

Identity Among Chinese American Adolescents in a Culturally Relevant Children's Choir

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to explore ways that the cultural identity of Chinese American adolescents was mediated through participation in a children's choir that sings repertoire from both Western and Eastern countries of the world. The study examined a children's choir where a majority of members identify as Chinese American adolescents. The primary question guiding the inquiry was: How do Chinese American adolescents describe the experience of singing in a children's choir on their emerging cultural identity? Sub questions included the following: How is identity created or described by Chinese American youth in a children's choir? How does social interaction with fellow choir members affect their identity development? What is the impact of singing Chinese folksongs on the development of their identity? How might the findings apply to other music education settings? Data collection included 12 hours of observations over the course of five weeks, and interviewing five students, the director, and the founding director of the children's choir. Findings suggest positive role models that are also culture bearers, singing popular Chinese folksongs, and having a positive, family-like environment aids in the development of cultural identity among Chinese American adolescents.

Keywords: identity, culturally relevant pedagogy, Chinese American, music education

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Identity Among Chinese American Adolescents in a Culturally Relevant Children's Choir

The National Standards for Music Education provide teachers with a framework for developing their curriculum. The eleventh anchor standard in the National Core Art Standards is to “relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding” (“National Core Art Standards”, 2014). This standard is quite ambiguous and leaves the interpretation of this standard to the teacher. This ambiguity leaves educators relying on personal experience and research to make decisions about repertoire selection. Further, the push to meet the needs of a diverse population puts added pressure on the educator in choosing what and how to teach.

Previous research on cultural identity in education primarily concentrates on African American and Latino students due to the “achievement gap” between White students, African American, and Latino students seen in standardized tests (O'Connor, Hill, & Robinson, 2009). Although Asian Americans are one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 2014), very little research centers specifically on the educational needs of Asian American students. Some believe this population is frequently overlooked in scholarly research because of the “model minority” myth, which is the perception that most Asian American students are successful academically due to hard work and family values (Lee, 1994; Maddux et al., 2008; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). The omission of this group from research is unfortunate since O'Connor et al. (2009) found that an achievement gap between Whites and Asian Americans does exist with Whites progressing faster than their Asian American counterparts.

To truly have a classroom that addresses the cultural needs of students, music teachers must consider the vast cultural differences within a classroom. Due to the lack of existing

research on the experiences of Asian American students, much less on Chinese Americans, we need to know more about their educational needs. This need for more research on the cultural needs of Chinese American experiences in music education stems from the fact that the music classroom differs from other classes in terms of style, goals, and curriculum.

As a middle school choir teacher who teaches a population of students where the majority identify as Asian Americans, the lack of research addressing this specific group of students intrigued me. Out of the Asian American population that I teach, most identify as Chinese American. I was interested in learning more about the pedagogy that addressed the specific needs of Chinese Americans. I wondered if creating a curriculum that incorporated culturally relevant information about Chinese music would positively affect the students, and I questioned if having Chinese American role models impacted them. I was curious to know if any of these questions might relate to identity development among Chinese American adolescents.

The purpose of this case study was to explore ways that the cultural identity of Chinese American adolescents was mediated through participation in a children's choir that sings repertoire from both Western and Eastern countries of the world. The study examined a children's choir where a majority of members identified as Chinese American adolescents. The primary question guiding the inquiry was: How do Chinese American adolescents describe the experience of singing in a children's choir on their emerging cultural identity? Sub questions included the following: How is identity created or described by Chinese American youth in a children's choir? How does social interaction with fellow choir members affect their identity development? What is the impact of singing Chinese folksongs on the development of their identity? How might the findings apply to other music education settings? To provide a foundation for many of these questions, Chapter 2 reviewed research concerning Asian

American youth identity, music identity, and the intersection of these concepts in music education.

Terminology

The term **identity** is found in psychology and the social sciences, and is synonymous with **individuality**. The term was coined in the 1950s and made popular with Erik Erikson's famous revelation of an "identity crisis" (Gleason, 1983). In this sense identity refers to "the self," which proves to be quite a vague term (Gleason, 1983). There are many different types of identity including political identity, gender identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, religious identity, musical identity, sexual orientation identity, and national identity. It is important to note that people can relate to a multitude of identities. For this study, I focused on the place where music identity and cultural identity merge.

Cultural identity is feeling a sense of belonging to a group. Race and ethnicity are part of ones cultural identity. Race refers to physical attributes, such as hair color and skin color. Ethnicity refers to cultural factors including nationality, ancestry, and language. For this study, cultural identity not only refers to ethnic identity as Chinese American, but also the children's choir culture including the social and musical aspects of the group.

Throughout the years, scholars have used a multitude of pedagogical terms to describe the cultural needs of students, including multicultural education, multiethnic education, cross-cultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and, to a lesser extent, intercultural education. Even though many of these terms are relatively synonymous, there are slight differences. According to Anderson and Shehan (1999), multicultural education organizes experiences for students that develop sensitivity, understanding, and respect for peoples from a broad spectrum of ethnic-cultural backgrounds. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a style of pedagogy that

addresses student achievement, helps students to accept and affirm cultural identity and develops critical perspectives that challenge inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 17-18). In short, culturally relevant pedagogy relates course content to students’ cultures while promoting critical thinking. Intercultural education is a term commonly used in international studies to describe the ability to respect, empathize with, and understand all ethnicities (Leeman & Ledoux, 2003).

Although the definitions of the terms are slightly different, they have more similarities than differences. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I used the term **culturally relevant pedagogy** to describe teaching that attempts to relate course content to students’ personal identities. Additionally, culturally relevant pedagogy requires individual students to make connections between culture, education, personal identity, and inequities. In this study, the term **multicultural education** will refer to the effort to expose a group of students to a multitude of cultures in addition to their own with the goal of creating a sense of understanding and respect for all cultures. Multicultural education focuses solely on race and ethnicity, whereas culturally relevant pedagogy dives into deeper issues surrounding race and ethnicity while also reaffirming cultural identity.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a challenging term because it involves others, in most cases the teacher, making assumptions not about that students’ culture, but also what students need in order to strengthen that cultural identity. The long distance these assumptions leap is problematic. Culturally relevant pedagogy implies a difference between education for *them* versus *us*. In a global economy those differences continue to become more obscure. My research assumed Chinese Americans receive a culturally relevant pedagogy through singing in a

choir with repertoire from both the Western and Eastern traditions including Chinese folksongs. The choir provided a culturally relevant pedagogy to their Chinese American students through content choices and also through creating a positive environment where students can explore their Chinese American identity with other Chinese Americans.

