

**“The Whole is Greater than the Sum of Its Parts”:
Choral Experiences of Singers and Conductors”**



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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Declaration:	4
Acknowledgements	5
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Making Music Together	6
1.2 Choir as Organized Group Singing	6
1.3 Benefits of Singing in Choirs	7
1.4 Why do Groups Sing?	9
1.5 The Role of the Conductor	13
1.6 Aims and Research Question.....	14
2. Method.....	16
2.1 Participants	16
2.2 Procedure	16
3. Results	19
3.1 Overview	19
3.2 Individual Benefits of Choir.....	21
3.2.1 Voice Contributing to Identity.....	21
3.2.2 Voice as Emotional Expression.....	24
3.2.3 Singing is Enjoyable Work	26
3.2.4 Choristers as Unselfish.....	28
3.2.5 Psychological Benefits of Singing	30
3.2.5.1 Singing Feeds the Soul.....	30
3.2.5.2 Singing Distracts from Troubles	31

3.3 Group Benefits of Choir	33
3.3.1 Collective Musical Achievement	33
3.3.2 Choir as a Social Connector	37
3.3.3 Choir Contributes to Culture	39
3.4 Conductor's Role	42
3.4.1 Collaborating with the Conductor	42
3.4.2 Building Personal Connections	45
3.4.3 Understanding Singers' Capabilities	47
4. Discussion	50
4.1 Overview	50
4.2 Implications	53
4.3 Strengths	56
4.3.1 Strengths of Thematic Analysis	56
4.3.2 Strengths Specific to Study	57
4.4 Limitations & Future research	57
4.5 Conclusions	59
References	61
Appendix A: Initial Email to director-conductors	64
Appendix B: Information Sheet	65
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form	67
Appendix D: Interview Schedule and Prompts	68

Abstract

Music making provides an opportunity for human groups to create and participate in shared experiences. However, little is known on why people sing in choirs. Previous literature on choir as a form of group music making has been limited to populations with adverse life circumstances, and, as such, findings are varied and inconsistent. Within the Psychology of Music, research has focused on psychological benefits for members of choirs, specifically from unique and disadvantaged groups. The present study aims to explore the experience of middle-class choristers and their conductors to add to emerging findings of psychological and social outcomes from choir. Two choirs, one non-professional and one professional, were recruited using purposive sampling methods. A total of 21 participants took part in semi-structured interviews; 18 singers, and 3 conductors. The first 14 interviews were transcribed verbatim, and all remaining interviews were partially transcribed. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) identified three broad categories of Individual Benefits, Group Benefits, and the Conductor's Role under which themes were grouped. Eleven main themes were identified and discussed. Implications of the findings are of potential interest to choir conductors, music educators, or other community groups. Future research could include different age groups and choirs with less experience.

Declaration:

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no materials previously published except where due reference is made. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.



October, 2017

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To my fellow cohort and close friends from the past year, thank you for being supportive of each other and for helping me strive to expand my knowledge and experiences within the field of Psychology.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Making Music Together

Music is not necessary for human survival, yet making and experiencing music is commonly described as a life-enhancing activity that is distinctly human (Elliot, 1995). Making and hearing music are also described as producing emotional experiences that serve to create a sense of connection with others (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Moreover, participating in and experiencing music are considered invaluable processes of building individual and group identity: music has been described as a “personal and social integration that make us whole” (Turino, 2008, p. 1). Although individuals can make music alone, music-making as a shared activity is argued to produce a greater meaning for those involved (Mithen, 2006). The focus of the research reported in this thesis is on one form of shared music-making: group singing.

Singing, without the involvement of instruments, is arguably the most human form of music-making. The human voice is a powerful form of expression, which has been described as communicating “the widest range of thought and feeling” (Durrant & Himonides, 1998, p. 61). Group singing occurs in many cultures in different forms, and many theories have been put forward to explain its functions. Historically, singing in groups was argued to be associated with celebration of plentiful food or resources (e.g., in Africa [Blacking, 1973]). More recently, singing by football spectators in Sydney, Australia, has been studied as a means of forming and expressing fan identity (Collinson, 2009). These examples of spontaneous group singing suggest that people sing together in response to particular events in their lives (Durrant, 2005). However, the reason why people sing in organized groups remains under debate. The limited research that has investigated the question of why people sing in groups, particularly in Western culture, has typically focused on choirs.

1.2 Choir as Organized Group Singing

A choir is defined as a group of people who sing together in unison or harmony, usually being led by a designated conductor (Einarsdottir & Gudmundsdottir, 2015, p. 40). Choral singing has a strong tradition in a number of countries around the world: The United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, and Finland being identified in particular (Judd & Pooley, 2013). In Australia, The Australian National Choir Association (ANCA) currently lists over 790 registered choirs, which vary from community and amateur, to professional ensembles.

This thesis addresses the question: ‘Why do people sing in choirs?’. To date, only a small number of studies, in diverse disciplines, have examined this question, and findings have been inconsistent. Within the discipline of the Psychology of Music, well-being has been explored as a motivating factor for choir members. These studies have focused on particular categories or groups of people who sing in choirs, and have used a variety of different methods, some less rigorous than others. Findings are not always consistent, and there remains little consensus about why people sing together (Durrant & Himonides, 1998). Against this background of previous research focusing on specific participant choirs, and the resultant limited findings, the present study aims to investigate a particular sample of choral singers in order to shed more light on the experience of choral singing. Interviews were undertaken with members of choirs who sing for pleasure (a non-professional, community choir) and for professional reasons (members of an auditioned, professional choir). The information gathered about involvement in choirs, and members’ experiences, has potential to be of use to music conductors who lead and train such groups, as well as to music educators. The study’s broad aim is to contribute to increased understanding of the motives for, and benefits of, singing in groups in the field of the Psychology of Music.

1.3 Benefits of Singing in Choirs

In the last twenty years, interest in the benefits and health outcomes of singing in choirs has grown. A survey study involving 90 members of English college choral societies

described the majority (89%) reported feeling happier as a result of singing in a choir (Clift & Hancox, 2001). Other findings involved social, spiritual, emotional, and health benefits. Participants reported feelings of relaxation, improved mood, and enjoyed meeting new people, along with improved lung function, and benefits for their heart and immune system from singing. Such self-reported findings remain to be confirmed, however. A large, cross-national study on the health and social benefits of choirs, involving over 1,000 participants from England, Germany and Australia who completed the World Health Organisation Quality of Life questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF) described the positive, holistic impacts of group singing (Clift & Hancox, 2010). Specifically, choral participation was reported to produce focused attention, deep breathing, a sense of social support, and cognitive stimulation among members.

A more detailed, qualitative analysis of a sub-group of over 600 of the English participants from this cross-national study highlighted psychological outcomes. Around one-tenth of the participants – those who scored relatively low on psychological well-being as measured by the WHO psychological scale – reported particular benefits from choral singing (Clift, Hancox, Morrison, Hess, Kreutz & Stewart, 2010). For this sub-group, group singing was reported to produce the following outcomes: producing a sense of happiness and countering depression; focusing attention; allowing practice of deep breathing and serving to counter anxiety; providing settings for friendship; keeping the mind active and slowing cognitive decline; and preventing physical inactivity.

Psychological, social and physical benefits were also observed in an interview study involving a small Australian choir with 10 members (Judd & Pooley, 2014). The researchers identified three levels of choral experience: individual or intrapersonal; group or interpersonal; and mediating factors that influenced both individual and group experiences. Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researchers highlighted ‘ethos’ as a sub-

theme of group experiences, defined as the “personality of the choir as a collective group” including the choir’s spirit and values (Judd & Pooley, 2014, p. 276). Members reported feeling comfortable learning music and practising their singing abilities in a choir where the ethos was supportive and trusting. Researchers considered a supportive ethos to contribute to choir members’ reports of strong bonds and interactions with people from different backgrounds. These findings of group ethos went beyond individual singer experiences previously observed (Clift & Hancox, 2010; Clift et al., 2010), and suggest that more complex social outcomes may be associated with group singing. Regarding the well-being outcomes of group singing, the focus of research has shifted from the individual benefits involved to a research interest in the concept of group outcomes. The following studies on specific choirs all describe the types of collective benefits that may be involved.

1.4 Why do Groups Sing?

Research investigating the reasons why people engage in group singing has typically focused on choirs that involve specific types of members. The following review describes studies involving Welsh choirs, choirs for homeless people, or those experiencing mental illness, prisoner choirs, and Ghanaian sailor groups. These studies explore contexts in which group singing has arisen either from tradition, or from adverse circumstances. The review will highlight how these specific features can be problematic for gaining broader insights into the dynamics of group singing.

Although previous reports have suggested that choirs bring people from different backgrounds together (Judd & Pooley, 2014), some choirs unite through similarity. In Wales, group singing has a long-standing tradition, beginning in the mining industry in the early nineteenth century (Johnstone, 2012). A study of three Welsh adult choirs concluded that singing in choirs constituted an important part of members’ national identity (Johnstone,

2012). Another focus-group study involving 24 members of Welsh choirs also reported that strong national identity was produced by the practice of communal singing of Welsh songs (Rohwer & Rohwer, 2012). Although participants from both studies also discussed forming friendships and having opportunities to travel and perform, a sense of cultural identity was the primary outcome for Welsh choristers in these two studies.

