Johnson (2017) ask their ensemble members to think about the following: “what they *expect*, what they *observe*, and what they *learn*” (p. 285). Developing questions like these can guide collegiate choral action in whatever shape it takes, whether it takes place as an off-campus endeavor or a rehearsal hall dialogue.

Similarities can be drawn between the choral ensemble and the theatrical ensemble in this way. Both are temporary communities made of individuals that come together of their own volition for an artistic collaboration (Heron & Johnson, 2017). The collegiate choral ensemble is similar in that many members choose to be part of the ensemble even if it is part of their degree requirement. The voluntary desire to come together to make music is further enabled by those collegiate choirs that are non-auditioned. As previously mentioned, singer retention in these ensembles also sets critical ensemble work apart from other critical spaces on campus. Harley (2017) suggests it is the choral community, not the choral music, that makes a lasting transformative impact on a person. I would add that it is the choral community, not the choral music, that makes a lasting transformative impact on the community in which it exists. However, if choral music educators concern themselves only with the music, then they are limiting their choirs.

This brings up an important feature about the collegiate choral ensemble as a community. Much like other artistic ensembles, members of a college choir choose to be there. Even in

auditioned settings, ensemble members choose to audition. For those members participating in ensembles due to a degree requirement, they have a choice to stay or leave after fulfilling the requirement. From that pool, some will leave, and some will choose to remain and sing beyond what their degree requires. In that way, it is akin other ensembles. However, while the collegiate choral ensemble is a chosen community, they do not know what they are signing up for other than singing in a group. In a collegiate theater ensemble, the student knows the show for which they are auditioning. Faith based, political, and other purposefully dedicated choirs know the religious and political slant for which they sing. The collegiate choir is not only at the mercy of the conductor's programming decision, but they are also left to sing within a politically "neutral" space hoping that, at best, humanistic songs bring about the humanist utopia without actually addressing or naming the limit-situations which prevent that vision from becoming a reality and taking action. Singers audition for a college ensemble and it is only after the fact that they find out what concert themes, programs, topics, or social issues, may or may not be part of the communal study and performance of music. A collaborative approach to programming can assist in overturning this dynamic (see chapter 3). However, Allsup (2003) raises essential questions regarding the extent to which student choice is to be involved in the music educational process. Students and teachers may disagree on the quality of a piece, teacher may not feel personally invested in a piece at all. Allsup also found from their teaching experience that a blanket invitation to choose repertoire almost always reinforced entertainment culture as the dominant culture of the students. This leads Allsup to ask the following when reflecting on the culture that is being reinscribed: Who is represented? The students? The educational institution? The state mandated curriculum? The entertainment industry? (p. 8). Reflecting on questions such as these can bring both the conductor and ensemble to a deeper understanding of why, especially if

repertoire selection is made a collaborative process. This is Freire's praxis, reflecting on our here and now to inform the actions we make, centered in our here and now.

Schmidt (2005) lends their voice in calling for a music education that "relate[s] to the realities of individuals and communities in which it engages. It must not only establish its value in cognitive and emotional connections alone, but also search for social and thus, personal, transformation" (p. 4). Connecting and engaging with audience members on an emotional level is a starting point, but it is not the end. The emotional and relational connection to music is the starting point of dialogical action for transformation and social change (Choirs Writing Collective, 2019). This approach emphasizes the use of music as a medium rather than an end. Notation, technique, and performance make up the medium, but they do not bring about transformation. When viewed in this light, the purpose of the collegiate choral ensemble is one of bridging the world and the academy. Its critical praxis pairs song with study while engaging choir and community in solidarity alongside the choir's development of their own critical consciousness.

Chapter 6: Solidarity

The challenge to the entire field of choral directors across the United States is this: Let us break the mold of traditional choral education; we must recognize a new frame for the music education we are delivering, we must re-think the reasons we are doing this work, and we must become leaders and advocates in our communities. By doing so, we will expand our autonomy as educators, more deeply engage with our students and the community, and, ultimately, we will disrupt the systems that maintain the status quo (Poulin, 2019, p. 32).

Introduction

Poulin's challenge to American choral educators invokes a new era for choral music education in America. Just over fifty years after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was first published, Freire's radical ideas are still echoing and finding a new voice in a new generation of critical pedagogues. There is a re-envisioning of what formal education is, what it should be, and what it can do. Freire (1998) views sites of formal education as, "the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects . . ." This is different from the more informal, experiential site of education through "real, concrete context of facts, the social reality in which men [people] exist" (p. 487). Bridging these two contexts of education is the challenge. Freire believes schools cannot transform society, and I do not disagree with that. However, I take issue with the notion that schools are incapable of doing their part for social transformation. While formal sites of learning should be a place for authentic dialogue and theorizing, they should also be a place of preparation for social engagement and foster practice of that engagement through facilitating opportunities for students and community partnership. Schools may not be able to transform society, but they can take part in the work of critical solidarity.

The theme of solidarity works in conjunction with dialogue and praxis while extending critical work beyond the individual. In the choral context, solidarity unites the work of the collegiate choral ensemble in their immediate locality of academia, their broader community, and the global context outside the halls of collegiate life. It informs the partnership between ensemble and conductor in addition to the partnership between community and choir. Solidarity requires that the collegiate choral ensemble take part in the world with which and in which they exist, the world that lies beyond the specialized spaces of the educational institution. Solidarity is fundamental to the work of the critical choir regardless of whether that choir goes beyond the physical collegiate setting. On the topic of solidarity, Freire (2018) writes that,

The revolution is made . . . by both [leaders and the people] acting together in unshakable solidarity. This solidarity is born only when the leaders witness to it by their humble, loving, and courageous encounter with the people. Not all [people] men and women have sufficient courage for this encounter—but when they avoid encounter they become inflexible and treat others as mere objects... and return to their place as the oppressor (p. 129).

Avoiding the witness of solidarity inevitably leads to an oppressive stance, good intentions notwithstanding. Being a witness requires an alignment of word and action, expressed through dialogue. Witnessing in solidarity is participating in this act with others, particularly the oppressed. Freire writes, “Joining the oppressed requires going to them and communicating with them. The people must find themselves in the emerging leaders, and the latter must find themselves in the people” (p. 163). Solidarity is not a theoretical stance. There is a need to study the issue, but solidarity is action. It is a trusting encounter with people as subjects rather than

objects. Solidarity demands social responsibility and necessarily requires one to go beyond themselves and join in the communal act of solidarity.

This is not to say there is no element of theory involved in a witness of solidarity. Solidarity as praxis is both action and reflection. Freire's critical dialogue between Subjects plays a crucial role in the theoretical work of solidarity in that it lends itself to teachers and students democratically uncovering the world (Freire, 2018). Dialogue as a practice of solidarity also forms the basis of co-developing conscientization among subjects. Freire (2018) states,

. . . revolutionary leaders . . . go to the people . . . in order to come to know through dialogue with them both their *objective situation* and their *awareness* of that situation—the various levels of perception of themselves and of the world in which and with which they exist (p. 95).

Critical awareness, while not the final goal of a critical process, is a necessary development. Freire's concept of conscientization remains fundamental for solidarity and consciousness raising for all parties involved. This awareness extends both ways in the dialogue and no single knowledge is sufficient to address the systems in place that maintain the current physical reality as well as the mental influences upon the perception of reality (Freire, 1998).

It should be underscored that this is not a process of leaving the world of the familiar and privileged to colonize the world or mind of another to save or study them as objects. Freire (2018) speaks directly to those who are institutionally educated when he writes:

Although they may legitimately recognize themselves as having . . . a level of revolutionary knowledge different from the level of empirical knowledge held by the people, they cannot impose themselves and their knowledge on the people . . . but must enter into dialogue with them, so that the people's empirical knowledge of reality,

nourished by the leaders' critical knowledge, gradually becomes transformed into knowledge of the *causes* of reality (p. 134).

Freire is essentially expressing what was the autonomy thesis of the Frankfurt School (see chapter 3), a theoretical element of solidarity formed through an exchange of knowledge. However, solidarity is not only a mental exercise nor can the theoretical and active be assigned exclusively to certain parties. Freire (2018) insists that, "The revolutionary effort to transform these structures radically cannot designate its leaders as its *thinkers* and the oppressed as mere *doers*" (p. 126). He goes on to say, ". . . this theory cannot fail to assign the people a fundamental role in the transformation process. The leaders cannot treat the oppressed as mere activists to be denied the opportunity of reflection and allowed merely the illusion of acting . . ." (p. 126). The illusion of action is a feature of manipulation (to be discussed in more detail) which results from an uncritical and non-reflexive witness of solidarity.

Solidarity, by its nature, draws individuals out of themselves. It is a movement from one person's *here* to another person's *here*, a movement from *here* to *there*. This is what Freire saw as a communion between persons, a genuine relational union. This could be a union between former oppressor and oppressed, between leaders and community, between teachers and students. According to Freire (2018), it is only through this dialogical, praxial, witness of solidarity that a theory of liberation can come to reality (p. 183). In an environment that is dedicated to research, it is easier for theory to inform the conscience through awareness, than it is for theory to lead to solidarity in the lived theory off-campus. The latter would require by practical necessity a movement beyond the classroom space. This outward shift of moving beyond should not be misconstrued as a movement from one side of society, past a border, to another side. It is easy to center the experience of praxis in solidarity in our current here, our

location within academia and the collegiate space. However, Freire (2018) notes that going beyond ourselves does not mean we go out to spaces in which we do not exist. He writes, “the oppressed are not “marginals”, are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside”—inside the structure which made them “beings for others”” (p. 74). He expounds further, stating that,

In fact, however, the social structure as whole does not “expel,” nor is marginal man a “being outside of.” He is, on the contrary, a “being inside of,” within the social structure, and in a dependent relationship to those whom we call falsely autonomous beings, inauthentic beings-for-themselves (p. 484).

Going beyond ourselves is not an act of going out to bring others in. Rather, it is a critical action that enables us to see the structure in which we exist, and the limitations imposed by that structure, learn the systems that prevent a full and free movement of persons, and work in communion to end dependence for survival upon those same systems that threaten a person’s very existence.

Solidarity within Ensemble Hierarchy

Rehearsal practices of critical dialogue, reflection, and action (as discussed in previous chapters) can all contribute to building a collaborative choral relationship, which in turn can strengthen a choir’s solidarity between conductor and ensemble. The greatest benefit of pursuing solidarity within an ensemble is empowering both the roles of the conductor and singer. Rather than the conductor bringing the ensemble along to accompany only the conductor, the conductor and ensemble unite in solidarity as distinct collaborators without abandoning their specific roles within the choral context.

The traditional authoritarian role of the conductor was formed and passed on by the Western romantics of the nineteenth century where the conductor dictates and the performers do without question or challenge (Durrant & Varvarigou, 2015; Jansson, 2015). The traditional choral hierarchy presents an immediate challenge to working in solidarity between conductor-ensemble. The challenge is not to remove the figure of the conductor or their responsibilities, rather it is to understand the conductor as a critical facilitator. Solidarity does not eliminate the presence of specific roles, even those of authority that are traditionally hierarchical. There is room for the teacher to hold authority and maintain the direction of education while still educating in solidarity with the students as a co-investigator rather than a manipulative, prescriptive educator. Entering into musical solidarity with the singers does not mean abandoning interpretive authority, the art of programming, or directive rehearsals. Musical solidarity means that students should be provoked into thinking more deeply about these same issues and not simply told how to navigate them. Singers should be part of the process of making musical decisions, considering alternatives, and be given the opportunity to take ownership for a musical creation that would not otherwise exist without them.

Freire maintains throughout his writings that the role of the teacher is distinct from that of the students (Freire, 1985; Freire & Shor, 1987; Freire, 1998) while at the same time, advocates for the “solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students” (Freire, 2018, p. 72). Understanding these seemingly contradictory positions will better inform the choral solidarity of the ensemble. Freire’s (2018) description of teacher-student and students-teachers is based in his rebuttal of the banking method in favor of dialogical education. The teacher-student is

no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach . . . Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are “owned” by the teacher (p. 80).

Teachers and students, in this approach, jointly explore the problem as posed by the teacher. The teacher poses the problem as informed by the generative themes and creates with the students new knowledge rather than depositing knowledge for the students to regurgitate (Freire, 2018). All the while, both teacher and students are re-considering the knowledge they entered with, while exploring the problem as co-investigators. In this sense, both educators and students are engaged in the learning process as incomplete beings and holders of knowledge. Even so, Freire does not hold teachers and students to be equal in their educational roles. In a conversation with his colleague Shor, Freire (1987) states that, “The educator continues to be different from the students, but . . . he or she cannot permit the necessary difference between the teacher and the students to become ‘antagonistic...[That is,] closed to democracy’” (p. 92-93). Democracy remains open when the unhidden liberatory agenda of the teacher progresses alongside and with the ongoing action and reflection of the students (Freire, 2018). No component of a critical process is to be granted to and guarded by one sect over another. Only when all parties are engaged in action and reflection and are taken seriously in dialogue will solidarity be possible. Praxis without solidarity, no matter how successful in its end goal, is always a dominating act.

Role of the Conductor

Here, I briefly share my reflections on my current choral practice of working towards solidarity with a choral ensemble. For myself, I have come to separate the duties I have as a conductor and the role I occupy as a conductor. The same is true when I am a singer in an

ensemble. Duties are the practical tasks that make a choir function, the technical components. The role is something more profound, something that if I cease to do in a choral context, I am no longer a conductor. When reflecting upon my duties versus my role as the conductor, I pose the following questions: How much of my duties can I extend to the ensemble before I no longer function within the role of conductor? What can I relinquish for a moment, short term, or long term, and still maintain the role of conductor? How permeable can the line be between conductor and singer in the pursuit of choral solidarity? Where the line bends and breaks will likely be different for various conductors and contexts. For myself, warmups are a duty. A music education student could lead warmups and I can join the choir and experience the warmups from the side of the ensemble, offering prompts when necessary and feedback afterward. This perspective grants a moment of reflection as it can help me learn what it is that I am teaching effectively or ineffectively, what it is that I haven't taught, what concepts students are connecting to, in addition to learning new warmups from the students. Most warmups throughout the year could be led by students and my role as conductor would remain intact. The line bends without breaking.

Programming for me is becoming a liminal space between duty and role. I consider programming to be part of my artistry as a conductor, but I also believe students should be given an opportunity to engage in this part of that process as artists and individuals who have a say in what they will be singing. Conducting in concert as part of the cycles of communication between ensemble, conductor, and audience, is for me, a role. It is a role with duties that can be shared (presenting program notes, having student conductors, etc.) but if I abandon it entirely or almost completely, I am no longer fulfilling my role as a conductor. I once had a conductor share with an ensemble I was in that if they do their job right, the choir will not need them in concert. I

disagree. One of my roles as a collegiate conductor is to facilitate throughout the musical process, including the performance. To this point, Freire (1985) writes, “. . . education always requires an educator’s presence. There is a radical difference, though, between being present and being the presence itself” (p. 105). Does a choir always need a conductor’s presence? No. However, when a conductor is present, and when the context requires the presence of a conductor, then the question must be asked: what does it mean for the conductor to be present with the choir?

Durrant & Varvarigou (2015) assert that the conductor’s role spans philosophical, technical, and relational roles in which they facilitate the flow of rehearsal, educate the singers on the proper and healthy use of their instrument, and sense and respond to the needs of the ensemble, all while making sure the expressiveness and artistry is successfully communicated to the audience. Singers bring their own expectations of what the conductor is to do. From the singers’ perspective, the conductor should possess technical and artistic knowledge and capabilities that shine light on the deeper layers within the music, in addition to being an informed liaison on behalf of both composer and singer; all while maintaining motivation and organization (Jansson, 2015, Major & Dakon, 2016). In short, the conductor is to be an artist, manager, and human. Jansson (2015) also posits critical questions regarding the educational role of the conductor:

. . . what is the relationship between conducting and teaching? Should the conductor be seen as a leader or a teacher, or both? Is it even possible that all of these questions miss the point—that the conductor is in fact nothing more than a co-musician, an ensemble member alongside singers and instrumentalists, a non-sound-producing musician with some special tasks, a specialist like everyone else in the ensemble? (p. 3).

Looking at the role of the conductor through a critical lens suggests that the conductor is indeed a co-musician with an area of educational expertise who, while in their leadership role, facilitates a more intricate questioning and understanding of the world through problem-posing, musical study, and performance (Freire, 1998, p. 490).

Navigating the leadership role of the conductor requires the conductor to work with authority, but this does not necessitate authoritarianism. Durant & Varvarigou (2015) propose greater use of collaborative learning, an openness to feedback from singers and accompanists, and intentional reflective practices. These suggestions do not imply the conductor is not knowledgeable or the primary facilitator of the process. They aim to keep the conductor in a state of growth and their authority is not bound and made rigid by authoritarianism. This flexibility is necessary as the conductor must constantly choose how to respond to the ensemble and decide which action is most appropriate to move from *here* to *there*.

Jansson (2015) provides a comprehensive list of spectrums the conductor is constantly navigating as they strive for what is described as “elusive perfection” (p. 1).

1. Control vs. empowerment: “when to relinquish and when to take command” (p. 16).
2. Knowing vs. searching: have a plan and a vision, but be flexible, adaptable, and open to changes and interpretation
3. Details vs the big picture: when to fix and prescribe and when to let the ensemble self-correct
4. Demanding vs. helping
5. Telling vs showing
6. Being vs. doing

7. Pompous vs meek: “singers expect authority and willpower but also modesty and sincerity” (p. 17).

Addressing these spectrums, Jansson (2015) observes, “What is particularly noteworthy about these various balancing acts is that there are no stable balancing points. The perfect blend of actions or behaviors in one moment may not be perfect the next moment” (p. 17). Jansson (2015) also notes that, “choral leadership mastery is about the situational *application* of capabilities, which goes well beyond the *possession* of capabilities” (p. 12). There is a need to be aware, but awareness alone does not suffice. Awareness must be translated into critical action. The same is true for the witness of solidarity with an ensemble. It is not enough for the conductor to make a statement of solidarity; they must exhibit it and work towards it in their critical praxis.

Ryan (2013) proposes four distinct roles for the educator committed to transformation. These roles provide a helpful framework for the critical conductor as they witness with the choral ensemble. Ryan (2013) contends that the transformative educator must be able to occupy and move between the roles of critic, activist, engager, and visioner, while noting that some roles come more naturally to individuals and that each role has its own pitfalls. The role of the critic (or commentator) is deeply reflective and observational both within themselves and with the world around them. It is this internal and external awareness that allows the critic to interpret and gather perspective. The role of the activist is, by contrast, excited to engage in action and develop plans. In simplest form, the critic/commentator and the activist comprise the conductor’s essential regular function. The conductor takes in information and responds. The conductor reflects on the previous rehearsal and plans the following rehearsal accordingly. At their best, the roles of critic and activist embody the two components of critical praxis. Nonetheless, the critic must avoid becoming the hopeless reflective cynic, and the activist must be careful to not

become hyper focused on a singular tree within a forest. This is true whether the issue is one of repertoire and programming, or one of addressing a societal or community issue with the ensemble.

Where the critic and the activist are roles taken up and realized by the individual, the visioner and the engager are roles taken up by the individual but are realized in and through community. The visioner dreams of the possible and encourages others to join the dream. Conductors may find themselves in this role when first starting repertoire or getting an ensemble excited about an upcoming program. The conductor begins with a vision and the ensemble voices add to that vision and bring it to life. The engager extends the role of the activist by becoming involved with the formation of partnerships, working within the system of policy, and enacting projects and programs. These are the roles of the educator committed to facilitating solidarity through praxis. The conductor as visioner and engager (as well as critic and activist) facilitates opportunities for the choral ensemble to embody the roles of critic and activist. The engaging conductor, in their readiness to commit to the work, should exercise temperance so as to not to overextend themselves and get lost in too many projects, while the visionary conductor can get lost in their own realm and brilliance. As with all things, there is a risk in these roles just as there is risk in employing a critical pedagogy. Still, Ryan (2013) believes that “Through these roles educators create learning opportunities for their students, continuously develop their expertise as educators and ensure their work is part of a broad agenda for social and educational inclusiveness” (pp. 98-99).

Directing as a Conductor in Solidarity

Freire (1994) asserts that education is by nature a directive practice regardless of its authoritarian or democratic model. When engaging in a critical process of educating, the

difference lies in that critical pedagogy is, “*Not* directive of the *students*, but directive of the *process*, in which the students are with me. As director of the process, the liberating teacher is not doing something *to* the students, but *with* the students” (Freire, 1987, p. 46). Freire (1987) goes on to write that, “For me, education is always directive, always. The question is to know towards what and with whom is it directive” (p. 109). The question that Freire aligns with the directive process draws attention yet again to the political nature of education. In Freire’s (1987) view,

There is a directiveness in education which never allows it to be neutral. We must say to the students how we think and why . . . Even if students have the right to bad dreams, I have the right to say their dreams are bad, reactionary or capitalist or authoritarian (p. 157).

Freire is pointing to the non-neutrality of education. Education, due to its political nature, is inevitably directive as the work of the educator does not end in meeting the students “here” but actively draws students towards a new “there.” This, yet again, conjures questions of manipulation. Some might even go so far as to say brainwashing students to think like the teacher. The directive inevitability of a critical pedagogy is not one of manipulation, but of necessarily questioning and challenging the here and now. In Freire’s (1994) words, “. . . the basic thing would be for me to challenge them to go more deeply into the meaning of the themes or content and thereby learn them” (p. 59).

An educational practice that does not challenge the status quo runs the risk of manipulating students just as much as one that does.

My concern is not to deny the political and directive nature of education . . . but to accept that this is its nature, and to live a life of full consistency between my democratic option and my educational practice, which is likewise democratic (Freire, 1994, p. 68).

Living the politics of education requires tolerance but not moral reticence, openness without domination of space, criticism that does not silence, and humble fortitude. Knowing the politics in play is necessary for entering into solidarity and avoiding a relationship of domination.

Politics of Place: Solidarity On and Off Campus

Where should this witness of solidarity take place? Is it best to witness within or outside of the academic setting? As with all things critical, the answer is not an either or, but a yes and. Freire (1987) preferred working with the community outside of the academic institution but insisted that educators who prefer to work within the formal educational system should be respected for the important work that they do in that setting. Freire (1987) did encourage educators to work in both contexts while being careful not to become “ineffective in both places, to do both poorly because you try to do too much” (p. 39). Each educator needs to be honest with their own areas of preference (one could say bias) in addition to knowing what freedoms and constraints are present within their setting.

Abilities of Educational Institutions

Freire (1987) begins with the assumption that, “our participation, in seminars at universities is a secondary place for liberating education” (p. 38), but that place is still of great importance. The strength of higher education is that it is a place intentionally set apart for study and questioning. Patton (2016) writes, “Higher education serves as a space for transformative knowledge production that challenges dominant discourses and ways of operating in and beyond the academy” (p. 335). I agree with Patton’s assessment of the purpose of higher education. If

society is to be transformed, sites of education are one place to reflect or inspire possible transformation. Unfortunately, discourse within the academy can easily become the dominant practice. Rigorous discourse is important, but the task before academic intellectuals is to always have action in the world, at least on the periphery, lest discourse becomes discourse for discourse's sake and eventually the discourse loses all significant meaning.

One of the unique features of higher education is the presence of disciplines. Giroux (1992) takes issue with disciplines as they are quite literally divisions of knowledge. Interaction between various knowledge is limited in many institutions. Furthermore, disciplines privilege certain types of knowledge and exacerbate problematic power dynamics. Conversely, McArthur (2010) suggests that disciplines within the academy could be conducive to developing and applying ideas of critical pedagogy. McArthur views disciplines as structures that can be subjected to radical thought and experimentation. Doing so precludes disciplines from remaining static. McArthur (2010) also stresses the distinction between subjects and disciplines. Subjects are passive and follow the banking model of delivering information, receiving information, and repeating information. Disciplines on the other hand are active. They are practices that require constant engagement and are capable of evolving. Thus, disciplines provide a space for what McArthur (2010) describes as “creative conflict” (McArthur, p. 308). Within these spaces of creative conflict, Shor (1987) believes collegiate educators can foster, “Critical curiosity, some political awareness, democratic participation, habits of intellectual scrutiny, and interest in social change” as “realistic goals from inside a dialogic course” (p. 132). Working to dismantle institutional barriers of disciplines can lead to a more widespread sharing of knowledge and collaborative projects on campus. Moving discipline activities beyond campus can displace the university as the citadel for the few and build solidarity with the broader community.

Freire (1987) suggests the following, “One way intellectuals can help social movements is by making available special knowledge they possess as experts in a field.” (p. 186?) Pairing this knowledge with the sensible, lived knowledge of those who may not be academic intellectuals in order to “go beyond the sensibility of the fact, in order to get the *raison d’être* for the facts” (Freire, 1987, p. 186). The question that concerns me as a choral musician in higher education is whether our choral practice has transformed within the last fifty years? What are the assumed norms that have hardened and resist being challenged? Even if change is out of the question, can we at least challenge these ideas?

Limits of Educational Institutions

Higher education has its strengths as a site for a reimagining of society, however, the fact that it is a place set apart for study also severely limits it. Freire (1987) observes that, “. . . we are in danger of despair and of cynicism if we limit our struggle to the classroom. What we have to do . . . is to be critically conscious of the limits of education” (p. 129). He goes on to say that,

We should know that it is possible to accomplish something important in the institutional space of a school or college in order to help the transformation of society . . . Knowing the limits of education did not lead me to reduce my activity in this area, but instead increased my political goals. But most of all, I increased my political work outside of the schools. I saw the need to act where the levers for transformation do exist (p. 130).

Educators and professors (and conductors) need to develop this awareness with the students.

What are the levers? What are the levels and opportunities of engagement? What are the problems with various forms of engagement (e.g., engaging at the institutional level)?

Freire (1987) contends that, “Only political action in society can make social transformation, not critical study in the classroom . . . At the level of the classroom only, you can

achieve much better understanding of this issue without changing it as a reality” (p. 175). The classroom may be the location of the theoretical, but I would suggest that collegiate educators would be remiss if they did not at least facilitate some form of opportunity for students to critically engage in enacting that theory through action in the world. As with all things critical, this is easier theorized than realized. Freire (1987) asks, “Can what I know from the outside help you tomorrow do something different than what you are doing today? Can what you do inside school help me do the transformation on the outside better?” (p. 131).

One alternative to going out into the community is to bring community representation into the school space. However, location is politically charged with dynamics of power. When we collaborate, in whose space is the collaboration taking place and what power dynamics are implicit within that space (Hess, 2013)? Solidarity must not simply consist of a demand to have the other inform the opposite side of the binary. That only perpetuates the power hierarchy of the privileged over the minority (Kaufmann, 2010). Furthermore, bearing witness can weigh heavily on the person who is giving their account (Low & Sonntag, 2013). If a single representative of the community comes into the school space as a culture bearer, how can we appreciate their meaningful witness without essentializing the diverse community they represent? Hess (2013) suggests that, when at all possible, work with multiple culture bearers. Even then, it must be reflected that a single culture bearer is one gem in a kaleidoscopic culture, and it is likely one part of the image we haven’t seen before. There is plenty to learn, but it is impossible to take in the entire image. Placing the burden of representation upon a single culture bearer can lead to humiliating an entire community. Humiliation in this sense being what Rorty (1992) describes as, “having an identity imposed upon one” (Rorty, 1992 quoted in Cruickshank, 2020, p. 579).

Shor (1987) identifies one of the difficulties of critical pedagogy in the classroom is that, when attempting to bridge the world outside of the classroom and the students within, there is an “uneven development [in the students] and their diverse ideological commitments...” (p. 132). This is in contrast to the political bodies and organizations which exist outside of the institution where already like-minded individuals can gather, discuss, and act. Shor, (1987) describes the latter as a political movement, whereas “A liberating classroom in a traditional school or college is a place of mixed intentions organized by a dialogic teacher with the students who rarely come there thinking to change themselves or their society” (p. 133).

So too is the collegiate choral ensemble. It is not the same as a faith-based choir in a sacred setting, or choirs unified in other political commitments such as GALA choruses or labor choruses. For the collegiate choir, committing to work toward a quality performance as conductor and ensemble can be a work of solidarity within the limits of the collegiate choral setting. To extend the witness of solidarity beyond that setting can be made troublesome by the political and ideological spectrum within the choir. I propose that it is because of this that most collegiate choirs align with semi-transitive political thought (acknowledging the political, isolating individual issues, avoiding the interconnectivity of problems, remaining noncommittal to transformative action, see chapter 2). However, if a choir and their director have a desire to extend their witness of choral solidarity, while recognizing the nonhomogeneous political thought of the ensemble, I suggest that forming a community partnership is essential (more on this beginning on p. 129).

It should also be noted that the performance driven environment inside the collegiate space places an emphasis on dichotomizing high quality and low quality, with high quality being coded language for functional use (Ryan, 2013). High quality musicians may be desirable for

functional purposes (e.g. having the technical capabilities of performing vocally demanding repertoire) and these skills are not by any means a bad thing, but quality of musician does not designate quality of thinker or citizen. In the current system, quality has been confused with and isolated to skilled adaptability. The treatment of programming and curriculum development as critical action highlights an important observation made by Abrahams (2017) in that choral activity is unique because it does not focus on cultivating a single skill set. Each piece of repertoire has different demands and is an invitation to do things a different way. The notion of quality possesses both subjective (e.g. musical interpretation) and objective (e.g. specific intonation) elements. Could it also possess both musical and non-musical elements? Can a choir be a quality choir in extra-musical ways? What would a high-quality musical partnership look like? What determines the quality, the musical or the relational? High quality musical experiences for ensembles should not be considered only in terms of performance. The conductor, rehearsal, repertoire etc. can factor into a singer's retention (Dakon & Major, 2016). Is it possible that a meaningful process with a partnership could also provide students a high-quality experience? McArthur (2011) argues that,

Education should be an experience, not an end. It is the participation in higher education, the interactions with peers, teachers and diverse forms of knowledge that will enable people to live richer lives and contribute to greater social justice through work and other social activities (p. 746).

How might we facilitate more experiences in balance with the traditional end goals of concert performance?

Considerations for Critical Choral Community Partnerships

Throughout this document, the cited voices of scholars and critical pedagogues have called for the critical process to extend beyond the classroom. Akin to problem-posing starting with the here and now of the students, so too does a critical engagement within the context of formal education begin in the here and now of the classroom. In neither of these cases, does the starting point remain as the end or even the midpoint. To achieve this “going beyond” that scholars and critical pedagogues call for, opportunities must be made available to students for them to understand the implications and actions of social change beyond the formal space of campus and time spent in the classroom. (Campbell, p. 71). This involves the need to navigate logistical challenges, but more importantly, these opportunities should be encountered and structured through a critical lens of solidarity and be under constant scrutiny lest the act of solidarity become dominating as patronizing charity or false generosity.

What does this dialogical, trust-based, transformational solidarity look like as choral action? To begin, any choral community partnership which includes working with a population or community experiencing oppression, that population must have ownership with the process, otherwise the academic party becomes, “colonizers of other people’s miseries” (Crean & Lynch, 2013, p. 58). White (2014) joins in this call of caution for those seeking to join in community, but risk perpetuating colonization, stating that “it is important that the decision be made by those who have most to lose, rather than decisions being thrust upon the population by outside forces who have the most to gain” (p. 128-129). This echoes Freire’s (2018) observation of cultural invasion, where “the actors draw the thematic content of their action from their own values and ideology; their starting point is their own world, from which they enter the world of those they

invade.” (p. 180). These cautions are also applicable to the classroom, as discussed previously regarding choral hierarchy and the roles therein.

In the educational setting, what is it that the teacher is at risk of losing and what could they potentially gain? What is it that students are risking and what are they hoping to gain? Reflection and critical dialogue on these questions can inform the actions taken within the classroom. When the drive toward solidarity moves from here to there, when social engagement moves outside of the classroom and into community, it is imperative that the ensemble does not invade the community with their plans and solutions. Hess (2013) addresses this issue when considering critical world music pedagogy. For Hess, reciprocity between parties must be part of any entry into a new community for it to remain ethical and free from passing paternalistic charity (Hess, 2013). This reciprocity involves the “other,” the community the choir is stepping into, defining and making clear their needs and expectations from the visitor, the choir. The choir then must be prepared to trust the stated needs of the community and make that a core part of their work with the community. Harley (2017) also underscores the importance of choral organizations responding to the basic needs of a community like food, water, safe shelter, etc. These reciprocal relationships go a step further than Freire (2018), who describes *cultural synthesis* as outsiders who come not, “to *teach* or to *transmit* or to *give* anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people’s world” (p. 180). Even if the choir is entering into a community with the simple desire to learn with them, the choir is still entering the community hoping to gain something from the community. Hence, the need for reciprocity as determined by those with the most at risk.

Entering into solidarity through a dialogue of reciprocity is an act of trust and trust is fundamental to solidarity. Freire (2018) leaves no room for doubting this stance when he writes

“ . . . if the people cannot be trusted, there is no reason for liberation . . . ” (p. 129). This holds true whether solidarity is being sought after between ensemble and conductor or choir and community. Those who join with the oppressed but do so uncritically,

truly desire to transform the unjust order; but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. They talk about the people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change (Freire, 2018, p. 60).