The term **Asian American** developed during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s to unify Japanese and Chinese Americans (Park, 2008). At present, the term Asian American is inexact and ill defined. There is a growing amount of literature analyzing the experiences of subgroups of Asian Americans including South Asian Americans, East Asian Americans, Southeast Asian Americans, and West Asian Americans (O'Connor et al., 2009). Most of the literature discussed in this paper uses the term Asian American broadly, but typically refers to people whose descendants originated from East Asia. Generally, this reference includes people whose ancestors immigrated to the United States from China, Korea, and Japan; Taiwan and Mongolia are also considered to be East Asian countries, yet are often not represented by this term. I believe the term Asian American is too vague, and therefore I only focused my research on participants that self identify as Chinese American.

Finally, the age range of participants needs to be clarified. This study used the term “adolescent” and “teenager” interchangeably because most of the research reviewed used these terms synonymously to refer to children between the ages of 11 and 18. Secondary education typically begins during this age range in the United States.

To fulfill the purpose of the study, I chose to study the Crystal Children's Choir which is a private children's choir located in the Bay Area in California. This group caters towards Chinese American youth by singing songs of different styles and countries. They do, however, make an effort to sing popular folksongs from China that they feel parents of the students may be

familiar. I observed the group over a course of five weeks for a total of 12 hours taking field notes and also audiotaping rehearsals. I conducted surveys and interviews of the students, and also interviewed the directors to gather a sense of the community and identity formation within this group of self-selecting students.

Chapter II

A Literature Review on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Asian American Identity, and Music's Role in Identity Creation

To address the needs of a diverse population, teachers must understand the background of their students, and culturally relevant pedagogy can aid teachers in this endeavor. Gloria Ladson-Billings is one of the pioneering researchers on the topic of culturally relevant pedagogy, specifically with regard to African American students. Her esteemed book, *The Dreamkeepers* (1994), discussed culturally relevant teaching as it relates to the perceptions of teachers and students, classroom social interactions, the teaching of literacy and mathematics, and the implications of such teaching on African Americans and teacher education. She stated, “The dilemma for African-American students becomes one of negotiating the academic demands of school while demonstrating cultural competence. Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476).

Recently, some researchers have begun examining culturally relevant pedagogy among Asian American populations in the classroom (Brown, 2004; Howard, 2003; O'Connor et al., 2009). However, there is relatively little literature on this population when compared to other racial and ethnic groups. The purpose of this chapter was to explore what research tells us about the following important topics: Asian American youth identity, music identity among adolescents, Culturally relevant pedagogy with regard to Asian Americans, and culturally relevant pedagogy in music education.

Asian American Youth Identity

The model minority myth is an overarching stereotype that seeps into Asian American identity. The model minority, sometimes referred to as the model minority myth, is a term that stereotypes Asian Americans as high achievers who do well in school due to hard work and family attitudes toward education (Lee, 1994; Maddux et al., 2008; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). W. Petersen first coined this stereotype in his 1966 *New York Times Magazine* article describing the successes of Japanese Americans as minorities (Petersen, 1966). In 1966, U.S. News and World Report described similar stereotypes about the Chinese American population ("Success story of one minority group in U.S.," 1966). Since those articles, the stereotype that all Asian Americans are successful, high-achievers grew in the United States. Some argue that this positive stereotype frees Asian Americans from discrimination. This suggestion is problematic because it narrowly catalogues a large population, and it ignores the relatively high rate of depression, anxiety, and suicide among Asian Americans (Lee, 1994; "The myth of the model minority: Asian Americans facing racism," 2011).

The “model minority” myth. The stereotype of Asian Americans as high achievers does not take into account the vast diversity within this group. Lee (1994) collected data via interviews, observations, and analysis of site data at a high school consisting of 2,050 students with 18 percent of the students identifying as Asian American. She wanted to reveal the realities behind the model-minority stereotype and introduce readers to the individuals who live behind this myth. The students who self-identified as “Asian” most closely resembled the characteristics of the model-minority stereotype whereas the Southeast Asian students, who identified as “new wavers,” did not feel education was the key to success. The students who self-identified as “Asian” described the “new wavers” as “liking to party” (p. 422). Lee concluded that there is variability among Asian Americans in fulfilling the model-minority

stereotype. Both high- and low-achieving Asian Americans felt anxiety over their efforts to live up to the myth, leading to some feeling depressed or embarrassed if they did not believe they were succeeding academically.

Non-Asians can resent Asian Americans for the model minority stereotype. Rosenbloom and Way (2004) examined racial relations among Asian American, Latino, and African Americans over a two-year period in a New York City high school. They interviewed the same 60 students comprising of equal numbers of each racial group twice over two years. The findings suggested that the teacher showed favoritism toward the Asian American students, which caused their non-Asian counterparts to physically and verbally harass the Asian American students. The Latino and African American students reported feeling discrimination and bias from the adults. The researchers also noted existing racial tensions over language and immigration assimilation for Asian American and Latino students with regard to those students who were born in America and those born abroad.

The model minority stereotype is prevalent in society and the media. Taylor et al. (2005) recreated a prior study from 1994 to see if Asian American portrayals in advertising had changed over time. They examined 943 advertisements from current issues of the same magazines studied in 1994 and found that while there was an increase in Asian American representation, that representation was stereotypical, portraying Asian Americans mainly in technology or business advertisements. The authors implied the continued portrayal of this stereotype could be damaging.

The stereotype of Asian Americans as high achievers does not take into account the vast diversity within this group. Ngo and Lee (2007) explored the conflicting stereotypes of the model minority idea among Southeast Asian youth. They reviewed literature analyzing the

educational performance of four Southeast Asian American groups, including Vietnamese American, Laotian American, Cambodian American, and Hmong American. The authors observed that migration patterns to the United States among Asian Americans affected future educational success, noting that many Southeast Asians immigrated as refugees. This led to struggles within the Southeast Asian American community. Despite these challenges, Laotian and Vietnamese Americans thrived educationally compared to the other two groups, which the authors attribute to cultural differences. The Laotian and Vietnamese cultures value education highly. The authors concluded the importance of recognizing diversity among the Asian American population and encouraged others not to stereotype this group.