A strong sense of group identity was also observed in a Canadian choir involving homeless men. Interviewees reported that singing produced positive emotional, social and cognitive outcomes, helping alleviate depression, develop interpersonal behaviours with other members, and stimulating mental engagement (Bailey & Davidson, 2002). Members also suggested that regular participation in choir had adaptive qualities; men felt more emotionally balanced and able to cooperate with others. A replication of the study involving a comparison between a homeless choir and a middle-class choir found similar results for psychological benefits (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). The main difference between the two groups of choristers was that the homeless men reported that the performance aspect as being more important, who described a sense of validation and social recognition from singing for an audience. Conversely, middle-class singers stressed the benefit of developing musical skills and producing a collective musical product, but not necessarily for an audience (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). Researchers considered middle-class singers to exhibit a more self-serving attitude of improving individual musical skills than the homeless choir, who had a strong sense of community. Given the variety of reasons for group singing that have emerged from studies such as these that focus on specific types of members, there is a need for further investigation of the nature of chorister experiences. Particularly the notion that middle-class singers are individualistic in choir requires more detailed examination.

An Australian choir involving adults who were experiencing mental illness also reported health and social benefits. After a year of choral participation, interviewees reported

experiencing stress relief, improved confidence, as well as improved singing ability (Dingle Brander, Ballantyn & Baker, 2013). Members also reported feeling more open and tolerant towards others, and a sense of belonging in the choir. A finding not previously reported in the literature involved participants' reports of anxious feelings associated with performing. The researchers argued that with appropriate support from the conductor, people with chronic mental health issues could overcome challenges and enjoy singing and performing. These findings are broadly consistent with social identity theory proposals (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes & Haslam, 2009) that forming a new and valued group identity is associated with positive emotional and social outcomes. The focus of the study was on the improved social and psychological outcomes; consequently emerging findings on group identity and the role of the conductor require further investigation.

The studies described above investigated existing choirs, however, some research has involved the formation of choirs for disadvantaged people. Silber (2005) formed a choir for female prisoners in Israel, leading and observing the members and conducting interviews after twelve months. Members reported feelings of empowerment from practicing and performing. Similar to the benefits of choir reported by homeless men, performing for others was reported to give these prisoners a sense of pride and connection with the outside world. They also reported improved relations amongst each other, and with prison authority figures. However, the prison context and conductor's influence may also have influenced inmates' experiences, not solely the intervention of group singing.

Another study of group singing to report social benefits involved Ghanaian male sailors who sing together as a fishing ritual. Sailors do not sing when working alone, but when fishing with other men, indicating that the practice is primarily a social activity (Addo, 2014). During observations and interviews, Addo (2014) noted that many fishermen reported a sense of 'brotherliness' from singing with fellow workers. They described how singing

established a sense of community and bonding between them. Social bonding is considered a way of synchronizing the mood of many individuals in preparation for united action (Huron, 2001). Addo (2014) argued that such singing led sailors to feel a sense of group identity and collective thinking. These findings may be specific to the cultural context; therefore it is of use to consider whether groups from other cultural settings might also experience similar benefits.

Research on the reasons on account of which people join community choirs to sing together in contexts where such singing is not traditional nor due to adverse circumstances is sparse. One interview study with four singers from community choirs and two conductors described two overarching themes of ‘connectedness’ and ‘achievement’ (McCoy, 2016). Singers discussed a sense of camaraderie, defined as a sense of “rootedness and maintaining social relationships” (McCoy, 2016, p. 131). In contrast to the findings reported by Bailey & Davidson (2005) that middle-class singers were individualistic, singers in the community choirs described feeling part of a group that was contributing to something greater than themselves. Singing together was described as allowing singers to work towards goals while learning musical skills, such as listening to others. A common finding with middle-class singers from Bailey and Davidson (2005) included that interviewed singers and conductors preferred rehearsals to performances (McCoy, 2016). In short, there are both contradictory and convergent findings for middle-class members who choose to sing. Further investigation of middle-class singers might provide clarification concerning the preliminary claims resulting from McCoy’s (2016) small study.

Social outcomes, such as group identity and increased openness towards others, have emerged in the literature. However the research has been limited to the study of particular groups, often involving members who have experienced some form of disadvantage. It is unclear whether the individual and group benefits from choral singing may be overstated

given that such results have come from participants experiencing adverse circumstances. What has also been missing from previous research is consideration of the presence and impact of the choirs' leaders or directors. The role of the choral conductor will be an aspect of key concern in the present study.

1.5 The Role of the Conductor

Conductors have an important role in choirs and exert considerable influence on choristers' experiences, yet their impact has not been studied to any great extent. In a model of effective conducting (Durrant, 2005), three interrelated attributes are proposed: philosophical principles, musicianship, and interpersonal skills. Philosophical principles refer to the understanding of the conductor's responsibilities and knowledge of the role. Musicianship includes technical music skills. One skill specific to the conductor role is the ability to use gesture: to give clear intentions of tempo, dynamics, and musical phrasing through certain expressions of the hands and arms (Durrant, 2005, p. 89). The third conductor attribute of the model is interpersonal skills, including appropriate communication to foster singer motivation and a supportive environment. Few studies examine all three components of the model in detail, which the present study will [attempt to] include.

Previous literature suggests that choristers value conductors' musical and interpersonal skills (Einarsdottir & Gudmundsdottir, 2015), and their ability to communicate effectively (Bonshor, 2017). Choristers have expressed a desire for frequent and detailed feedback from conductors in order to improve performance quality and build confidence (Bonshor, 2017). A group of Australian choristers described how the overall experience of choir can be determined by the personality, musical ability, and teaching style of the conductor (Judd & Pooley, 2014). Similarly, Scandinavian choristers reported that conductors

were vital for creating a supportive environment and also providing musical inspiration for choral singing (Durrant, 2005).

Choristers and conductors are engaged in a reciprocal relationship. Scandinavian choristers and conductors interviewed about their choral experience likened group singing to a team sport (Durrant, 2005). Choristers described how working towards a common goal with a conductor united people of different backgrounds, status, and ethnicity. Choristers have consistently reported the importance of a supportive choral environment (Judd & Pooley, 2014; Durrant, 2005; Welch, 2015). Even inexperienced singers reported increased enjoyment and confidence in singing under the direction of an encouraging and supportive choir conductor (Welch, 2015). Although research on conductors' and choristers' experiences is limited, emerging concepts are the importance of support and outcomes of group benefits. Considering the conductor's fundamental role in choirs, it is important to investigate the role of the conductor when investigating the question of why people sing in choir.

1.6 Aims and Research Question

Previous literature on choral singing has focused on particular groups, and there are mixed reports about what group singing may bring to the lives of middle-class singers. The present study aims to explore the experiences of people who choose to sing in groups, not through necessity of national identity, adverse circumstances, or physical labour. Choristers and conductors from a non-professional community choir, and a professional choir were involved in semi-structured interviews in the present study in order to gain further insight. A previous finding from middle-class choir singers suggested they were individualistic in their approach to group singing (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). This claim will be examined further, particularly in light of other research findings that have emphasized the importance of group identity for choir members (Addo, 2014; McCoy, 2016). The present research aims to add to

current limited knowledge about why people sing in choirs and, in particular, to consider the role of the conductor. Specifically, the research focuses on exploring group outcomes of choir as well as individual benefits for choristers and conductors by focusing on their experiences of choral membership. Specifically, then, the research question addressed here is: How do choir members from 'leisure' and professional groups, both singers and conductors, attribute meaning to their choral activity?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Members of two adult choirs and their respective director-conductors (DC), were recruited, using a purposive sampling approach. DCs were directly approached. Eligibility criteria for participation included participants being over the age of 21 and current members of a choir, and for the DCs, to be currently directing a choir. Choir 1 was an auditioned community choir with over 50 members, approximately 20 men and 30 women. Members were non-professional but were required to complete a short audition process and are expected to have previous experience singing in choirs. Choir 2 was a professional chamber choir, with 16 core members, 8 men and 8 women. Members were invited to audition and join the group by the DC, and singers are highly experienced and receive monetary compensation.

An introductory email (Appendix A) was sent to two DCs', accessed through their public online profile in relation to the choir. Once the DCs had agreed to participate and had gained agreement from their respective choir members, a meeting time for the researcher to introduce the study to the group was arranged. At the initial meeting with the choir members, the researcher explained the study and distributed an Information Sheet (Appendix B) to all choir members. Members willing to participate provided a contact email address or phone number, through which an interview time was arranged.

A total of 21 participants took part in the study, 10 from Choir 1 (6 men and 4 women) and 8 from Choir 2 (2 men and 6 women). The DC of both choirs took part, and choir 2 also had an associate conductor who was interviewed.

2.2 Procedure

Ethics approval for the study was obtained from The University of Adelaide School of Psychology: Human Ethics Subcommittee. A total of 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted at a public location convenient for participants. The interviews took place over a 3-month period from June to August 2017. Interviews were audio recorded and ranged from 22 to 60 minutes, with an average duration of 37 minutes. Data saturation, when no new themes were emerging (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006), was noted as being achieved by the 13th interview with choristers. All remaining interviews were still completed with respect to participants who had volunteered their time, and their accounts potentially offered additional insight into the research question.

Signed consent (Appendix C) was obtained from all participants prior to the beginning of the interview. The age range was 23 to 72, with an average of 45 years. Firstly, participants were asked about their previous choral experience to contextualise their present choral membership. Subsequent interview questions (Appendix D) were based on previous research into choir members' experiences, with each question being followed up with prompts that allowed interviews to be personalised to the particular experience described by participants.

An Audit Trail was kept, which provided clear documentation of researcher's decisions and activities (Tracy, 2010). Auditing included researchers correspondences with participants, interview observations, thoughts on emerging themes and decisions over the course of data collection and analysis. This process allowed for self-reflexivity, the practice wherein researchers review their position within the project, considering any biases and personal interests that may influence data collection and analysis. Self-reflexivity through the Audit Trail exercised transparency and a critical stance of the researcher's decisions and actions. Transparency ensures credibility and sincerity to the research process (Tracy, 2010). The researcher is a member of a choir and has over 14 years of experience of singing in

groups. She has tacit knowledge of group singing, such as understanding common terminology, and musical expressions used in choral settings.