Approaching choral partnerships in this way and working to form a foundation of trust maintains the identity of persons for both choir and community. Reciprocal learning and action become less invasive and takes on the shape of emancipatory research, avoiding the humiliation that comes with imposing an identity.

Finding Unity

Boyce-Tillman (2016) considers music to have a unifying power between people when those people gather to make music together. Not only can unity be formed, but it can also be restored. Such a restoration pushes against divisions of fragmentation, alienation, and isolation. This sentiment echoes Freire (2018) when he suggested that “Instead of following predetermined plans, leaders and people, mutually identified, together create the guidelines of their action. In this synthesis, leaders and people are somehow reborn in new knowledge and new action” (p. 181). This sort of collaboration combats alienation and lends itself to a choral process modeled similarly to emancipatory research. Crean & Lynch (2013) define emancipatory research as research that “recognizes the moral right of research subjects to exercise ownership and control over the generation of knowledge produced about them and their world” (p. 61). Recognition of the moral right is predicated upon a relationship of reciprocity between the research subject and

the researcher. A reciprocal relationship feeds the witness of solidarity in that the process becomes a collaboration *with* a subject and authority is shared (Low & Sontag, 2013, p. 777) rather than a study *on* a subject made object (Cook-Sather, 2007, p. 398). Kathy Saltzman Romey takes this approach outside of an academic setting with the Minnesota Chorale. As the conductor, Romey

“teaches the members of the chorale the value of the lateral learning position, of putting oneself in a place of discourse with members of the community, one learning from another in a circular pattern rather than in a “hierarchical relationship” (Dexter 2014, p. 21).

For example, in 2007, the choir partnered with Habitat for Humanity and local inner-city high schools for a lengthy and extensive collaboration. The choral component of this partnership included commissioning new and accessible works based on poetry written by local high school students. The choir shared these songs beyond their own concerts and took them into their individual areas of the community where the singing and dialogue continued. This model moves away from the linear transmission of knowledge from one beholder to a passive learner and instead moves into a witness of solidarity between subjects.

Crean & Lynch (2013) advocate for the formation of “research coalitions” (p. 61) within higher education. Like Freire’s model of critical pedagogy, these research coalitions are based upon relational and dialogical community partnerships, witnessing together in solidarity, which enable emancipatory research to fulfill praxis in both its theoretical and activist endeavors. The authors realize that such an approach to doing research within the academic institution may be unfamiliar or contrary to current practice. The following explores two arts educational models.

Examples

Tintiangco-Cubales et. al (2016) documented the use of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in conjunction with critical performance pedagogy (CPP, a performance based practice of critical pedagogy that emphasizes dialogue and collaboration) in a partnership between Ethnic Studies students and high school students. Through Pin@oy Educational Partnerships (PEP), students use performance as a medium for engaging in dialogue and reflection. Teachers also share their artistic skills and knowledge through performance. Performing together not only fosters collaboration, dialogue, and reflection, but it is also an act of vulnerability which builds trust and relationships between the teachers and students. The work of PEP culminates in an end of year community performance which showcases the year long process of students engaging in the study of issues pertinent to themselves and their community. For this final show,

the students in partnership with their teachers organize a community show where they perform not only what they learned in their class and in their projects, but also propose ways to improve the lives of people in their communities. The community show is where the stage becomes the classroom (Tintiangco-Cubales, et al., 2016, p. 1314).

The community show is praxial in that it is both action and reflection. The works of performance that are shared are the active artistic works of a year of learning, dialoguing, and consciousness-raising. The works are simultaneously reflective for the students as they re-engage with the material that shaped their art. The reflective element of performance also affords participants to “heal from all the trauma that we unpack throughout the school year” (Tintiangco-Cubales et. al, 2016, 1321) Solidarity is fostered in this praxis through the collaborative process of the program

between teachers and students. PEP began its work in 2001 and continues to foster critical creativity among the youth and educators involved.

Another performance-based partnership between collegiate students and youth is the *Music Alive! in the Yakama Valley* (MAYV) partnership between music education students from the University of Washington and youth of the Yakama Reservation. MAYV focuses on bridging community and school through artistic collaboration. Since 2018, the partnership has focused on collaborative songwriting in which the youth write original material addressing a range of concerns felt by young people that can then be shared in performance with the community. (Campbell, 2010). Like PEP, MAYV has been a critically formed partnership for over twenty years. The examples of PEP, MAYV, and other education-performance based partnerships show that such activity is sustainable and capable of developing critical consciousness through relationships of solidarity.

Critical Collegiate Choral-Community Possibilities

My reading of Freire within a collegiate choral context has brought me to the belief that the current state of the collegiate choral ensemble has been limited to a singular expression of purpose found in concert performance. I argue in favor of expanding the possible purposes of the collegiate choral ensemble to include going beyond rehearsal and performance spaces and entering into a community-choral partnership. Such partnerships are not unheard of in the collegiate context, although these endeavors seem to be largely absent from collegiate choral activities.

It must be acknowledged that a collegiate choral ensemble is not the same as an Ethnic Studies or Music Education Cohort. Collegiate choral ensembles are a diverse gathering of majors and academic interests. Therefore, a collegiate choir may not necessarily be the best

vehicle for entering into an education-based partnership, one in which the role of each singer is as a performance educator. The musical level of the choir may also guide what form of critical inquiry and action is most appropriate. Research by Dakon & Major (2017) found that repertoire choice matters more to singers in top-tier ensembles than mid-level ensembles. They found that, “[top-level choristers] preferred engaging in “quality,” “challenging,” and “high-level” performance experiences with peers...” (p. 37). Therefore, how critical pedagogy takes shape within top, middle, and entry level collegiate choirs even within the same institution may be different. What remains constant is the process of conscientization through critical thought and action, witnessing through solidarity.

I would argue that a critical choral community partnership for the collegiate ensemble is not necessarily performance based. Crean & Lynch (2013) challenge intellectuals within the academy to use their place of privilege to remove limit-situations so that the community voices can be heard in spaces guarded by gatekeepers. It should not be assumed that the most important action involved in the removal of obstacles is the performance by the choir. That is not to say that the choir does not perform or that music is not part of the process. Musical performance and creation should be a component, but conductors should consider the possibility that the crux of the partnership is being in community and working with community in a non-musical setting. Or at least in a setting where their musical performance is not the final goal. Research by Major & Dakon (2016) support this, stating that “Ensemble purpose and goals should not always revolve around performance . . . even though choristers enjoy performing for large audiences, they did not cite performance often enough to be considered an important factor affecting either dedication or enrollment” (p. 123). A second study by Dakon & Major (2017) offers further support to this finding.

While top and mid-level choristers attested that they enjoyed singing for large audiences, comments suggesting the desire to perform as a primary factor were largely absent from dedication data in both groups. This suggests that the desire to perform may be inconsequential to choristers' level of dedication. Furthermore, while performance is an important aspect of any choral program, directors who solely focus on performance might be overlooking other strategies that could help build a stronger sense of ensemble identity. Additionally, directors who use the concert as motivation for more dedication might be misdirected (p. 46).

Such an identity of community partnership has become a key feature of the previously mentioned Minnesota Chorale. Since 1994, their *Bridges* program works to connect the concert hall with the communities of the Twin Cities and extend musical community outreach beyond singular moments of participation and performance. Romey, the choir's Artistic Director, notes how partnerships act as "inreach" for the choir, and in doing so, "challenges our organization to assess, stretch, and push traditional boundaries" (Wanyama, 2006, p. 11). In this way, the Minnesota Chorale responds to the question posed by Dexter (2014) to choirs performing outreach, "In the larger picture, how does the organization show empathy in the concert setting or within the community? Does the organization give thought to the continued relationship with the audience beyond concerts?" (p. 60).

Responding to this in an academic setting begins with knowing the expertise of the students in the choir. As a relationship is formed with the partnering community and the needs of the community are made known, the singers can understand how they can best enter into community partnership through musical and/or non-musical ways. Dexter (2014) describes this process as "collaborative problem-solving" (p. 37). In collaborative problem-solving, there are multiple teams working on the task at hand, all dedicated to the same endeavor. Those in the

collaboration co-develop new knowledge free of a top-down system of a hierarchy of knowledge. Kaufmann (2010) found small group work to be crucial in providing opportunities to develop solidarity among college student participants and lead to critical dialogue among students. The conductor, on their part, could be part of musical encounters in the partnership through communal singing, community music sharing, or musical culture circles. Throughout the partnership, dialogue with the community partners and among the collegiate members become a source of collective reflection. From this dialogue and reflection themes can emerge, and musical repertoire can be paired to points of reflection.

The Minnesota Chorale's partnership with Habitat for Humanity illustrates this process in a choral context outside of the collegiate setting. The choir's role, in terms of promoting the organization and raising awareness, was to take themes of home and share them in concert form in relation to ongoing dialogue about affordable housing (Wanyama, 2006). This stage of the process, (the discovery of generative themes) and an exploration of repertoire is a collaboration between ensemble members and the conductor. Critical concert programming becomes a collaborative process between all those involved. Repertoire is critically examined not only for its thematic content, but also musical. What makes the repertoire appropriate not just as an expression of themes, but appropriate for the ensemble? In what ways can the choir and community join in the music making in performance? Is the audience involved in a participatory or passive manner? Repertoire is programmed, rehearsed, and the choir and community can partner in concert, sharing their themes and reflections with an audience through repertoire, program notes, speaking directly, and offering further information or opportunities to learn and do more on the part of the audience after the concert. The concert becomes a reflective practice

based upon the intentionally engaged—and not always musical action—of the choir leading up to the performance.

Another possibility would be to have an entirely separate choir dedicated to a critical choral process. Much is demanded of the collegiate concert ensemble and the conductor. For many of these ensembles, it is not pragmatic to implement an immediate change and require them to fulfill their current demands as well as their entire being into a praxis of transformational critical consciousness. A poorly engaged and executed critical process can do more harm than good in its reinscription of domination (see previous chapters). It is possible for a collegiate choral ensemble to lean into critical inquiry without ever leaving the campus. Even so, what if there is a desire by the conductor and some students to go beyond campus in a more critical and consistent manner? The answer could be found in the formation of an entirely new ensemble. Higher education already has choral ensembles dedicated to concert performance. Why not have a choral ensemble dedicated to community engagement that is reflected through performance? It is not a choice of either or, but a union of both and. Concert performance and community can and should coexist and inform each other at the collegiate choral level, but they don't necessarily have to be part of the same ensemble.

A separate ensemble could be formed as a club and run by students with the conductor acting as a faculty advisor. Or could be formed and registered as a course like concert ensembles themselves but embracing the freedom to chart its own purpose without the burden of traditional expectations laid by the institution upon the other established concert ensembles. Another ensemble possibility could be the formation of an alumni choir. The retention of choral members is a benefit to the critical choral endeavor, but what about students who want to continue or who were part of the early stages of a partnership but graduated before that partnership came to full

fruition? An alumni ensemble, or a separate ensemble composed of current and alumni singers, could allow for students to continue to explore critical choral community action even after graduation. The point is not to do critical choral pedagogy perfectly the first time or uniformly across schools and ensembles. The point is to ask what could we do? Why don't we do it another way? How can an alternative be made possible? All while constantly reflecting upon changes to ensure practices of domination are not continued in an appealing and buzzworthy critical style. Critical music pedagogy, as solidarity with community derived from praxis, is where the collegiate choral ensemble is uniquely situated to physically go beyond itself not just in awareness, but in community choral action.

Wanyama (2006) describes the role of the choir and its leaders engaged in community partnership as being “translators” (p. 19). Do some things get lost in interpretation? Always. Does everything translate perfectly? No. And, as my former Hebrew Scriptures professor Dr. Suzanne Scholz would remind us, “All translation is interpretation.” And this is important to remember. We as choral artists cannot recreate the world in a concert. We cannot embody lives that are not our own. However, we can make the concentrated effort to extend ourselves outward to better understand ourselves inwardly. Through partnerships, witnessed in solidarity and derived from critical praxis, Dexter (2014) argues that “choral organizations and university choral programs have the power to provide music education and music experiences for all ages . . . so that a difference is made in those lives, and the music will ultimately *matter*” (pp. 62-63). Marx's eleventh thesis, which echoed in Freire's work, now reverberates in the choral hall: the point is to change the world, not simply observe [or sing about] it. When we go into the world, we are not just observing it, but we and our students are prepared to change it.

Challenges and Distortions of Solidarity

Freire's pedagogy and the role he ascribes to educators has a clear agenda: developing conscientization for the transformation of self and society. The question then becomes how can educators have an agenda without being authoritarian or manipulative? Freire (1987) addresses this, saying,

The issue is that the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism . . . I am convinced that the educator . . . has to assume the necessary authority which he or she must have, without . . . manipulative appeal...[that is,] you know what points you picked for the students to know. But, you don't want them to know your plans, your map" (p. 91).

In other words, manipulation is the preservation of a hidden curriculum through anti-dialogical pedagogy. Freire (2018) insists that, "Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people—they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress" (p. 178).

Freire (1994) pinpoints the moment in which the directive component of education is supplanted by a manipulative process. It is, ". . . the moment the educator's "directivity" interferes with the creative, formulative, investigative capacity of the educand, then the necessary directivity is transformed into manipulation, into authoritarianism" (p. 68). Presented this way, the difference between choral manipulation and choral direction is made clear. Choral manipulation is a technique of domination focused on ensemble silence and acceptance of the conductor's vision. In short, "you [the choir] *must* believe [do] this because I say it" (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 172).

Freire (1987) writes that, “the manipulating, domesticating educator always keeps in his or her *own* hands the induction of the process” (p. 158). The inherited role of the conductor in Western choral tradition lends itself to this type of a domesticating educator. It is typically within the conductor’s sole purview to select repertoire and design programs, decide how and where the music is presented, determine teaching sequences and rehearsal plans, design warm ups, interpret the music, establish a vision, and accept responsibility for a choir’s success or failure (Abrahams, 2017; Jansson, 2015). This is not the witness of a conductor working in solidarity with their ensemble. This is more closely aligned with Freire’s (2018) description of cultural invasion and further facilitates the banking model wherein, “the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the teacher” (p. 73). This illusion of acting inhibits and denies the creative capabilities of students and maintains the notion of the conductor as the sole actor in the creative process. The majority of conducting texts reflect this reality in that conducting as a collaborative process is not addressed as an element of conducting (Abrahams, 2017). Conductors must reflect on inherited and currently embraced practices as it relates to collaboration and co-investigation if the collegiate choral environment is to lend itself to solidarity.

Choral direction, as opposed to choral manipulation, is an open sharing of the conductor’s vision alongside an intentional deepening of the ensemble’s knowledge and participation. These two components are always accompanied by an openness on the part of the conductor to new ideas, new knowledge, and the possibility that the newness brought forth by the ensemble could inform or even change the conductor’s vision. Direction can be a collaborative process which deepens the solidarity between conductor and ensemble. The critical agenda is to get from *here* to *there* through dialogical tools and a unified praxis. However, the path is not prescriptive. All knowledge—including the educator’s— is susceptible to challenges

and questions, and the educator makes no attempt to hide their curricular goals from the students. To say critical pedagogy is a pedagogy without an agenda is false and no critical pedagogue should claim as such. Openness and honesty are what makes room for a pedagogy with an agenda without relying on manipulation or hidden curriculums.

Extending acts of solidarity beyond the time spent in rehearsal can further facilitate that transformation which is not already occurring in rehearsal. However, these extensions of solidarity must be intentional and direct. Recalling my own experiences, I have had many wonderful collegiate educators whom I admire and learned a great deal from, who sought to minimize the power dynamics between professor and student while retaining the role of educator. As a student I appreciated this, but their vision of transforming the power dynamic rarely took hold and I believe it is, in part, due to professing a vision with inadequate awareness of student reality. To illustrate, the following anecdote is from my own experience as a student in higher education.

I once had a professor who told their students that they were having a weekly open door office hour for students to come in and chat, geek out about music, inquire about future courses, performances, anything at all, in an attempt to remove the depersonalizing obstacle of superior professor over inferior student. This professor was disappointed when no one showed up to the casual office hour. It wasn't until after the professor shared this disappointment with the students that students began showing up to these informal gatherings. The vision was admirable, but it wasn't until the power dynamics were activated, students wishing to please the professor and ease their disappointment, that the vision became reality. To this point, I must say, students have successfully managed in the educational system without their professors' presence in their conversations or life outside of class. Why should students initiate change now? Students are

conditioned to acknowledge the words that the professor says, maybe even accept them as true (e.g., I care, my door is always open, this is a safe space, etc.) but why should the student be the one to take the action step of accepting the professor's invitation to destabilize the traditional power-dynamic? There must be visible, concrete actions on behalf of the professor. The aspirations of the previously mentioned professor may have been better realized had they been more direct and intentional. It could have been setting up a series of office chats based on student year, degree plan, academic cohort, etc. Another consideration would be to offer office chats in a location other than the professor's office. They could occur in the classroom/rehearsal space directly afterwards (providing that space is available) or in another nearby public space. Students then are not required to block off time to get across campus to enter the professor's space.

Ensemble members, particularly those long-term and committed members, admire their conductor. The conductor is one reason they stay in choir (Major & Dakon, 2016; Dakon & Major, 2017). It can be difficult for singers to bridge the perceived divide between conductor and singer when the conductor is held in such high (and positive) esteem. If collegiate conductors believe there is a power imbalance, we must actively invite students past the threshold that unnecessarily divides power. We must embrace the permeability of the divide between conductor and singer. Otherwise, we become verbalists spouting a belief that we care and are interested while remaining safe within our professorial tower, wondering all the while why no student ever comes to our door without manipulation.

Freire was critiqued for proposing a liberatory pedagogy that could just as easily become manipulative as an authoritarian pedagogy, to which Freire (1994) responded, "As if an educational practice were possible in which professors and students could be absolutely exempt from the risk of manipulation and its consequences!" (p. 69). My personal anecdote of the

professor who so genuinely desired to equalize the professor-student power dynamic but achieved it through unintentional manipulation shows how practices with the best intentions can still undermine their own goals. Freire (1985) points out that one safeguard against manipulation in critical pedagogy is “the methods of the revolutionary party must necessarily be different” (p. 159). A commitment to conscientization achieved through critical dialogue, praxis, and solidarity does, in theory, caution against manipulation. However, they are by no means fool proof and human error falls short of the ideals found in these practices. Still, Freire (1994) remains hopeful that such error can be avoided and implores educators with the following: “The more tolerant, the more open and forthright, the more critical, the more curious and humble they become, the more authentically they will take up the practice of teaching” (p. 70).

Unintentional manipulation can also be a product of incomplete reflection that confuses empathy with sameness of person. Whether it be through culture bearers or community engagement, an encounter with the unfamiliar should not lead one to conflate understanding or awareness with truly experiencing an unfamiliar lived reality. Low & Sontagg quote Salverson (2001) who so eloquently illuminates the fine line between solidarity and attempting to own what is not ours to own:

When, I wonder, is the meeting of lives . . . about a contact that consumes the other person and reduces them to our terms? When, on the other hand, is it a contact that lets us come together differently and binds me deeply to another without collapsing either the ‘I’ or the ‘other’ into a totalizing ‘we’? (p. 119).

This humanistic fallacy of collapsing the ‘other’ into a ‘we’ commodifies the difference of people and reduces Subjects into Objects of lived experiences we can then possess through claims of empathy or awareness. When we partner with a community or invite a representative

from the community, we must be sure that we are not consuming them as a product for our own gain, further alienating the human connection from the performance of choral music.

It is true that dialogue can be an instrument of domination when it is used to demand narratives from the oppressed and/or silences voices. At the same time, cultivating opportunities for dialogical exchange is a building block of solidarity. Kaufmann (2010) found that the only times critical reflection or conscientization occurred was when “there was a feeling of camaraderie and/or connection between the participants” (p. 472). Alienation in no way aids critical endeavors. Kaufman (2010) goes on to say that,

It appeared that the group could go only where at least one of the members had been before. Thus, a participant possessing rational knowledge and/or personal experience was often able to facilitate the deconstruction of ideologies held by other group members. However, when no participant possessed this location, resistance and/or confusion emerged (p. 469).

Kaufmann’s observations are based in the classroom setting where these experiences can be more structured and prolonged over a series of weeks. The benefit of choral retention has been pointed out as an advantage, but what about the passing experience of performance? Longevity as well as fleeting encounters are built into choirs’ existence. Choirs are performing bodies, one of the roles of a choir is to make and share music in some way. Therefore, we must always consider how something as time consuming as critical pedagogy with all its challenging components can be shared and inspired in a performance experience that is fleeting by comparison to the rest of the process. I myself have experienced great frustration in attending or participating in performances that stirred emotions and was inspiring in the moment, but limited in efforts to advance action, curiosity, or awareness after the fact. Like a choral one-night stand,

there was preparation with no lasting substance. Passing performances of solidarity risk being just that, performative. As such, they are nothing more than donations of false generosity.

When enacting false generosity, “The generosity of the oppressors is nourished by an unjust order, which must be maintained in order to justify that generosity” (Freire, 2018, p. 60). Individuals may work to help relieve the experience of oppression in the moment but unless the individual at the same time challenges the root of the oppression, the system which affords the oppressor to be generous remains alive and well. The emotionally placating allure of false generosity for the unaffected can act as a balm for those wishing to engage but who are not yet fully committed to the critical challenge. On this note, Freire (2018) quotes the words of Father Chenu in the following passage,

Many . . . fear that in facing the needs and suffering of the world we may simply adopt an emotional protest in favor of palliating the manifestations and symptoms of poverty and injustice without going on to analyze the causes of the latter, to denounce a regime which encompasses this injustice and engenders ‘his poverty’ (p. 172).

Yes, it is good to feed the hungry, but it is wrong to maintain the system that sustains peoples’ hunger. Yes, it is good to sing a benefit concert for the local food pantry, but it is wrong to simply sing because the conductor says so and to perform without understanding. Going beyond ourselves in partnerships of collaborative solidarity develops our own awareness by engaging in a critical process with others of whose existence and knowledge we were previously ignorant. Forming relationships predicated on dialogue and trust in a manner of solidarity can help us challenge and change the system that holds all parties.

This is perhaps the most important reality of choral artists: *a concert itself will never solve a critical issue*. I would argue that the purpose of a concert is not to solve, but to provoke.

It could provoke curiosity, reflection, or action. Provoking only an emotional response is not enough to warrant a critical concert. Choirs and audiences will not achieve a fully critical process and transformation in the time span of a concert. However, the concert can continue the critical process for some while sparking a critical inquiry for others. As one member of a UK street (politically engaged) choir observed,

We might not be able to change the world but we're actually here . . . I can *imagine* what people's lives are like in particular situations, but I don't *know*. But it's those moments of connection: you just think, okay, we're doing the right thing (Choirs Writing Collective, 2019, p. 135).

It is time we take a normative stance and ask ourselves, are our choirs doing the right thing?

What is the right thing for our choirs and communities? I believe a critical framework can assist conductors in addressing these questions. What has been presented here is one critical framework for the critically conscious collegiate choir and their conductor. It is a framework based in dialogue, realized through praxis, and bears witness in solidarity in the march toward transformation. In this march, it is not so much a matter of transforming or even provoking transformation in the moment of a performance. Rather, it is about coming to know and continuing to do the right thing even after the singing has stopped.

Chapter 7: A Critical Values Interpretation and Analysis of Collegiate Choral Practices

Introduction of the Problem

For the purposes of this document, I developed a survey to facilitate a better understanding of collegiate choral conductors' attitudes toward and practices of critical pedagogy with collegiate choral ensembles. While critical pedagogy in music education has been studied within the context of K-12 education and in the education of music educators, the literature surrounding the use of critical pedagogy with ensembles is limited. The literature becomes even more limited when addressing the use of critical pedagogy with collegiate choral ensembles. Critical pedagogy exists within a specific context and the context of the collegiate choir is its own. The preceding chapters established what critical pedagogy is, how it has been used in various contexts, and I have provided my own suggestion for how critical pedagogy may uniquely inform the work of the collegiate choral ensemble particularly as it pertains to choral-community engagement. With all of this in mind, I was curious to see what other conductors think of critical pedagogy and its constitutive elements.

This survey explores how elements of critical pedagogy are applied within the context of collegiate choral ensembles in the United States. The survey is divided into six sections: demographics, ensemble, rehearsal, performance, the role of the conductor, and concluding questions. Each question within these sections related to one of the following elements of critical pedagogy: dialogue, action, reflection, solidarity, and politics. The survey is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) Are elements of critical pedagogy present within the context of the collegiate choral ensemble?
- 2) What are collegiate choral conductors' attitudes toward elements of critical pedagogy?

3) How can a critical lens inform collegiate choral practice?

A brief note about the use of neutral in the Likert scale questions and my analysis.

Critical pedagogy maintains that all education is politics and that neutrality is in reality not a neutral stance. Neutrality inevitably works in favor of one thing over another. Therefore, when considering neutral responses in the data, a neutral response reads as working in favor of the status quo rather than the critical element in question.

Method

Familiarity with the field of critical pedagogy was not considered a prerequisite for taking the survey. The single requirement for eligibility was that the participant currently conducts a collegiate choral ensemble. A pilot survey was distributed to six current collegiate choral conductors. Reliability of the instrument was checked through a second round of survey participation by the same six conductors. Reliability was confirmed among the Likert-type questions in which a five-point scale was used to gauge conductor agreement and frequency of use regarding critical practices. However, reviewing the data from the two pilots revealed significant inconsistencies in conductors' responses to rank order questions. Table 1 illustrates one example of these inconsistencies.

It is not concerning for the initial top ranked purpose to be displaced to a second rank. Reliability in this one case is brought into question when the top rank is replaced by a purpose that was previously given no rank, and the initial second top purpose of contextualizing repertoire is not ranked at all. This was not an isolated incident as such inconsistencies were noticed among all participants for the rank order questions. This issue was resolved through replacing rank order questions with open ended response questions and Likert-type scales as these forms were found to be more critically reflective and reliable.

Table 1

Please rank your top 5 purposes with "1" being the primary purpose.

The primary purpose of my collegiate choral ensemble is...

1	musical outreach with communities off campus	1	to contribute to non-musical campus events (e.g. convocation, sporting events, commencement, etc.)
2	to contextualize choral repertoire	2	musical outreach with communities off campus
3	to improve vocal facility	3	to improve vocal facility
4	to learn, sing, and perform choral repertoire	4	to learn, sing, and perform choral repertoire
5	community building among member	5	community building among members
0	to preserve the canon	0	to preserve the canon
0	political engagement	0	political engagement
0	to contribute to non-musical campus events (e.g. convocation, sporting events, commencement, etc.)	0	to contextualize choral repertoire

I am aware that a survey is a more positivist instrument. However, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the most useful tool available to conduct this research. My initial plan for the study was to do a purely qualitative approach that included in person visits to the choral rehearsal and interviews. The COVID-19 pandemic made such travel and observation unavailable. Therefore, I chose to use a survey to gather a broad, and by no means absolute, view

of critical pedagogy within collegiate choral ensembles. Because critical pedagogy honors the specificity of context, the survey included an extensive demographics section regarding both the conductor and their ensemble while maintaining participant anonymity to encourage full and free responses of participants. In addition, qualitative responses were included throughout the survey for conductors to lend their own voice and perspective without being limited to predetermined answer selections. The responses to these questions were examined through Values Coding (Saladaña, 2016). Values Coding was chosen in accordance with the purpose of the survey to gauge conductors' attitudes. Focused Coding was then used when necessary to cull overarching themes from collections of individual codes. Decoding the qualitative responses in this manner allows for an interpretation of the values held by conductors in relation to their attitudes as recorded through the Likert-type questions of the survey.

This is not a scientific survey in that it does not present findings that support general statements applicable to the entirety of collegiate choral education in the United States. This is a descriptive survey that collects conductor attitudes and practices in an amount that is too great for a qualitative study, but not broad enough for a scientific survey. I imagine it more as a large roundtable discussion. This alternative construction may be best described as a critical values interpretation and analysis of collegiate choral practices. The term critical is used to designate the contextual nature of the data. The information should be used in dialogue through reflection with the readers' context rather than attempting to make generalized statements applicable to the entirety of collegiate choral practice. Values refers to the critical values within critical pedagogy upon which the survey is constructed. It also underscores the use of Values Coding for the process of interpreting conductors' voices. Analysis designates the quantitative reading of

responses to Likert-type questions. The information gained from the survey is intended to begin a conversation, not present closed facts.

Snowball sampling through social media and dissemination of the survey through NAFME's Research Survey Assistance were used to collect responses. In total, the survey collected 55 responses with 20 incomplete, 5 partially complete, and 30 fully complete surveys. 17 incomplete responses were due to a negative or an unanswered response to the second question of the survey, "Do you currently direct a collegiate choral ensemble?" Again, current direction of a collegiate choral ensemble was the one requirement for eligibility and a negative or blank response took the participant to the end of the survey. Still, I am thankful that 17 individuals showed interest in the topic and were willing to help in my research. The remaining 3 incomplete surveys were started, but the respondents did not finish or answer beyond the opening demographics section. 5 surveys were labeled as partially complete since respondents answered beyond the demographics section and contributed some qualitative responses. The partially completed survey responses are not included in the quantitative discussion or presentation of the data. The full survey as it was shared with conductors is available for review in Appendix B.

Demographics

Institutional Demographics

The majority of respondents currently teach at a liberal arts school (N=21) while a small handful teach at a research institution (N=6). 2 of the participants teach at a conservatory and 1 teaches in a Community College context. Of these schools, 17 are public institutions and 13 are private. Most of the respondents teach in a non-sectarian environment (N=21) with the remaining 9 teaching in religiously affiliated schools. What is unknown is the extent to which that religious

affiliation is present in the everyday education and life of the students, whether the institution is religious by name or religious in culture and practice. The size of the entire student population was also not taken into consideration. Both factors would be useful in further understanding each participant's context.

Participant Demographics

9 women, 20 men, and 1 participant who preferred to not disclose their gender comprise the roundtable of 30 complete responses. The racial makeup of the group was predominantly white (N=28) with some members identifying as Asian (N=1), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (N=1), and 1 participant preferring not to disclose this information. Regional membership within the ACDA was used to gain a sense of the national regions represented. Midwestern (N=8) and Southern (N=8) regions had the most participants and were equally represented followed by Southwestern (N=6), Eastern (N=5), Northwestern (N=2), and western (N=1). In this group of complete responses there is 1 graduate student conductor. Faculty status was not a requirement, only the current direction of a collegiate choral ensemble. As a fellow graduate student at the time of writing this, I give special thanks to this participant for taking the time to contribute to this survey. The 29 faculty members are ranked accordingly: adjunct (N=1), visiting assistant professor (N=1), assistant professor (N=8), associate professor (N=9), and professor (N=10). Of these faculty members, 16 have tenure, 8 are in the process of reaching tenure, and 5 do not have tenure. There is a wide range of years of experience in directing collegiate choral ensembles present in the group, ranging from 2-35 years. On average, the group holds 11 years of experience. Similarly, when asked how long individuals have worked with their current ensemble, responses range from 1-32 years with an average of 8 years with the current ensemble.

Ensemble Demographics

Most of the participating conductors indicated that their primary ensemble is mixed voice (N=26). 3 conductors work primarily with a treble voiced choir and 1 conductor works primarily with a lower voice ensemble. Of these ensembles, there are 16 top level choirs, 7 mid-level choirs, and 7 beginning level choirs represented. Most of these ensembles are auditioned (N=26) while 4 remain open without audition. The size of the choirs range from the following: 4-12 (N=1), 13-24 (N=3), 25-48 (N=21), 49-60 (N=4), 60-72 (N=1). These ensembles are primarily undergraduate students (81%-100%) as indicated by 27 respondents. 2 conductors have an undergraduate population of 61%-80% and 1 has close to an even balance (41%-50%) of undergraduate and graduate students in the ensemble. By contrast, the presence of music majors differs significantly as follows: 0-20% (N=6), 21-40% (N=8), 41-60 (N=5), 61-80% (N=8), 81-100% (N=3).

Findings and Discussions

Critical Choral Conscientization

Conductor Awareness of and Attitudes toward Critical Pedagogy. From the pool of respondents, there was a near even split between those who are familiar with the field of critical pedagogy (N=14) and those who are not familiar (N=16). When those who are familiar asked if they intentionally use critical pedagogy with their collegiate choir, there was equal division between those who do (N=7) and those who do not (N=7). All seven conductors who use critical pedagogy elaborated as to why they use it, while five of the conductors who do not use it provided further reason. Themes of empowerment, social justice, and responsible teaching arose as underlying values of conductors who show a favorable attitude toward using critical pedagogy with an ensemble. These conductors express a feeling of responsibility to include the whole

being of the student as well as the world in which they live. Responses sharing why critical pedagogy is not used do not necessarily reveal an unfavorable attitude toward critical pedagogy. One conductor stated that they use critical pedagogy, but it is not explicitly built into the curriculum while two conductors in the discussion are not opposed to using critical pedagogy. However, they feel unprepared to use it currently or they are working within its framework unintentionally. These two share a thematic value of curiosity in that they want to learn more about the topic and want to use critical pedagogy carefully and effectively. Only one conductor plainly expressed an attitude of unfavourability toward critical pedagogy as they believe, “it divides students into groups” and “Choral Music [sic] is about unifying.” Finally, one conductor pointed out a purely logistical reason for not using critical pedagogy. The performance demands of the choir simply do not allow for the time intensive pedagogy.