The model-minority stereotype has both positive and negative connotations, as Maddux and her colleagues (2008) found. They completed a number of tests to instill fear among participants. These tests were designed to suggest whether feelings of being threatened were greater if presented with a hypothetical Asian American counterpart versus another race. The first two tests were surveys centered on observing negative emotions towards the model minority myth among non-Asian Americans. The third study was a question-and-answer interview that tested the causal nature between a feeling of threat and negative attitudes and emotions toward Asian Americans. In the fourth and final study, ninety-seven students of White, European descent volunteered to participate in a study where they individually competed in a trivia contest on a computer for a cash prize against a randomly selected European or Asian opponent, although the opponent was hypothetical. After the game, the participants answered questions about attitudes and feelings towards different racial groups, with one being Asian American. Knowing the competitor was Asian American created different feelings compared to a competitor of European descent. The results of the studies concluded that among non-Asian

Americans, the stereotypes of Asian Americans derive from feelings of realistic threats. The authors found that people can have positive stereotypes towards Asian Americans yet also express negative attitudes and emotions toward them (Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008).

The model-minority stereotype, although sometimes deemed positive, packs Asian Americans into an oversimplified vision of an entire group of people. Asian Americans are frequently grouped together based on stereotypes of an entire continent, ignoring the important cultural differences that exist between Asian nations. These widely held notions might hinder Asian Americans' pursuit of finding their own individual identity.

Asian American adolescent identity. Most Asian Americans positively identify with their cultural group. Porter and Washington (1993) reviewed the existing literature on the self-image of Asian Americans and Hispanics and compared this to existing literature on African Americans. The authors noted there was more literature on African Americans, and they attributed this to the long and brutal history experienced by African American populations compared to other minorities in the United States. Porter and Washington also found that Hispanics, Asian Americans, and African Americans tend to identify positively with their group, particularly if they are young or in a position of social mobility.

Oyserman and Sakamoto (1997) asked a sample of 162 Asian American university students to complete a 30 to 60 minute questionnaire about their identity as Asian Americans and the role of stereotyping in their exploration of identity. They wanted to research the relationship between individualism and collectivism among Asian Americans with regards to ethnic identity and self-esteem. They also explored how ethnic identity and self-esteem influence perceptions of the model minority label. Participants noted the positive attributes of the label, including high

academic achievement, a label they did not avoid, and the negative characteristics including social awkwardness, a label they did avoid. They found that students who closely identified with their cultural label liked the label more than those striving for individualism, although collectivism outweighed individualism in most participants.

Bradley and Corwyn (2004) examined perceived life-satisfaction among five sociocultural groups including Chinese Americans. The sample consisted of 310 families with at least one child between the ages of 10 and 15. The children and their families completed a series of tests and questionnaires. Three predictors of marital status, self-efficacy beliefs, and adolescent health seemed to affect perceived happiness among youth. Specifically, marital status was a significant factor, whereas the ratio of income-to-needs played a smaller role in life satisfaction. Family contextual factors were very significant, particularly among Chinese American youth. Once economic conditions and a personal feeling of control were met, the next significant factor was association of family strictness and negative feelings. Health status played a significant role in all the sociocultural groups except Chinese Americans due to the fact that few Chinese American teens reported being in poor health.

The underrepresentation of Asian Americans in education research was highlighted in Ng, Lee and Pak's (2007) review of literature. They noted the neglect of Asian Americans in discussions of curriculum and staffing, and also within issues of identity and educational needs. Discussions revolved around minorities who were more visibly underrepresented within the curriculum:

Research presented here reveals not only a wide variation of experiences, needs, and outcomes along ethnic lines but also a more complicated situation in which Asian American students struggle to interpret and negotiate the racial and cultural demands of

identity development, family relations, college access and retention, campus racial climate, and an invisibility in education policies. (Ng et al., 2007, p. 120)

The term Asian American was created during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's to unify Japanese and Chinese Americans (Park, 2008). Park wanted to see if the term changed since its inception. He interviewed 88 second-generation university students and found that the term shifted to encompass a wide diversity of Asian countries, and with those changes, the meaning of the term was modified to encompass the diversity in the group, including a wider diversity of religions, ethnicities, and generations. He argued that these new meanings might diminish the effectiveness of unifying and activating this group.

Despite high levels of academic achievement, many Asian Americans report poor psychological and social adjustment (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Qin, Way and Mukherjee (2008) looked at 120 Chinese American students from two qualitative studies to find trends in the reasoning for poor adjustment and mental well-being. They found that many participants had distant relationships between themselves and their parents due to language and cultural barriers. Also, non-Chinese peer harassment about physical attributes and verbal taunts contributed the most to detrimental psychological and social adjustment.

Parental relationships are very important to Asian American adolescents. Juang and Nguyen (2009) completed a study of Asian American adolescents in San Francisco, with 309 participants from two large high schools. They found that adolescents with higher levels of family obligations and a later onset of autonomy engaged in less misconduct than others. In reviewing other studies, they concluded that "these studies suggest that greater assimilation to U.S. (or Western) culture is associated with greater misconduct and especially when youth are not involved in their traditional culture" (Juang & Nguyen, 2009, p. 651).

Although this stereotype does not apply to all Asian Americans, certain research does reinforce some of the stereotypes of the model minority myth. Jang (2002) was a sociologist who compared misbehavior in schools of 18,132 Asian and non-Asian Americans in the United States and found that Asian American adolescents are less likely to exhibit deviant behavior when compared to their White, African American, Hispanic, or Native American peers. He came to similar results even when breaking down Asian Americans into four groups consisting of Far East, East, Southeast, and South Asian Americans. Southeast and South Asian Americans were the most deviant among the Asian American subgroups. He suggested the differences are based on the participants' positive family backgrounds and school bonding.

Asian American adolescents relate to many different identities. Exploring the life of adolescents outside of school can lead to insights on some of these identities. Hunt, Moloney, and Evans (2011) explored over 500 dance events in 61 dance clubs that catered to Asian Americans. The goal was to focus on the drug scene among Asian Americans and find how it related to their identity. The respondents noted that their identities were fluid and flux, and they had to maintain multiple identities based on the situation. Drug life was one of many identities that did not affect or intertwine with the other identities necessary to be an Asian American.