The researcher fully transcribed the first 14 interviews verbatim in their entirety. Due to time constraints and having achieved data saturation, the remaining 7 interviews were partially transcribed guided by the research question and themes emerging from the previous interviews. Confidentiality was maintained by replacing participant names with pseudonyms and any specific information that might serve to identify participants, such as dates, and names of friends, family or locations, was changed. Transcripts and audio recordings were routinely analysed to identify themes and assess for data saturation. Assessing all transcriptions against the research question was crucial to uphold methodological rigor in Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

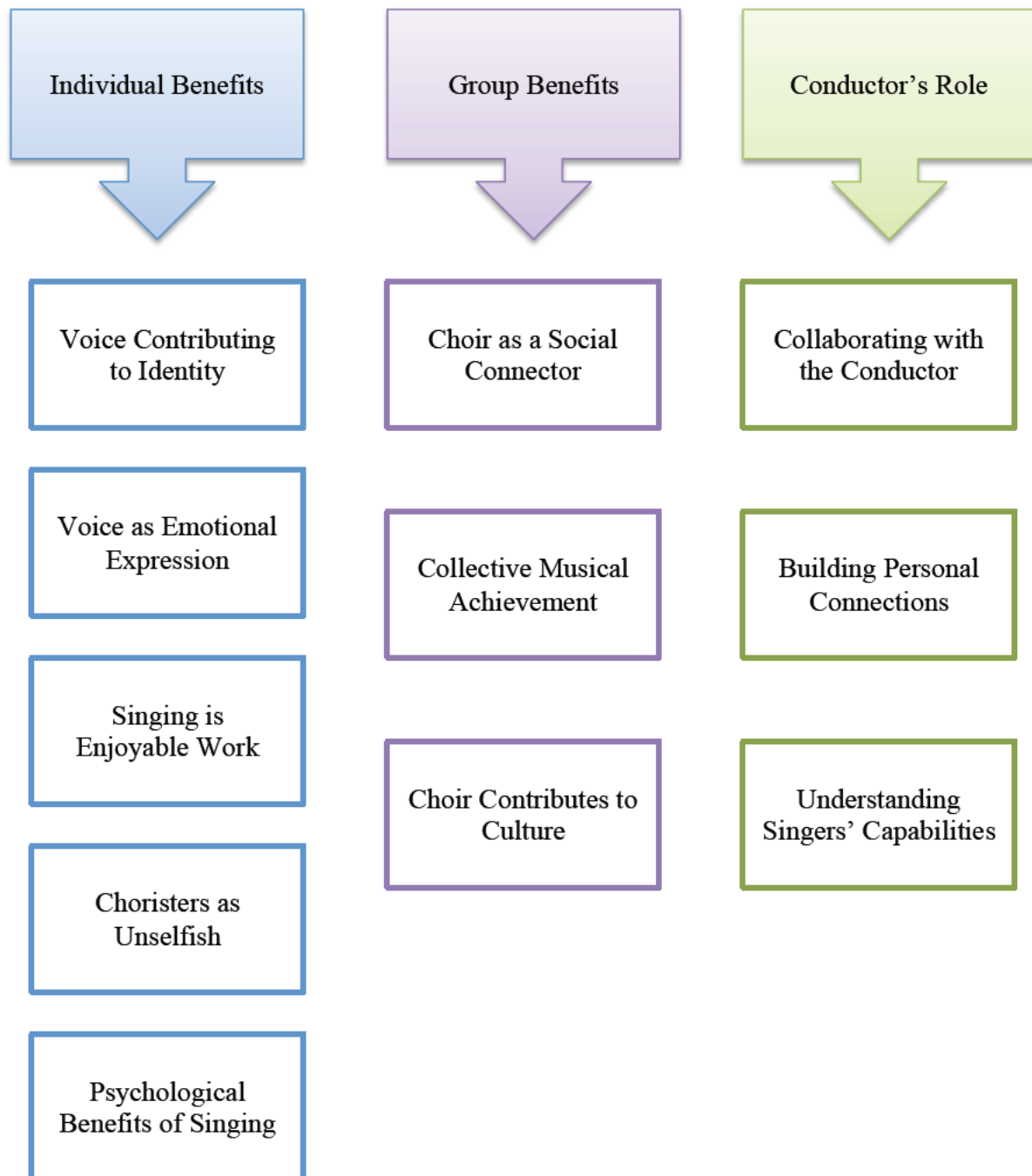
Braun and Clarke (2013) advocate five major stages for data analysis using TA: 1) reading and familiarisation with the data, 2) coding the entire dataset, 3) searching for emergent themes, 4) reviewing themes and identifying nested or connected themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) finalising the analysis to relate back to the research questions and previous literature. In keeping with a theoretical approach to TA, the analysis was guided by outcomes emerging in previous research on group singing, particularly group identity and benefits.

3. Results

3.1 Overview

Participants discussed their experiences of group singing, both from the perspective of singers and conductors. As such, themes were constructed within three overarching categories: individual benefits of choir; group benefits of choir; and the conductor's role, see Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Structure of Themes*



3.2 *Individual Benefits of Choir*

Initial analysis involved the identification of a broad pattern in interviewee talk about choral singing: a focus on individual experiences, and a focus on group experiences. Talk that addressed individual experiences will be described first. Five themes were identified in constructions that oriented to the individual benefits associated with choral singing. In one theme, singing was described in terms of its contribution to individual identity (*Voice Contributing to Identity*); another theme focused on singing in terms of emotional expression (*Voice as Emotional Expression*); the third theme focused on singing in terms of enjoyable mental exercise (*Singing is Enjoyable Work*); the fourth theme focused on singing in terms of cooperation (*Choristers as Unselfish*); and a fifth theme focused on descriptions of positive psychological outcomes (*Psychological Benefits of Singing*).

3.2.1 *Voice Contributing to Identity*

Singing, or use of ‘voice’, was regularly described as key to individual and human identity. Talk about ‘voice’ was repeatedly described as ‘natural’ or ‘fundamental’ to human beings. Voice was framed as a uniquely human trait that contributed strongly to identity. The following extracts illustrate this pattern:

Extract 1

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Arthur: [...] I’ve just been around music and singing since I could walk [...] I mean it’s just been a part of my life as much as breathing. ((laughs))

Interviewer: Yeah.

Arthur: So it’s like saying ‘would life be like without breathing?’, I’m not saying I’d be dead ((laughs)) I’m sure I would have found something else...

Extract 2

Interviewer: What is your background in singing and singing in choirs?

Sarah: [...] I think it's a really fundamental part of... of who I am [...] definitely part of the, the DNA really...

These examples highlight how, for interviewees, singing was repeatedly constructed as 'natural' (e.g., it was likened to 'breathing', or considered 'part of the DNA'). Such descriptions reflect an essentialist construction of the voice, positioning the voice as an intrinsic human trait. Moreover, the voice was also positioned as a musical instrument, in contrast to other instruments, such as the piano. In the extracts below, that illustrate this pattern, the voice is described as described as the 'original' or as an 'organic' instrument.

Extract 3

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Adam: [...] there's just something really wonderful about the voice as opposed to, you know, a piano, I suppose cause it's an organic thing...

Extract 4

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Peter: [...] I mean there's nothing better than, [the] voice is the original instrument...

Extract 5

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

David: [...] [Singing] us[es] nothing other than the instrument that we were all born with, is really very... it's quite a special feeling I think. I also thing there's something about the human voice, as opposed to other forms of music or musical instruments ...

Here the voice was constructed as similar to, but different from, other musical instruments. The voice was described an instrument that is a natural aspect of what it is to be human. The voice was also commonly described as representative of the self, and as ‘intimate’:

Extract 6

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

DC3: [...] I feel like I’m really myself when I [sing] [...] I do think you give a lot of yourself as a singer, because what else do you do? Like, what else is there? There’s only you [...] The extension of your voice is you, not your bat or your instrument...

Extract 7

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Rachel: [...] It is such an... intimate thing for someone, it’s not like playing an instrument, you know, playing the piano or the clarinet or something like that, it’s your instrument.

In summary, the voice was repeatedly positioned as an intrinsic part of singers’ human identity (‘extension of your voice is you’). There was also a pattern of talk that constructed a key feature of voice as its ‘consistency’ over time. This pattern is illustrated in the extracts below:

Extract 8

Interviewer: Could you tell me a bit about your backing in singing in choir?

Georgia: [...] everywhere I’ve been around um the place I’ve sung in choirs, so I moved to [city] I’ve sung. Moved to [city] I’ve sung. Moved to [city] found a choir and sang so um, uh and I’ve come back to [current city]... so just always sung.

Extract 9

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Mary: [...] I think it's been an anchor in my life, a common thread. No matter where, where I've lived [...] I joined a choir...

Extract 10

Interviewer: Could you tell me a bit about your backing in singing in choir?

Amelia: [...] [I started] when I was eight... And... yeah from there I haven't stopped singing in a choir since, so that was almost twenty years ago.

The talk in these extracts reflects a temporal construction of the voice as a consistent, stable, enduring element or aspect of identity. Singing in choir is presented as a common activity that persists even though other aspects of life may change (e.g., moving cities, growing older).

This theme of '*Voice Contributing to Identity*' captured the construction of the voice as an instrument that remains constant throughout an individual's life and thus reflects a personal and human identity.

3.2.2 *Voice as Emotional Expression*

In addition to the voice being constructed as key to human identity, interviewees repeatedly described the voice as expressive of emotion. It was typical within this talk about voice, for descriptions to emphasize the notion of voice as located within, and thus expressive of, internal experiences. The following extracts illustrate this framing:

Extract 11

Interviewer: Do you have any final comments, anything we haven't already talked about in relation to choir or group singing?