The Primary Purpose of the Collegiate Choral Ensemble. When asked, “What is the purpose of your collegiate choral ensemble,” responses coalesced around the following themes: literacy, performance, and citizenship. Conductors placed a high value on teaching literacy skills (Gould, 2009). These skills are frequently combined with a strong slant towards “eschewing the canon” (Hess, 2017). This combination could be viewed as an eschewed functional literacy. While some conductors expressed the theme of functional literacy as training, others seemed to value functional literacy for building both cognitive and technical skills beyond those found in Western training. Within the pursuit of functional literacy is a prevalent theme of diversity through repertoire, styles, and cultural awareness. In the case of these conductors, what is included in functional skills is expanding. Progressive literacy (Gould, 2009) also came up—though not as prevalent as functional— as a desired literacy. This is indicated by the drive to develop independent thinkers and musicians.

It should come as no surprise that the theme of performance dominated the question of the purpose of the collegiate choir. Conductors who explicitly mentioned performance as a purpose also cited challenging repertoire, diverse repertoire, quality repertoire and performance, tour, as well as university representation and recruitment, as important to the performing purpose of the choir. Matters of citizenship, independent thinking, community, lifelong participation, social justice, building connections, and the whole person arose in comments by conductors who did not explicitly mention performance as a purpose. These responses contribute to the third theme of purpose for the ensemble, the theme of citizenship. Citizenship in this case includes both the choral ensembles as a community and the wider community of which it is a part. This is not to say that elements from the citizenship theme are not also part of the practice of performance conductors, or that the citizenship conductors do not also work towards quality performance of diverse repertoire. These themes have some interplay, but the question posed is directed to “the primary purpose of your collegiate ensemble.” The differences within this group of conductors may illustrate the challenge of going beyond repertoire as a means of critical engagement when performance is—whether for personal or institutional reasons—a primary purpose of the collegiate choral ensemble. The question, “What is the primary purpose of performance for your collegiate choral ensemble” further illuminates the question of performance and how conductors may or may not be using repertoire critically.

The Primary Purpose of Performance for the Collegiate Choral Ensemble. Quantitative data from the Likert-type question, “How important are the following performance purposes to your work with your collegiate choral ensemble?” provided minimal insight to the group of conductors participating in the survey.

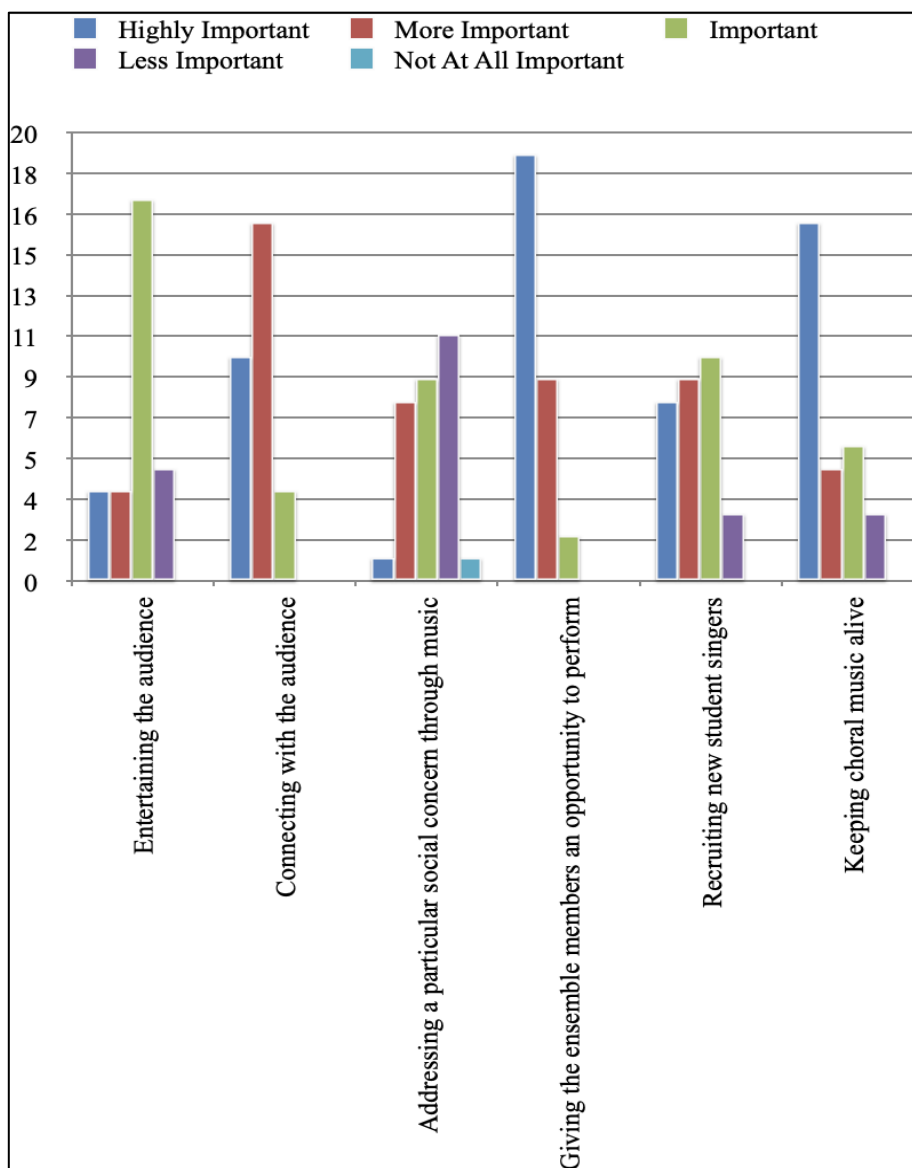


Figure 1.0 “How important are the following performance purposes to your work with your collegiate choral ensemble?”

Each element is deemed to be of some form of importance by most conductors. Performance opportunities and the continuing life of choral music were collectively considered the most important elements while addressing particular social concerns had the slimmest majority vote of importance and was the only performance purpose to receive a vote of “not at all important.” This collection of data reveals some of the attitudes of the surveyed conductors. However, their

freely written responses to the question, “What is the primary purpose of performance for your collegiate choral ensemble?” yielded more insightful themes.

Responses to this question illustrate that those conductors who believe the primary purpose of a collegiate choir is performance (performance conductors), do not necessarily take an uncritical approach to performance. Some conductors who expressed a primary purpose of performance also seem to view performance through a critical lens. The same performance conductor who stated the primary purpose of their ensemble was to, “Develop skills in singing, music literacy and performance utilizing a wide range of repertoire from around the world” views the primary purpose of performance for their collegiate ensemble as, “Musical/poetic inspiration, outreach, raise visibility and understanding of what we do in the School of Music, offer support to certain causes issues (i.e. LGBTQ or environmental concerns), increase likelihood of future opportunities to collaborate with various communities...” This response is one example of a performance conductor expressing the theme of social engagement. This theme embodies performance codes of collaboration, community, outreach, reflection, storytelling, social awareness, and social justice. All of which inform a critical approach to collegiate choral performance.

Adjacent to the theme of social engagement is the theme of personal engagement. Like the theme of social engagement, personal engagement seeks to connect. However, this connection stems more directly from the community of the ensemble rather than the community in which the ensemble exists. This theme is built upon sharing human emotion and experience, the choral art, spirituality, and entertainment. While some performance conductors approach performance through the critical theme of social engagement, nearly all citizenship conductors

view performance as a critical practice³. Meanwhile, the personal engagement theme consists solely of performance conductors. These relationships may be better visualized via a simple chart where conductors can place themselves as they reflect on the intersection between ensemble and performance purposes with their own choirs.

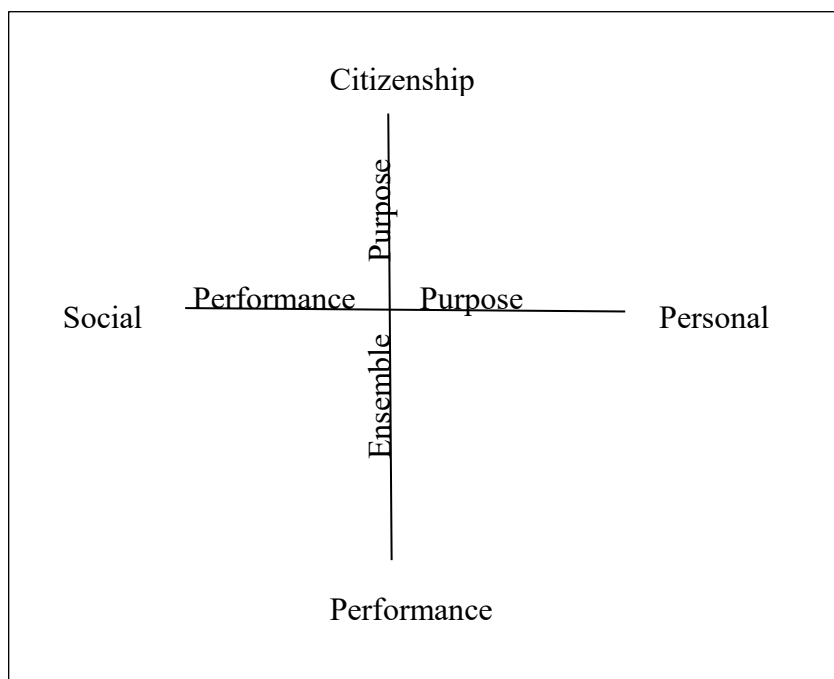


Figure 1.1 Intersections of ensemble and performance purposes

A final performance theme arose from the responses, and it is very simply, the theme of the ensemble. The primary foundation for this theme is the desire to showcase the choir and celebrate their work. Subsections of this theme also include evaluation and assessment, experience, institutional requirements, quality, recruitment, retention, training, and working towards a goal. Some responses indicated the importance of sharing performances with the

³ One conductor indicated that the purpose of performance for their entry level non-auditioned choir was solely, “Part of the curriculum and school community expectation” They also did not indicate performance as a primary purpose of the ensemble.

community and engaging audiences, but they did not venture deeper into social or personal engagement beyond a desire to share the choir's work with those around them. The ensemble theme sits comfortably at the point of intersection of ensemble purpose and performance purpose. In other words, the ensemble purpose is to perform, and the performance purpose is the ensemble. And that is the theme of the ensemble.

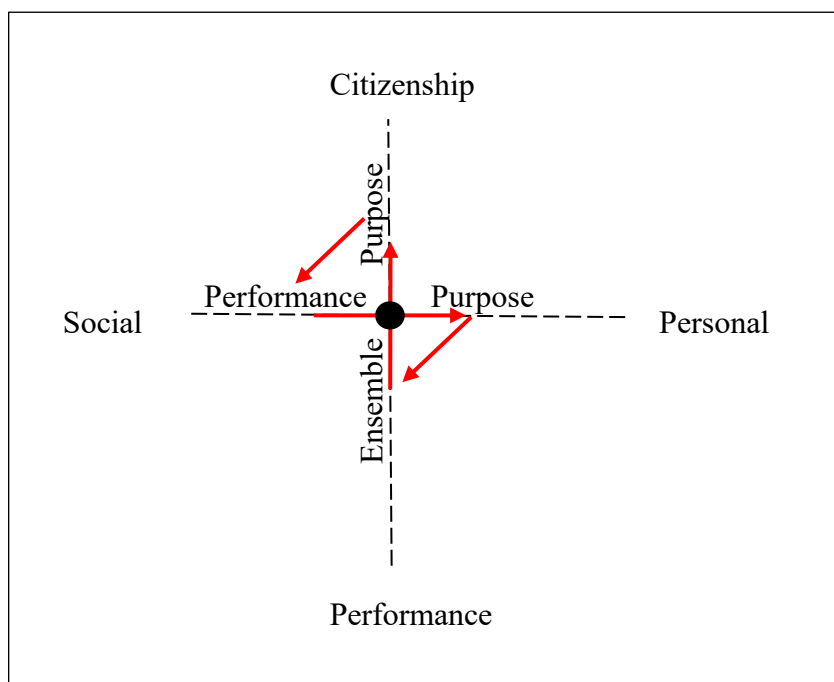


Figure 1.2 Theme of the ensemble

This literally centers the ensemble, rather than decentering the ensemble to a place where they are the medium for something beyond themselves. What is noteworthy about this theme is that it is composed entirely of responses by performance purpose conductors. While some performance purpose conductors migrate towards the critical sector of social engagement for performance (and others toward personal engagement), citizenship purpose conductors remain committed to social engagement for performance.

Critical Choral Dialogue

As discussed in previous chapters, repertoire is an accessible and common entry point for critical pedagogy with choirs. Just how common, and to what extent does this pool of collegiate choral conductors use repertoire to facilitate dialogue? Contextualizing and sharing knowledge about repertoire during rehearsal appears to be a common practice.

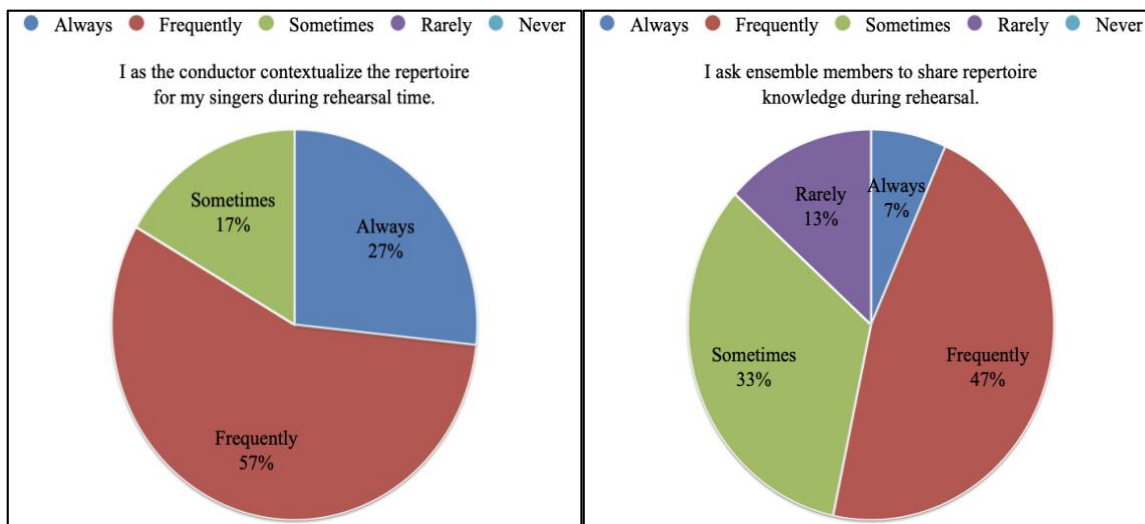


Figure 2.0 conductor contextualizes repertoire

Figure 2.1 ensemble members contextualize repertoire

However, the source of knowledge is most often the conductor. Yes, conductors should have knowledge of the repertoire and its context. But it would be wrong to assume that they are the only ones with knowledge. Even something as simple as starting a new piece of repertoire with a brief discussion of, “tell me what you know” could facilitate a dialogue starting with the singers’ knowledge and indicate what points of knowledge are present and what pieces of the picture are missing. This dialogue could even happen as a piece of music is being handed out to limit the amount of time used for dialogue during rehearsal. Conductors are not opposed to using rehearsal time to discuss repertoire, but the option of continuing the dialogue outside of rehearsal appears to be largely unexplored. Two possibilities could be the use of online discussion boards

or offering a designated office hour for the purpose of cultivating dialogue stemming from the repertoire.

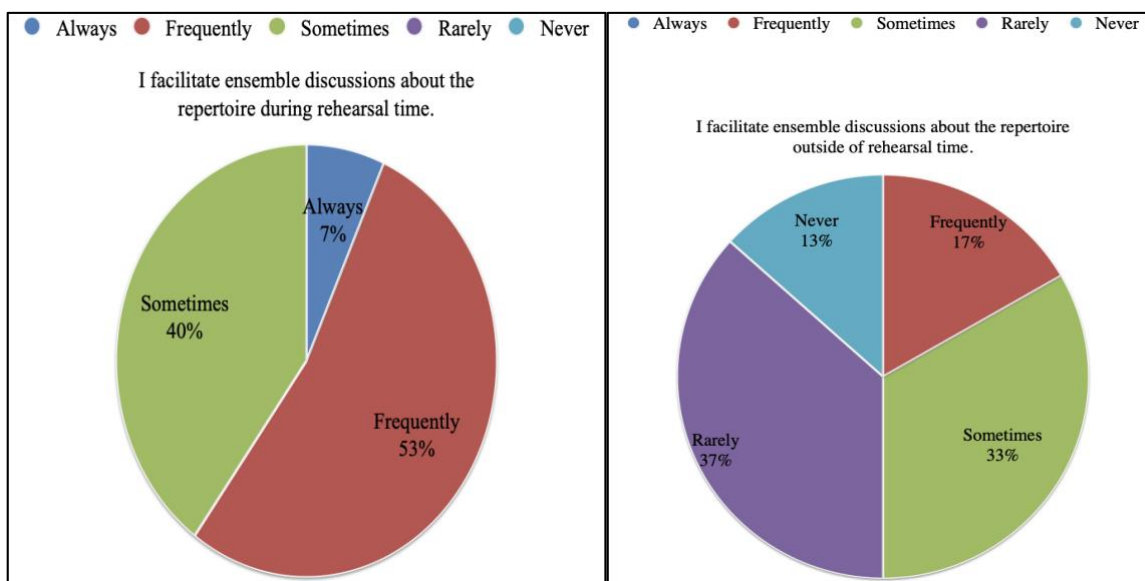


Figure 2.2 Discussion during rehearsal

Figure 2.3 Discussion outside rehearsal

And what is the repertoire that is being discussed? Who is selecting the repertoire that the singers will be singing? It is an accepted, albeit not as common, practice to take student suggestions into consideration. But as is the case with the previous questions, it is not as common to take one step further towards the critical through collaborative programming as illustrated in the following charts.

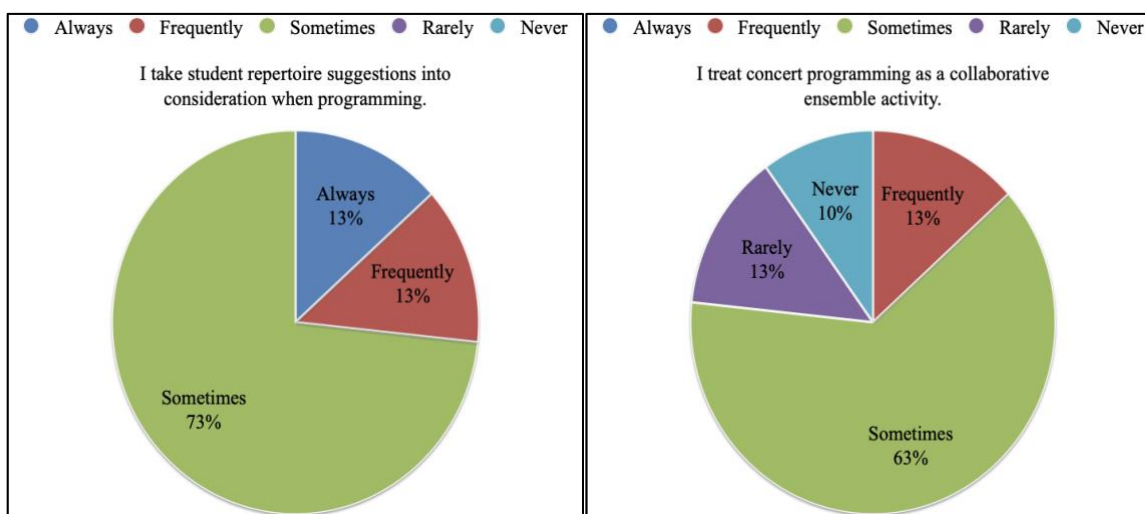


Figure 2.4 Students suggest repertoire

Figure 2.5 Collaborative programming

Some conductors indicated that the performance is a time for the ensemble to share what they learned in the rehearsal process. This obviously happens through demonstration and the singing of repertoire, but it can also be facilitated through program notes or speaking directly with the audience. This is the case whether the performance is a part of social engagement, personal engagement, or celebrating the ensemble. Survey responses maintain a similar pattern when it comes to dialogue facilitated by the conductor and dialogue facilitated by the students.

Conductors should be sensitive to student well-being, and it shouldn't be assumed that involving students in concert dialogue is a small request. At the same time, it shouldn't be assumed that students cannot or do not desire to speak about their experience with the repertoire, the learning process involved, or deeper layers for the audience to give special attention to.

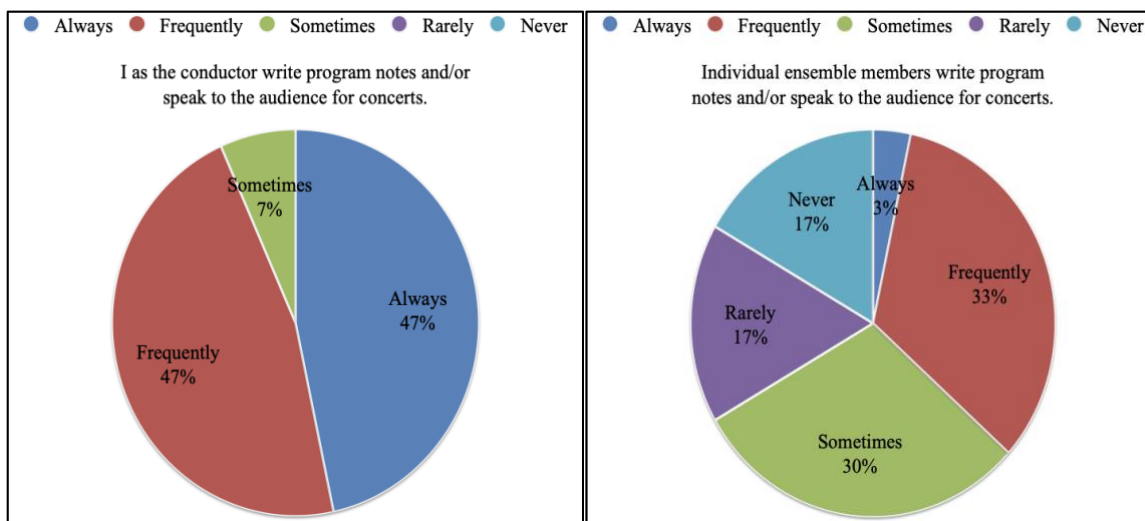


Figure 2.6 Conductor engagement with audience Figure 2.7 Ensemble member engagement with audience

While this survey is not intended to propose a generalizable trend across a broad population or field, the trend of who speaks and who facilitates within the survey participants is consistent and should provoke further reflection for individual conductors on their values and practices.

It is worth noting that while ensemble members do not step into the role of teacher during a performance, they are more likely to be encouraged to do so in rehearsal with peers. If students

are valued as educators among their peers in rehearsal, why not invite them to educate the audience during performance?

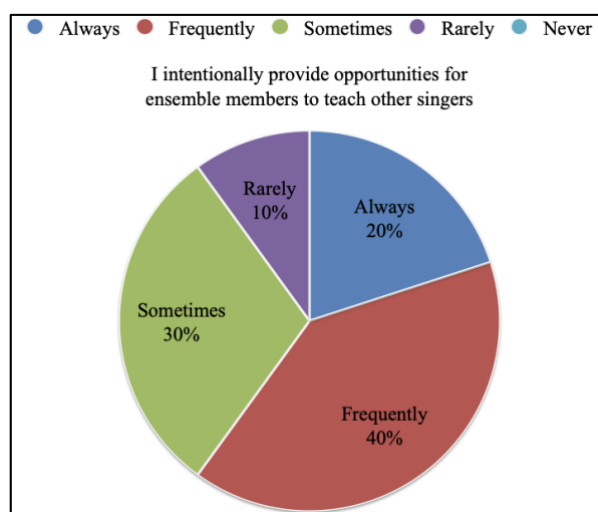


Figure 2.8 Peer to peer instruction

Critical Choral Praxis

Critical Choral Action Survey responses indicated that in addition to contextualizing repertoire, improving vocal facility is a key component of the choir's activity during rehearsal. These are not earth-shattering finds. I was more interested in gauging conductors' attitudes towards choral action outside of rehearsal. To that extent, conductors were asked questions pertaining to the community life of the choir and its place in the campus community, outreach, and political engagement. Conductors unanimously agreed that building community among ensemble members was a top priority. Clearly, community well-being and the importance of it is not an unknown concept to surveyed conductors.

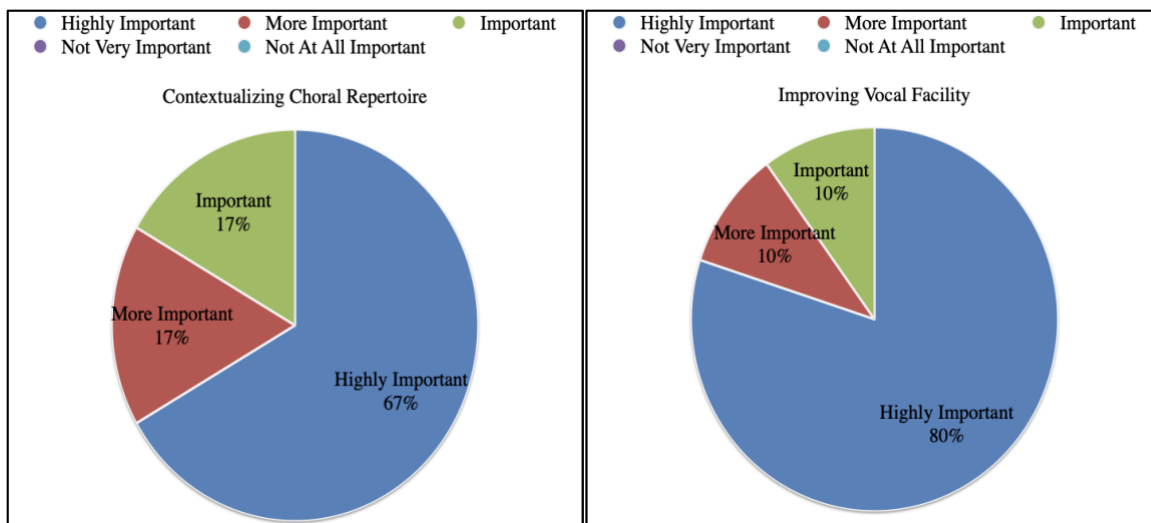


Figure 3.0 Contextualizing repertoire

Figure 3.1 Improving vocal facility

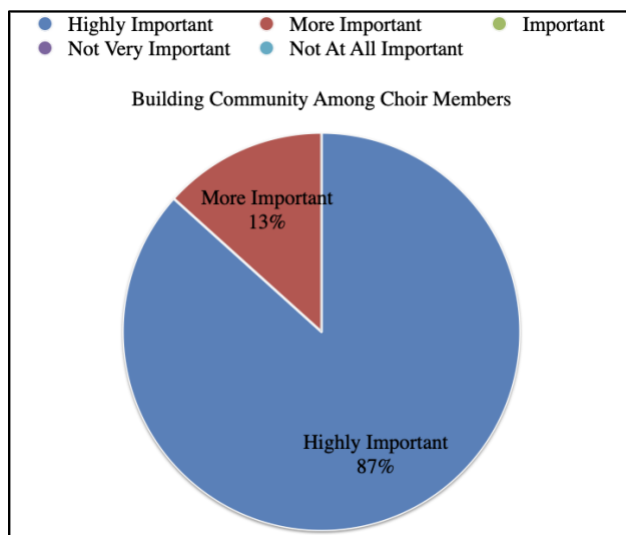


Figure 3.2 Building community among members

However, priorities began shifting once questions about community extended beyond the immediate community that is the collegiate choral ensemble. Conductors were evenly divided as to the importance of participating in non-musical events on campus such as convocation, sporting events, commencement, etc.

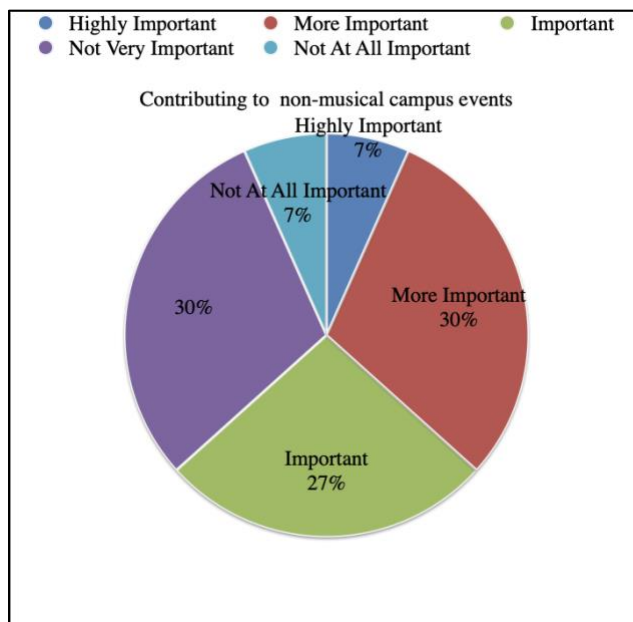


Figure 3.3 Contributing to non-musical campus events

Responses to this question were not split any way between conductors who appear to favor critical, progressive, or traditional practices in their collective responses. This seems to suggest that specific context or personal bias is more of a factor than degree of critical commitment. I find it interesting that when it comes to community outreach on and off campus, conductors are more willing to engage in more logistically involved community outreach off campus than connect with communities on campus. When it comes to being active community members, surveyed conductors favor encouraging community involvement over requiring it. This is not surprising, as student burnout is a real thing. But it is worth noticing that conductors in the group appear to favor the idea of having their members involved in the community.

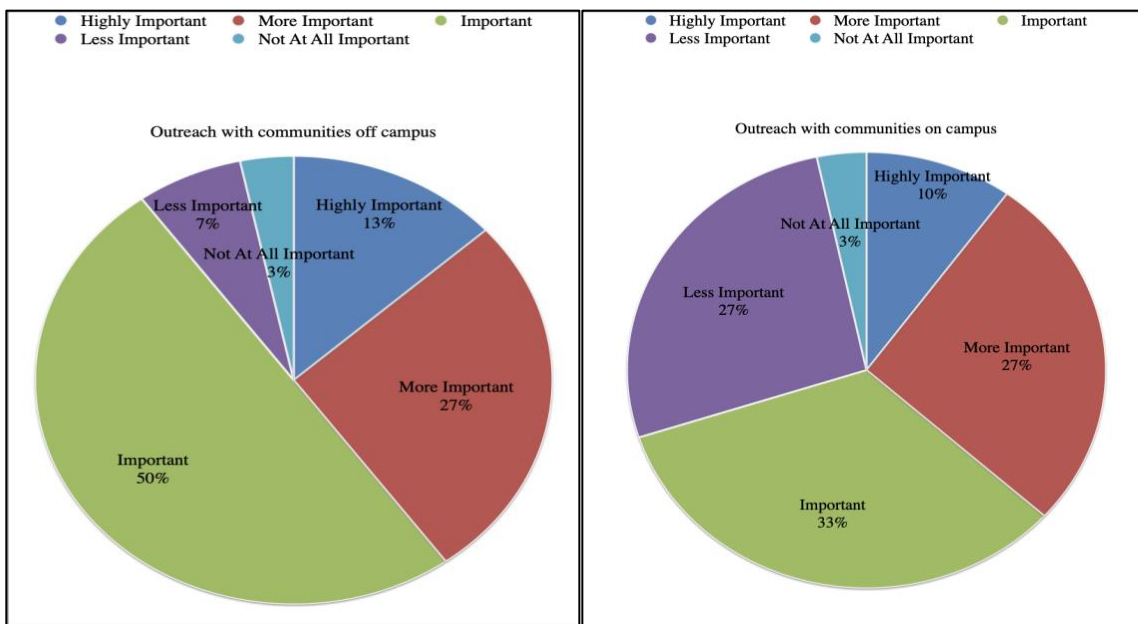


Figure 3.4 Outreach off campus

Figure 3.5 Outreach on campus

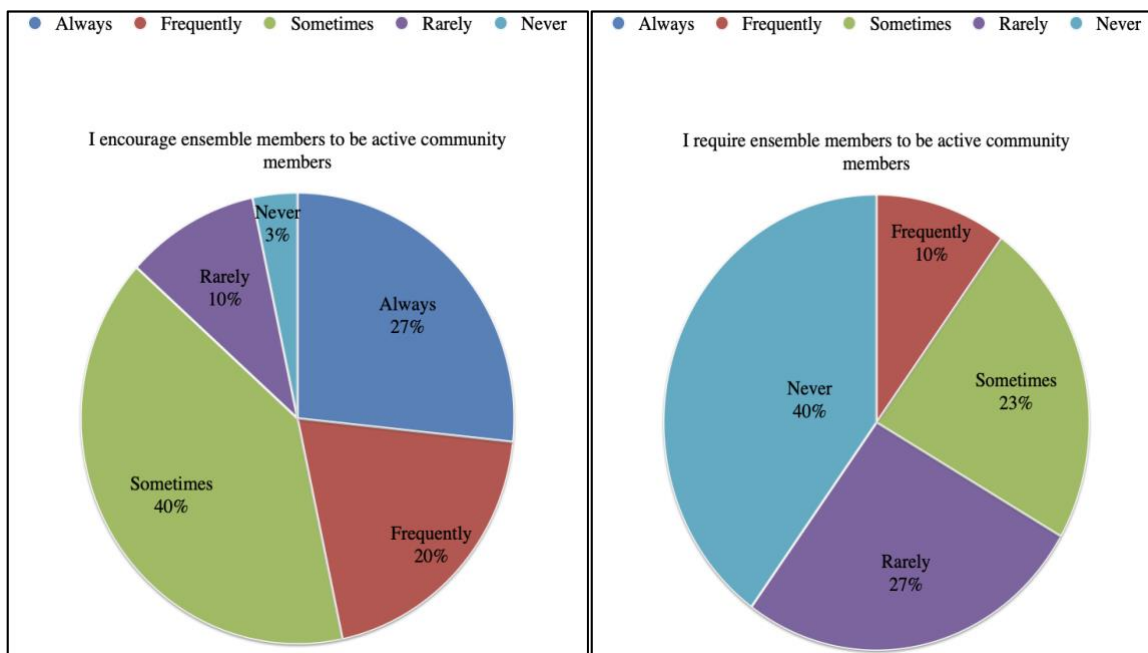


Figure 3.6 Encouraging community involvement

Figure 3.7 Requiring community involvement

Critical Choral Reflection Conductors in the survey provided a strong foundation regarding the practice of reflection. It is clear that reflective practices form a key component of their work as collegiate conductors.