Language also plays a large role in Asian American adolescent identity. Shankar (2011) reviewed Asian American youth language practices in hopes of offering alternative ways to look at identity, school orientations, and generational change. She found that Asian American youth use their heritage language to bond with their cultural communities and find a sense of belonging. The ability to speak English is also important in identity; however, English learning environments seen in English language learner classrooms can create a sense of being "forever foreign" (Shankar, 2011, p. 20).

Even though some Asian American youth identify positively with the model minority stereotype, there are aspects from which students may distance themselves. The negative effects of the stereotype are seen through higher rates of anxiety, conflict with non-Asian peers, and depression rates among Asian American adolescents. The reviewed literature emphasized the importance of culture and identity, two key aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant music teachers need to understand not only how culture plays a part in students' identity, but also how music is involved in identity development.

Music Identity Among Adolescents

In addition to culture, music plays an important role in identity creation. The development of music identities begins at a young age and morphs over time (Green, 2011):

Musical identities are forged from a combination of personal, individual musical experiences on one hand, and membership in various social groups--from the family to the nation-state and beyond--on the other hand. They encompass musical tastes, values, practices (including reception activities such as listening or dancing), skills, and knowledge; and they are wrapped up with how, where, when, and why those tastes, values, practices, skills, and knowledge were acquired or transmitted. (Green, 2011, p. 1)

In the 1970s, Cooley and Mead were among the first to study identity as we know it today (Cerulo, 1997). Identity studies originally focused on individual identity and over time evolved to focus on the collective. Through the lens of identity in relation to music among adolescents, this section will review literature on social influence on music identity, and music identity within music education.

Social influence on music identity. Social groups play a critical role in music identity. Typically, adolescents do not identify as a musician unless others identify them as a musician

first. Through the lens of social constructivism, O'Neill (2002) inquired into self-identity in young musicians by reviewing other studies on identity and also by reviewing two studies she conducted on the subject. The first study noted four female adolescents' view of musicians, and the second study focused on expectations of university students' final recitals. She also looked into the social influences of the creation of self-identity, including family, education, media, and structures of power that define social groups according to such classifications as gender, ethnicity, and social class. O'Neill explored the obtuse definition of "musician" and how many youth, even those in formal lessons in and out of school, failed to recognize themselves as musicians unless others perceived them in this light.

Music preference plays a role in peer relationship and personal identity. Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (2002) examined the relationship between music and identity from the viewpoint of the individual and among an adolescent's social group by reflecting on two prior studies completed in 2001. The first involved 124 British adolescents between the age of 14 and 15, and the second involved 149 British adolescents. Both had the goal of revealing the effect of social groups on music identity. These researchers found that listening to self-chosen music seemed to regulate moods, form positive peer relations, form positive social identities, and fill a void for other identity needs.

Music identity within music education. Music identity is closely interwoven with music education (Green, 2011). North, Hargreaves, and O'Neill (2000) explored the importance of music among adolescents in England. From looking at prior dialogue in the music education community, there seemed to be a disconnection between music in the classroom and music outside the classroom. By exploring students' perceptions of music both in- and out-of-class, the researchers further investigated the issues.

In addition to looking at the importance of music among adolescents in England, the researchers were interested in discovering why students listened to and played music. Curriculum choices in music education were controversial in England at the time and many critics felt that music taught in school did not relate to the students' out-of-school musical experiences. The authors hoped that the study could aid in this debate. They asked 2,465 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 14 from 22 secondary schools to complete a questionnaire about their degree of involvement in music. Students described their involvement with music primarily as listeners, typically in isolation. The questionnaire revealed interesting perceptions of popular and classical music in the third goal of the study. The respondents felt that people listened to and played popular music to be creative, enjoy music, relieve tension, and be cool. In contrast, the prevailing belief among this same group was that listening to and playing classical music was an activity meant to please a parent or teacher (North et al., 2000).

School music is part of many adolescents' lives, and Lamont (2002) considered three of her previous studies to determine the weak effect between music education in school and adolescent identity as a musician. The first study in 1998 questioned 1800 children in England between the ages of five and 16 about their identity as musicians or non-musicians. Interestingly, despite participation in classroom music, 48% identified as non-musicians. The second study analyzed identification of 139 children over a four-year age range to see if identification as a musician deteriorated, stayed constant, or increased with age. The results showed that although identification with school music decreased, there was no effect on students' overall identity as musicians. The final study looked at 284 children to investigate secondary schools' music curriculum. The findings suggested that students in secondary school involved in extra-curricular music activities are more likely to identify as musicians. Moreover,

positive relationship with the music teacher was a determining factor on musical identity.

Lamont implied that inclusive music programs, typically seen in younger grades, are more likely to produce students who identify as musicians as compared to programs with more exclusive extra-curricular activities, typically seen in older grades, where the identity as musician decreases.

Gracyk (2003) criticized Lamont's (2002) work. His critique centered on *Musical Identities*, edited by Raymond MacDonald, David Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell, and he specifically focused on the previously mentioned essays including Lamont (2002), O'Neill (2002), and Tarrant, North and Hargreaves (2002). He criticized the studies' failure to acknowledge non-musicians as utilizing music for purposes of creating identity. He cited research on the music identity of infants and discussed personal observations of the role of music and identity in adolescents. He believed there was a special relationship between music and identity, particularly in adolescents, since he believed it was a unique stage of life where the relationship with music plays a formative role in self-identity. He added that this stage of life involves abstract thinking and the idea of multiple selves, and the role that listening and performing music plays is vital. He argued that leisurely listening to music helps self-discovery by enhancing an individual's sense of self. Creating self-identity through musical memories, and musical works itself may also help as a guide in self-identity discovery.

Music plays a prominent role in teenagers' lives. In "Adolescents' Expressed Meanings of Music in and out of School," Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) studied the significance of music and music education in 1,155 American middle and high school students ranging from 13 to 18 years of age. This study found five themes, including (1) identity formation through music, (2) emotional benefits, (3) life benefits including character-building and life skills, (4)

social benefits and (5) positive and negative impressions of school music programs and music educators. Music continued to be a necessary element in students' lives and some even "argued its essence for their survival" (Campbell et al., 2007, p. 235).