Sarah: [...] singing rather than playing [an instrument], it because it comes from so much inside your own body, that it's, I think it can be quite emotional. So, I mean sometimes I do, sort of, I think I'm gonna cry...

Extract 12

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

DC2: There's something about the human voice, because the voice is from within us, when you sing in an ensemble, or when you sing on your own, but when you sing, you don't pick up an instrument. You get in touch with something that is deep inside of us.

This spatial positioning of the voice as 'internal' was also referenced in relation to repeated association of the voice with the human 'heart'. The extracts occurred in response to a question concerning what participants found enjoyable about group singing:

Extract 13

Adam: [...] [the voice is] actually coming from the person. You can't get much more from the heart than with the voice.

Extract 14

Peter: [...] there's nothing more moving to the human heart than a group of people harmonising together

Singing, was routinely constructed as a involving a direct communication of internal emotion ('can't get much more from the heart') that is free from physical barriers such as might be imposed by the use of mechanical instruments. This form of emotional expression was also framed in terms of its service as a 'creative outlet'. In this sense, singing was described as having a beneficial cathartic effect for singers. The following extracts highlight this pattern:

Extract 15

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Cath: [...] For me, it's kind of like an emotional therapy [...] I feel as though I've kind of had a bit of a cleanse of my emotions...

Extract 16

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Hannah: [...] [Singing in choir is] a creative outlet... and you know, great emotionally, and helps me, I guess, refocus...

Here emotional expression is framed as an 'emotional cleansing' or as an 'outlet' for creativity; these framings construct a sense of the emotional release that is achieved through using the voice to sing. In one case, singing as emotional expression was constructed in terms of appropriate emotional outlet for men:

Extract 17:

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Arthur: [...] [In group singing] we've sung together, we've laughed and cried together, you know and for a guy, that's sort of 'manly man', you can't... yeah the music sort of gives us an opportunity to, I guess express ourselves where we normally otherwise wouldn't have that opportunity...

Overall, the pattern involved various related constructions of the voice and singing as a direct form of communication that expressed singers' internal emotions.

3.2.3 *Singing is Enjoyable Work*

The third theme involving talk of the individual benefits associated with singing in choir is '*Singing is Enjoyable Work*'. This theme captures the common construction of music-making – and singing in particular – as effortful, an aspect of the activity that

participants framed positively and enjoyable. In particular music and singing was described as getting ‘the brain going’ and ‘stimulating’. The following extracts illustrate these patterns:

Extract 18

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Cath: [...] I’ll come home after three hours of singing and brain work as well, with the amount of sight reading, it really gets your brain going [...] I like being able to use my brain that way as well.

Extract 19

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Sarah: [...] I like the business of being... having the challenge of being on top of [the music] all the time, it’s mentally stimulating, you know, I find that really enjoyable.

Extract 20

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Steven: [...] Look, what do I enjoy about it? It’s the, it’s actually making the sound, it’s actually blending with everything else that’s going on... To some extent, conquering the music, if you like. Learning it, being able to read it...

Enjoyment of choral singing was framed in terms of the mental stimulation associated with the challenge of sight reading, learning, and successfully singing, music. Through the ideas of ‘being on top of’, or ‘conquering’ music, descriptions presented a sense of music-making as involving the exercise of mental flexibility adaptation. As shown by Extract 21 below, singing was described as keeping the ‘older brain’ going and active.

Extract 21

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Adam: [...] especially when you do some really complex things, it's a big effort to bring it all together, and particularly with [another choir] in the past 6 [years] I've been doing a lot of contemporary music, and that's particularly challenging especially for an older brain that hasn't grown up with that sort of stuff. It's really interesting to push the boundaries, I really enjoy that... it's keeping my brain going, musically, doing newer things.

Other benefits from regular practice emphasized the mental stimulation involved in singing and also oriented to the effortful and challenging nature of learning and singing music.

3.2.4 *Choristers as Unselfish*

A further individual benefit from participating in choir came from talk about choristers as unselfish. A patterned description involved singers in choir being described in contrast to solo singers. The following extracts highlight this pattern:

Extract 22

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Steven: [...] I don't particularly enjoy solo singing, I do very little of it [...] I don't really think my voice on it's own sounds like much. [...] It's not a solo voice, never has been, I suppose.

Extract 23

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Jim: [...] I hate singing solo [...] you're very exposed [...] it's a bit more reassuring that you've got a whole bunch of other people [in choir].

Extract 24

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Sarah: [...] It's the collective... I'm not a soloist, never have been...

Extract 25

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Amelia: [...] I enjoy working with other people [...] I'm happy to be in the spot light but I'm very happy to share that spotlight, so I'd rather do something as a group rather than be out on my own.

These interviewees described preferring group singing to singing alone; positioning themselves as someone who enjoys 'shar[ing]'.

A related pattern involved choral singers being constructed as 'less selfish' and 'more humble' as a result of their singing in a group. This pattern is illustrated in the following extracts, which occurred in response to the question of how life would be without choir:

Extract 26

Rachel: [...] I might be a bit more... selfish? If I wasn't in a choir! I'm just thinking out loud... because of, like I said before, it's that connectivity, it's the group environment, it's looking out for one another, working together, and the ability to work well with other people, I think is really important.

Extract 27

Kate: [...] you're more humble, like, everyone is equal, you know, you're only as strong as everyone else in the group, it's not all about you all the time, it's about working together and creating something rather than being a diva or everyone supporting you, it's about supporting each other...

Here, an individual who does not prioritise the collective goal, or support the group, is positioned as a 'diva', which is framed as undesirable in a group setting where the

assumption is that ‘everyone is equal’. There is also mention of the choir being ‘only as strong as everyone else in the group’. The striving towards a common goal over individual aims is valorised here. Participating in choral singing was thus framed as an opportunity for people to extend their outlook beyond their own personal or individual goals

3.2.5 *Psychological Benefits of Singing*

There were also more figurative constructions of the rewards or benefits from group singing, through discussions around how singing can ‘feed the soul’ or distract from troubles. The theme ‘*Psychological Benefits of Singing*’ includes two contrasting patterns of talk on singing, that described individuals ‘receiving’ positive experiences (*Singing Feeds the Soul*), and ‘removing’ negative experiences (*Singing Distracts from Troubles*).

3.2.5.1 *Singing Feeds the Soul*

The idea of being ‘fed’ or ‘nourished’ by singing involved a positive construction of choral music and participation. The following extracts illustrate this type of positive talk around singing and choral music:

Extract 28

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Georgia: [...] I dunno you’ve had a really awful day... and... you go along to choir, I mean it might depend particularly on what you’re singing I guess but you go along to choir... and you feed your soul for a couple of hours and you, you were feeling really awful when you were going in between work and choir but when you finish, you’re feeling, ‘that was good’.

Extract 29

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

DC3: [...] you learn a lot about eras, you learn a lot about people, and I think, to me that's a really interesting part of it. I think that any type of musical language is derived from the time that it's written, and it's in response to what goes on around them. So, the richness in that way is that we get to interpret something that may be so much older than all of us, and I find that amazing...

Extract 29

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Peter: Would certainly not have been as rich [...] if I look back the most memorable things have either been singing in choirs or in stage musicals, or in the opera [...] [Singing in choir] is one of the great benefits that I've had...

Extract 30

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Bill: [...] choral music has been such a long, important part of my life. I think it has just enriched... me in so many ways. From knowing so much, learning about different composers and styles of music...

'Richness' was a common pattern amongst interviewee's talk that oriented singing in choir as a positive, life-enhancing experience. Participation in choral music was framed as an opportunity to 'interpret' history and learn about 'different composers and styles', implying that singers could vicariously experience other perspectives and historic eras. '*Singing Feeds the Soul*' captured the constructions of psychological benefits for individuals through participating in choral music that was described as 'enriching' in various ways.

3.2.5.2 *Singing Distracts from Troubles*

Interviewees also described the psychological benefits of singing in terms of mental distraction from troubles or worries. The talk about mental distraction was constructed as involving the direction of effort and focus into singing and choral music, and away from other matters (e.g., troubles). This mental distraction was framed positively, and described in terms of feelings of relief and disconnection from negative thoughts or physical discomfort:

Extract 31

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Adam: [...] once you focus on [making music], you un-focus on all the other things that might be at the back of your mind, or upsetting you or whatever. And you'll generally come out the other end feeling better at the end of it. So I find being involved in music, is a great way to switch off, from whatever might be giving you a hard time, because your focus is on... what's on the page, what's going on around you in the group...

Extract 32

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Mary: [...] it meant that I had something to look forward to... and a group of people that... you know, who were long term friends... and it meant that I could almost forget that I had a problem, a physical problem at the time, you know, and that I could sing.

Extract 33

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Sarah: [...] I'm perfectly willing to believe that you can get rid of nausea feeling just by doing something... distracting [...] that distracting you, doing something you

enjoy, will get rid of it. So for whatever reason it is, I will always feel better after singing

Such comments provide examples of choral singing and music being framed as serving to distract singers from their mental and physical troubles. This was a repeated psychological benefit of participation in making music and group singing that emerged from the interviews. The two sub-themes of the *psychological benefits of singing* (‘*Singing Distracts from Troubles*’ and ‘*Singing Feeds the Soul*’) framed singing differently in that singing could provide relief from negative experiences, but alternatively, singing could also bring a positive experience.

3.3 Group Benefits of Choir

The second broad construction of interviewee talk was identified as orienting to the group benefits of choir. Participants frequently described choir in terms of ‘community’, and as an opportunity for ‘shared experiences’. The concept of community was discussed with reference to musical outcomes as well as social factors. In order to illustrate these patterns, the three overarching themes of the group benefits of choir will be discussed: *Collective Musical Achievement*; *Choir as a Social Connector*; and *Choir Contributes to Culture*.