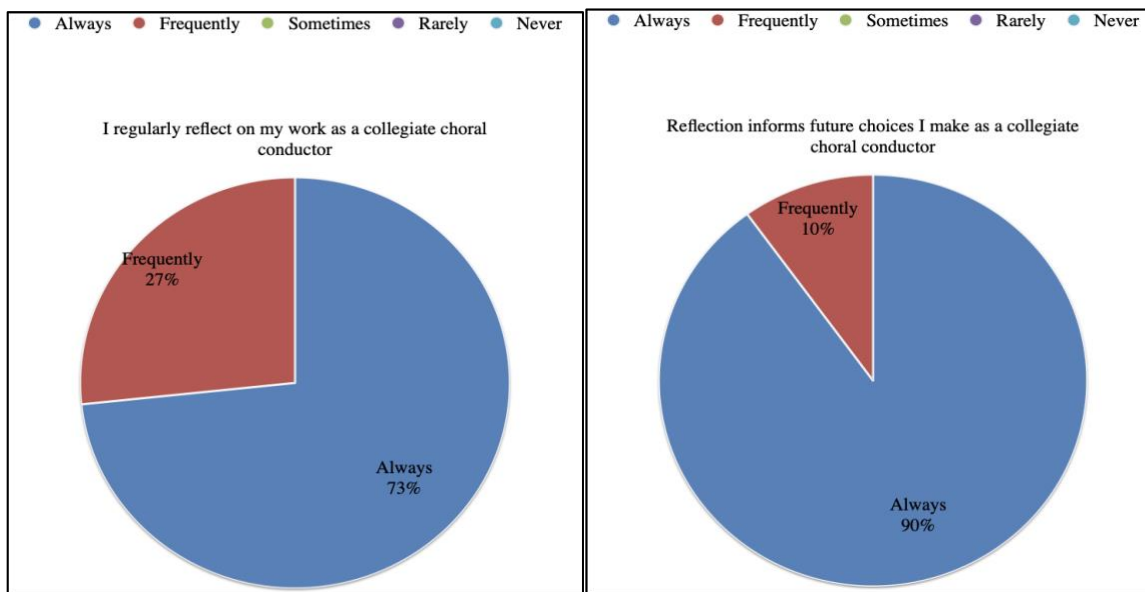


Figure 3.8 Engaging in reflection

Figure 3.9 Reflection informing future choices

Further questions explored the specific reflective practices of conductors related to reflection-on-action and reflection-fore-action as derived from the findings of Butke (2003). Reflection-on-action involves reflecting after the fact (e.g., rehearsal or performance) to inform future action, while reflection-fore-action considers external forces that influence decisions regarding action such as teaching philosophy or politics. The surveyed elements of reflection-on-action all appear to be constant or frequent points of reflection-on-action by the majority of survey participants. The dominance of constant reflection on repertoire upholds the value of repertoire as a primary means of reflection and choral activity.

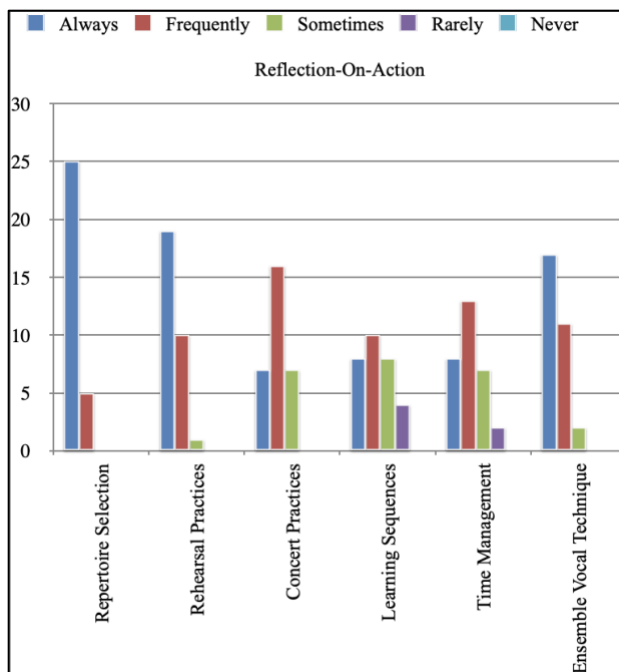


Figure 3.10 Items for reflection-on-action

Compared to reflection-on-action, conductors indicated that they do not as constantly or frequently reflect upon the selected components of reflection-fore-action included in the survey. Professional development, collegial interactions, and teaching philosophy are the primary points of engagement for reflection-fore-action. Opportunities for personal continued education and outreach possibilities garnered the slimmest majority while politics was the only point of reflection to be in the minority as a source of constant or frequent reflection. To be clear, surveyed conductors engage with politics as a point of reflection. But it is also the point that most conductors “rarely” engage with. This group of conductors indicates what could be either a preference for, or a greater comfortability, with reflection-on-action over reflection-fore-action.

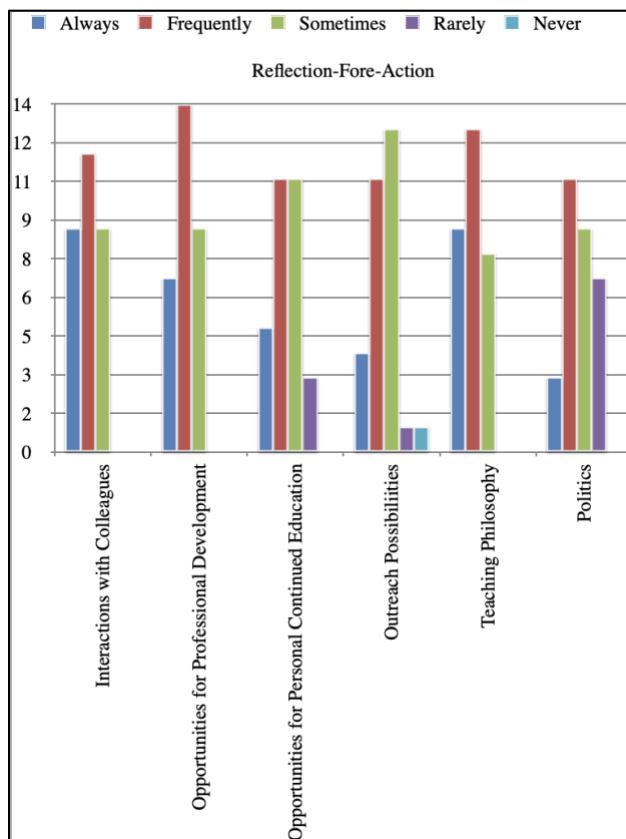


Figure 3.11 Items for reflection-fore-action

In a free response, some conductors elaborated on other tools they use for reflection. Conductors offered further specifics such as effective modeling, keeping ego in check, long term programming, musical theology and spirituality, needs of individual ensemble members, opportunities for student leadership, recruitment, community building, skill development, and tours/performances off-campus. In addition to questioning what it is that conductors reflect on, I was also interested in finding out how the conductors prefer to reflect.

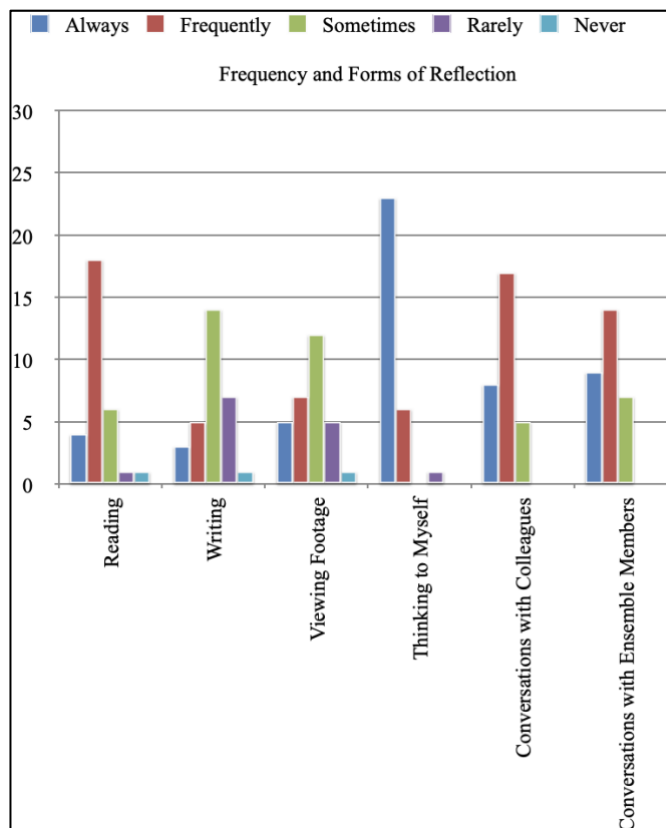


Figure 3.12 Forms of reflection

Having internal dialogues is a preferred method of reflection among this group of conductors. The reflective internal dialogue also extends outward through conversations with both colleagues and members of the ensemble. Writing and viewing rehearsal footage do not appear to be as common in the reflective toolbox of the participants. Conductors also had the opportunity, like with the points of reflection, to freely respond and provide further information on their modes of reflection. In addition to the reflective forms in the chart above, conductors also turn to their family, friends, group discussions, institutional and community leaders, performances by colleagues and their ensembles, TAs, and written student evaluations. Conductors in this survey are dedicated and reflective individuals. I don't believe there is a lack of conductors taking time to reflect, but there does seem to be an opportunity to expand conductor reflection-fore-action.

Critical Choral Solidarity

There is no question among surveyed conductors that it is important for them to know the singers in the ensemble.

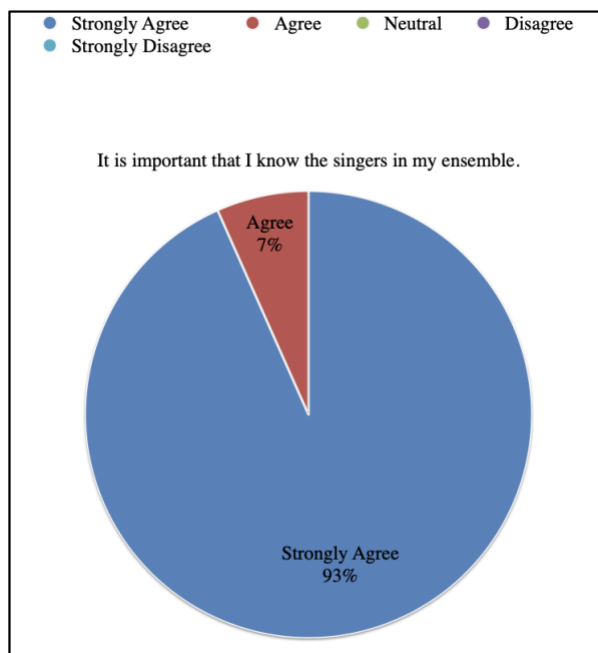


Figure 4.0 Knowing the singers

The majority also agree that it is important to know the various cultures of reference within the ensemble. One point of this reference is musical histories experienced through culture, exposure, and participation. Most participating conductors agree that it is important to know the musical histories present. And for most, knowing the ensemble even informs programming choices. Knowing the cultures and histories present in the ensemble allows the conductor to be more culturally informed in addition to better understanding the students' "here" based on students' "there" so that collectively the conductor and ensemble can explore possible future "there."

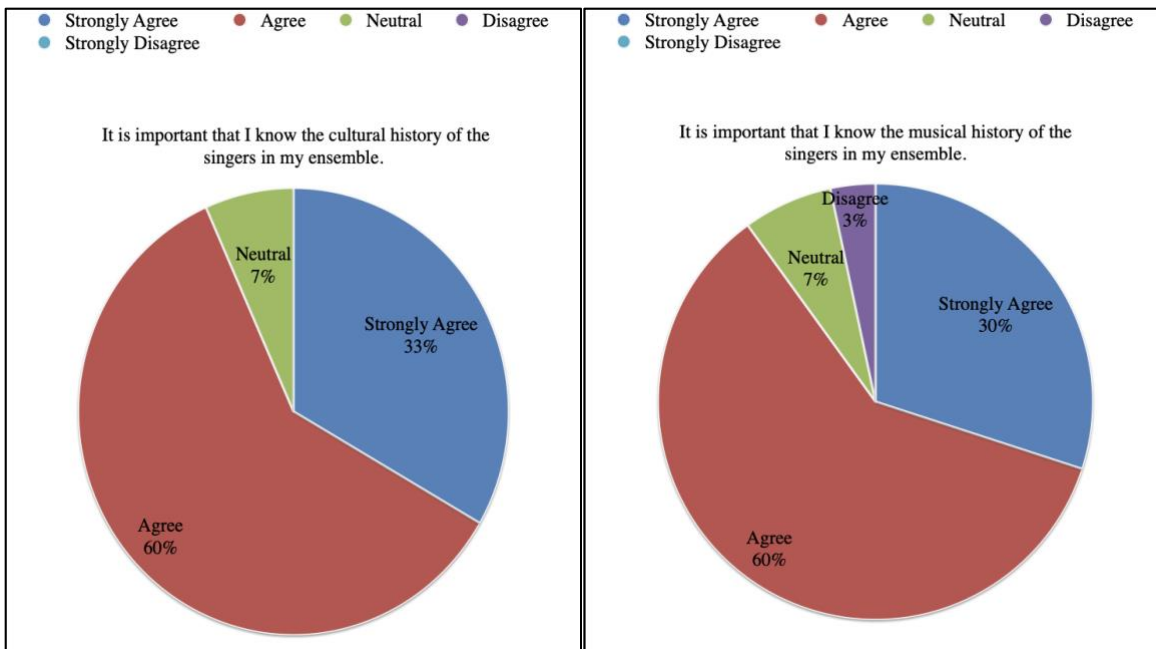


Figure 4.1 Knowing singers' cultural history

Figure 4.2 Knowing singers' musical history

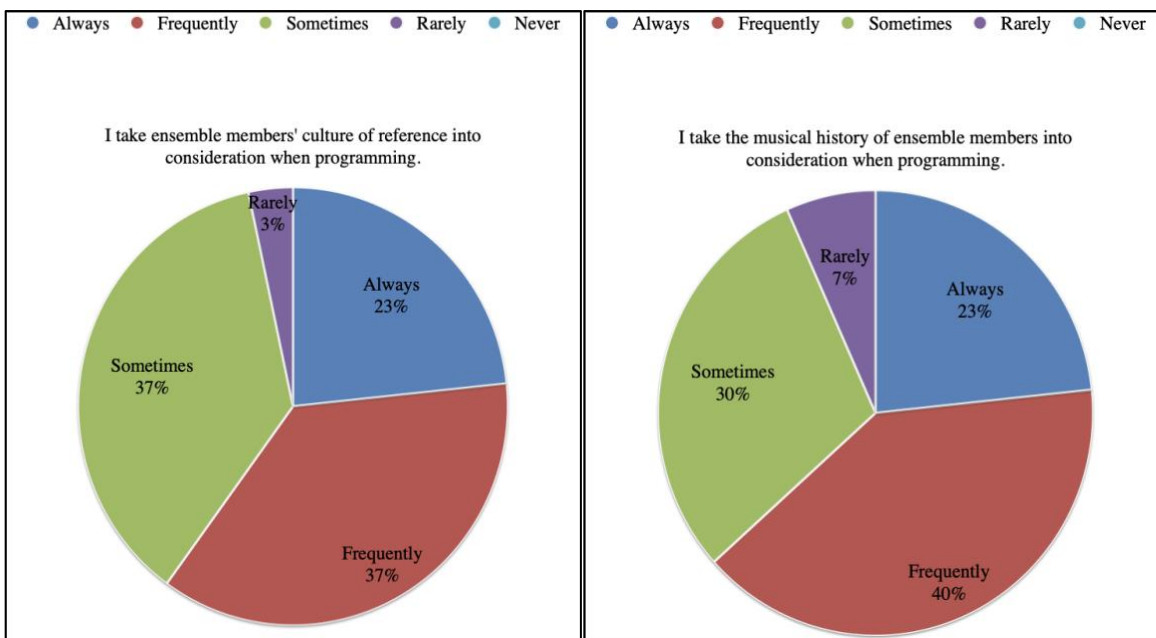


Figure 4.3 Considering cultures of reference

Figure 4.4 Considering musical histories

Conductors agree on the basic premise of the importance of knowing their singers and many use that knowledge to inform practices. How that knowledge informs their practice is not made clear in this survey and the question welcomes further research. Another question worth further exploration is how the conductor relates to the students. The majority of participating conductors do not view their role as conductor to be above the role of the ensemble members. However, this is not as full a majority as other foundational questions such as knowing the ensemble and the importance of reflection.

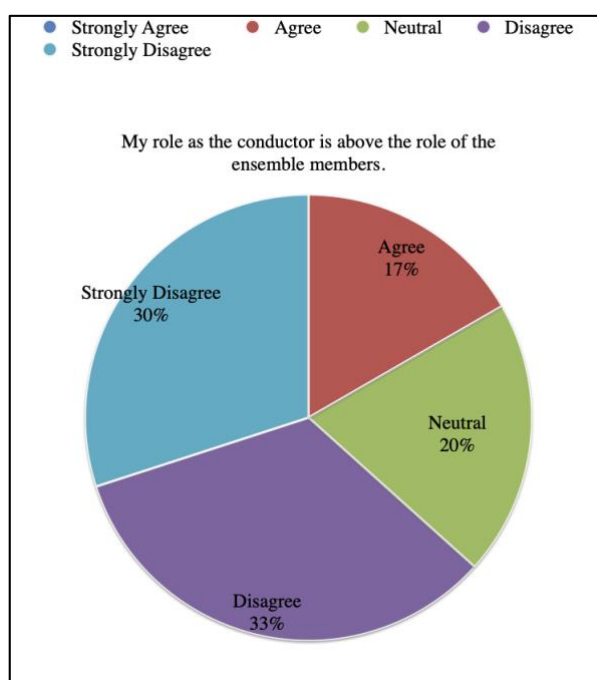


Figure 4.5 Superior status of the conductor

So, let's take a moment and explore this question further. What do surveyed conductors believe is the role of the conductor? Additionally, what do the conductors view the role of the singer to be?

Conductors were asked to offer a free response to the question, "What is your primary role as a conductor in rehearsal?" Responses to this question fall under larger themes of being a facilitator, caretaker, decision maker, and educator. These themes and their subsidiary codes

highlight values of collaboration, holistic care, authority, conductor independence, and education. The most common word used to answer this question was “facilitator,” to the extent that this single code became a significant theme of its own. The conductor as a facilitator works to be a conduit of musical vision, communication, collaboration, dialogue, and choral participation. They have a leadership role, but they function constantly in relation to and with others. The facilitator does very few things truly on their own. The caretaker role of the conductor captures the conductor’s concern for the whole person of the individuals within the ensemble. As a caretaker, the conductor fosters a sense of community, strives to ensure the choral environment is a safe space and works in service to others. In addition to caring about the quality of personal well-being of choir members, the conductor in this role also claims responsibility for performance quality. The conductor as a decision maker is responsible for selecting repertoire, planning rehearsals and programming, being the musical leader, interpreting the music, and taking charge of logistical organization. They are the sole source of instruction during the process leading up to performance. The process component is where the conductor as educator shines through. The theme of educator is broad and is found within responses from across the spectrum. It is not bound by authoritarian, progressive, or critical leanings. The conductor as educator values literacy, provides training, models technique, cultivates independent musicians, guides singers through the process, and challenges singers to go deeper into musical and/or social issues. There is some overlap between the theme of educator and the theme of decision maker in that the conductor constantly makes decisions as to what type of educator they are functioning as. This overlap is highlighted in the responses to a similar and distinct question, “What is your primary role as a collegiate choral conductor?”

Some conductors responded with the exact same answer while others added on to their previous answer. Others provided entirely new perspectives. This second question may seem like splitting hairs, but responses suggest that there is a change of mindset once the question of conductor purpose is placed squarely in a context of formal education. The responses still suggest the same set of larger themes discussed above. The role of the caretaker remains stable and largely unchanged, but the facilitator and educator take on new meaning and raise new awareness. It begins with a noticeable absence of the word “facilitate” when answering this question. Yes, facilitator is still a theme, but this refers less to being a conduit and is supported more by facilitating experiences for singers. These experiences include performance, outreach, formative personal experiences, and career boosting professional experiences. The facilitating conductor in the collegiate context of this question is primarily concerned with what they can offer students. What arises in these responses in place of facilitating is yet a larger theme of providing. The collegiate choral conductor shifts to being primarily a provider of experiences and education. The conductor as a decision maker becomes part of the theme of conductor as educator within this new overarching theme of conductor as a provider. Whereas before the conductor made choices on how they educate an ensemble, now they are making choices as to what sort of education they are providing students through their participation in the ensemble. Answers to this question highlight two important realities. The first being that all education really is politics. The constant choosing of how to educate, and which experiences conductors work to make available are bound to favor technical, professional, personal, social, or critical agendas. Secondly, collegiate choral conductors are providing a product for the benefit of the students’ life after college. This is not a groundbreaking observation. But, if conductors are providing a product for the consumption and benefit of students, what is it that drives the

demand for the product? What is it that students in various contexts need? Is there only a single choral product that collegiate conductors provide, or can there be multiple forms of collegiate choral education offered to students? If conductors are providing a good to students, are students expected to receive it passively or do conductors require something in return? I believe reflecting on the purpose of the singer in the collegiate ensemble may reveal deeper rooted attitudes towards singers as objects or subjects.

Responses by participating conductors to the question, “What is the primary purpose of the singer in rehearsal?” indicated three different purposes. Singers are expected to contribute, engage deeply, and collaborate. These provide a spectrum for ensemble participation expectations. Like the previous chart of ensemble and performance purpose, I visualize this spectrum along an x-y axis. At one end of the spectrum is the basic expectation of singers to sing and apply themselves to the process for the purpose of quality performance. If all that is expected of singers is to contribute their voice, then the singer is being reduced to an object for the benefit of a product. And that is unacceptable. At the other end of the spectrum is collaboration where singers actively participate in the creative process as subjects rather than objects thereby forming a final performance that is co-authored by conductor and ensemble. Engaging deeply with the ensemble task runs along a separate and intersecting axis. Deeper engagement may occur through deeper musical engagement or through deeper extra-musical engagement. A singer could be expected to collaborate and be part of the interpretive process for deeper musical engagement. Or perhaps a singer is expected to contribute their voice to a concert program raising awareness of homelessness in the community without being expected to engage beyond learning the repertoire. There is a component of extra-musical engagement due to the social issue centered program, but the primary expectation is that the singer will sing and therefore the primary role of

the singer is closer to an object than it is to a subject. Expectations along a spectrum are not necessarily set in stone for the entire year and they can change depending on the situation, upcoming performance, performance partnership, etc. Even within this fluctuation, there is no situation in which the primary purpose of the singer is to be an object. If the expectation spectrum is a useful tool for reflection, I hope conductors use it as it pertains to their own ensemble(s) and reflective needs.

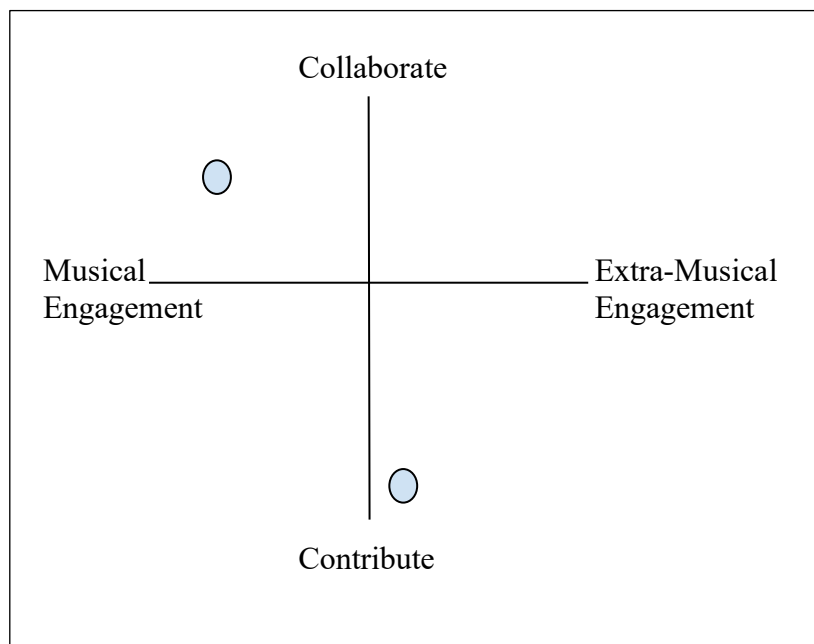


Figure 4.6 Expectation spectrum

The various themes expressed through the role of the conductor and expectations of singers muddle the following quantitative responses regarding interacting with students and leaving the role of the conductor. Conductors are not opposed to interacting with students outside of rehearsal. However, survey participants showed more hesitancy toward leaving their role. Maintaining distinct roles also protects students from abuses of power such as granting solos based on nepotism or being hit on by their professor. As such, a better question might be which role(s) do conductors continuously occupy and which role(s) are fluid? It is still a necessary

question to ask if conductors are working towards a witness of solidarity with their ensembles. Just as it is important that conductors know the singers in their ensemble, it is also important for the singers to know their conductor.

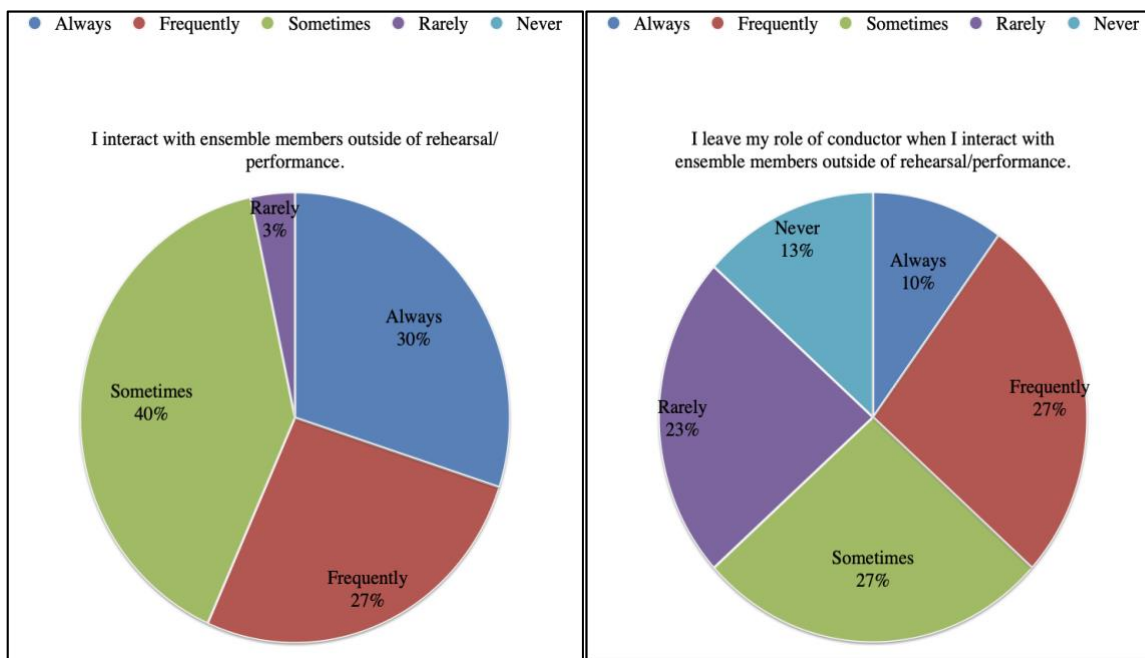


Figure 4.7 Interacting with ensemble members outside of the choral space

Figure 4.8 Leaving the role of conductor outside of the choral space

In the previous chapter, I argued that solidarity through musical outreach is a distinct feature of critical pedagogy for the collegiate choral ensemble and provides ample questioning of what could be possible for critical choirs beyond repertoire. It seems that I am not alone in seeing and responding to the need to go beyond, but this practice is not yet common among the majority of survey participants. When surveyed conductors do engage in outreach, they do so through a variety of locations with a primary focus on community relationships.

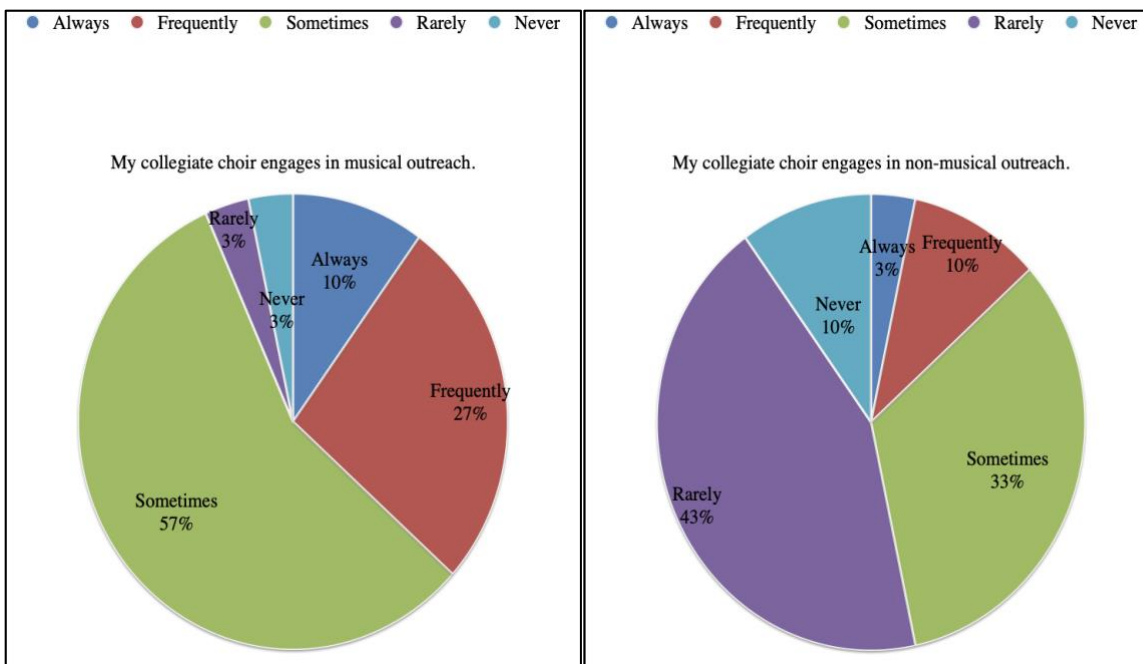


Figure 4.9 Engaging in musical outreach

Figure 4.10 Engaging in non-musical outreach

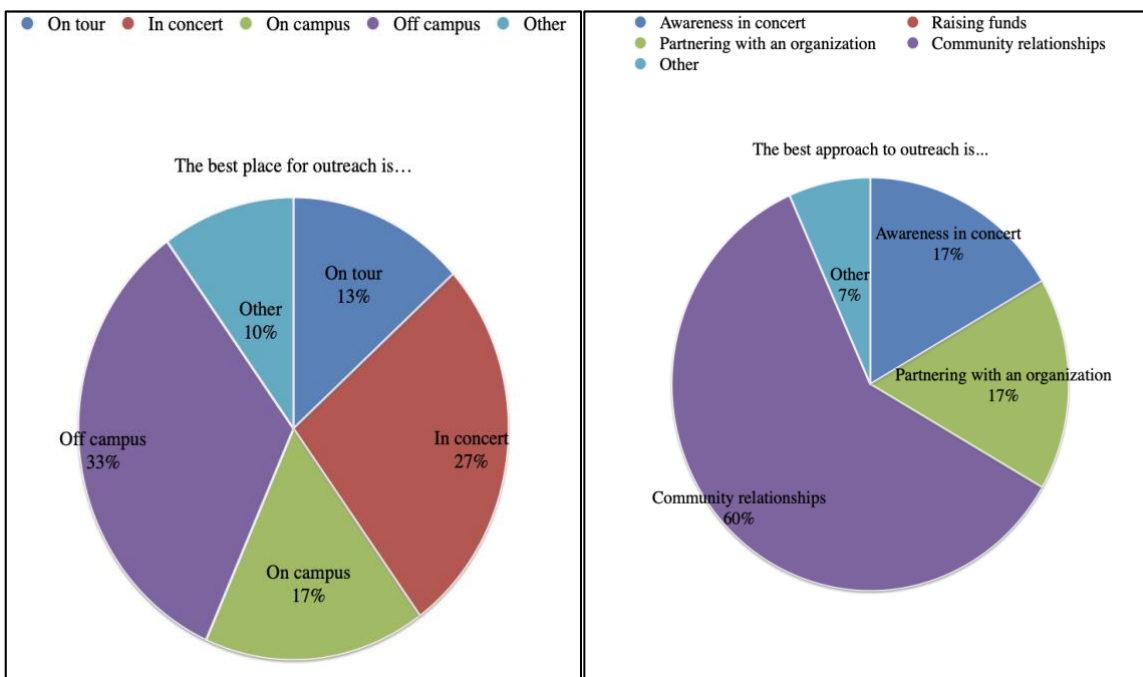


Figure 4.11 Best location for outreach

Figure 4.12 Best approach to outreach

Some conductors commented that a best practice would be a combination of all locations and approaches. One conductor also suggested, “workshops or festivals held on our campus for high school students” as a form of musical outreach to be considered. Given that a large majority of surveyed conductors expressed favor for engaging in outreach through community relationships, serious reflection on critical solidarity is a vital component for any collegiate choir engaging in these activities. Furthermore, if choirs are entering into community relationships, the issue of location needs to be raised. Is the outreach occurring on campus in a festival or workshop situation? Is the outreach happening off campus within community areas or with populations that are distanced from the institution? An encounter between persons is entrenched in power dynamics. Furthermore, the location in which the encounter takes place is inevitably situated within politics.