Music identity through music education also occurs in settings outside of the school classroom. One of these settings is a community children's group. Mills (2008) studied the effects of participation in a children's choir and the participants' identities. She examined personal identity, music identity, and the ways other people influence the creation of personal identity. She studied six adolescents between the ages of 12 and 14. The findings suggested that participation in the children's choir enhanced personal and musical self-esteem, self-efficacy, and created a family-like collective identity with the group.

In another children's choir setting, Bartolome (2010) explored the culture and social system of a girl's choir over the course of a year to better understand modern music making. The girl-centered culture of this choir fostered young women musically, personally, and socially while positively contributing to the musical fabric of the local, national, and international communities.

Brittin (2014) compared music style preference among young listeners of different linguistic backgrounds. One cultural group researched was Asian, and she presented both a Korean and Mandarin song to this group to explore whether there were any preference patterns for these songs. While it was weak, there was a small correlation found. The author noted that the majority of the Asian students did not speak Mandarin or Korean, which may have played a role in the findings. The author recommended that teachers present listening activities that provide a wide range of cultures to enhance positive listening experiences for the students.

Music plays a pivotal role in the self-identity of adolescents, whether from the individualist or group perspective. It can help in the regulation of emotion, relation to peers, and discovery of identity. It is also important to note that music is not always taught in a formal way, and informal learning of music is just as important in the adolescent mind. An emerging issue with cultural identity and music identity is the mass marketing of certain music, such as American pop, to all parts of the world. With the development of technology, certain styles of music are globally available, drastically changing exposure (Green, 2011). This globalization of music is blurring the line of *our* music versus *their* music (Jorgensen, 1998).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Research with Regard to Asian Americans

Although Asian Americans are an under-researched population, a limited number of researchers addressed their needs with regard to culturally relevant pedagogy (Howard, 2003; Brown, 2004; O'Connor et al., 2009). To be effective facilitators in a culturally relevant pedagogy classroom, teachers need to be non-judgmental and inclusive of their students' cultural backgrounds (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Teachers need to be careful not to include stereotypes in references from home and recognize differences among individuals in each culture. "Thus, not all African American students work well in groups, not all Latino students are second language learners, and all Asian American students are not high achievers" (Howard, 2003, p. 201).

Many of these studies took place in urban settings where ethnic diversity is common. Brown (2004) interviewed thirteen first-through-twelfth grade urban teachers across the United States to determine if their classroom management strategies aligned with culturally relevant teaching strategies. Several of the teacher participants interviewed described using management strategies that emulate the research on culturally relevant teaching. These included developing

personal relationships with students, creating a professional and caring environment, stating clear expectations, and using culturally sensitive communication processes. When discussing the communication of Asian Americans the researcher stated that many of the students, “avoid confrontational situations such as correcting fellow students’ mistakes, or responding competitively in discussions or recitation” (Brown, 2004, p. 272). He also noted that, “Some Asian students smile and laugh as a reaction to their confusion or misunderstanding of language or principles they are learning” (Brown, 2004, p. 272). Brown found through his research that culturally sensitive communication included knowledge of these communication patterns in students from varied cultural backgrounds.

One of the justifications offered for the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy is the need to address gaps in standardized testing scores among different races, including Asian Americans (O’Connor et al., 2009). In *Who’s at Risk in School and What’s Race Got to Do With It?*, the authors reviewed literature that addressed racial gaps in schools. These studies calculated the likelihood of poor achievement outcomes based on race. This review not only discussed the commonly researched racial gap between Whites, Latinos and African Americans but also delved into commonly overlooked races including Asian Americans. The reviewers implied that the research leads to the belief that although Asian Americans start school at an advantage over their white peers, by third grade the advantage diminishes. The authors stated,

We could argue that it is Blacks *and* [all italics in original] Asian Americans who are at risk in school as they *both* lose ground over the course of their early academic careers.

We also could argue that Blacks, Hispanics, *and* Whites are *all* at risk in school because they all begin school at an academic disadvantage compared to Asian Americans (pp. 7-8).

Although culturally relevant pedagogy may help bridge the gap in standardized testing, the primary goal of culturally relevant pedagogy is to address diversity in the United States and meet the needs of students both academically and culturally (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Research suggested that many students have an educational disadvantage due to race, and culturally relevant pedagogy may help to close these gaps. It is clear from the research reviewed that although initiating culturally sensitive methods into the classroom may be challenging, the possible benefits may outweigh this risk. A successful culturally relevant curriculum seems to involve a positive environment, a friendly teacher, and curriculum geared towards exploring self-identity and acceptance of a multitude of cultures. Each subject is slightly different, and therefore it is necessary to address culturally relevant pedagogy in different fields, including music education.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Music Education

For music educators to truly practice culturally relevant pedagogy, they must look at identity from a cultural perspective that not only includes racial culture but also the students' musical culture. Music education researchers studied ways to apply culturally relevant music education to the classroom (Jorgensen, 1998; Goetze, 2000; Johnson, 2004; Parr, 2006; Campbell et al., 2007; Gackle & Fung, 2009; Lum, 2009; Field, 2012; Hoffman, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2012; Shaw, 2012). Many of these researchers focus on a very specific demographic of students, and others took a broader view. In this section I first discussed music education in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy, and then I described literature concentrating on Asian American adolescents in music education.

Music education in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy. Music is part of every culture (Hodges & Sebald, 2011). This presents an interesting dilemma for music educators

given the vast array of options when addressing curricular choices. Jorgensen (1998) explored the conflict in multicultural music education between honoring a multitude of cultures while providing the depth and breadth necessary to fully comprehend the culture. There are also time limitations to consider when needing to address other aspects of music education. Jorgensen identified the blur between *their* music and *our* music and pointed out the universality of the benefits of music across cultures. Recognition of the problems associated with a multicultural education does not negate the need for it, since the benefits may provide tools for student to navigate the clashes often associated with diverse musical values.