3.3.1 Collective Musical Achievement

The theme of ‘Collective Musical Achievement’ captures regular descriptions of collaboration as key for achieving a collective musical product. A consistent pattern in the data in response to the question of what participants enjoyed about singing in choir, involved reference to the idea that the ‘whole is greater than the sum of its parts’. The following extracts exemplify this framing:

Extract 34

Peter: [...] you're part of something bigger, than yourself, which something, something that actually becomes more than the sum of its parts

Extract 35

Jim: [...] there's an experience that you're producing something greater than just the, you know, what you put into it, which I suppose is obviously what a choral thing can do. You know, it seems to produce more than its parts in a way.

Extract 36

David: [...] the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts, and there are things that emerge in a group, which, if you listen to individual singers, just singing on their own, solos, you wouldn't necessarily pick out, you know there are beautiful harmonies and blends of voices that sort of emerge...

Extract 37

Robert: [...] but when you sing, draw breath, and make harmony together, it's not the same note, but it's forming a greater sound than any one of you could do...

The collective product of singing was constructed as more powerful ('greater') than that which individuals were capable of producing alone. The activity of group singing was also framed as more enjoyable than solo singing in terms of its ability to enhance individual experience. The following extracts illustrate this pattern:

Extract 38

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Hannah: [...] it's this kind of elevated things because of the fact that there's more people involved. And I mean, people talk a lot about how choral singing... you create

something that is greater than the sum of its parts. [...] it's kind of hard to quantify...
how much better things are made by making things together as a group.

Extract 39

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Lauren: [...] it's more enjoyable for me when everyone gets it right than if I just get it right [with solo singing].

Extract 40

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Robert: [...] I think I really enjoyed the challenge, of taking a piece, learning a piece and singing it well, and feeling the other people around me singing it well. The feeling of being in a group where everyone is achieving what they're trying to do and, you know, pushing themselves and then the group achieves...

Talk of enjoyment, here, works on the assumption that it is challenging for a group of people to achieve in unison. When collective musical achievement occurs, the construction of joint effort and achievement was described in terms of elevated feelings of accomplishing something that was greater than the 'sum of its parts'.

Another pattern reflecting the construction of '*Collective Musical Achievement*' involved interviewee's descriptions of a common goal. In the following extracts, conductors and singers discussed the importance of a common 'purpose' or 'direction', in response to a question about what was important for effective group singing:

Extract 41

Jim: [...] the direction that a choir, and the standards that a choir has, are important things to consider. So I suppose that implies the purpose of the choir, and just how, it's fairly obvious, to sing but at what level...

Extract 42

Miriam: [...] working towards something. So, because I guess we work about ten, thirteen or so rehearsals before the concert, so it's good to have that, when you're working towards something and you accomplish it...

Extract 43

DC3: [...] you can be as disparate a personality or a group of people as you like, but you share a very strong goal, which is basically just getting together and singing. And I think there can be no value higher than doing that...

Extract 44

Rachel: [...] I really love that kind of that team, that sense of team direction, and we're all kind of working towards this one, you know, product...

Regardless of whether the goal was framed as a high quality and professional musical performance, or more simply, coming together to sing, a collective goal was expressed as effective if everyone was aware of the goal. The extracts below are indicative of singers common talk about being aware of ('on the same page') and, thus, singing with, unified 'intent':

Extract 45

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

DC3: [...] Blend is not a verb [...] For me, blend is a noun. Blend happens when people do the same thing, at the same time, with the same artistic intent...

Extract 46

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Mary: [...] it's that collective thing, where you're all on the same page, and times when we've actually memorised something, and you just... you're all there, you're all together, you're doing this collective thing and it's sounding just magnificent...

These examples highlight that collective musical achievement was constructed as accomplished through the development of a collective goal or group understanding, that required collective action.

3.3.2 *Choir as a Social Connector*

The theme 'Choir as a Social Connector' captures the construction of choir as a means to bring disparate people together. A consistent pattern in the data related to talk constructing humans as having a natural desire to connect with each other. The following extracts illustrate this pattern:

Extract 47

Interviewer: There are sailors in Ghana who have a group singing fishing ritual. What do you think about that?

Robert: [...] I think [group singing is] a way of expressing and experiencing... contact, with other people, in a different way than other forms of contact. So I view it as actually a fundamental, human experience, [...] So it is a way of being aware of each other... subconsciously, probably even more than consciously because so much of the processes going on when you sing are subconscious...

Extract 48

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Sarah: [...] that chance to do something collectively, with other people, that results in something good. [...] I think that's probably where it lies, that human need to... share... something collective with other people.

Extract 49

Interviewer: What do you think life would be like without choir?

Arthur: [...] I guess that's human nature, I think, to come together

Interviewer: yeah

Arthur: and do stuff together [...] If you look across the world, singing is such an intrinsic part of we do as people

These patterns of talk reflect both the activity of 'do[ing] something collective', and also 'experience[ing]' a sense of connection with others. Here, interviewees construct group singing choir as fulfilling a 'fundamental' or 'intrinsic' human need to come together. For example, in response to the interviewer's question about what participants thought of Ghanaian sailors sing together, the following extracts illustrate interviewees' regular construction of an awareness of connection:

Extract 50

Rachel: [...] [There's] a sense of togetherness and unity [that] we're all in this together in the world, I think that's just so powerful.

Extract 51

Jim: [...] people read, or you sing, or you paint or you do these things, to know that you're not alone in your experience that is that it's that very basic thing of sharing that must have been around for, you know, doing things on cave walls.

Descriptions of experiencing a 'sense of togetherness' orient towards the experience of connection that comes from group singing. Both singers and conductors emphasized that choir rehearsals can be important for people to experience a sense of connection. The following extracts demonstrate this pattern:

Extract 52

Interviewer: What do you enjoy about singing in choir?

Hannah: [...] the rehearsal process in itself is almost like an ends in itself, it's a satisfying experience just as it is even without the performance aspect [...] [singing in choir] is more about the experience in itself...

Extract 53

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

DC2: [...] it's a bit like, 'If you sing something [in rehearsal] and the only people who ever hear it are the people who are singing it, is it still worthwhile?' To an extent, that's probably the most meaningful, where the act of listening and the act of creation are instantaneous.

Talk of the group benefit of choral singing was framed as '*Choir as a Social Connector*' in terms of the fulfilment of a human need to connect.

3.3.3 *Choir Contributes to Culture*

The theme '*Choir Contributes to Culture*' includes pattern of talk around group and social benefits that extend beyond the immediate setting of choir. A common pattern towards the end of interviews included discussions of choir in broad terms. Such discussions

encompassed topics around choir performances and opportunities for younger age groups to be involved with group singing. The extracts below highlight descriptions of how choir ‘contributes’ and ‘gives the gift of music’ to audiences:

Extract 54

Interviewer: Do you have any final comments, anything we haven’t already talked about in relation to choir or group singing?

Robert: [...] I’m participating in culture, I’m contributing to culture, I’m helping to make culture, and you know, I’ve participated in what is now part of choral history. So when I’m not doing it... I kind of feel like I’m not.. part of society in a way...

Extract 55

Interviewer: Do you have any final comments, anything we haven’t already talked about in relation to choir or group singing?

DC3: [...] you give a gift of music to someone else, and I think that it’s quite a thrilling thing. And I can’t think of very many opportunities, and this includes sport, where you’re giving something like that. Because you’re allowing people to reflect and interpret, [...] you offer something that actually kind of changes the ether around everyone’s heads [...] that becomes just a gift that reimagines itself every time a new person hears it, and I find that fascinating, all together fascinating. And really, I think, to enrich people.

Extract 56

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

DC2: [...] when it's the public concert, everything is geared towards making the audience feel like they're receiving something, they're being inspired, they're being engaged and fired...

The concept of 'enriching' was used to describe how choral music could influence and 'inspire' listeners, not just singers. Choral music is positioned as having an ability to influence people's perspectives through 'reflect[ion]' and 'interpret[ation]'. Beyond descriptions of choral music and performance, interviewees also commonly referenced choir in terms of an opportunity to learn life skills. Interviewees commonly constructed choir as a valuable activity for children and adults in terms of contributing knowledge and skills that are transferable beyond choir. The following extracts illustrate this pattern:

Extract 57

Interviewer: Do you have any final comments, anything we haven't already talked about in relation to choir or group singing?

Mary: I'm just passionate that children have access to music and to singing [...] we'd really like to target the music education of children. It just opens up a whole world, and even if you don't continue to sing, then at least you have an appreciation of music...

Extract 58

Interviewer: What do you think is important for an effective choir?

Sarah: [...] [Choir is] not going to work if people don't show up all the time, at least it's not going to work in the excellent way that you want it to. It's a life skill that I think is... really, really important for kids to grasp, as a well-rounded human being, to be part of things like that.

Extract 59

Interviewer: Do you have any final comments, anything we haven't already talked about in relation to choir or group singing?

Hannah: [...] I think any well functioning society should have ensemble music in it. Like not just at an elite level, but at all levels, and it should be part of an educational experience as well. [...] And make sure that it's considered, not just as, kind of... I dunno a snobby pursuit or something that only a few people are talented in. But I think it's something that can benefit people across the board of all different contexts.

These positive constructions of choir participation were made with reference to 'well-rounded human' and 'well functioning society', which orient group singing to the broad social benefits for its members. Descriptions of listening to choral music as an audience member, or participating directly in the activity of group singing, capture the theme '*Choir Contributing to Culture*', and reflect potential social benefits of choir.

3.4 Conductor's Role

As part of the study's key aim of investigating the role of the conductor, all participants were asked to discuss the role and what attributes were considered important for an effective conductor. Patterns of talk reflected that both singers and conductors described the role in terms of having an impact on members' experience of group singing. The theme '*Collaborating with the Conductor*' captures constructions of cooperation between singers and conductors; another theme of '*Building Personal Connections*' focused on the conductor in terms of interpersonal skills; and lastly, '*Understanding Singer's Capabilities*' focused on the conductor and singers in terms of musical knowledge and capabilities.