Politics and the Critical Choral Ensemble

Perhaps I frequently return to this reality of politics in education and choral practice in this document because it was not so long ago that I came to be aware of the politics of all education—including choral activity—and I am still in the excited afterglow of this new raising of consciousness in myself. I suspect I am not alone in this realization nor in my previously held belief, or more accurately ignorance, on education as politics. Because of this, I offered the following clarification in the introduction of the survey: Throughout this survey, the terms 'politics' and 'political' refer to systems and practices that favor certain interests over others and the resulting implications (e.g., the politics of repertoire, the politics of policy, the politics of social issues, etc.). Based on the responses of the survey participants, further reflection among choral colleagues on this issue of politics is warranted.

A large majority of conductors who responded to the survey stated that their collegiate choral ensemble rarely or never lends itself to authoritarianism. At the same time, these ensembles are not entirely democratic.

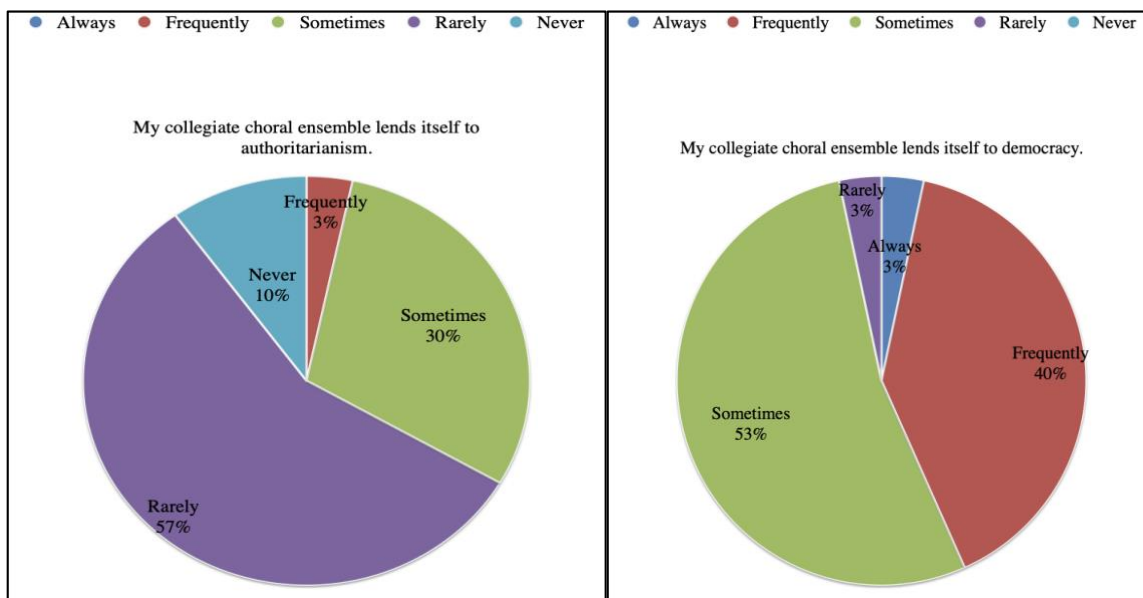


Figure 5.0 Choral authoritarianism

Figure 5.1 Choral democracy

There is a gray area, or a space that is in flux, moving somewhere between the spectrum of authoritarian and democratic practices. There are politics involved whether the choice is to simply not be authoritarian or be a shifting democracy. For example, a conductor who is the only person responsible for the selection of repertoire has an element of authoritarianism. The repertoire, and the topics addressed in the repertoire, are part of the politics of collegiate choral repertoire.

Almost half of the survey respondents indicated that they always or frequently avoid conflict and controversy in the choral rehearsal.

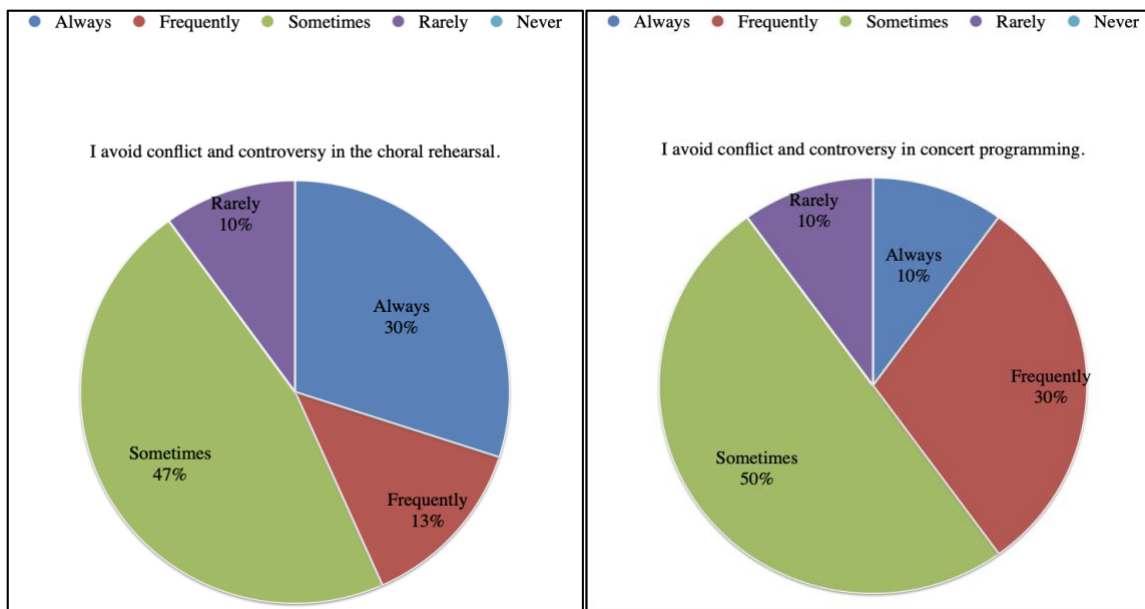


Figure 5.2 Avoiding conflict and controversy in rehearsal

Figure 5.3 Avoiding conflict and controversy in programming

This sentiment is reflected in the conductors' views regarding political repertoire. Again, almost half of survey respondents indicated that they frequently or always avoid conflict and controversy in concert programming. Similarly, just over half of the respondents strongly agreed, agreed, or were neutral when asked if concert repertoire should be politically neutral (keep in mind that a position of neutrality favors the status quo).

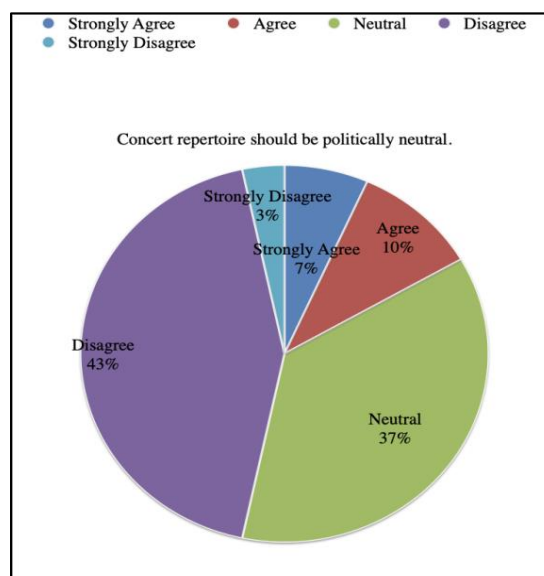


Figure 5.4 Political neutrality of concert repertoire

Reflecting on these attitudes of politics and repertoire makes the following attitudes even more curious. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their collegiate choral ensemble resembles the best features of an ideal society. However, most survey respondents favored the notion that their collegiate choral ensemble is politically neutral.

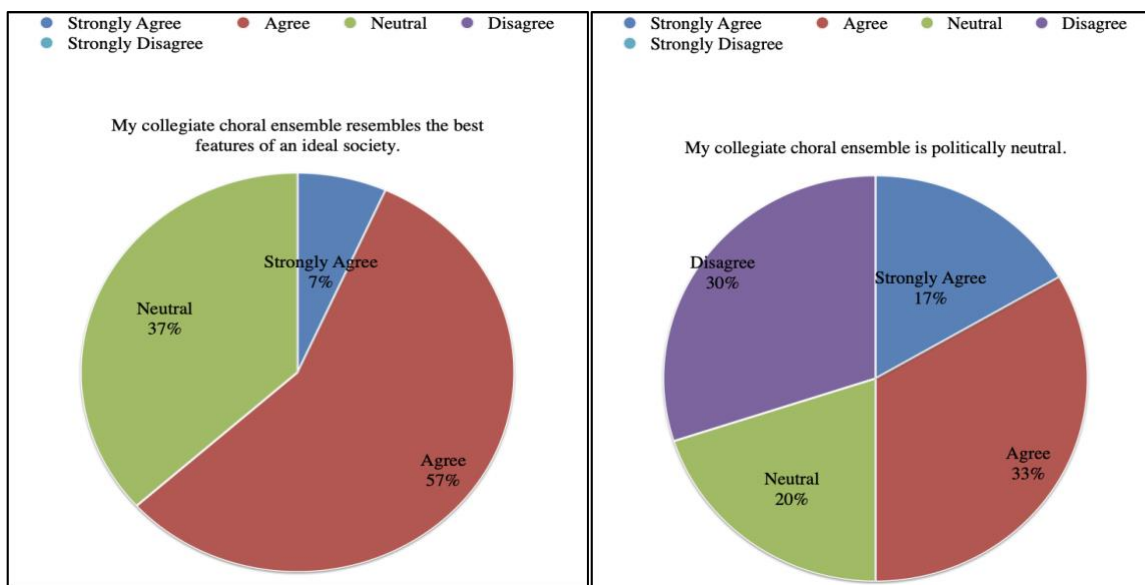


Figure 5.5 The ensemble reflects an ideal society

Figure 5.6 The ensemble is politically neutral

Based on this above information, the best features of an ideal society seem to be avoidance of conflict and controversy and a preference for attempting a neutral stance. It is necessary for conductors to reflect deeply on what features of society are mirrored and which features are challenged in ensemble and choral practice if it is believed that the collegiate choral ensemble resembles the best features of an ideal society.

Politics does not denote party politics or affiliation, but it naturally intersects with political movements and causes. Because the choral ensemble as a site of education cannot be separated from politics, conductors must navigate a fine line between the politics of education and the political minds in the ensemble. One conductor highlighted this reality when they said their primary role as a collegiate choral conductor is, “To educate ALL [sic] students about choral

music, regardless of their backgrounds or political leanings.” How do conductors educate a variety of political leanings, placed in the context of the politics of education, through a non-neutral art of choral music? When asked if the best approach was through rehearsal dialogue, repertoire, traditional concert performance, or outreach, the majority seemed to think the answer is simply, no. The preferred method, though still in the minority, is through repertoire. But then what happens during the concert? The majority of surveyed conductors were not favorable to bringing politics into the concert experience. If politics are uncovered through repertoire, do they remain hidden from the audience? Is the political intentionally kept out of earshot? The prevailing attitude among those surveyed indicates a preference of non-engagement.

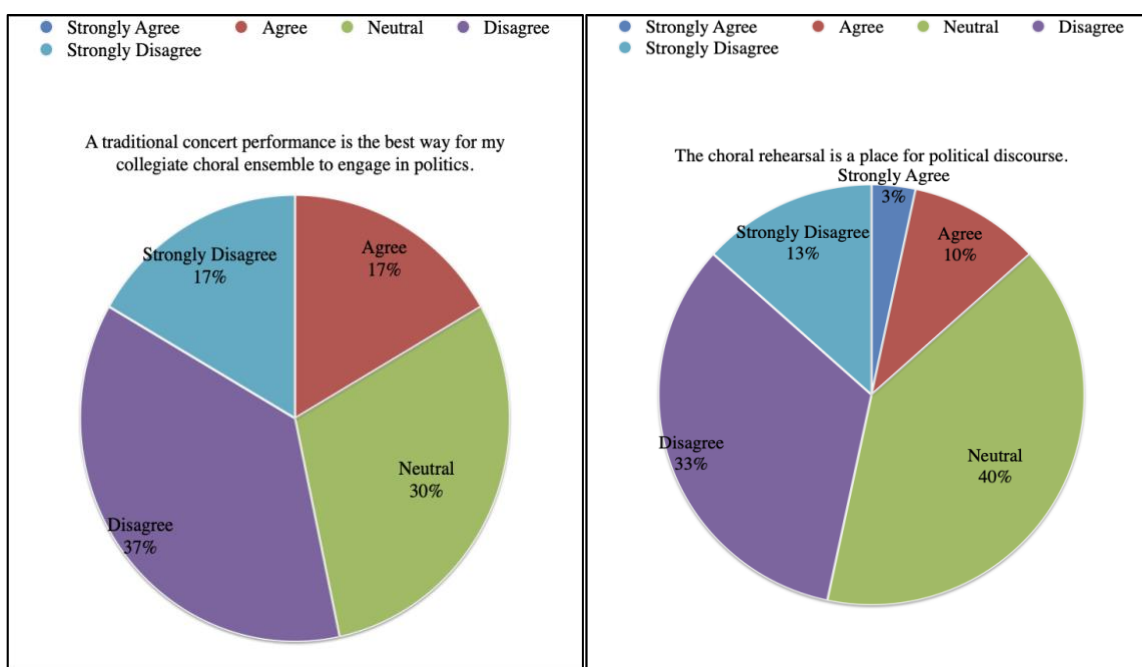


Figure 5.7 Engaging in politics in concert

Figure 5.8 Political discourse in rehearsal

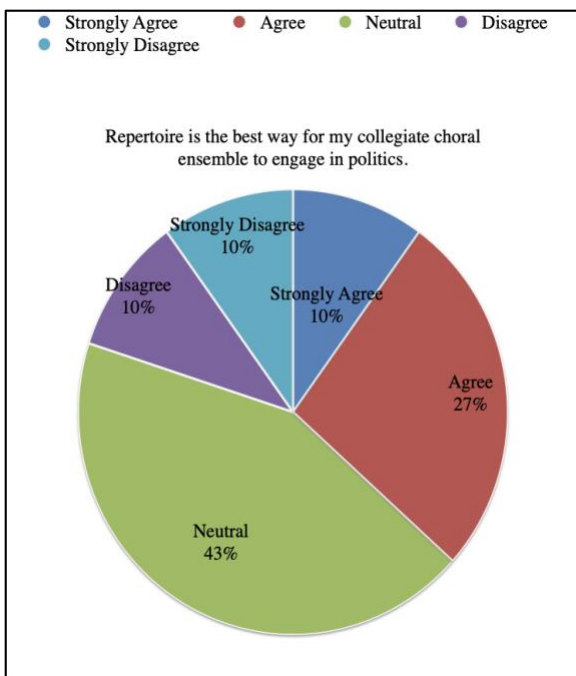


Figure 5.9 Repertoire and political engagement

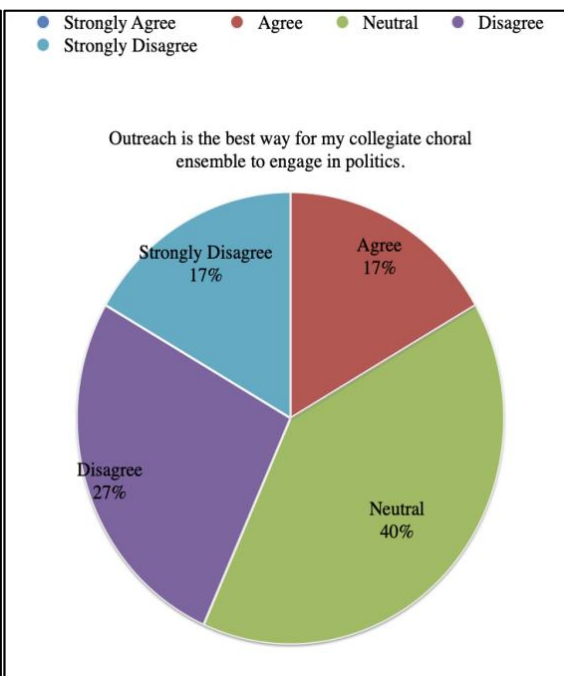


Figure 5.10 Outreach and political engagement

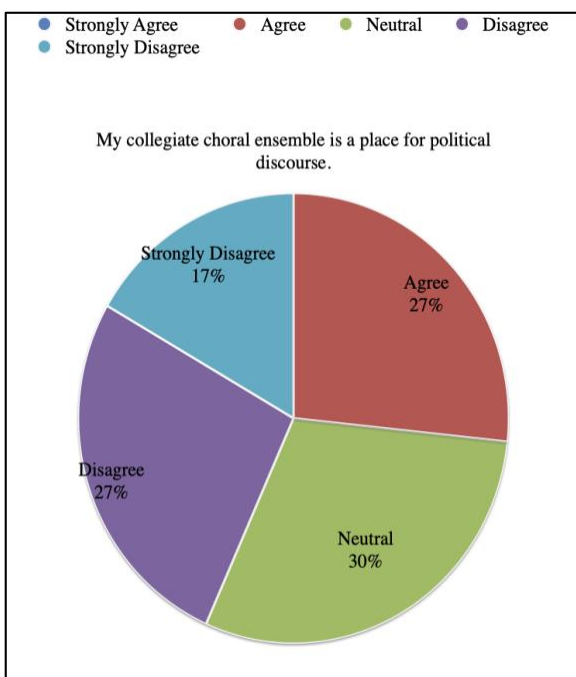


Figure 5.11 Political discourse within the ensemble

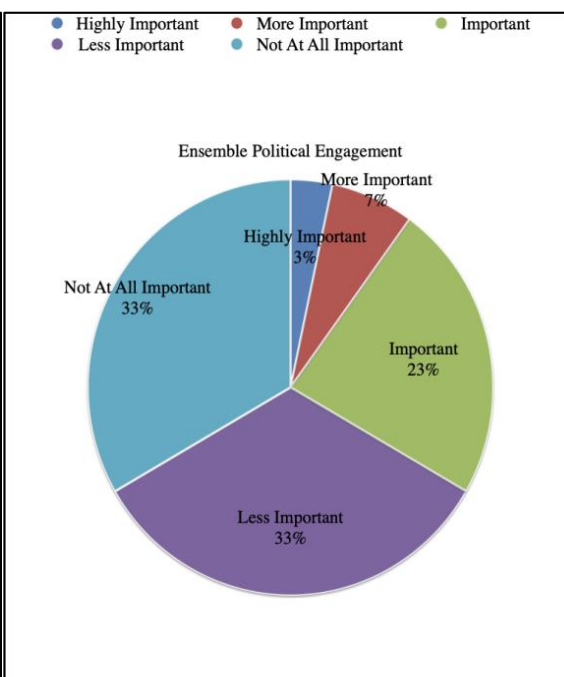


Figure 5.12 Importance of ensemble political engagement

Among the conductors surveyed, there was an agreement by the majority (albeit at times a slim majority) that various collegiate choral norms should be questioned.

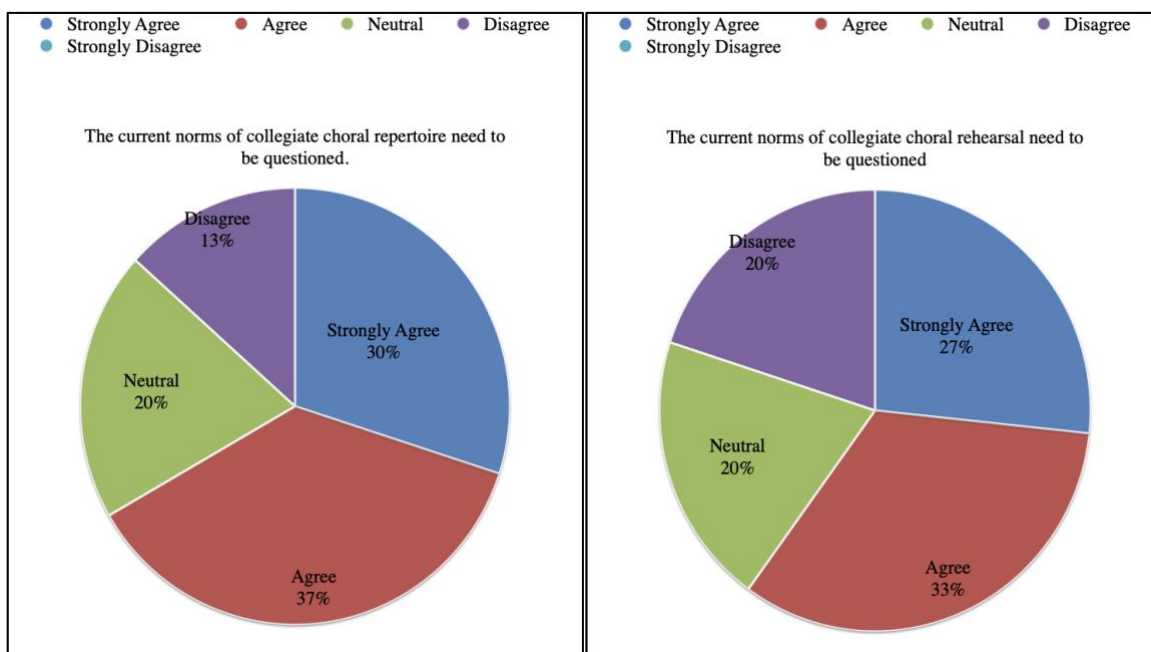


Figure 5.13 Questioning norms of repertoire

Figure 5.14 Questioning norms of rehearsal

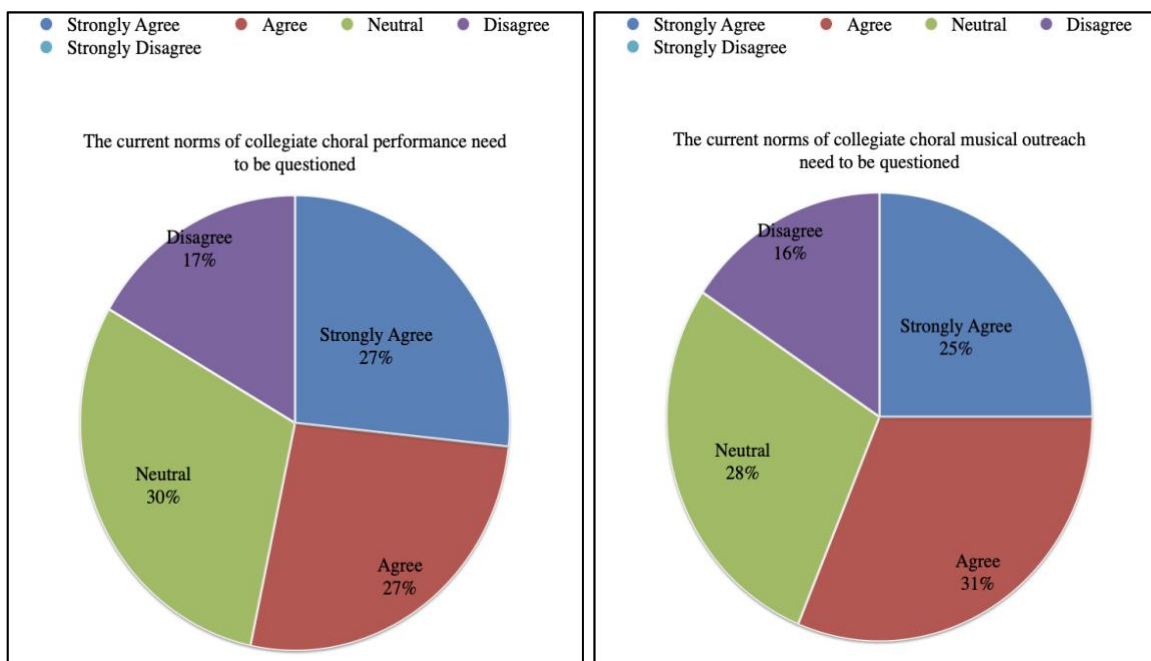


Figure 5.15 Questioning norms of performance

Figure 5.16 Questioning norms of musical outreach

However, fear can be a factor in deciding whether or not to push against an established norm in academia (Crean & Lynch, 2013). It could be very possible that a conductor in their context attempts a stance of neutrality with the ensemble due to fear of negative repercussions. Sure enough, there was some fear present among the surveyed conductors in deciding whether or not to challenge the norms of choral practice. For the majority in this case, the source of fear doesn't stem from what the institution might think or do, but rather what they might incur from the ensemble. I think this speaks volumes to the value conductors give their singers. If a conductor wants to push against a choral norm but is afraid of how the ensemble might respond, I suggest being open and honest with the ensemble (or at least with select leaders or a choral cabinet if one exists). Approach the challenge less as a command and more as a sharing of why the conductor sees the need to challenge a norm. Then, invite the choir to respond before any official action for change takes place. In other words, raise awareness of the politics of choral activity and invite them to be a critical partner in the politics of their collegiate choral ensemble.

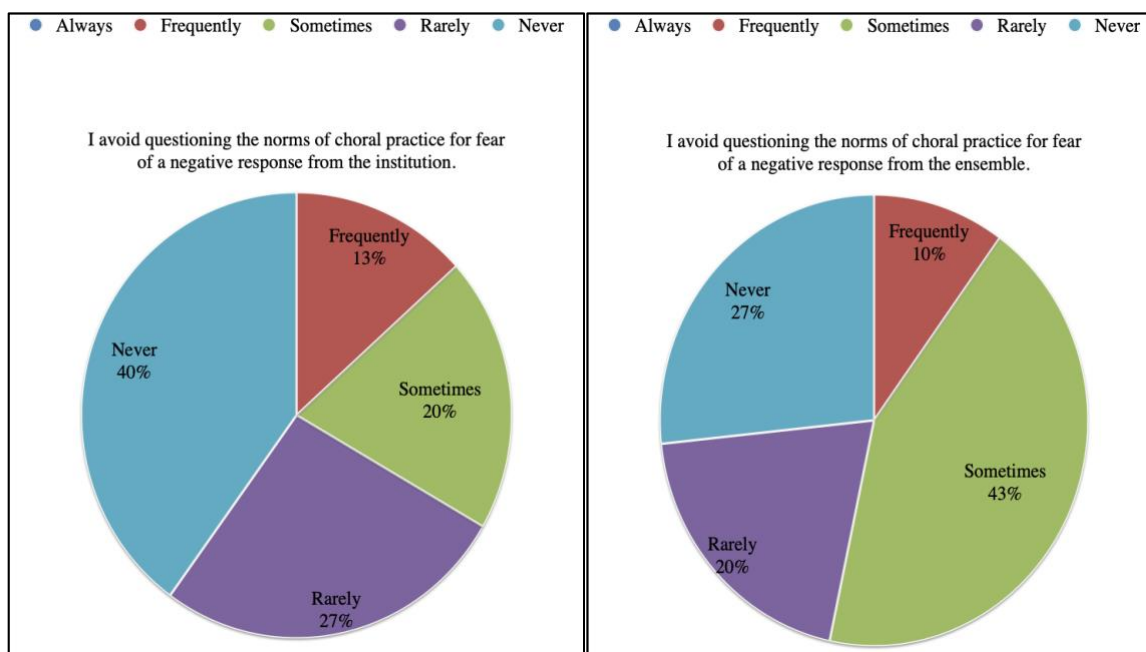


Figure 5.17 Fear of institutional backlash

Figure 5.18 Fear of ensemble backlash

Summary

The conductors who participated in the large, imagined roundtable of this survey did not overwhelmingly object to critical pedagogy as a lens or a framework for critical choral engagement with the collegiate ensemble. There was one conductor who expressed a clear stance of opposition to critical pedagogy as a framework and others who expressed difficulties around the practicality of critical pedagogy alongside a demanding performance schedule. Still, the conductors as a whole were not completely dismissive of a critical lens. Conductors are open to critical dialogue with the ensemble particularly as it pertains to contextualizing music. However, they are hesitant to engage in more radical practices such as collaborative programming, students educating the audience, or extending the dialogue beyond time spent in rehearsal. The surveyed conductors are invested in the well-being of their choral ensemble as a community. There is even general consensus that it is good and desired for the singers to be active members within the community. How to facilitate it and what that looks like is not as clear cut. Contrary to the uncertainty of pursuing critical choral action is the affinity for critical reflection. Critical reflection is the most widely embraced component of critical pedagogy among the surveyed conductors. Conductors are experienced in critical reflection-in-action and are committed to critical reflection-on-action. There is still room to grow in the practice of critical reflection-fore-action among this group of conductors, particularly as it pertains to reflecting on the political and social influences of choral practice. These influences inform not only what conductors pursue as action but also in how they view their role in relation to the ensemble. Conductors take on a variety of roles that intermingle and the primary role is likely dependent on the situation rather than being fixed. In the context of education, conductors provide students with experiences and an education. In return, conductors expect singers to be part of the musical process. Critical solidarity is dependent upon the witness between

the conductor and the singers. If singers are only expected to be objects there is no hope for a witness of solidarity. Community outreach and engagement is a choral action that is viewed favorably among the conductors, but the extent to which that outreach is done in solidarity is uncertain. More research is needed to better understand current and best practices for critical collegiate choral outreach. It is safe to say that among this group, solidarity is not related to an act of politics. In fact, the concept of politics was rarely connected to the work of the ensemble. This is the area of critical pedagogy that faced the most resistance among the conductors. While there are places to grow in the elements of dialogue, action, reflection, and solidarity, it will be difficult for conductors and their ensembles to be truly critical without an awareness of the politics of their choral activities and any resulting political reflection or action.

Conclusion and Need for Further Study

Critical pedagogy can be distilled as a pedagogy that questions assumed norms. At its core, it attempts to bring about awareness of the deeper why for why things are, understanding the structure of societal forces, and making choices to transform current reality. Conductors in this survey were mostly agreeable to questions of challenging norms of collegiate choral repertoire and rehearsal. The margin of agreement narrowed when asked about challenging the current norms of collegiate choral performance and musical outreach. This could be seen as a distinction between preparation and performance. Granted, repertoire is part and parcel of both preparation and performance. But is it possible that collegiate conductors are more willing to question and change what happens behind the scenes regarding repertoire and rehearsal but are not yet prepared to grapple with the actions of performance and outreach? The responses from this survey are not intended to paint a broad picture but are to be considered within particular collegiate contexts.