Goetze (2000) also recognized the benefits of multicultural music in the classroom. “The insights that students gain into cultures and humanity through making music with integrity and understanding are not attainable through scholarly learning or verbal expression alone” (p. 48). She acknowledged the need for performing and learning multicultural music in a style similar to the culture. When learning a non-Western piece, Goetze emphasized the need to defer to experts and native speakers, while also sharing cultural information with the students to strive to put non-Western music in a Western context. These culture-bearers could provide an authentic music experience that honors the culture and verifies the music is performed with integrity.

One of the benefits of culturally relevant and multicultural pedagogy is the ease in applying these concepts to music education. The legitimacy of arts education within the larger curriculum is constantly challenged and Johnson (2004) investigated two multicultural issues in music education: equal music opportunity and the domination of the Western classical tradition. He contended that to exhibit the legitimacy of music education, music educators must adapt to

the culturally diverse student population by filling their needs through culturally relevant pedagogy.

To adequately apply culturally relevant pedagogy, a number of researchers identified themes for teaching multicultural music with a culturally relevant approach. Parr (2006) stressed that in order for music to help bridge cultures, teachers must be willing to take risks and try music that may not be familiar to them. He identified eight rules for singing multicultural music: (1) connecting with the culture; (2) focusing on one style at a time; (3) listening widely by finding multiple recordings of the music; (4) providing context to enhance understanding; (5) seeking authentic sources; (6) learning the language; (7) teaching authentically; and (8) leaving the teacher's comfort zone.

Music education can be an important asset in culturally relevant pedagogy. Field (2010) analyzed the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme in relation to music education to see how music education led to one of the program's goals of intercultural awareness. She found that students were more challenged if the goal was cultural understanding as opposed to simply awareness, and noted that music education would be a good tool for meeting this goal due to the direct association with diverse cultures.

Similar to Field, Hoffman (2012) implemented an integrated arts curriculum to study different cultures through the lens of the arts in a middle school consisting of 900 sixth through eighth graders. She reported that the arts helped to bridge the gap of "*other* and *self*" between the perceived differences amongst the changing student population (Hoffman, 2012, p. 64). She concluded that music education, through the vast amount of music repertoire, might be a more inclusive vehicle to make explicit the diverse cultures in the United States.

In an article geared towards practitioners, Fitzpatrick (2012) looked at the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy, school music curriculum, and student identity. She noted the importance of students recognizing that their cultural identities are acknowledged, legitimate, and respected. This therefore encouraged social justice in the schools and greater community. She suggested ways that teachers can apply these practices, such as aligning music curriculum with music enjoyed outside of class, creating an environment encouraging positive peer and role model relationships, teacher self-reflection, and knowing and embracing their students cultural identity, all in attempts to guide the students to greater cultural awareness and acceptance.

Nethsinghe (2012) worked in Australia to explore the impact of multicultural music education on students. In 2009, he interviewed students in one of the more diverse regions of Victoria, Australia to complete his qualitative case study. Similar to others findings, he categorized these findings into three themes including development of respect, construction of self-identity and tolerance through appreciation of multicultural music, and the positive benefits of community music-making for school students.

The historically Euro-centric music education may not be applicable to today's diverse society, according to Shaw (2012). Her article took the many principals of culturally responsive education and applied it to principles of choral music education. She offered suggestions for applying these concepts to the choir classroom. This included choosing repertoire that validates students' cultural backgrounds while developing cultural competence. Like Goetze (2000), she recommended working with native musicians and students from the culture to teach the music. She also recommended balancing rehearsals with Western and non-Western music traditions, including music notation and singing styles, and developing a multi-year culturally responsive curriculum. Shaw stated, "Because singing provides an accessible avenue for both validating

students' own cultural backgrounds and teaching about diverse cultures, choral music education has the potential to be at the forefront of making music education as a whole more culturally responsive" (p. 76).

Music education research concentrating on Asian culture. Lau (2007) described the practical implications of teaching Chinese folksongs with an authentic approach. He provided theory behind Chinese folksongs, lesson ideas, and repertoire. Other researchers looked at the effect of culturally relevant pedagogy in the music classroom on the students. Gackle and Fung (2009) analyzed strategies used to teach a Chinese choral piece over four months to 35 singers in a youth choir comprising 14 to 18 year olds, primarily of non-Asian descent. For many of the students, this was the first time they were exposed to Chinese music, and the project concluded with the students going to China to perform for Chinese judges who marked their performance as successful. The author described these successes as beneficial in four major areas including musical, pedagogical, cultural, and attitudinal and personal.

The progression of Asian American stereotypes is seen in music education textbooks. Lum (2009) examined the portrayal of Chinese American music in music education basal texts starting in the late 19th century. He concluded that music education sources of Chinese American heritage transformed from negative stereotypes to addressing quality, authentic educational experiences for the students. This change coincided with many historical events including changes in immigration laws and the advancement of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Implications

It may be easier to position music education courses within the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy since music is present in every culture. Although music educators must balance their curriculum to reflect multiple standards, recognizing and learning about songs from

students' cultures as well as other cultures can be simple if the teacher is open. Some teachers will need to shift their views, be willing to learn something new, and look at how to break down cultural barriers. This requirement includes cultural barriers between generations. Many researchers look at specific cultures and find ways to integrate those cultures into the classroom including music from Asian countries to address the increasing Asian American population. To be able to adequately address the cultural needs of this population, teachers need to be familiar with current cultural trends of Asian American youth.

Culturally relevant pedagogy can make education more meaningful for the changing diversity in the classrooms of the United States. Music education is a subject that naturally relates to these practices. One of the goals of culturally relevant pedagogy is to help students relate not only to their identities but to others as well. The model-minority myth is one stereotype that can be broken with culturally relevant pedagogy to help students find their own unique identity. Music proves to be an aid and a necessity in creating self-identity among adolescents. Also, the mass marketing of music blurs the line of *their* versus *our* music. By combining the ideas expressed by the authors reviewed, teachers can start to fit the needs of not only their Asian American students, but all students.

There is little research that blends all of these concepts together. Looking at culturally relevant music education among specific groups of adolescents, including Asian American youth, could help music educators in the classroom. Discovering the specific needs of Asian American adolescents, if any, in music education could also aid educators in creating a culturally relevant pedagogy for the classroom. The next chapter describes the methods used in this particular study to examine this context.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to explore ways that the cultural identity of Chinese American adolescents was mediated through participation in a children's choir that sings repertoire from both Western and Eastern countries of the world. This study examined a children's choir where a majority of members identified as Chinese American adolescents. The primary question guiding the inquiry was: How do Chinese American adolescents describe the experience of singing in a children's choir on their emerging cultural identity? Sub questions included the following: How is identity created or described by Chinese American youth in a children's choir? How does social interaction with fellow choir members affect their identity development? What is the impact of singing Chinese folksongs on the development of their identity? How might the findings apply to other music education settings?