3.4.1 Collaborating with the Conductor

The conductor was regularly described as key to the overall operation of the choir. Interviewees consistently positioned the role as having the ability and responsibility to oversee group singing. In particular, the pattern of ‘responsibility’ and leadership is evident in the following extracts:

Extract 60

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

Cath: [...] the conductor is the one who’s responsible for that holistic picture. I think that’s the importance of their role as well, in that not, you know, sixteen people trying to work out how they want to perform this piece, is not going to end up sounding as good and being as cohesive as what it would be with a conductor who can, kind of, mould it and shape it.

Extract 61

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

David: [...] It is very much the coach of a sports team, the conductor is about bringing out the best in the musicians...

These descriptions position the conductor as having an external perspective (‘holistic picture’, or ‘coach’ of a team). There is also a simultaneous construction of power and responsibility; the conductor is framed as being expected to ‘mould’, ‘shape’, and bring out the ‘best’ of singers. With reference to ‘team’ and ‘cohesive’, the construction also assumes that singers cooperate with the conductor in order to achieve the best results (e.g a performance sounding ‘good’).

A similar pattern of talk oriented the conductor in a position of responsibility for practical reasons. The conductor was constructed as making the final decisions in order for

the choir to operate as an effective group. The following extracts illustrate that singers in a group could not all have control:

Extract 62

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

Sarah: [...] there'd be lots of people putting in lots of input but in the end, someone's gotta make a decision. And if you can imagine a group, a choir of sixty people, sort of arguing, I couldn't imagine it, choristers of all people!

Extract 63

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

Jim: [...] someone's really got to be making the choices. We can't all really be voting on every, sort of, song."

Extract 64

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

Amelia: [...] it's definitely not a democracy but there is room... when you're singing in a more professional group, for facilitated experimentation, because the singers themselves, many of them are conductors themselves... sometimes our opinion is asked, we try a couple of things but the conductor makes the final decision and I think that's how it should be. If a choir is a democracy then it's probably not going to be a very good choir, because [there would be] too many cooks all in the kitchen.

Here, the role of the conductor is described in terms of opposition of a 'democracy' and the unrealistic concept of 'sixty people arguing' or 'voting' (e.g. 'too many cooks all in the kitchen'). However, there is the possibility of discussion and cooperation ('opinion is asked'),

orienting the conductor away from complete autocracy. As showing in Extract 65 below, the conductor was described as not too dictating:

Extract 65

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Bill: Well they've certainly got to be self-confident, be in charge, but not too dominating a way [...]

This example frames the conductor as being able to balance the role of leadership ('be in charge') with not being overly aggressive or 'dominating'. In short, the role of the conductor was described as one of cooperation between singers and conductors, wherein singers both follow the conductor and occasionally offer discussion.

3.4.2 Building Personal Connections

Working with a conductor was regularly described in terms of a reciprocal relationship and building personal connections. The talk about the conductor was frequently constructed as involving interpersonal skills. For the non-professional choir, a conductor's 'likability' and 'humour' were factors that interviewees noted could impact a rehearsal. The following extracts exemplify this pattern:

Extract 66

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

DCI: [...] The most important thing for choirs, especially amateur or semi-professional choirs, you have to be likeable. [...] If they don't like you, they're not going to respect you, and if they don't respect you they're not going to do what you ask them to do.

Extract 67

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Bill: [...] I think the personality side is really important. [...] I also think, they've gotta have a sense of humour, and that always is encouraging, I think if there can be some fun in the rehearsals as well, it comes back again to we an amateur choir...

Extract 68

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Sarah: [...] [Conductors] have that little bit of room just for levity, you know, when it's needed.

Interviewer: what do you mean by levity?

Sarah: Levity, oh lightness, you know, break the mood a bit, break the tension, crack a joke. People will often remember something about what they need to do because it was funny.

Extract 69

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Georgia: [...] [they] gets us to work hard, we all wanna work hard we want to do well but [they] jokes with us and laughs and gets all the jokes we make and things like that...

These examples highlight how the conductor role was framed in terms of having to balance discipline ('work hard') and fun (e.g. 'levity' or 'joke'). Such constructions of interpersonal skills and humour were reflected as influencing the rehearsal, as more 'encouraging' or singers able to 'remember' certain information.

Additionally, singers and conducts described conductors making personal connections with members in order to establish mutual respect and effective teamwork. In this way, conductors are positioned as being expected to acknowledge and respect individuals, even in

process of group singing. This pattern of the importance of interpersonal skills with individuals is illustrated in the following extracts:

Extract 70

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

David: [...] there are opportunities to build relationships between the conductor and individual singers, and obviously you don't have time to do it regularly, but just maintaining that level of personal interest and personal connection is really important...

Extract 71

Interviewer: What do you think is important for an effective choir?

DC2: [...] For me, that kind of valuing of the individual, I suppose is part of that whole personal thing [...] the plural is much, much less important than all the singular [singers]

Extract 72

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Kate: [...] [conductor's] communication and respect develops things, develops the relationship between the conductor and each of the singers individually, not only as like a group people or as sections, but as individuals...

The conductor's role was constructed in terms of connecting with individual singers, not only as a 'group'. These regular interpersonal and social descriptions of the conductor in the context of choir thus construct the role of the conductor as balancing leadership of a group with amicability with individuals.

3.4.3 *Understanding Singers' Capabilities*

Interviewees regularly described choral music as challenging for singers. For both non-professional and professional choristers, the conductor was described in terms of having a range of musical skills, including knowledge of singing and choral repertoire. Moreover, it was regularly discussed that conductors needed to know and understand the capabilities of the singers in their own groups. A conductor's understanding of singer's capabilities was accomplished in terms of the conductor's ability to pick appropriate repertoire for the group.

The following extracts illustrate this pattern:

Extract 73

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Mary: [...] They know about the act of singing, so they don't put unreasonable strains on you, as a singer, with the amount of repertoire.

Extract 74

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Hannah: [...] to bend, and accept and absence, to accept people are not in their full form, to give them some space and comfort to actually be able to make a nice sound. Too much pressure simply doesn't work, for a singer. If it's in a situation where nothing they do... is good enough, then it doesn't really allow them to flourish

Extract 75

Interviewer: What makes an effective conductor?

Bill: [...] we left choir for five years or so because we weren't enjoying singing under a particular conductor. [...] He wasn't experienced as a singer, he was an instrumentalist, not sure he understood voices and choirs particularly well. We've had some terrific conductors who have been singers...

These comments frame a conductor's understanding of their singers in terms of the 'amount of repertoire' they choose for their choir, understanding singers 'comfort zones' or not being 'unreasonable'. Additionally, the standard of repertoire was described as revealing conductor's knowledge of their singers' abilities. The following extract demonstrates that conductor's ability to assess and 'push' singer's capabilities:

Extract 76

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of the conductor?

David: [...] there's a comfort zone and some [singers] are happy to be taken further out of their comfort zone than others and it's just about understanding, not only the voice qualities, but also how far [conductors] can push people.

From interviewee constructions of the conductor's knowledge and understanding of singing, there was a sense that singers evaluate a conductor's effectiveness on their ability to appropriately assign and execute choral music. This pattern frames the conductor's role in terms of expectations of having musical skills, and the ability to effectively apply their knowledge.

4. Discussion

4.1 Overview

This study used qualitative methods to explore the experiences of two choirs and their respective director-conductors to investigate the overarching question, ‘why do people sing in choirs?’. The question serves to establish more clearly and comprehensively that singing in groups has particular benefits. The themes identified were categorised under individual benefits of choir, group experiences benefits of choir, and the conductor’s role. Eleven themes were identified and included: Voice Contributing to Identity; Voice as Emotional Expression; Singing is Enjoyable Work; Choristers as Unselfish; Psychological Benefits; Choir as a Social Connector; Collective Musical Achievement; Choir Contributes to Culture; Collaborating with the Conductor; Building Personal Connection; and Understanding Singers’ Capabilities.

Previous studies of choirs have predominantly focused on particular groups, specifically groups with adverse circumstances or particular cultural contexts. The present study on members without disadvantaged backgrounds contributes to the literature on choirs in the Psychology of Music. Experiences of members of non-professional and professional choirs may offer further insight to the reasons people choose to sing in choirs, as opposed to singing in groups in response to difficult circumstances. This study also adds to the literature on the influence of the director conductor leadership role in choir, which was previously largely overlooked.

Within the literature on choir in the Psychology of Music, there were few reports that related specifically to the voice and singing. The theme ‘*Voice as Contributes to Identity*’ was not directly encountered in the reviewed literature of the present study. A few studies discussed singing and participation in choir contributing to identity formation (Durrant, 2005; Welch, 2015), however participants in this study described the voice as key to their

experience of choir and their identity, as individuals and humans. Relatedly, participants' talk also involved constructing chorister identity as unselfish and considerate, due to singing in a group (*'Choristers are Unselfish'*). These findings, to the researcher's knowledge, are unique themes to the research of choir.

Music, and singing, has been described as a vehicle for emotional expression (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Durrant, 2005). This claim was reflected in the theme *'Voice as Emotional Expression'*, yet the positioning of voice instead of singing was apparent. Participants reported that singing and using their voice allowed for emotional release and expression. These descriptions were consistent with experiences from homeless people in choir (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; 2005), and suggest that people without disadvantaged backgrounds also benefit from singing.