There is an abundance of opportunities for further research regarding critical practices in collegiate ensembles. There is a significant lack of literature on critical applications in both choral and instrumental ensembles, particularly at the collegiate level. Having a better understanding of why and how critical practices are applied will inform not only collegiate ensemble practice, but also illuminate how it is distinguished from critical pedagogy in other areas of higher education as well as K-12 critical music education. This will provide further grounding for why collegiate ensembles are a necessity to the institution. The survey in this study consisted of several elements of critical pedagogy. Moving forward, the field would stand to benefit from focusing on specific points, particularly as it concerns those of politics, the political, and the ensemble. Doing so will enable conductors to move beyond a stance of attempted humanist neutrality, navigate the complexity of ensemble politics, and engage more deeply with the world alongside the students. Actually doing the work of critical pedagogy and taking on the challenge of cultivating a critical choral ensemble in our various contexts is what is most needed in this area of research. Appendix A provides an illustration of what a critical approach might look like in a day in the life of a collegiate choral conductor and the ensemble. Examples like this can be helpful as starting points but dialoguing with colleagues about what it is we are doing in our own contexts and growing together in that way will move critical choral practices forward. Finally, there must be a continued effort by organizations like the American Choral Directors Association and the National Association for Music Educators, who set and disseminate the choral standard, to invite critical ensembles to the conference stage. Witnessing critical theory in action affirms that a changing choral tradition is a living tradition, that what could be possible is possible, and that in going beyond ourselves we will come to know our own deepest purpose.

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Appendix A: An Imagined 50 Minute Critical Collegiate Choral Rehearsal

What follows is one possible outline of a critical choral rehearsal in a collegiate setting.

This is only one imagined rehearsal situation. My hope in providing this is to illustrate small and large ways the collegiate ensemble can be a place of critical awareness, dialogue, reflection, action, and solidarity.

Rehearsal Preparation

The conductor sketches their rehearsal plan. Utilizing reflection-on-action, the conductor finalizes which selections, sections, and techniques will be rehearsed. For example, the conductor plans to rehearse the seventh movement of Vivaldi Dixit *Dominus* (RV 594). The descending arpeggios have been particularly troublesome for the bass section. The conductor wonders if some peer-to-peer teaching might be more effective than conductor to section teaching. So, they make a note of that possibility and leave some extra time for sectional dialogue.

11:55 pm

5 minutes before rehearsal. The conductor gets to the doors of the rehearsal hall and checks in with the students of the logistics team who are setting up the rehearsal space. The conductor told the team ahead of time that the choir will be on the risers in their standard four rows and in sectional formation for today. There are no other students arriving just yet, so the conductor lends a hand with the team for a bit before going into the hall to welcome students.

11:57 pm

Students begin to arrive. The conductor stands at the door, holding it open and greeting students by name. The conductor is genuinely glad to see the singers and they let the singers know. If the conductor asks questions like, “How is your day going?” or “What are you looking forward to

today?” the conductor makes sure to ask those questions only if there is time and space for them. The American practice of exchanging surface level pleasantries with no real substance has been a topic of conversation among students in the past and the conductor wants to work with the students to be intentional about asking them about their day. Now is not the time to ask the student who is rushing in seconds before rehearsal starts. But, the conductor can give them a fist bump, smile, and say they are glad the student is here.

12:00 pm

Rehearsal begins with warmups. The music education student leading warmups today walks from their seat within the ensemble up to the front. They sustain a pitch while walking to the front and the rest of the choir stands up and joins in singing the pitch. The conductor is in the room, standing at the end of the row closest to the door. The conductor likes standing here because it allows them to participate in the warmups with the students while also allowing them to welcome any latecomers. The student leader looks around the room and once they are satisfied with the focus, eye contact, and engagement, they begin their warmup plan.

Warm ups. The conductor sings with the students and follows every direction given by the student leader. The leader today is a soprano section leader who is also a music education student. One of the warmups is new to the conductor and they find it to be particularly effective. The conductor makes a mental note to ask the student where they learned it. The conductor notices in another warmup that the student is using a kinesthetic that the conductor introduced in a previous rehearsal. They're glad to see some concepts are sticking and working well. At one point, the student leader asks the singers to expand the ribcage with the breath and to keep it expanded during exhalation. The singers do so and the conductor notices the sound is a bit tight and weakens during the duration of the vocalise. The student leader keeps going with the

exercise, so the conductor walks up, indicates to the choir and accompanist to keep the exercise going, and quietly asks the student leader if that is the sound they want. The student leader says it isn't. The conductor asks the student if they want the singers to hold their ribcage in a rigid fashion. The student leader says no, and then realizes what might have gone wrong. The student leader pauses the warmup, rephrases the instruction to expand the ribcage with the breath and then keep it buoyant throughout the exhalation. The change of wording makes a difference, and the student leader nods to the conductor and the conductor takes their place back with the choir. At the end of the warmup, the student leader tells the choir the difference they noticed in the sound and asked the choir what it was about their wording that made a difference to them. There is a brief exchange, during which a student walks in late looking stressed and disappointed. The conductor smiles and gives a little wave to the student. The conductor makes a note to check in with the student at the end of rehearsal. The check in isn't to guilt the student, but to understand the situation of their tardiness. The student leader goes into their final warmup which is built around descending arpeggios and directly references its use in the Vivaldi. The conductor is glad that they aren't the only ones noticing the need to refine descending arpeggios.

12:07 pm

Rehearsal. The conductor follows their rehearsal plan without needing to alter it significantly. The descending warmup did help, but it still isn't as cohesive as it could be. The conductor asks everyone in their section to stand, pair up with their neighbor, face each other, and sing their descending D major arpeggios on the text and to not turn towards the front until they have found their unison sound. The accompanist keeps the choir centered on D from the piano. As the choir sings, the conductor walks around, listens, and notices which pairs are the first to turn and face front. The conductor asks the choir to show with their hands, on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being super

difficult and 1 being super easy, how challenging it was to find the unison with their partner. The conductor asks a few of the fives what was challenging and received responses including blending different styles of voices (e.g. “I have a big voice, my partner has a light voice, we had a hard time finding a cohesive sound”), certain vowels being more problematic than others, and one pair says it was difficult to focus during the exercise with everyone else singing. The conductor openly acknowledges that this exercise may not be best for everyone before asking one of the pairs that finished the exercise first to sing their arpeggio. They do so effortlessly. The conductor asks what made it easy for them. They said that they worked on matching their internal vowel space, were purposeful about not opening their [a] vowel with their jaw, and gliding into the final note rather than hitting it hard. The conductor asks if they could demonstrate again before asking the choir to return to facing their partners and trying it all together. The first task is to match internal vowel space rather than forming vowels with the jaw and lips. The choir sings using their partner as a mirror/reminder and it’s already an improvement. The next is to land on the tonic gently. For this, the conductor asks the original pair that demonstrated for a kinesthetic to reflect the feeling. They sing through it again and use a relaxed upward floating hand with the palm facing down. The conductor asks everyone to try it. The arpeggios aren’t yet quite perfect, but they are significantly improved. The conductor asks what the two take-aways from this are and the choir responds with internal vowels and gentle landing. These are core concepts that can be further developed in any of the repertoire. The conductor is going to be sure to do this same exercise, but expedited without as much dialogue, in the next rehearsal. The conductor is also aware of the amount of time this critical exercise took, so they are going to limit how much peer instruction occurs throughout the remainder of

the rehearsal so the choir can get plenty of singing in. After all, that's why they want to be in choir.

12:43 PM

Reminders. The conductor reminds students that this afternoon is the weekly repertoire chat in Library study room 215. Today they'll be talking about Psalm 110, looking at the Hebrew text instead of the Latin, and asking how we might understand some of the warring language today. Special guest teacher from the University's Hillel. As always, someone will take notes and post them to a discussion board for those who can't make it. Next week's repertoire chat will be given by the repertoire committee. This group has been finalizing a set for the "Song and Dance" concert slated for the spring. They have considered repertoire suggestions from students as well as the conductor. At the start of the process, the conductor and the committee discussed various elements of selecting repertoire (theme, contextualization, detecting appropriation, etc.), compiling learning materials (YouTube performances, rehearsal tracks, language/diction coaching), and expansive concert practices (altered attire, movement, staging, etc.). Since then, the conductor has handed the final decision for the set over to the student committee. Lastly, weekly reflections are due Thursday by midnight. These reflections can be one sentence, they can be one page, and can cover anything from what you learned/realized this week in rehearsal, what you want to work on more, what isn't clear, what is enjoyable, what is frustrating, etc. The conductor uses these reflections for their own reflection and rehearsal preparation.

12:45

Cabinet update. The chair of the outreach committee reminds the choir that they have five weeks left to fulfill their volunteer hours. The choir is in Phase 1 (first 10 weeks) of their partnership

with a local homelessness non-profit. Phase 1 involves working with the organization in non-musical ways. The organization has provided multiple volunteer options to choir members so they can gain volunteer hours and get to know both the organization, their needs, and the community it works with. The organization has a music jam session with the homeless community that is headed up by an alum of the university. The outreach committee is working with the alum and regular participants of the community to finalize options for the choir to be involved in musical ways with the organization for Phase 2. The chair of the community engagement committee shares a reminder that the choir sponsored Kampus Karaoke Night is happening next Wednesday in the lower level of the campus community building. Extra fliers for dorms are available on the piano. Altos are in charge of providing snacks this month, tenors are responsible for beverages, and choir cabinet will cover plates, napkins, etc.

12:48

There are two minutes left, so the conductor runs the opening section of the seventh movement of the Vivaldi to lock in those descending arpeggios.

12:50

Rehearsal ends. The conductor never goes over rehearsal time out of respect for the students and their time. The conductor quickly commends the student who led warmups as she hurries to her next class. The conductor asks the student who was late if they have a class to get to. The student does not so the conductor checks in with them now in person rather than via email later. The student who was late lost track of time working on a paper in the library and was upset with themselves for being late. The conductor assures the student that their tardiness today doesn't not lower their grade or their standing in the choir. The conductor tells the student they admire their

academic drive and dedication to the choir. They also encourage the student to take a few minutes today to reset if needed, even if it's just admiring the trees on their way to class.

Appendix B: Application of Critical Pedagogy in Collegiate Choral Ensembles: A Survey for Collegiate Choral Conductors

Application of Critical Pedagogy in Collegiate Choral Ensembles: A Survey for Collegiate Choral Conductors

The purpose of this survey is to explore how elements of critical pedagogy are applied within the context of collegiate choral ensembles and to gauge the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors regarding these elements. You do not need to be familiar with critical pedagogy to take this survey. The single requirement is that you are currently the conductor of a collegiate choral ensemble within the United States. The survey is divided into six sections: demographics, ensemble, rehearsal, performance, the role of the conductor, and concluding questions. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that collegiate choral conductors may engage in practices related to critical pedagogy without calling it as such. Data from the survey will contribute to an understanding of critical practices as they are currently applied within collegiate choirs. This research will have implications for those considering the activities of a collegiate choral ensemble within a framework of critical pedagogy.

Throughout this survey, the terms 'politics' and 'political' refer to systems and practices that favor certain interests over others and the resulting implications (e.g. the politics of repertoire, the politics of policy, the politics of social issues, etc.).

Page Break

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

CONSENT FORM

**Application of Critical Pedagogy in Collegiate Choral Ensembles:
A Survey for Collegiate Choral Conductors**

Researchers: Simon Hill, doctoral student, UW School of Music Choral Conducting Department, email kshill@uw.edu

Dr. Giselle Wyers, faculty advisor, Chair, Voice/Choral; Professor, Choral Conducting, email wyersg@uw.edu

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Being in the study is voluntary. Please read this carefully. You may ask any questions about the study. Then you can decide whether or not you want to be in the study.

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS STUDY

The purpose of this survey is to explore how elements of critical pedagogy are applied within the context of collegiate choral ensembles and to gauge the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors regarding these critical elements. You do not need to be familiar with critical pedagogy to take this survey. The single requirement is that you are currently the conductor of a collegiate choral ensemble within the United States. The survey is divided into six sections: demographics, ensemble, rehearsal, performance, the role of the conductor, and concluding questions. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that collegiate choral conductors may engage in practices related to critical pedagogy without calling it as such. Data from the survey will contribute to an understanding of critical practices as they are currently applied within collegiate choirs. This research will have implications for those considering the activities of a collegiate choral ensemble within a framework of critical pedagogy.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this survey is to explore how elements of critical pedagogy are applied within the context of collegiate choral ensembles and to gauge the attitudes of collegiate choral conductors regarding these critical elements.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Participation in the study involves completing the survey. The survey is anonymous and full completion will require approximately 20 minutes. You will be asked about your collegiate setting and your current choral practices. The online survey will be open through March 31, 2021.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Taking time during a busy day to complete a survey may cause an increase in stress.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

There are no outside benefits from being in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH INFORMATION

This survey is anonymous. Survey responses will be kept indefinitely by the researcher and may be used in presentations or publications. Participants will not be given the opportunity to review their responses or delete any portions once they are submitted.

USE OF INFORMATION

The information obtained from you for this study might be used for future studies. The researcher may remove anything that might identify you from the information. If so, that information and specimens may then be used for future research studies or given to another investigator without getting additional

permission from you. It is also possible that in the future we may want to use or share study information that might identify you. If we do, a review board will decide whether or not we need to get additional permission from you.

Commercial Profit

The information we collect as part of this research may be used for commercial profit. There is no plan to share this profit with you.

OTHER INFORMATION

You may refuse to participate, and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

RESEARCH-RELATED INJURY

If you think you have been harmed from being in this research, please contact Simon Hill kshill@uw.edu or Dr. Giselle Wyers wyersg@uw.edu.

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, or if I have been harmed by participating in this study, I can contact one of the researchers listed on the first page of this consent form. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at [\(206\) 543-0098](tel:2065430098) or call collect at [\(206\) 221-5940](tel:2062215940). I may request a copy of this consent form from the researchers listed on the first page of this consent form.

***1)**

By checking 'yes' you confirm that you have read the information above and you consent to participating in this survey.

I have read the information above and I consent to participating in this survey.

Yes [Value=1]No [Value=2]

Question Logic

If [Yes] is selected, then skip to question [after #1, Text] (See "Edit Logic" for details)

If [No] is selected, then skip to question [after #115, Text] (See "Edit Logic" for details)

—————Page Break—————

Demographics

***2)**

Do you currently direct a collegiate choral ensemble?

Yes [Value=1]No [Value=2]

Question Logic

If [Yes] is selected, then skip to question [#3]

If [No] is selected, then skip to question [after #115, Text] (See "Edit Logic" for details)

—————Page Break—————

3)

Which of the following best describes your gender identity? (Please select all that apply)

Woman (including cis- and trans-women) [Checked=1] Man (including cis- and trans-men) [Checked=1] Non-binary, genderqueer [Checked=1] I prefer not to say [Checked=1] I prefer to self-describe (please do so in the space provided) [Checked=1] Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

4)

Which of the following best describes you? (Select all the apply to you).

American Indian or Alaska Native [Checked=1] Asian [Checked=1] Black or African American [Checked=1] Hispanic, Latinx, or of Spanish Origin [Checked=1] Middle Eastern or North African [Checked=1] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander [Checked=1] White [Checked=1] I prefer not to answer. [Checked=1] My race, ethnicity, or origin is not listed (please specify in the space provided) [Checked=1] Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

*5)

At what type of institution of higher education do you currently teach?

Community College [Value=1] Conservatory [Value=3] Liberal Arts College or University [Value=2] Research University [Value=4] Other [Value=5]

*6)

Is your institution public or private?

Public [Value=1] Private [Value=2]

*7)

Is your institution religiously affiliated or secular?

Religiously affiliated [Value=1] Secular [Value=2]

*8)

Are you a graduate student conductor or a faculty member?

Graduate student conductor [Value=1] Faculty member [Value=2]

Question Logic

If [Graduate student conductor...] is selected, then skip to question [#11]

If [Faculty member] is selected, then skip to question [#9]

—————Page Break—————

*9)

At what faculty level are you currently ranked?

Adjunct [Value=1] Instructor [Value=2] Assistant Professor [Value=3] Associate Professor [Value=4] Professor [Value=5] Other (please specify) [Value=7]

*10)

Do you have tenure?

Yes [Value=1] No [Value=2] In process [Value=3]

*11)

How many years have you directed collegiate choral ensembles?

—————Page Break—————

It is not uncommon for collegiate choral conductors to lead multiple choirs at their school. For the purposes of this survey, please answer the remaining questions throughout the survey as they pertain to what you consider your primary choral ensemble.

***12)**

How many years have you worked with your current ensemble?

***13)**

What is the voicing of the collegiate choral ensemble you currently conduct?

Mixed voice ensemble [Value=1] Treble voice ensemble [Value=2] Lower voice ensemble [Value=3]

***14)**

What level of collegiate choral ensemble do you currently conduct?

Top level [Value=1] Middle level [Value=2] Beginning level [Value=3]

***15)**

Is your ensemble auditioned or non-auditioned?

Auditioned [Value=1] Non-auditioned [Value=2]

***16)**

How large is your ensemble?

4-12 singers [Value=1] 13-24 singers [Value=2] 25-48 singers [Value=3] 49-60 singers [Value=4] 60-72 singers [Value=5] 73+ singers [Value=6]

***17)**

What percentage of your singers are undergraduate students?

0-20% [Value=1] 21-40% [Value=2] 41-60% [Value=3] 61-80% [Value=4] 81-100% [Value=5]

***18)**

What percentage of your singers are graduate students?

0-20% [Value=1] 21-40% [Value=2] 41-60% [Value=3] 61-80% [Value=4] 81-100% [Value=5]

***19)**

What percentage of your singers are music majors?

0-20% [Value=1] 21-40% [Value=2] 41-60% [Value=3] 61-80% [Value=4] 81-100% [Value=5]

***20)**

What percentage of your singers are non-music majors?

0-20% [Value=1] 21-40% [Value=2] 41-60% [Value=3] 61-80% [Value=4] 81-100% [Value=5]

***21)**

In which ACDA region do you currently teach?

Eastern Region (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland/District of Columbia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont) [Value=1] MidWestern Region (Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin) [Value=2] NorthWestern Region (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming) [Value=3] Southern Region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia) [Value=4] SouthWestern Region (Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas) [Value=5] Western Region (Arizona, California, Hawai'i, Nevada, Utah) [Value=6]

*22)

Are you familiar with the field of critical pedagogy?

Yes [Value=1]No [Value=2]

Question Logic

If [Yes] is selected, then skip to question [#23]

If [No] is selected, then skip to question [after #25, Text] (See "Edit Logic" for details)

Page Break

*23)

Do you intentionally use critical pedagogy in your work with your collegiate choral ensemble?

Yes [Value=1]No [Value=2]

Question Logic

If [Yes] is selected, then skip to question [#24]

If [No] is selected, then skip to question [#25]

Page Break

24)

Please briefly describe why you use critical pedagogy with your collegiate choral ensemble.

(1000 characters remaining)

Skip Logic

Skip to question [after #25, Text] (See "Edit Logic" for details)

Skip Logic

25)

Please briefly describe why you do not use critical pedagogy with your collegiate choral ensemble.

(1000 characters remaining)

Page Break

The Ensemble (10 questions)

*26)

What is the primary purpose of your collegiate choral ensemble?

(1000 characters remaining)

How important are the following elements to your work with your collegiate choral ensemble?

	Highly Important	More Important	Important	Less Important	Not At All Important
*27) Contextualizing choral repertoire	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*28) Improving vocal facility	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*29) Outreach with communities off campus	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

*30)	Outreach with communities on campus	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*31)	Contributing to non-musical campus events (e.g. convocation, sporting events, commencement, etc.)	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*32)	Political engagement	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*33)	Building community among choir members	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

34)

Please select all that apply.

Participation in my collegiate choral ensemble equips members...

With skills necessary for any job after graduation [Checked=1]With skills necessary for professional musicians [Checked=1]With skills necessary for lifelong choral participation [Checked=1]With skills necessary for asking questions and forming solutions [Checked=1]With skills necessary for a politically engaged citizen [Checked=1]Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

Page Break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
*35)	My collegiate choral ensemble is politically neutral.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*36)	My collegiate choral ensemble is a place for political discourse.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*37)	My collegiate choral ensemble resembles the best features of an ideal society.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
*38)	I require my members to be active community members.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*39)	I encourage my ensemble members to be active community members.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*40)	My collegiate choral ensemble lends itself to democracy.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*41)	My collegiate choral ensemble lends itself to authoritarianism.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*42)	My collegiate choral ensemble lends itself to hierarchy.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

The Choral Rehearsal (12 questions)

*43)

What is your primary role as the conductor in rehearsal?

(1000 characters remaining)

*44)

What is the primary role of the singer in rehearsal?

(1000 characters remaining)

Page Break

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
*45) I as the conductor contextualize the repertoire for my singers during rehearsal time.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*46) I ask ensemble members to share repertoire knowledge during rehearsal.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*47) I facilitate ensemble discussions about the repertoire during rehearsal time.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*48) I facilitate ensemble discussions about the repertoire outside of rehearsal time.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*49) I intentionally provide opportunities for ensemble members to teach other singers	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*50) Active leadership roles are held by ensemble members	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*51) I avoid conflict and controversy in the choral rehearsal.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
*52) The choral rehearsal is a place for political discourse.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*53) Repertoire is the best way for my collegiate choral ensemble to engage in politics.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

The Choral Performance (14 questions)

*54)

What is the primary purpose of performance for your collegiate choral ensemble?

(1000 characters remaining)

How important are the following performance purposes to your work with your collegiate choral ensemble?

	Highly Important	More Important	Important	Less Important	Not At All Important
*55) Entertaining the audience.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*56) Connecting with the audience.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

*57)	Addressing a particular social concern through music.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*58)	Giving the ensemble members an opportunity to perform.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*59)	Recruiting new student singers.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*60)	Keeping choral music alive.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
*61)	It is important for singers to reflect on their work as individuals after a performance.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*62)	Post-concert reflection is best done as an ensemble activity.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
*63)	I as the conductor write program notes and/or speak to the audience for concerts.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*64)	Individual ensemble members write program notes and/or speak to the audience for concerts.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*65)	I avoid conflict and controversy in concert programming.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
*66)	Concert repertoire should be politically neutral.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*67)	A traditional concert performance is the best way for my collegiate choral ensemble to engage in politics.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

*68) My collegiate choir engages in musical outreach.
Always [Value=1]Frequently [Value=2]Sometimes [Value=3]Rarely [Value=4]Never [Value=5]

*69)
My collegiate choir engages in non-musical outreach.
Always [Value=1]Frequently [Value=2]Sometimes [Value=3]Rarely [Value=4]Never [Value=5]

For the following three questions, outreach may refer to musical and/or non-musical outreach.

*70) Outreach is the best way for my collegiate choral ensemble to engage in politics.
Strongly Agree [Value=1]Agree [Value=2]Neutral [Value=3]Disagree [Value=4]Strongly Disagree [Value=5]

*71)

The best place for outreach is...

On tour [Value=1]In concert [Value=2]On campus, within the campus community [Value=3]Off campus, within in the local community [Value=4]Other (please specify) [Value=5]

*72)

The best approach to outreach is...

Raising awareness in a concert [Value=1]Raising funds [Value=2]Being in partnership with an organization [Value=3]Building community relationships [Value=4]Other (please specify) [Value=5]

Page Break

The Role of the Collegiate Choral Conductor (17 questions)

*73)

What is your primary role as a collegiate choral conductor?

(1000 characters remaining)

Page Break

*74) I regularly reflect on my work as a collegiate choral conductor.

Always [Value=1]Frequently [Value=2]Sometimes [Value=3]Rarely [Value=4]Never [Value=5]

*75) Reflection informs future choices I make as a collegiate choral conductor

Strongly Agree [Value=1]Agree [Value=2]Neutral [Value=3]Disagree [Value=4]Strongly Disagree [Value=5]

How often do you reflect on the following?

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
*76) Repertoire selection	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*77) Rehearsal practices	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*78) Opportunities for professional development	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*79) Teaching philosophy	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*80) Time management	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*81) Concert practices	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*82) Ensemble vocal technique	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*83) Opportunities for personal continued education	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

*84) Politics	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*85) Learning sequences	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*86) Outreach possibilities	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*87) Interactions with colleagues	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

88)

Please describe other points of reflection you engage with as a collegiate choral conductor.

(1000 characters remaining)

How often do you engage in the following forms of reflection?

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
*89) Reading	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*90) Writing	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*91) Viewing rehearsal/performance footage	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*92) Thinking to myself	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*93) Conversations with colleagues	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*94) Conversations with ensemble members	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

95)

If there are other modes of reflection you engage with, please describe them in the space provided.

(1000 characters remaining)

Page Break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
*96) As a collegiate choral conductor, it is important that I know the singers in my ensemble.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*97) As a collegiate choral conductor, It is important that I know the musical history of the singers in my ensemble.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*98) As a collegiate choral conductor, It is important that I know the cultural history of the singers in my ensemble.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*99) My role as the conductor is above the role of the ensemble members.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
*100) I interact with ensemble members outside of rehearsal/performance.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*101) I leave my role of conductor when I interact with ensemble members outside of rehearsal/performance.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*102) I take the musical history of ensemble members into consideration when programming.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*103) I take ensemble members' culture of reference into consideration when programming.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*104) I take student repertoire suggestions into consideration when programming.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*105) I treat concert programming as a collaborative ensemble activity.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*106) I consider the implications of concert attire required for my ensemble.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

Concluding Questions (9 questions)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
*107) The current norms of collegiate choral repertoire need to be questioned.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*108) The current norms of collegiate choral rehearsal need to be questioned	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*109) The current norms of collegiate choral performance need to be questioned	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*110) The current norms of collegiate choral musical outreach need to be questioned	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
*111) I feel supported by my institution to question the norms of choral practice.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*112) I avoid questioning the norms of choral practice for fear of a negative response from the institution.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]
*113) I avoid questioning the norms of choral practice for fear of a negative response from the ensemble.	[Value=1]	[Value=2]	[Value=3]	[Value=4]	[Value=5]

Page Break

114)

Have your attitudes or practices about any choral norms changed in the past four years? How so? What brought on these changes in attitude or practice?

(1000 characters remaining)

Page Break

***115)**

All education is political.

Strongly Agree [Value=1] Agree [Value=2] Neutral [Value=3] Disagree [Value=4] Strongly Disagree [Value=5]

Page Break

Thank you for your time and honesty in completing this survey!

Automatic Page Break

Application of Critical Pedagogy in Collegiate Choral Ensembles: A Survey for Collegiate Choral Conductors

Thank you!

For maximum confidentiality, please close this window.

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Appendix C: Tables and Figures

Method Tables and Figures

Pilot test inconsistencies in conductors' responses to rank order questions.

Table 1

Please rank your top 5 purposes with "1" being the primary purpose.

The primary purpose of my collegiate choral ensemble is...

1	musical outreach with communities off campus	1	to contribute to non-musical campus events (e.g. convocation, sporting events, commencement, etc.)
2	to contextualize choral repertoire	2	musical outreach with communities off campus
3	to improve vocal facility	3	to improve vocal facility
4	to learn, sing, and perform choral repertoire	4	to learn, sing, and perform choral repertoire
5	community building among member	5	community building among members
0	to preserve the canon	0	to preserve the canon
0	political engagement	0	political engagement
0	to contribute to non-musical campus events (e.g. convocation, sporting events, commencement, etc.)	0	to contextualize choral repertoire

Findings and Discussions Tables and Figures

Critical Choral Conscientization Tables and Figures

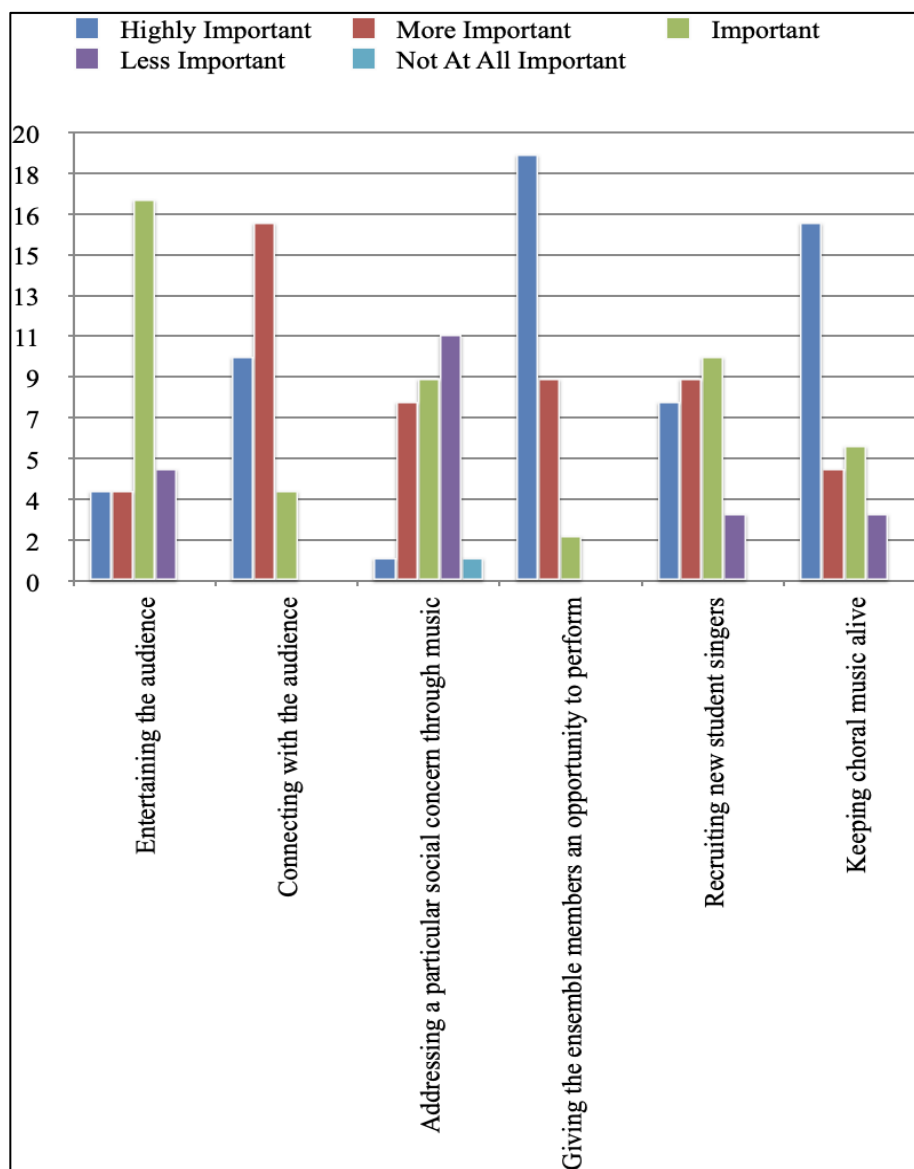


Figure 1.1 “How important are the following performance purposes to your work with your collegiate choral ensemble?”