Design

Case studies are a "strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). To satisfy this definition, I explored the experiences of five students in a children's choir. Case studies typically employ a variety of data collection methods over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2009). I studied a group of students who are members of a children's chorus in an urban environment located in a western city in the United States over the course of five weeks, incorporating approximately 12 hours of field research. I used questionnaires, interviews, observations, audio recordings, and field notes to explore this particular children's choir and the insights of the individuals involved. The primary focus was on the adolescents in the choir; however, I also interviewed and consulted with the directors to help with the context and

framework of the study. I consulted with the directors throughout the data collection period and then formally interviewed them towards the end of the observation period.

Creswell (2007) states that ethnography is “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time” (as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Though ethnography informed the research design for this case study, I did not call it a true ethnography because I did not study the group for a prolonged period of time; I observed them over the course of five weeks. Also, ethnology implies immersion in the group and I do not feel I was truly immersed due to time restraints. Regardless, I borrowed the aspect of culture seen in ethnography which was a good framework through which to view a specific cultural group and informed my decisions when working with the members of the children’s choir. The cultural group represented in this study was a group of singers between the ages of 11 to 14 in the natural setting of a children’s choir. An ethnographic design implied identifying a culture-sharing group and studying how it developed shared patterns of behavior over time (Creswell, 2009). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) stated that the process of ethnography is flexible and may evolve in response to the realities encountered throughout the study. Thus, this framework was appropriate for this particular setting, where there is little research.

Description of Setting

The children’s choir studied was the Crystal Children’s Choir (CCC). CCC was founded in 1994 in the San Francisco Bay Area and now has over 1,000 members with 11 directors and 11 accompanists. The choir offers a year-round choral program, and also music classes, which consist of 50-minute lessons on voice-training and other musicianship courses. The choirs are divided by level, with Level One geared toward beginners, typically in the first grade, and Level

Seven as the most advanced choir, consisting of high school singers. Levels Five, Six, and Seven are known as “Concert Choir,” and the students must be in at least 6th grade. Concert Choir has over 240 members and each level meets once a week. The choir performs nationally and internationally. Its members must participate in a five-day music summer camp. There is an optional music literacy class for the students on Wednesday nights, where the singers work on sight singing and ear training exercises. The group performs three major concerts per year and at other outreach events, including music festivals and choral conferences. CCC recently traveled to Taiwan, where they performed with their sister organization, another children’s choir called Crystal Taiwan.

Crystal Taiwan is not the only link to Taiwan. The two directors I interviewed were born and raised Taiwan. I found it interesting that the directors identified themselves as Chinese American and not specifically Taiwanese American. I was unaware until the end of the study that they were raised in Taiwan, otherwise I may have added “Taiwanese American” to the initial questionnaire when asking about race identification.

CCC provides a culturally relevant pedagogy to their Chinese American students through content choices and also through creating a positive environment where students can explore their Chinese American identity with other Chinese Americans. The mission of the organization, according to their website, is “to strive for choral music excellence by providing choral music education to children and blending the best of Eastern and Western musical traditions” (“Crystal Children's Choir ", 2009-2011). The organization “aspires to be a cultural ambassador of children's choral music, especially in the field of Chinese folk songs and newly commissioned works” (“Crystal Children's Choir ", 2009-2011). Each choir sings at least one Chinese folksong a year to encourage a connection between older generations and the Chinese American

participants. While these songs are in Mandarin, and some of the students speak Mandarin, rehearsals are conducted in English, since not every member can speak Mandarin. The website features both English and Mandarin translations of each webpage.

As I mentioned in chapter one, I am a middle school choir teacher who teaches students that primarily identify as Chinese Americans. None of my students, nor former students, were involved in CCC. Level five is closest in age to the students I teach, and the majority of the students in this organization identify as Chinese American. Despite these similarities, it is important to note the self-selecting nature of the students in CCC. Unlike many music education settings, these students and their families chose to be part of this extra-curricular ensemble. The participants needed to audition for the group and be able to afford the fees to be in the group. The participants chose to be in a group where Chinese culture is part of the mission statement. Because of this, it is important to note that this selective group is not intended to be representative of a larger population. Rather, I researched how some of the students in this choir feel about their cultural identity in this particular children's choir.

Description of Participants

In an effort to protect those who willingly gave me time and information, I used pseudonyms instead of the participants' real names. The exception is the founding director, Karl Chang, who is easily identifiable as the founder of the choir, since I am using the real name of the choir in the study. Mr. Chang is aware of this and has agreed to allow me to use the choir's name for this study. In the following chapters, the students are referenced by first name (pseudonym) only, whereas teachers are given honorific titles and last names. The difference in representation between adolescents and adults is designed to aid the reader in differentiating the participants throughout the paper.

For this study, I chose to focus on part of the Level Five students in the Concert group, which is referred to as “C51”. There is also a “C52” which I did not study. To be in Level Five, students must be in at least 6th grade, which typically puts students at around age 11. While there is no maximum age, the typical age in the group is middle school, which ranges from ages 11 to 14. There are 83 children in C51. The majority is female, as there are only around 20 male students in the group. The audition requirements include singing the C major scale, sight-singing, singing two American patriotic songs, and other musicality tests (see Appendix C). The sight-singing portion of the audition includes one or two accidentals and more complex rhythms including the triplet and syncopation. The passage rate is about eighty to ninety percent to graduate to the next level. Over half of the students in Level 5 have been in CCC since the first grade. CCC offers three sessions a year, and it costs \$945.00 a year to be part of Level Five. The students are from the Bay Area and most are from the immediate Silicon Valley area. The students mainly identify as being Chinese American, but there are two children with heritage from India and England, respectively.