Interviewees reported psychological benefits of singing. Participants described making music and singing as mentally stimulating and hard work (*'Singing is Hard Work'*). Findings from a cross-national survey of choristers from England, Australia and Germany were similar, wherein participants described singing as keeping the brain active (Clift & Hancox, 2010). Moreover, participants in this study framed psychological benefits of singing in choir in terms of requiring focus and thus distracting attention from troubles (*'Singing Distracts from Troubles'*); this pattern was also previously reported (Clift et al., 2010). However, interviewees' description of singing as soul food (*'Singing Feeds the Soul'*) was not directly reported in previous literature. This theme may relate more broadly to previous findings of improved quality of life from singing (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Clift et al., 2010).

The role of the conductor was directly investigated by including a question in the interview schedule. Discussions similar to the attributes of Durrant's (2005) model of effective conducting were evident, including the importance of musical knowledge and

interpersonal skills. Furthermore, interviewing conductors allowed for their perspectives and experiences to add to the richness of data (Tracy, 2010). The conductor's role was presented with a number of challenges: finding balance between authority and cooperation (*'Collaborating with the Conductor'*), connecting with individuals and the choir as a whole (*'Building Personal Connection'*), and having appropriate musical knowledge and subsequently applying it (*'Understanding Singer's Capabilities'*). The themes were consistent with the interpersonal skills and musicianship included in Durrant's (2005) model of effective conducting. Further research is warranted to explore these aspects in relation to the model in greater detail and potentially with conductor experiences with groups of different ages.

Previous studies have reported that members of choirs described a sense of community and group identity (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Dingle et al., 2013; Addo, 2014). The present findings converge with these reports. Group benefits of choir included participants' descriptions of community, group achievement and choir situated in broader society. The theme *'Collective Musical Achievement'* captured interviewees' talk of the choral musical product as greater than sum of its parts, a description consistent with other middle-class choir members (McCoy, 2016). Descriptions of learning new skills were consistent with previous reports from middle-class choristers (Bailey & Davidson, 2005), however the more consistent pattern of talk reflected sense of connection with others (*'Choir as a Social Connector'*). These reports from the present study countered the claim from Bailey and Davidson (2005) that middle-class singers are likely to have a self-serving attitude towards choir membership.

The final theme in this study detailed the descriptions of participant's talk around choir in terms of benefits for broader society. *'Choir Contributes to Culture'* reflected the pattern in the data wherein choir was framed as impacting its members' lives, and also

audience members who listen to choral music. Participants consistently expressed that opportunities for group singing could help children and adults learn skills and an appreciation for music making. These reports were not encountered in the literature review, however such findings may have been published outside of research specific to choirs in the Psychology of Music. Findings of this study therefore add to the existing body of research on choirs, by presenting similar themes to previous literature and also providing further insight into experiences of choir members at level of the individual, the conductor and the group.

4.2 Implications

Implications of the present findings involve opportunities to expand and promote participation in group singing. Previous studies have pointed to mental health benefits of group singing for adults (Clift et al., 2010; Judd & Pooley, 2013). Interpreted themes from the present study also described that choral singing as mentally stimulating and distracting from negative thoughts or worries. With regard to interpreted patterns of described group benefits, themes identified choir as providing opportunities to feels connected with others and contribute to broader culture through music. Such findings suggest benefits for adults and older adults, whereby involvement in choirs through direct participation or through attending choir performances may positively impact quality of life. Particularly, participants constructed singing as an enjoyable group activity through descriptions of collective achievement and feeling connected with others.

The majority of participants expressed that their involvement in choir began through primary school or church, and that singing has been a fundamental and consistent part of their lives. Encouraging early involvement in group singing and providing more opportunities for choral participation at schools may see children starting sooner and benefiting from group singing for longer. Participants discussed that accessibility to choir ought not be limited to schools and church. Community groups for all ages can offer a supportive environment for

people to connect and collaborate. Such groups may be of particular interest for new members of a community without existing familial or social networks. Participants remarked that choirs have the ability to bring disparate people together under the common goal of making music. Some singers commented on the current political and social climate that appears increasingly divided, and framed group singing as an opportunity to bring people together.

It must be acknowledged that encouraging choral involvement in schools, church and broader communities has challenges. In order for choral groups to exist, economic and administrative tools must be available. Some choir groups operate on a voluntary basis where singers must contribute a membership fee. These fees may hinder people from participating who could benefit from group singing. However, there are various choral group levels and membership fees may be indicative of a certain standard of musical repertoire and operation. Regardless of a choir group's musical standards, choir groups require music, rehearsal venues, and potentially resources for public performances. Considering that some community groups may not have these resources available, they could benefit from external support. For example, government funding for arts groups and programs could contribute to encourage more opportunities for group singing.

Not only is there an opportunity to expand the integration of choir in communities, but also some participants remarked there is an opportunity to change common perceptions of choir. For people's involvement in choirs to change, it is important to assess the preconceived understanding and stereotypes of choir. Participants reported certain stereotypes that framed choir as a negative or undesirable activity. As such, music educators and community music leaders are at the forefront of potentially shaping people's perceptions of choir and singing. Additionally, exposure in the media could also contribute to broadening people's understanding of what choir involves and how singers or audience members could benefit.

Participants described the voice as a fundamental human trait and the original instrument that the majority of people are born with. Considering the growing body of research suggesting psychological and social benefits of group singing, it is important to spread awareness of choir's positive outcomes for members.

While the importance of participation in choirs has been consistently stressed throughout the present study, participants also highlighted that listeners could benefit from choral music. Participants discussed that audiences are able to experience new music at choral performances, which may even lead to a change in perspective or appreciation of music. Participants described group singing as having the potential to impact audiences who are participating indirectly in choral practice. Whether there is a human need to connect or whether the voices provides an emotive form of communication, participants described choir in terms of contributing to broader culture. Although not all groups will have the goal to sing publically, choirs who aim to perform may require publicity, concert venues, and an audience. This implies that there should be opportunities for choirs to perform but, importantly, people to attend concerts. Changing perceptions on choir is not limited to potential choir members, but stereotypes in the mind of potential audience members should also be considered.

All participants discussed the role of the conductor. Participants reported that the role, decisions and actions in the choir contribute to singers' experiences and motivations to sing in a group. The importance of balancing musical expertise and interpersonal skills was expressed. Given these findings, it is not unreasonable to suggest that such skills can be incorporated into conductor education or trainings. One conductor also expressed that the conductor role has similarities with other leadership and managerial roles. Adequate knowledge in a specialised field must be complemented with the ability to appropriately apply the knowledge, for individual and group situations. The conductor qualities of

leadership, social skills, and musical expertise, may be a potential metaphor for other managerial trainings.

4.3 Strengths

4.3.1 Strengths of Thematic Analysis

The current study adhered to standards of good thematic analysis, established by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013). Data of the first fourteen interviews were fully transcribed *verbatim* with line numbers to provide detailed reports for each interview. All remaining interviews were partially transcribed and included in the analysis. Coding of the data was extensive across all data and subsequently extracts of the codes were collated. Themes were constructed from the collated codes and were checked against each other and with the original data. During the analysis, themes were evaluated and divided into broad categories of individual experiences and group experiences that related back to the research question. Further analysis led to identification and construction of 11 themes. Extracts were applied to each theme. The researcher was positioned as an active participant in the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

An audit trail was maintained to ensure authenticity and sincerity of the research. It included accounts of researchers' decisions, thoughts and actions during the research process and analysis of themes (Tracy, 2010). The researcher was also positioned as choir member with experience of group singing. Participants were made aware of the researchers' role as a chorister during the recruitment process. The role of the researcher as a chorister may have provided useful insight into common terminology and choral practices, however this experience comes with potential biases, which must be acknowledged. There were limitations and strengths to the researchers' position as a chorister and a student. Participants may have assumed or over-estimated the researchers' knowledge of choral experiences during

interviews and provided less detailed responses than with an experienced researcher. Conversely, it is also possible that participants were led to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences in detail with the researcher as a chorister.

4.3.2 Strengths Specific to Study

Although qualitative research does not claim generalizability, the themes of the present study were congruent with previous research of choral experiences. Thus it is not unreasonable to suggest that participants' recounts reflect the experiences of similar choirs in Western society. Some previous studies also used thematic analysis, but methods have not been consistent across the literature on choirs.

The present study was also fortunate to interview 21 participants, providing over 700 minutes of recorded data for transcription. The researcher conducted all interviews to ensure for immediate familiarization with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Participants had a range of experiences, some of which had also conducted choirs, which provided further detail to the data in response to interview questions. The semi-structured nature of the interviews also allowed for flexibility and personable discussions according to individual participant's experiences.

4.4 Limitations & Future research

As previously acknowledged, the researcher was positioned as a chorister and this experience may have contributed to bias during the data collection and analysis processes. Although tacit knowledge of choristers' experience may have provided valuable insight to participants' experiences, the researcher may have overlooked certain details as taken for granted phenomena. Participants were made aware of the researchers' position during recruitment and this information may have influenced people's decision to volunteer

participation, or not. In a similar vein, participants who volunteered may have been more motivated to share their experiences. Social desirability may have influenced responses during the interview since the researcher was a student. Future research may consider a researcher who is not a chorister, who may explore taken for granted assumptions in more depth. Alternatively, a researcher with choral experience may benefit from tacit knowledge, however may choose not to reveal this experience to participants prior to interviews. In this way, participants may be motivated to discuss their experiences in more detail without assuming the researcher has prior experience with choir.

The majority of participants were experienced singers, having sung in choirs for many years. These long term choral experiences and involvement could potentially have led to singers expressing long term benefits from choir. Replication of the present study could consider community choirs or other groups with singers who have less experience and exposure to group music. Previous literature on homeless men (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; 2005) and prisoners (Silber, 2005) suggested non-experienced singers were able to experience benefits of group singing despite limited previous experience with choirs. It would also be worth investigating choirs with mixed ethnic backgrounds to assess whether benefits of choir are not limited to Western cultures.