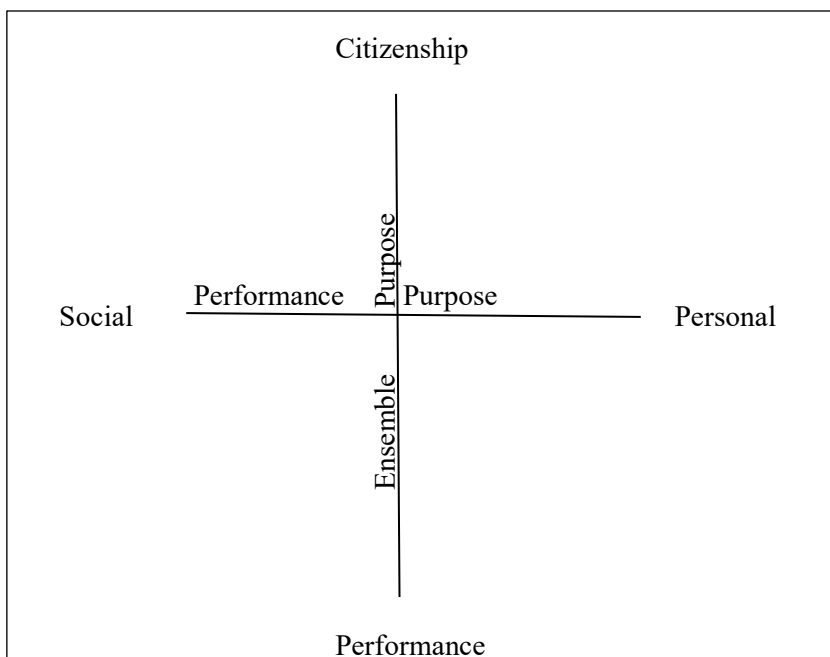


Figure 1.2 Intersections of ensemble and performance purposes

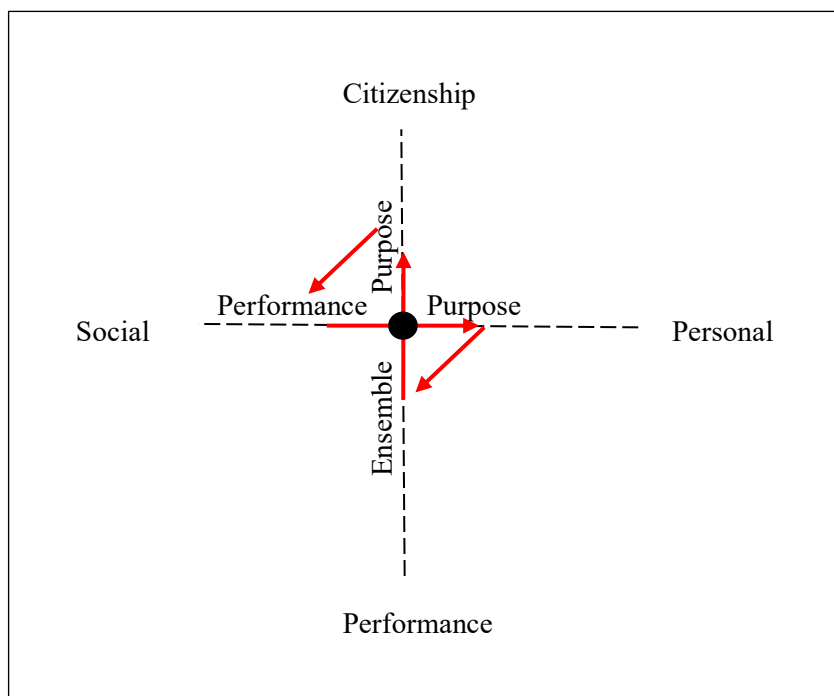


Figure 1.3 Theme of the ensemble

Critical Choral Dialogue Tables and Figures

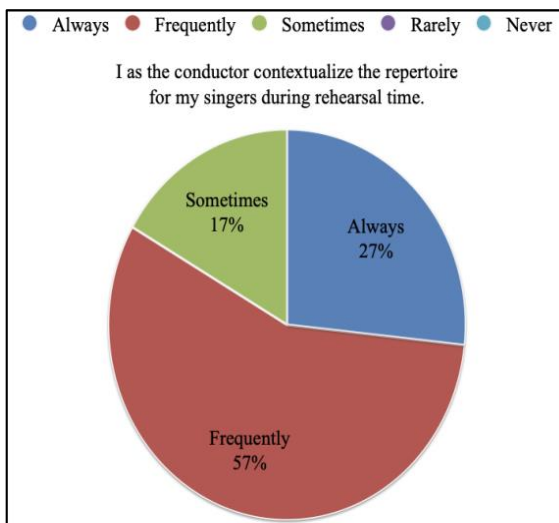


Figure 2.0 Conductor contextualizes repertoire

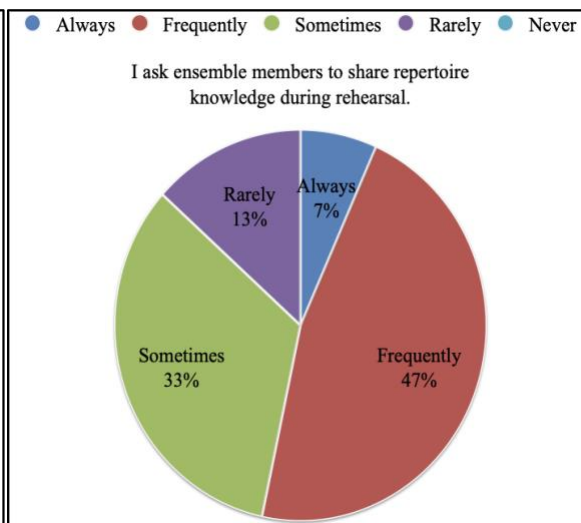


Figure 2.1 Ensemble members contextualize repertoire

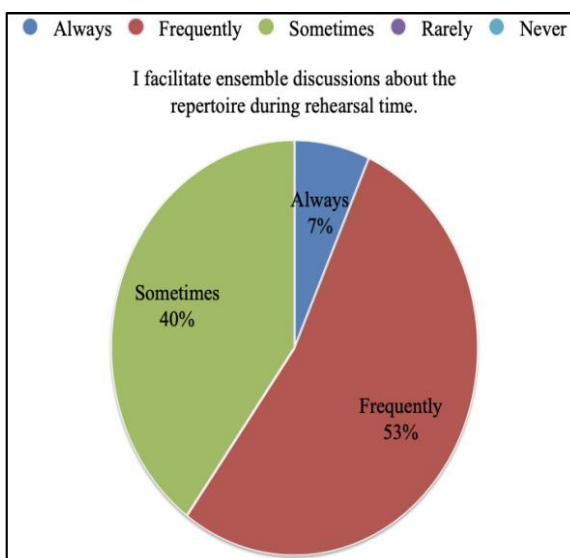


Figure 2.2 Discussion during rehearsal

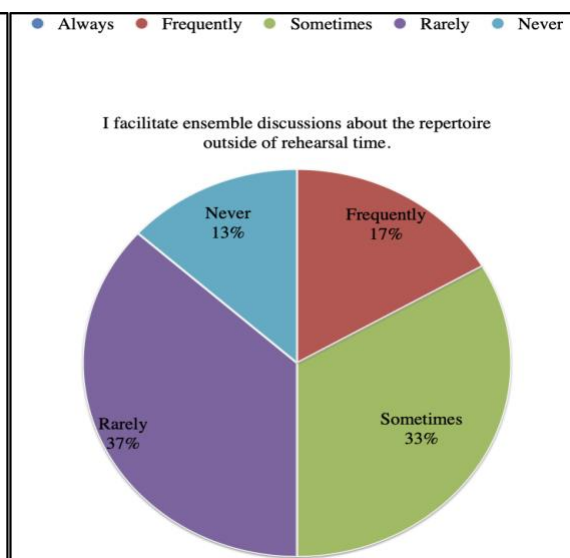


Figure 2.3 Discussion outside rehearsal

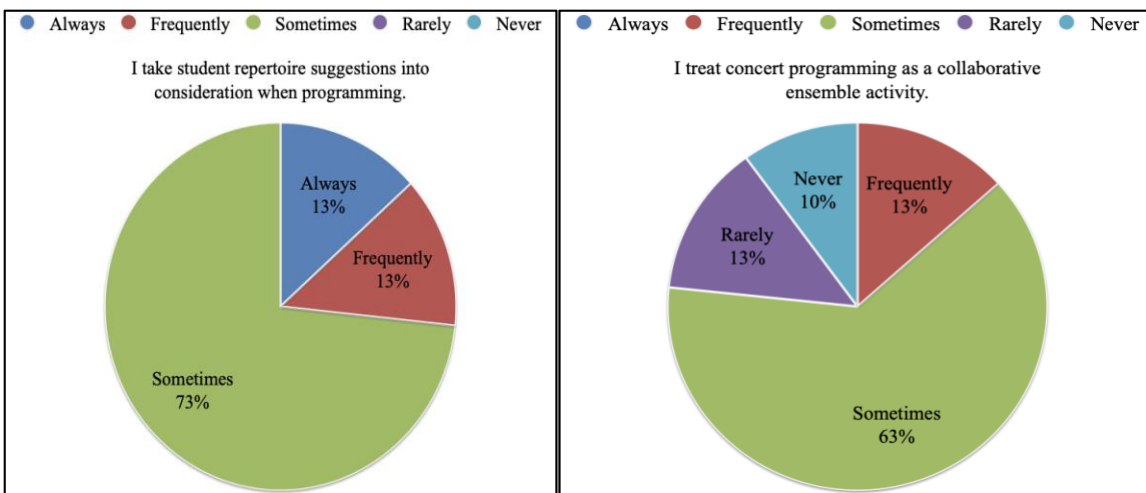


Figure 2.4 Students suggest repertoire

Figure 2.5 Collaborative programming

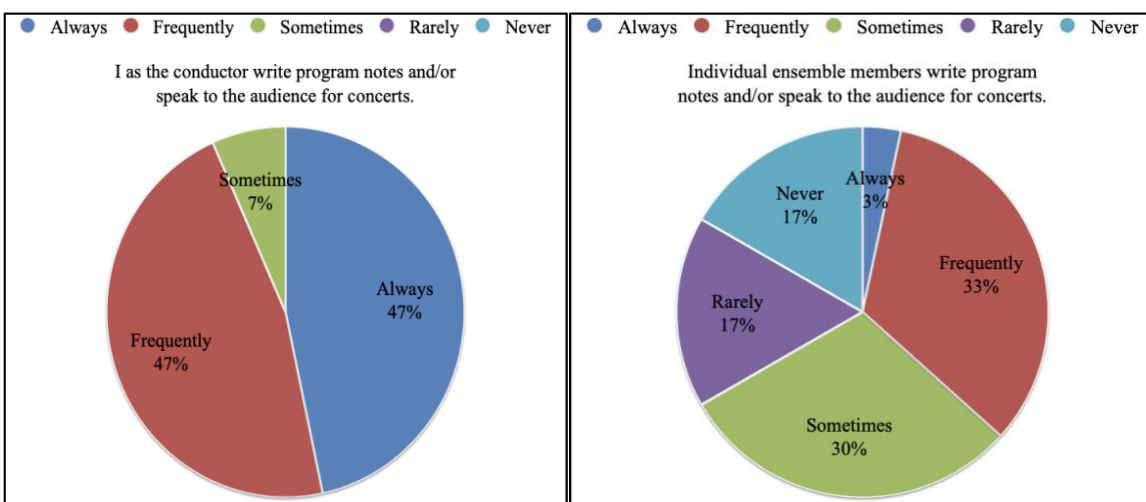


Figure 2.6 Conductor engagement with audience

Figure 2.7 Ensemble member engagement with

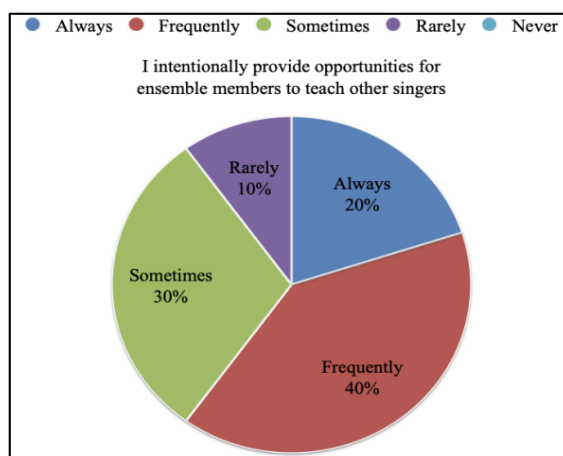


Figure 2.8 Peer to peer instruction

Critical Choral Praxis Tables and Figures

Critical Choral Action

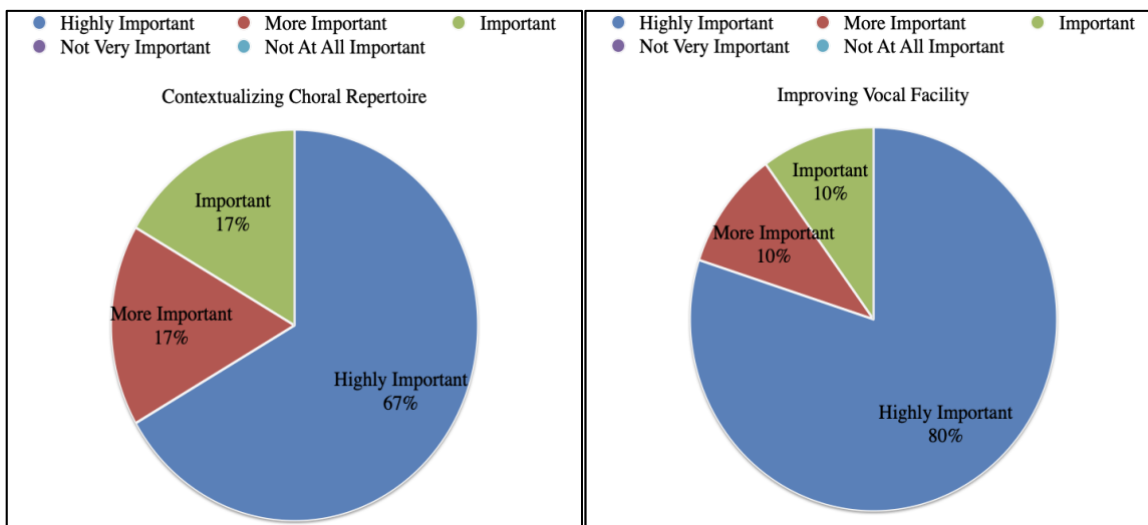


Figure 3.0 Contextualizing repertoire

Figure 3.1 Improving vocal facility

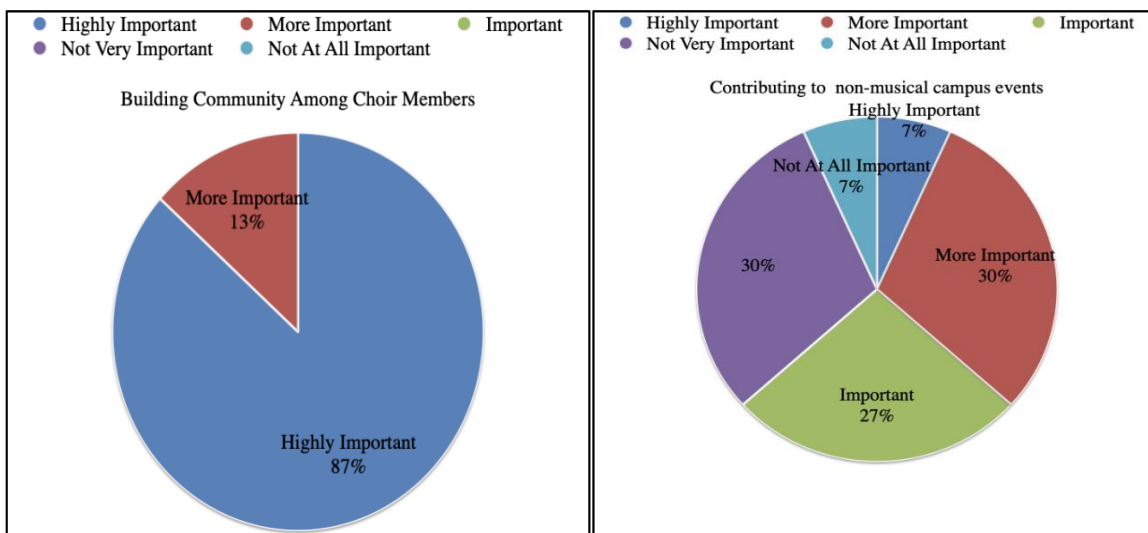


Figure 3.2 Building community among members

Figure 3.3 Contributing to non-musical campus events

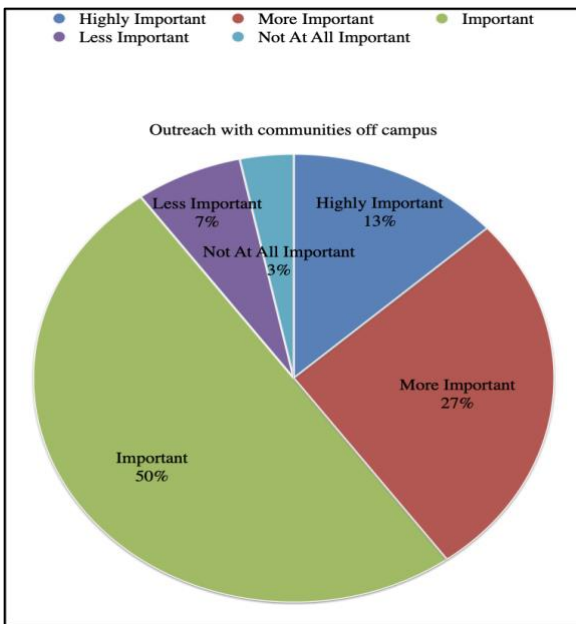


Figure 3.4 Outreach off campus

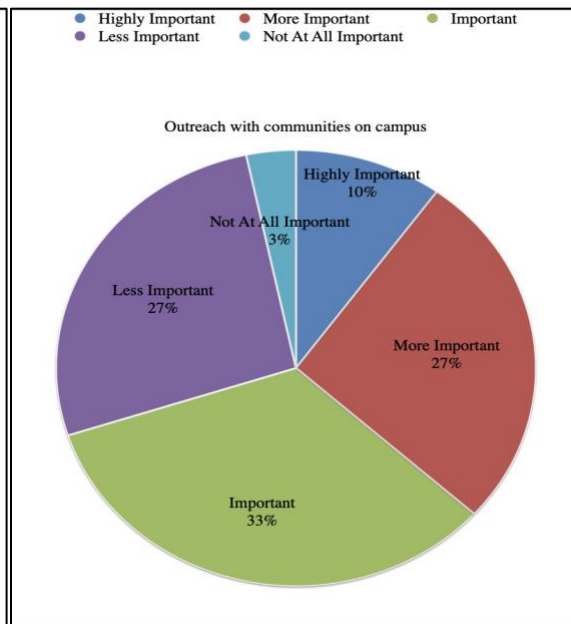


Figure 3.5 Outreach on campus

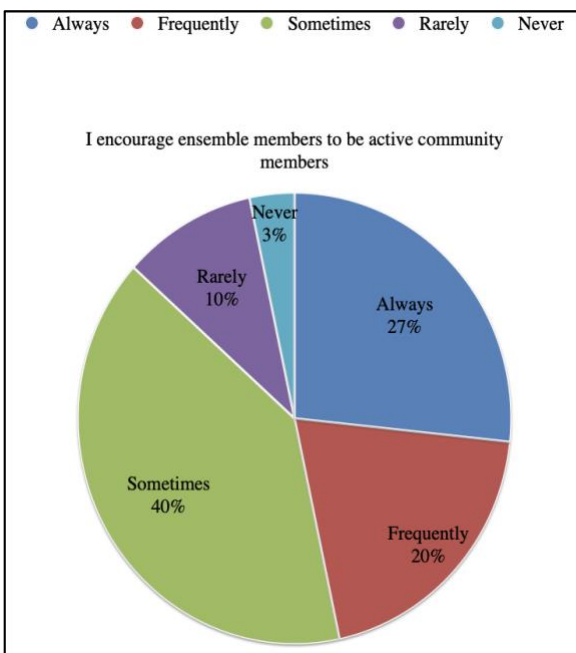


Figure 3.6 Encouraging community involvement

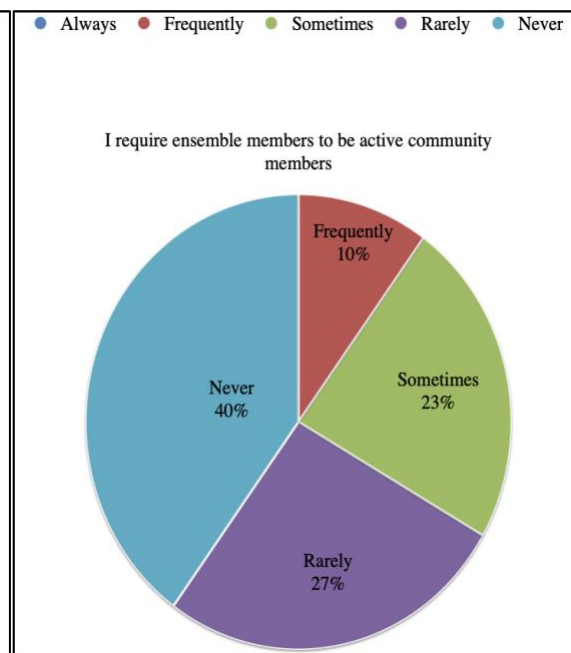


Figure 3.7 Requiring community involvement

Critical Choral Reflection Tables and Figures

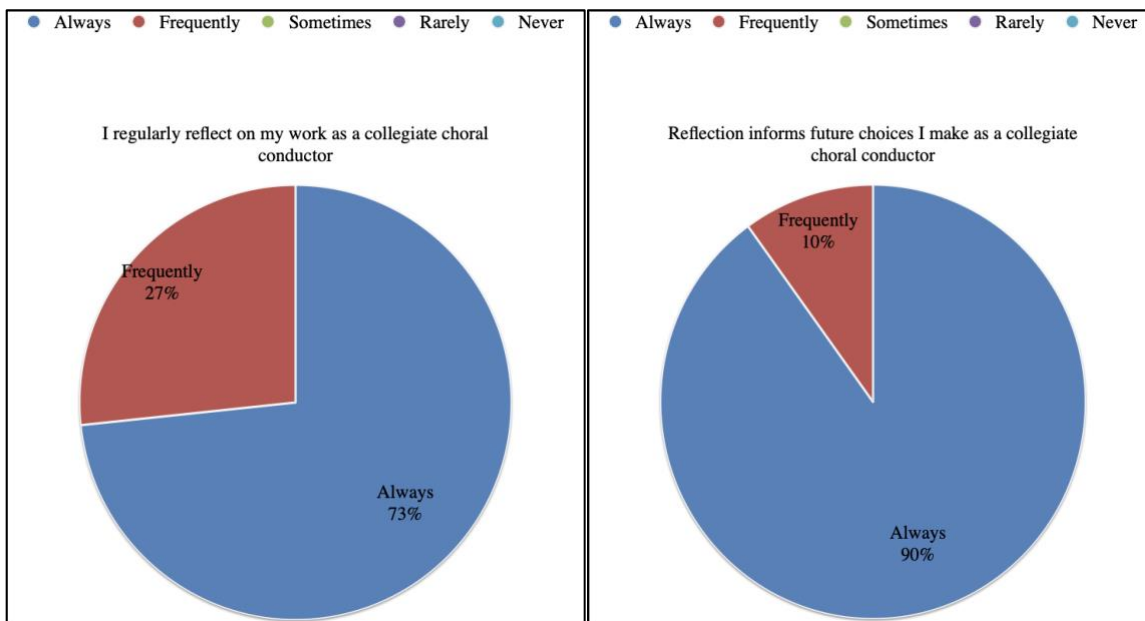


Figure 3.8 Engaging in reflection

Figure 3.9 Reflection informing future choices

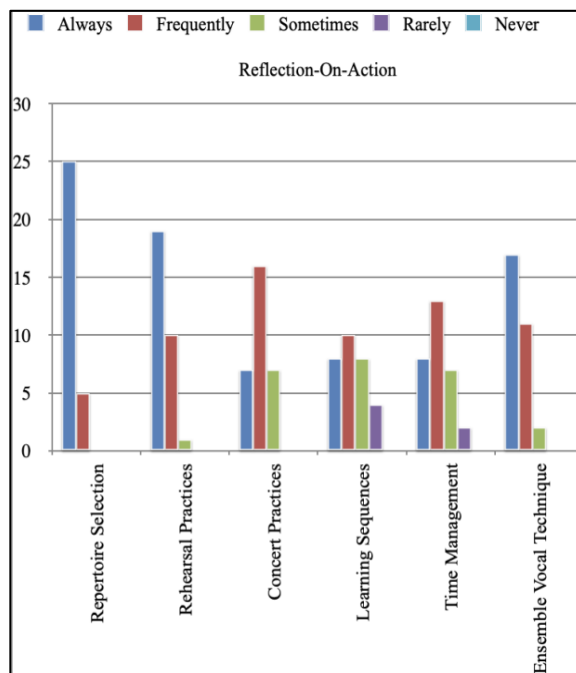


Figure 3.10 Items for reflection-on-action

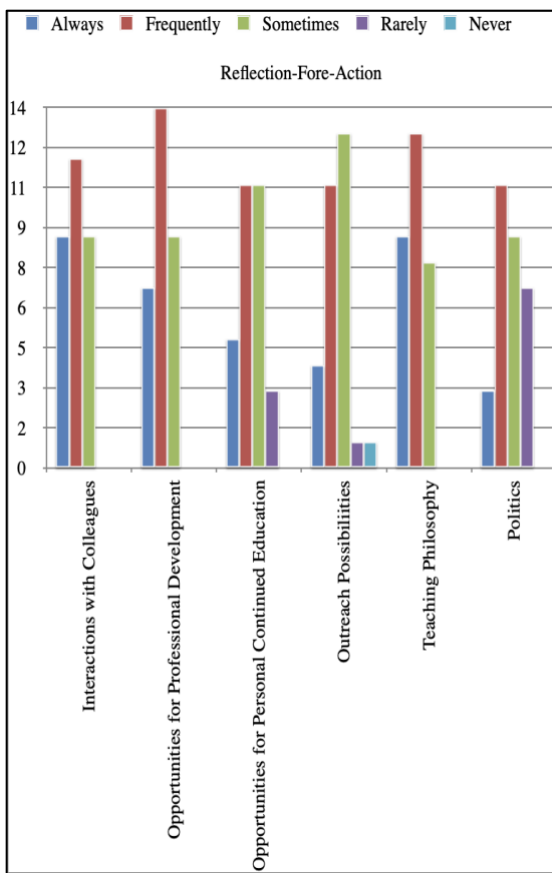


Figure 3.11 Items for reflection-fore-action

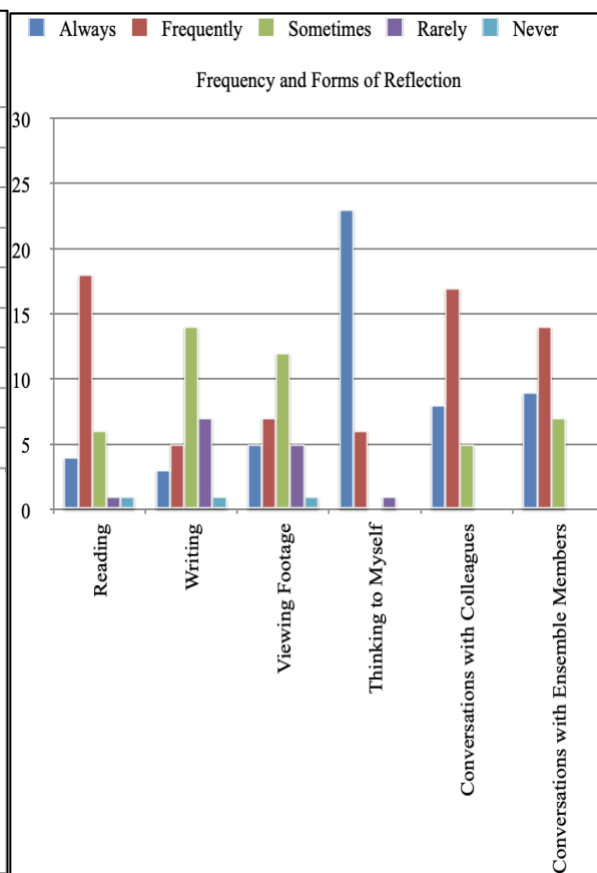


Figure 3.12 Forms of reflection

Critical Choral Solidarity Tables and Figures

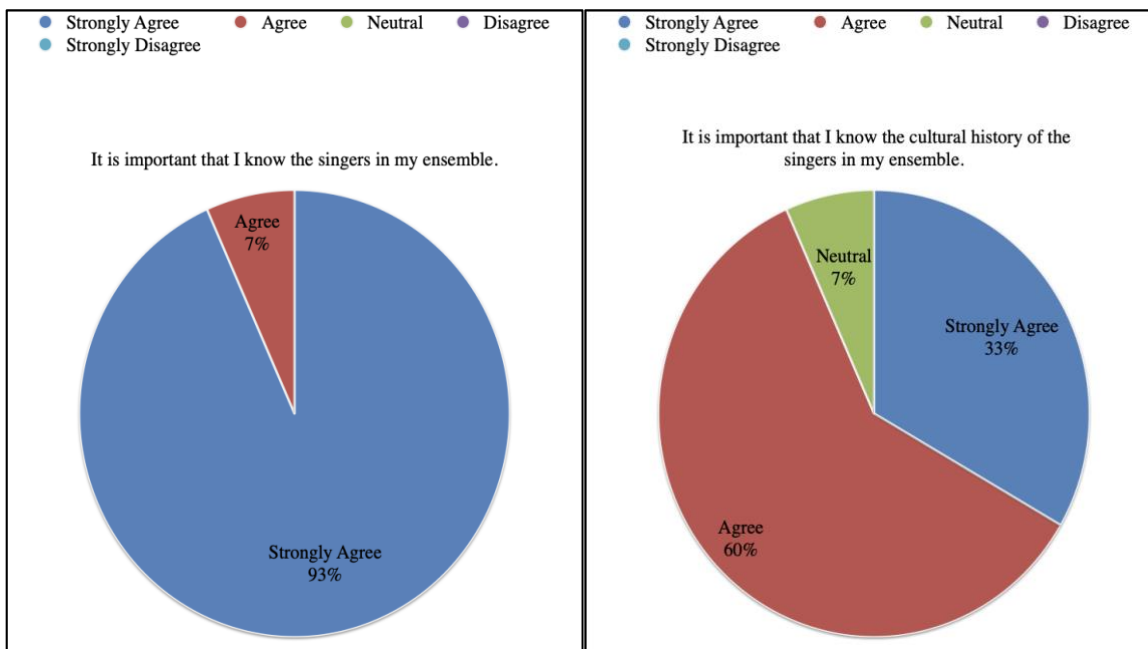


Figure 4.0 Knowing the singers

Figure 4.1 Knowing singers' cultural history

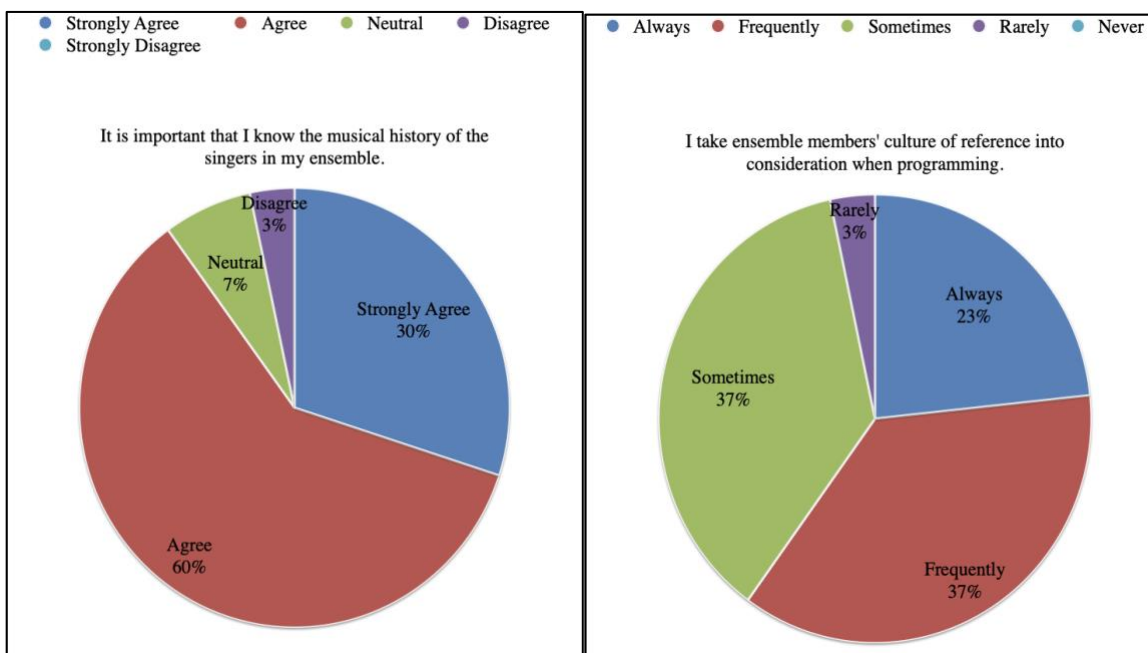