Additionally, the participants interviewed were members of choirs with high musical performance standards. Although Choir 1 claims to be an amateur, community choir, members are required to audition in order to join and it is expected potential members have some previous experience in choral singing. Choir 2 was a professional ensemble, where members are invited to audition and join by the director-conductor. Examples of the prerequisite experiences of the singers of both choirs include the ability to read music and to sing in groups with multiple part harmonies. These standards of singing, mostly classical, music, may have influenced the responses of the participants. Although themes highlight that

members discussed mental stimulation of singing and the importance of collective achievement, singers and conductors also discussed the importance of singing high quality music. Future studies could examine choirs that sing different genres of music, or community groups that are un-auditioned.

The present research had limited demographic information of participants, thus it was difficult to discern and compare additional factors. For example, the level of academic or music education may have influenced participant's responses or ability to express their experiences. Although many participants discussed their background in choral singing in terms of university or church choirs, the data lacked detail. It is also important to note that the professional ensemble received some monetary compensation from their membership and performances, however these details were not discussed nor the focus of the present study. Some participants from the professional choir discussed other employment in addition to their choral membership, however this information was not questioned or examined in detail. Further studies may benefit from including a more comprehensive survey of singers' choral history, education and employment for potential contextual insight to compliment the analysis.

Singers and conductors of the present research were all adults over the age of 21. The themes discussed mainly reflect positive outcomes for group singing, however these findings may be limited to adults. A similar study may investigate groups with younger members and different levels of experiences. Whether group singing in choirs is beneficial for younger age groups would be worth exploring but may face rigorous ethical approval.

4.5 Conclusions

This study used qualitative methods to investigate the experiences of singers and conductors of two choirs, who sing by choice and not through the necessity of national

identity, disadvantaged backgrounds or physical labour. Findings provide further insight into the benefits and outcomes of group singing for individuals and groups. Participants expressed great enthusiasm for the benefits of choirs, and, although the majority had long experiences and potential bias of these outcomes, consistency with previous literature adds support to the present claims. Interviewees reported the importance of continual opportunities for children and adults to be involved in group singing through active participation or attending performances of choir. Policy makers, music educators and community leaders have important roles to play in addressing these issues. The reasons for which people sing in choirs are numerous and diverse. Perhaps singing provides a unique expression of human identity and emotion, and when sharing these experiences through music-making with others, there is a connection with what it means to be part of humanity.

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Appendix A: Initial Email to director-conductors

Dear [Conductor's name],

My name is [student's name] and I am an Honours Psychology student at the University of Adelaide. I am in the process of developing a thesis project, and I am interested in investigating choir members' experiences of membership in adult choirs.

The research involves interviewing choir members and director-conductors. The interviews will be recorded in order to be transcribed and analysed. The transcribed data will be pseudonymised in order to maintain anonymity of all participants. Also the descriptions of the choir will be kept broad to protect anonymity of the group. For example, "an adult choir from an Australian metropolitan city".

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to be involved with [respective choir under conductors direction]?

I very much look forward to hearing from you. You can contact me at [email address].

Kind regards,

[Student's name]

Appendix B: Information Sheet

Experiences of Members of Adult Choirs

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a study that will examine adult choir members' experiences of their membership of their choir.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?

This study is designed to explore the experiences of members of an adult choir and their respective conductor. Your participation is voluntary and all identifiable information will not be disclosed.

What does the study involve?

Should you choose to take part, the research will involve talking to the researcher, [student's name]. The questions will focus on your experiences and perceptions of being in a choir. With your permission, it will be recorded in order to be transcribed and analysed.

All identifiable information will not be disclosed in the report and pseudonyms will be used instead of participants' names. Any specific information will be coded, for example an event name or date will not be used. The choir will also only be described in broad terms, not publishing the name of the group nor its director-conductor. You are not obliged to share any information you do not wish to. You can also choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

This study is being undertaken as part of an Honours degree in Psychology. It is hoped that the findings will also be published as a peer-reviewed, journal article.

How long will the interview take?

It is estimated that an interview will last between 30 to 45 minutes. The date and time for the interviews will be mutually decided, most likely during June to August at a time that is convenient to you.

What are benefits and risks from participating in this study?

Participation will involve reflecting on your membership and experiences of being in a choir. In a broader context, participation in this study will add to the growing body of knowledge and research in the field of Psychology and Music.

We do not foresee any risks in participating in the study. If you have any questions or concerns at this initial stage, please contact us directly (see Who do I contact if I have any questions?).

What happens at the end of the study?

The expected completion date of the project is October 2017. The data from the interviews will be held by the University of Adelaide for a period of five years from the publication of the results, and will then be securely destroyed. Data will be accessible only by the researchers, and will be treated in a confidential matter.

If you would like a summary of the study's findings, please indicate "yes" on the attached consent form along with a contact email.

Who do I contact if I have any questions?

For any questions or queries, please contact (researcher) at: [email],

Or (research supervisor) at: [email].

In the unlikely event that you experience extended discomfort, you can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or at <http://lifelineadelaide.org/>

This project has been approved by the University of Adelaide Subcommittee for Human Research in the School of Psychology (code number 17/38). For any questions concerning the ethics of this project, please contact the convener of the Subcommittee for Human Research in the School of Psychology, Professor Paul Delfabbro, 8 313 4936.

You will need to give your consent to be involved. Please see and complete the attached consent form if you wish to participate.

Kind regards,

[Student's name] and [supervisor's name]

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

1. I (please print name) consent to take part in the research project entitled “Experiences of adult choir members”.
2. I acknowledge I have read and understood the attached Information Sheet entitled “Information for prospective participants”.
3. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is given freely.
4. I understand that the study involves an interview that will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes and will be recorded. The interviews will be conducted between June and August 2017.
5. I have been informed that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal information will not be divulged.
6. I understand I am free to withdraw from the project at any time until September 2017, at which time the analysis will be developed which would make it no longer practicable to isolate and remove the data.
7. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent form, and the attached Information sheet.

..... (signature) (date)

Please indicate if you would like a summary of the findings once the thesis is complete in October 2017:

- No, I do not require a summary of the study’s findings.
- Yes, I would like a summary of the study’s findings.

Contact email:

OR I would prefer the researcher to present a brief summary to the choir prior to a rehearsal instead of an email.

Appendix D: Interview Schedule and Prompts

Questions & prompts	Previous research
<p>1. I'd like to start by hearing a bit about your background in choir and group singing. Could you tell me a bit about how you got started?</p> <p>a) What have your experiences with [current choir] been like?</p> <p>b) Could you talk a bit about the differences you noticed between groups you've sung with?</p>	<p>Singer identity is considered to develop over time, through experiences from childhood, school, family, tertiary study, or work (Johnston, 2012; Welch, 2015)</p> <p>This broad opening question allows for the researcher to gain some insight to the participants' background and is an opportunity to develop rapport at the start of the interview.</p>
<p>2. Could you tell me a bit about what you enjoy about choir and group singing?</p> <p>a) Could you tell me a bit more about what you mean by [excerpt of interest from previous answer]?</p>	<p>Social and psychological benefits of singing in choir have been commonly reported in previous literature (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; 2005; Clift et al., 2010; Judd & Pooley, 2013)</p> <p>This question explores if participants from the present study reflect previous findings.</p>
<p>3. And I'd like to hear a bit about what you think is important for group singing? What do you think makes a good or an effective choir?</p> <p>a) You've spoken a bit about the [music/social] side. Could you also talk a bit about the [social/music] side?</p> <p>b) Could you tell me a bit more about what</p>	<p>Previous literature has discussed various reasons as to why people sing together (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Johnston, 2012; Judd & Pooley, 2013), however findings have been limited due to disadvantaged populations.</p> <p>This question explores if participants from the present study reflect previous findings and</p>

<p>you mean by [excerpt of interest from previous answer]?</p>	<p>seeks to add to the literature of choral experiences.</p>
<p>4. I'm quite intrigued by the role of the conductor. Although I understand a bit of what the role is about, singing in a choir myself, I'd like to hear a bit about what you think of the role?</p> <p>a) What do you think makes a good conductor?</p> <p>b) You've spoken a bit about the [music/social] side. Could you also talk a bit about the [social/music] side?</p>	<p>Previous research on conductor's impact on singers is limited. Existing research has focused on conductors influence singer's enjoyment, motivation and perception of choir (Durrant, 2005; Judd & Pooley, 2013)</p> <p>This question explores if participants from the present study reflect previous findings and seeks to add to discussions around the role of the conductor.</p>
<p>5. Now this is a bit abstract, but I'd like to hear about what your life might have been like without choir or group singing. Could you talk a bit about what choir brings to your life that might not otherwise be there?</p>	<p>A previous study encouraged participants to consider a life without choir (McCoy, 2016).</p> <p>This question encourages participants to synthesize the above questions and consider a different perspective on potentially how choir has impacted past or present experiences.</p>
<p>6. And I'd like to finish with something that I've read during my research. There was a master's thesis of a case study, researching sailors in Ghana who sang together while they fished, but not in any other contexts. The research was talked about that the group singing helped them work and also</p>	<p>A recent Master's thesis presented a case study on singing sailors in Ghana and argued that group singing was a social function that helped with physical labour (Addo, 2014).</p> <p>This question allows for participants to discuss their thoughts on recent research and explore if they could identify with the</p>

<p>helped the group socially bond. What do you think of those findings?</p> <p>a) Can you relate to or understand those findings, at all?</p>	<p>findings through their own group singing experiences.</p>
<p>7. Is there anything else you'd like to add that you think we haven't discussed in relation to choir or group singing, to finish?</p>	<p>This final question is an opportunity for participants to raise additional thoughts or experiences that were not previously discussed from answering the above questions.</p>