Figure 4.2 Knowing singers' musical history

Figure 4.3 Considering cultures of reference

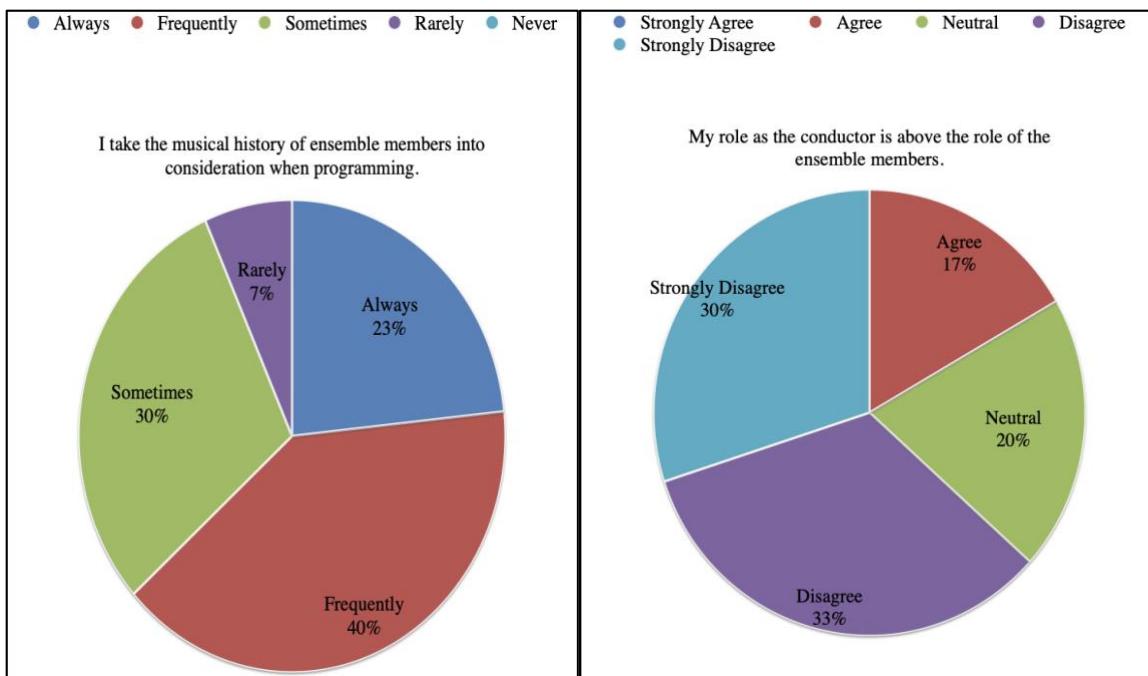


Figure 4.4 Considering musical histories

Figure 4.5 Superior status of the conductor

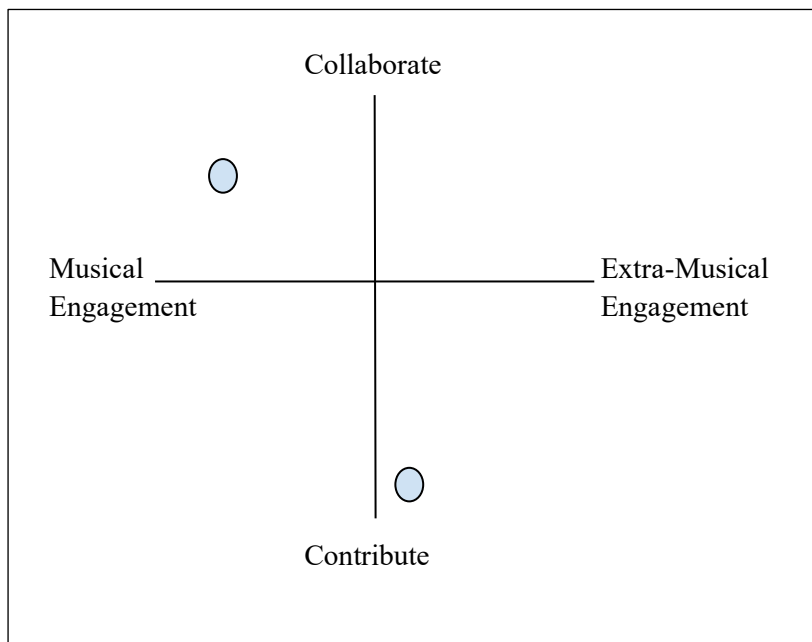


Figure 4.6 Expectation spectrum

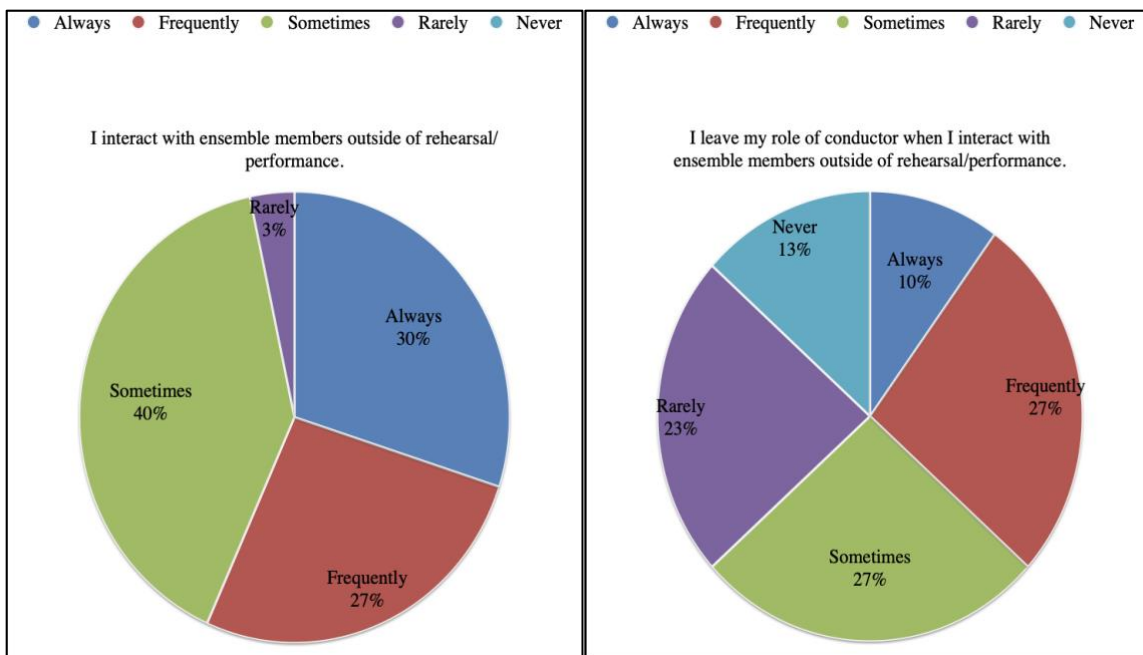


Figure 4.7 Interacting with ensemble members outside of the choral space

Figure 4.8 Leaving the role of conductor outside of the choral space

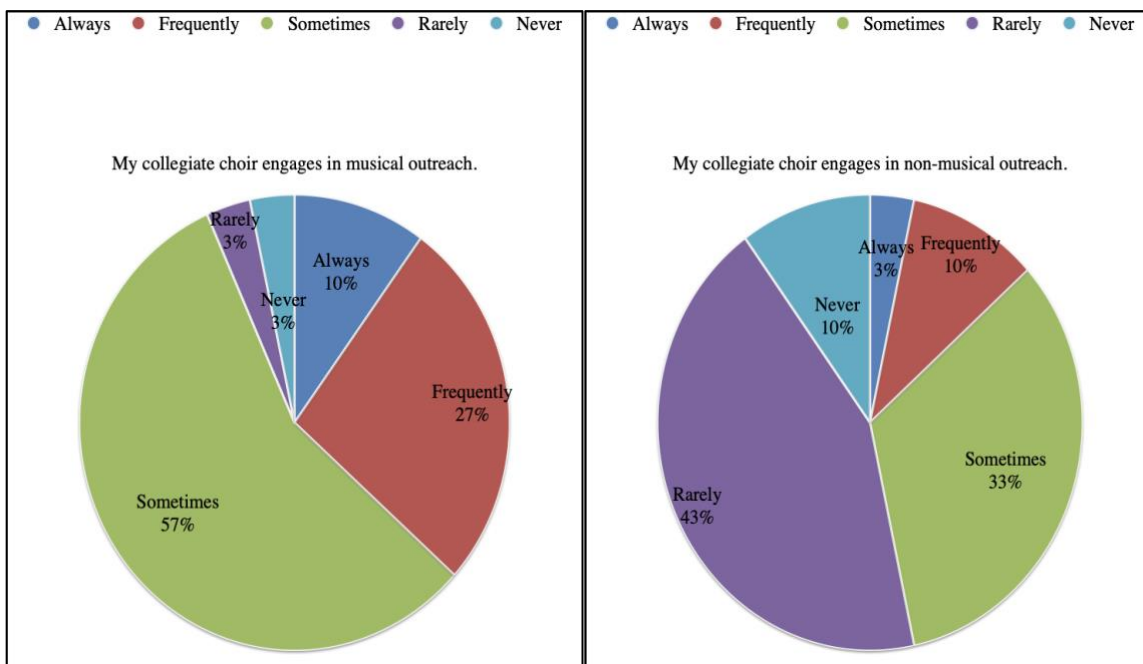


Figure 4.9 Engaging in musical outreach

Figure 4.10 Engaging in non-musical outreach

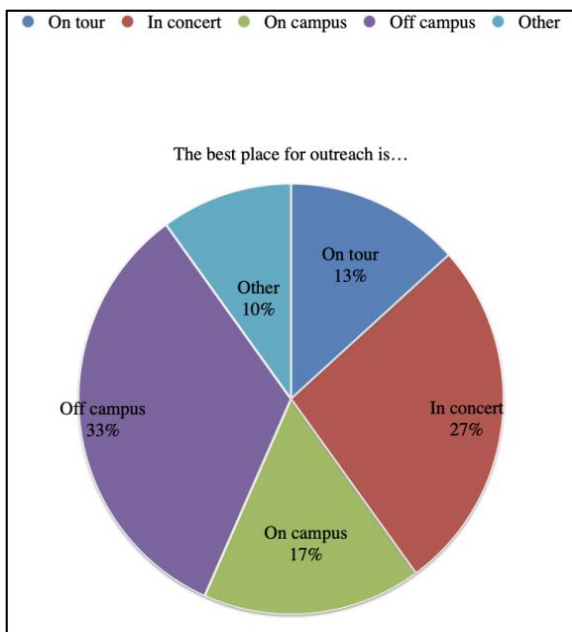


Figure 4.11 Best location for outreach

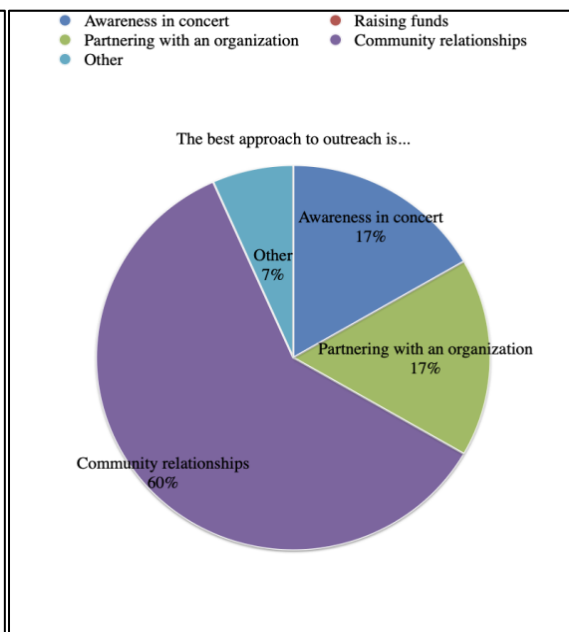


Figure 4.12 Best approach to outreach

Politics and the Critical Choral Ensemble Tables and Figures

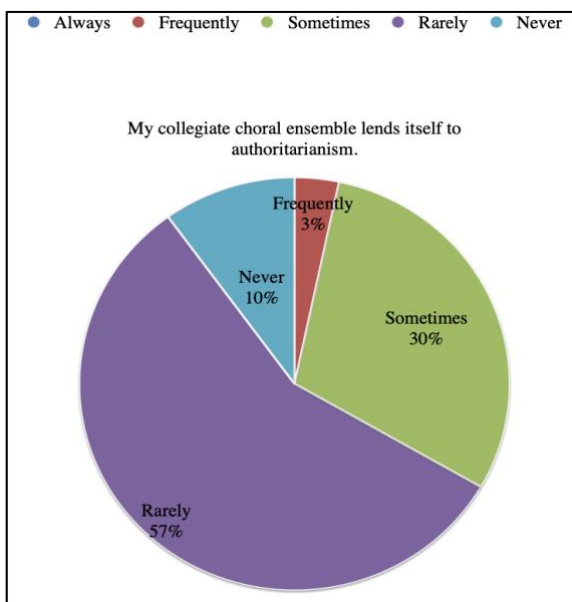


Figure 5.0 Choral authoritarianism

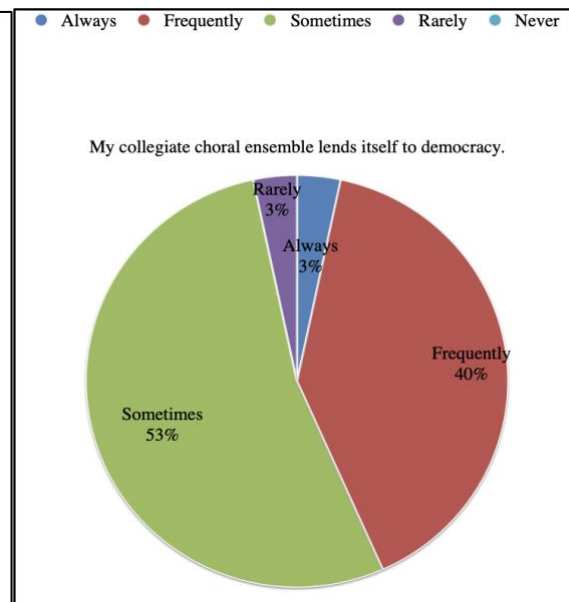


Figure 5.1 Choral democracy

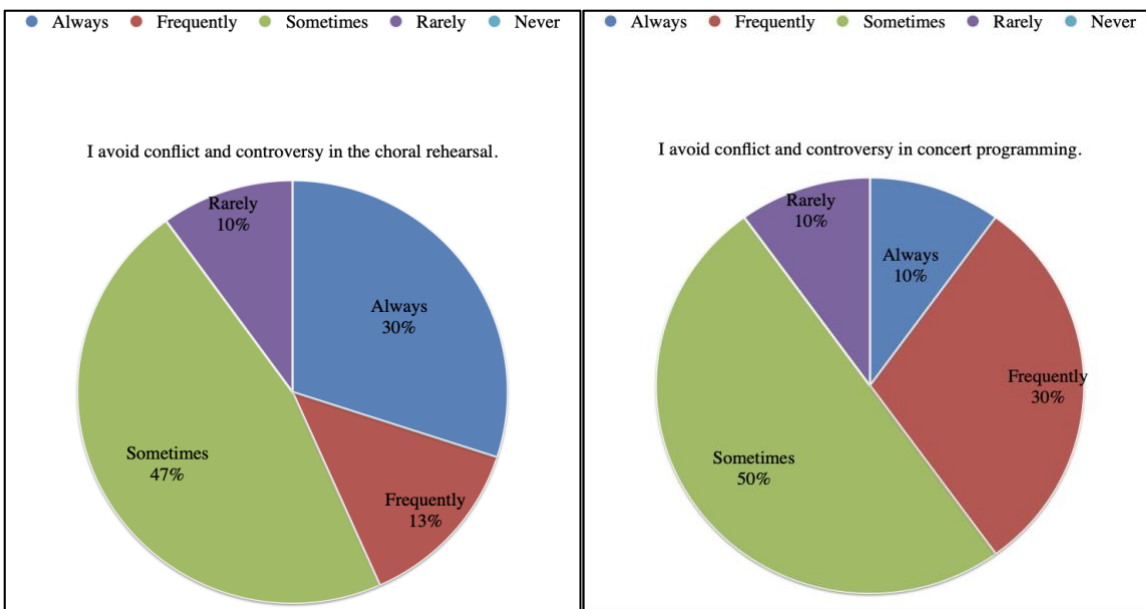


Figure 5.2 Avoiding conflict and controversy in rehearsal

Figure 5.3 Avoiding conflict and controversy in programming

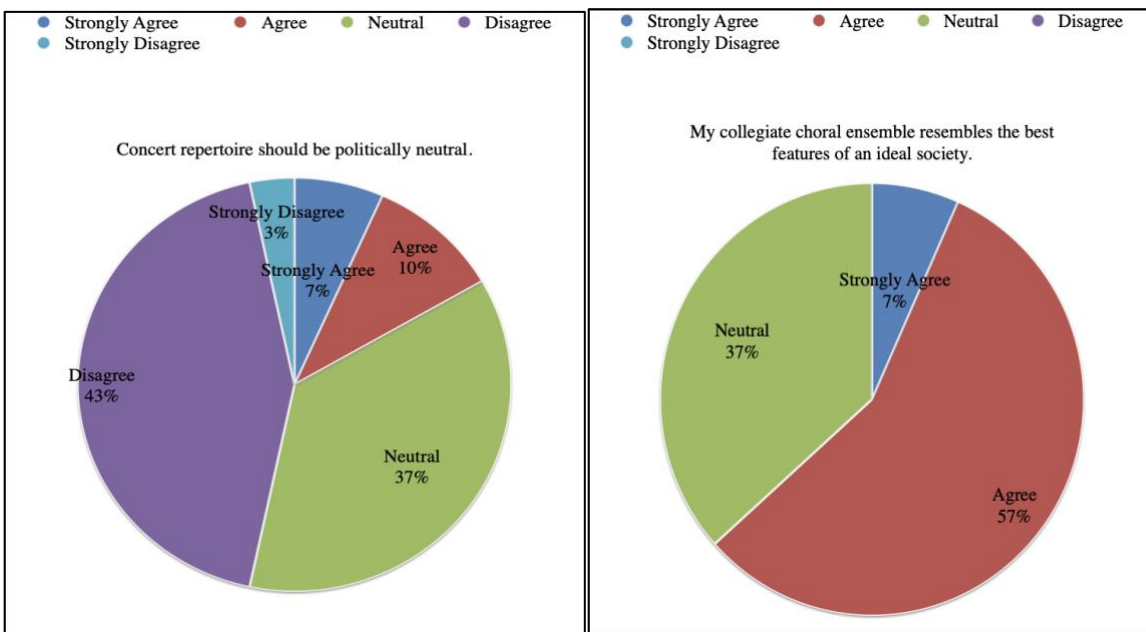


Figure 5.4 Political neutrality of concert repertoire

Figure 5.5 The ensemble reflects an ideal society

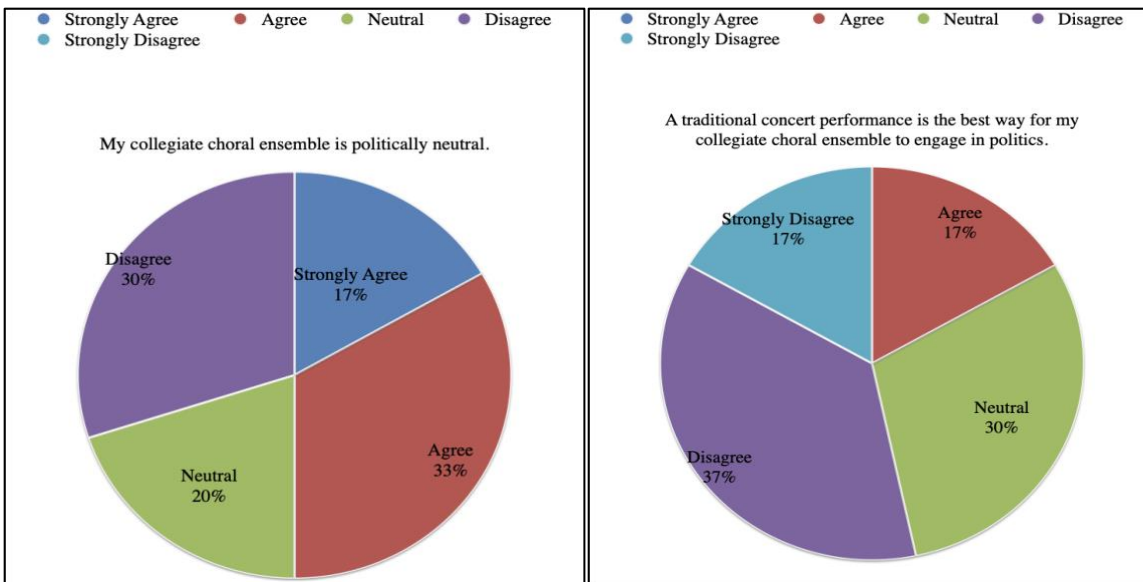


Figure 5.6 The ensemble is politically neutral

Figure 5.7 Engaging in politics in concert

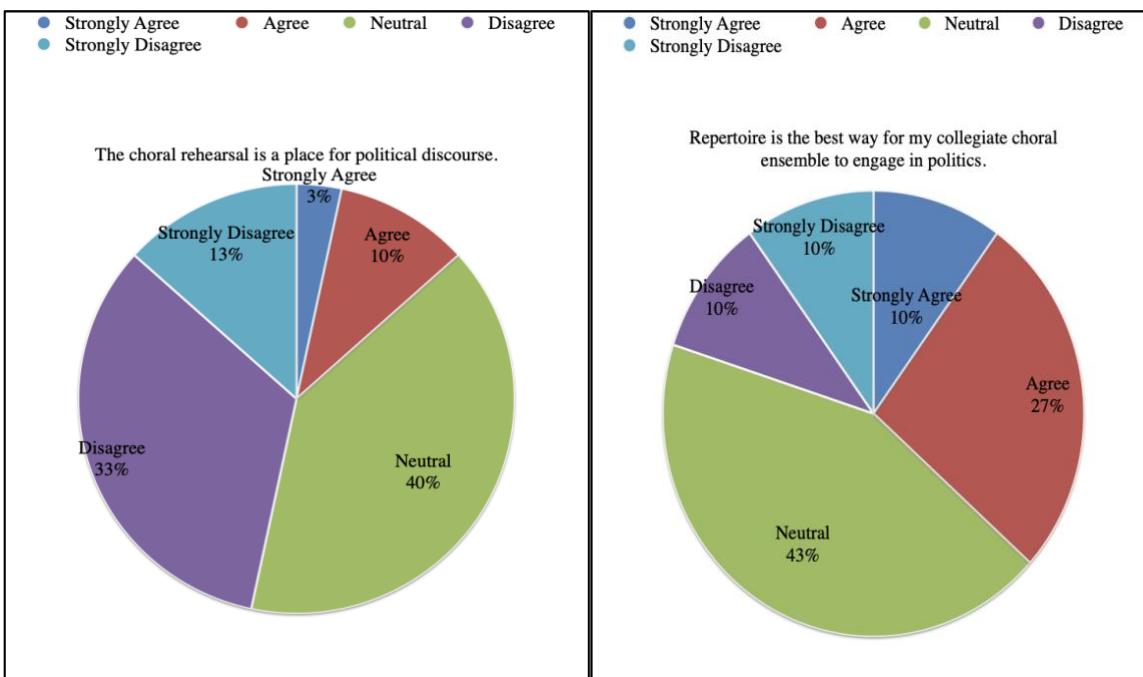


Figure 5.8 Political discourse in rehearsal

Figure 5.9 Repertoire and political engagement

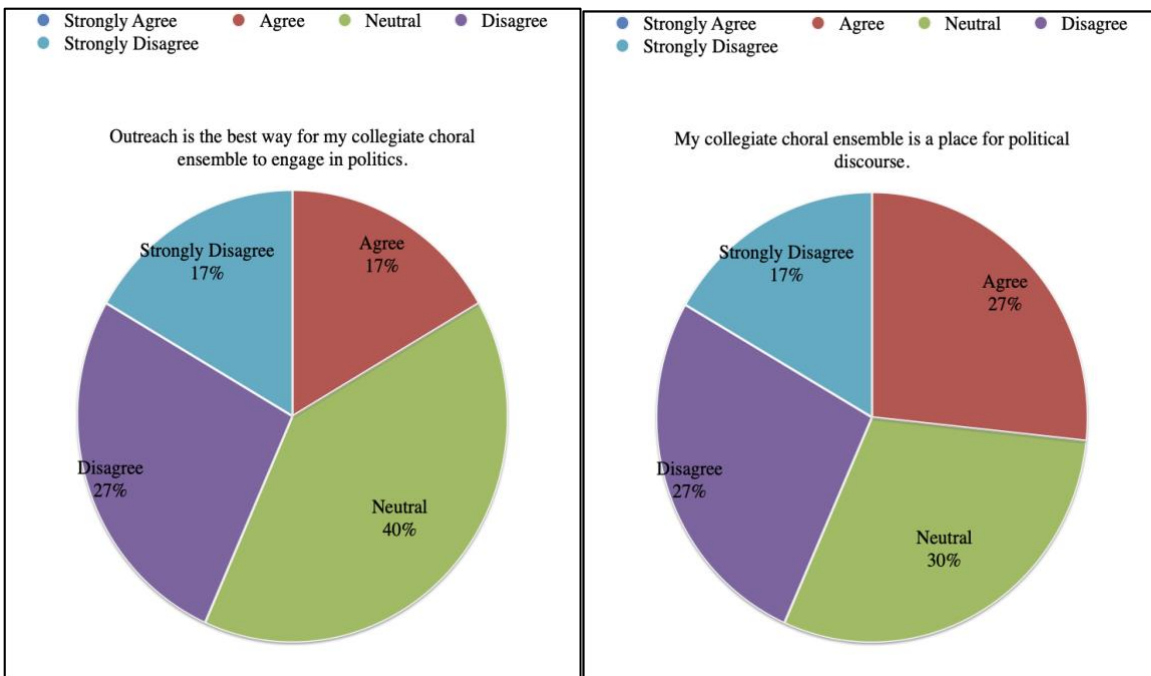


Figure 5.10 Outreach and political engagement

Figure 5.11 Political discourse within the ensemble

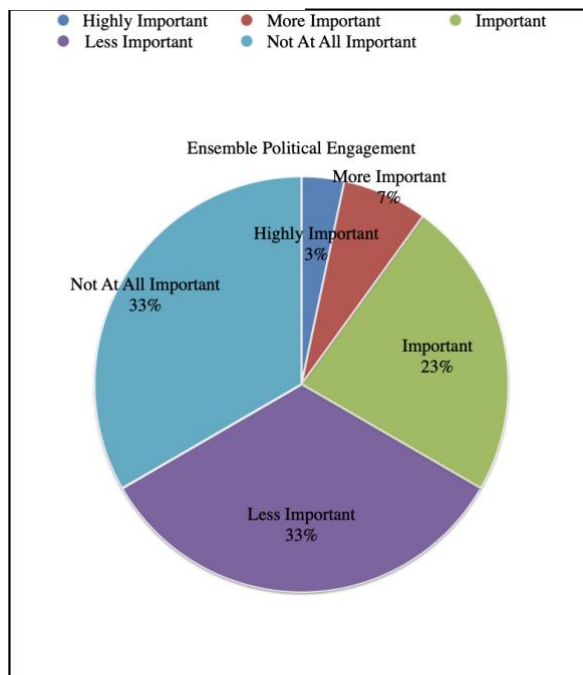


Figure 5.12 Importance of ensemble political engagement

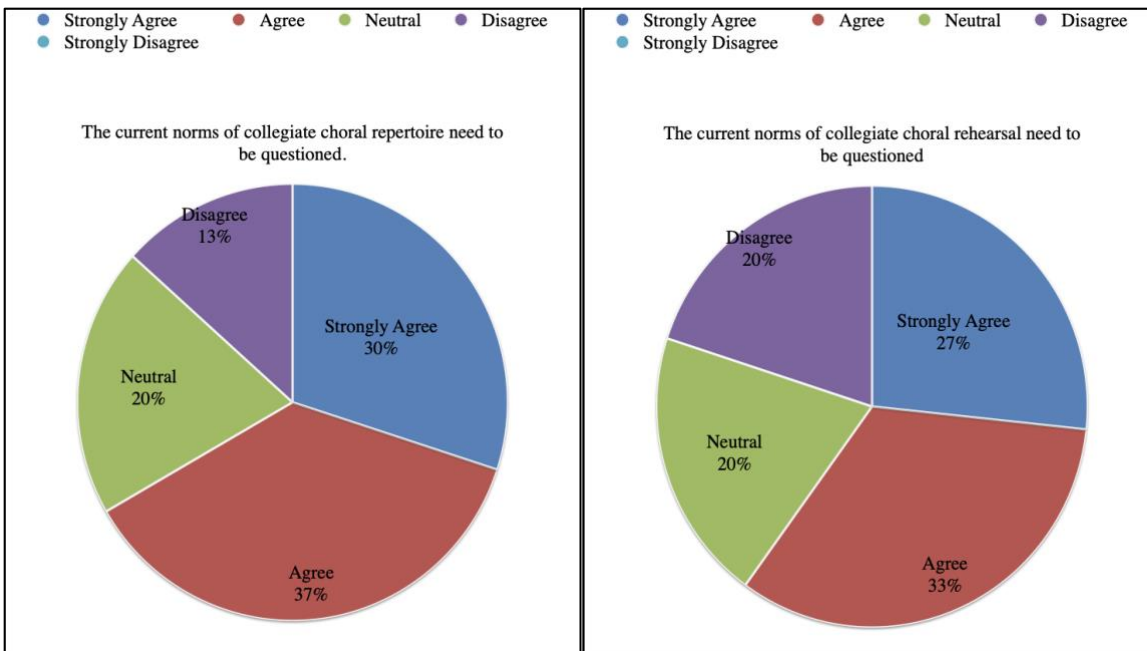


Figure 5.13 Questioning norms of repertoire

Figure 5.14 Questioning norms of rehearsal

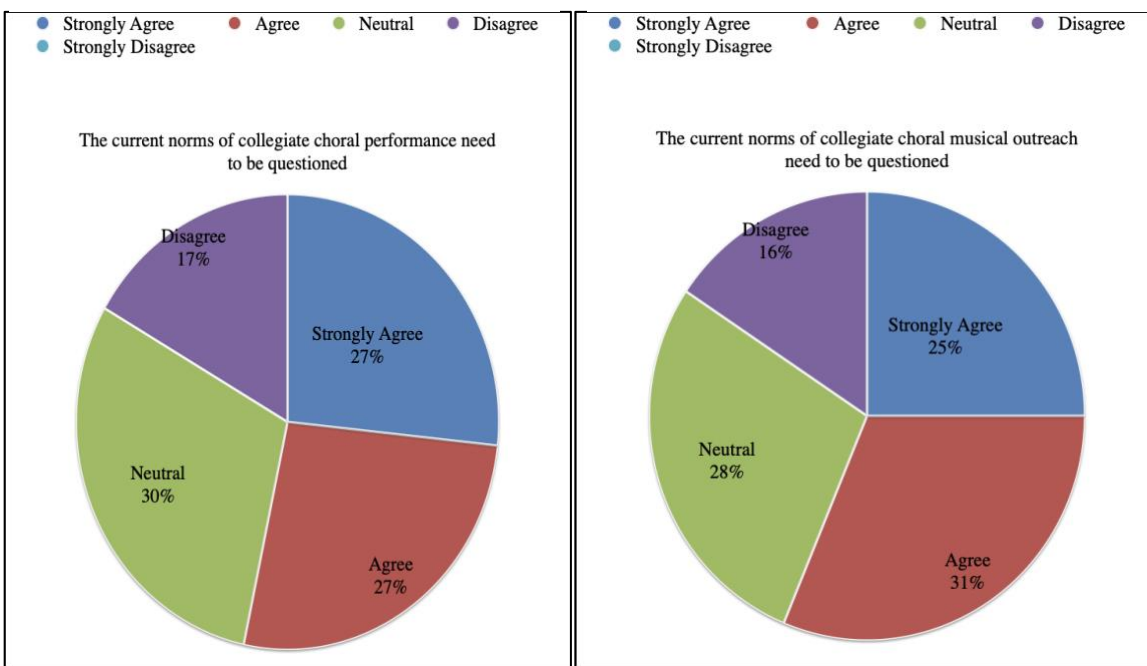


Figure 5.15 Questioning norms of performance

Figure 5.16 Questioning norms of musical outreach

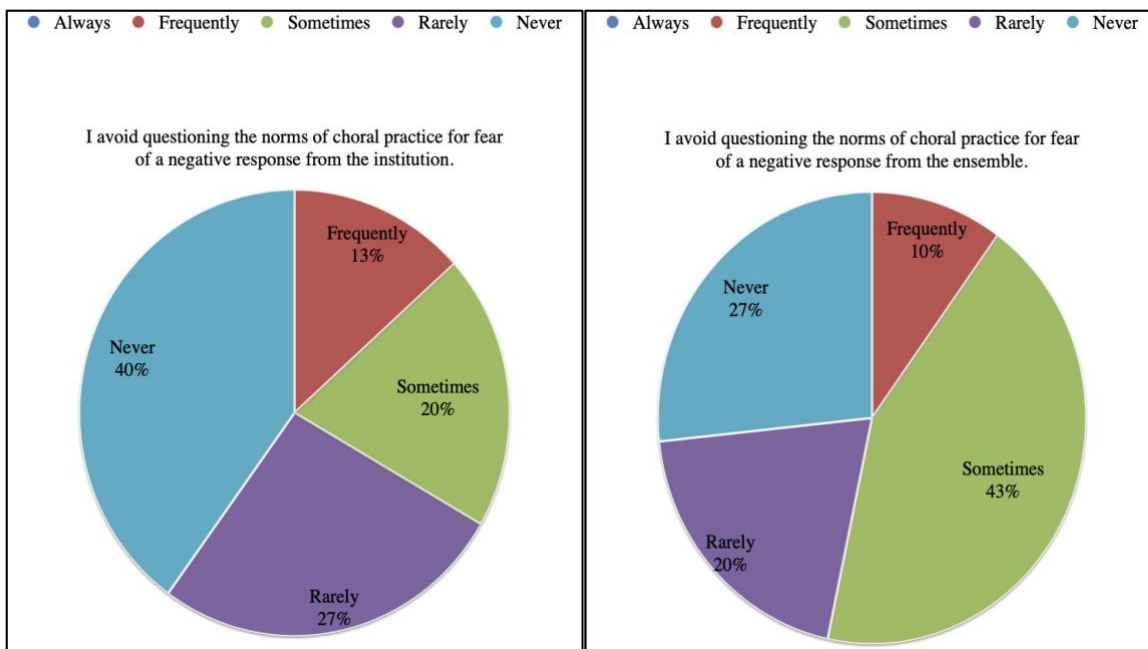


Figure 5.17 Fear of institutional backlash

Figure 5.18 Fear of ensemble backlash