All of the teachers speak Mandarin fluently and identify as Chinese American. They are the culture-bearers of the group. The founder regularly visits Hong Kong to select repertoire and has another branch of their choir program in Taiwan that has over 400 members and blends Eastern and Western music traditions. The directors have an excellent relationship with the parents, and freely switch between English and Mandarin when talking to the parents.

Sampling

I purposefully sampled the participants. In this document, I called the participants “students.” Creswell (2009) defines purposeful sampling as qualitative researchers that “select individuals who will best help them understand the research problem and the research questions”

(p. 231). Criteria for purposeful sampling in this study included looking for students who clearly verbalize their thoughts and opinions, identify as Chinese American, and have been involved in the choir for at least a year. One of the interviewees, Philip¹, was older than the age range I was hoping for but still added a unique perspective so he is included in the study.

I used a homogeneous sampling strategy which allows an in-depth exploration in a smaller subgroup by selecting similar cases (Glesne, 2011). I decided who the specific participants were after I started observing and received the initial questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire identified how long each student had been involved in CCC and also how they identified culturally. This process allowed me to ensure that the students involved in the study had been in the group for over a year and also identified as Chinese American. It also allowed me to focus on identity and the cultural aspect of the purpose statement. If the students did not identify as Chinese American nor have experience in the choir, I do not think I could claim I studied the CCC culture.

After the first week of observations, I identified 16 students who met the qualifications. I then met with Ms. Leung to discuss which ten students she felt would be able to articulate their experiences well. It is important to note many students would have fulfilled the requirements, but not everyone completed the prescreening questionnaire during that first week.

I next took these ten students and had them fill out a survey in a separate room during rehearsal (see Appendix E). Each of these ten students completed a survey to discover more on their experiences. The survey asked simple questions like how they joined the choir, their parental involvement in the decision to join, the student's perceived benefits of the group, and

¹ All pseudonyms are Anglicezed rather than Chinese because the students' names were more Anglo

also any cultural benefits they perceive. Through these surveys I got a sense of who could clearly articulate their ideas. I dismissed the surveys that lacked depth in their answers, including the few that only had one-word answers. I looked for students who clearly articulated their thoughts on the survey since I thought this would indicate more thorough answers during the interview process. It is possible that by making this choice I could have lost some interesting information from other students perspectives. Perhaps students who responded with one-word answers were not as engaged in the group as others. Maybe writing was a challenge for those particular students. I also picked students who had a wide range of answers on the survey to gather different points of view during the interview. There has not been much literature describing the relation between cultural identity among Chinese Americans and culturally relevant pedagogy. Because of this, I wanted to get a broad overview of the phenomenon. I wanted to study students that can clearly verbalize thoughts and feelings so that I can better understand their participation in this context.

There were six students who I felt met my expectations for the study. I also worked with Ms. Leung to ensure that she was comfortable with me pulling these students from class. Out of the six, she identified five that she felt would be a good fit for the study. I am not sure why she dismissed the one student. At the time, I assumed it was because she did not want the one to miss rehearsal.

The teachers and directors were part of the study in that they helped me select students and provided me perspective and general information about the choir. Although the students were the primary focus for my data, the teachers and directors offered some interesting information as well. I interviewed both Ms. Leung and Mr. Chan outside of the rehearsal (see

Appendix D). During observations, my focus was primarily on the students during rehearsals and not the directors.

The students interviewed. I interviewed five students, four girls and one boy. Kelly² had a nice confidence about her and was not afraid to be a little quirky and fun. She was quite candid and used funny sounds like, “eek” and “err” in her interview to describe her stories, which led to a lighthearted interview. She is social with the other students in her alto section and also hangs out with some of the “cool guys,” with which she has a friendly and flirty relationship. She has long brownish-black hair, is fourteen years old, and is on the shorter side compared to other students her age. She loves to sing at home, which is why her mother enrolled her in the choir. She started CCC in first grade and is planning on staying until she graduates.

Patricia is in sixth grade and is very articulate. She attends a brand new private school, smiled constantly, and sat with her hands folded on her lap. She has been in CCC for six years and although her parents attend all the concerts she is in, she is in the group because she loves to sing and values community. She always sits in the same area among the sopranos during rehearsal and is always displaying perfect posture and optimal vocal production. She clearly wants to succeed in this group, yet does not come across as overly ambitious. She is very friendly among her social group and always seems to be in a good mood during choir.

Megan is in eighth grade and is a sports-lover. She plays basketball and runs cross-country. Her typical dress at rehearsal is laid back with her hair in a ponytail and a simple top or sweatshirt and jeans, if she is not in basketball shorts. She is more of an introvert compared to her friends in the group. At first, you may think she is quiet but after talking to her you realize

² Pseudonym used for participants

she has a cool and confident air about her. She sits in the back with a group of her friends and is a soprano.

Betsy is friends with Megan and is also in the eighth grade. She giggled as she nervously entered the room for her interview. She told me she was nervous as she smiled from ear to ear. She worried she would not know the answers or not give the “right” answer. Her perfectly maintained hair, little glasses, and manicured look radiated the feeling of perfection. Betsy’s nervous energy is balanced with her kind smile and giggle. She is very social with her friends, more as the follower compared to the leader in her crew.

Philip did not meet the criteria I was hoping for when I started the study, but he provided an interesting perspective, so he was included at times in the findings. He is in eleventh grade, and is in level 5 due to scheduling conflicts. He did not want to quit the choir, so he worked with the directors to find a place for him in a lower level. He sings in his falsetto throughout choir in the alto section. He plays the violin as well in another private music ensemble. He’s been playing violin for seven years and has been in CCC since the first grade. He would be in the top, most advanced choir if he did not have the scheduling conflict. He was very upfront and honest in his answers with lengthy answers and spoke to me as an equal using more slang than formal language. Even though he was singing in a lower level, he still never missed a rehearsal nor arrived late. He clearly enjoyed singing in the group, even though most of the students were younger than him.

The directors. Mr. Karl Chang founded the CCC in 1994, and by 2004 he left his job as an industrial engineer to work full-time at CCC. He was born and raised in Taiwan where he fell in love with choral music once he joined his high school choir. He sang in college choirs, conducted in those choirs, and continued to sing and conduct upon graduation. He was one of

four founders. He also has an adult community choir that he started when he moved to California in 1981 and two of the founders are members in that group. Some members of that adult choir asked him to start a children's choir, and that was the beginning of the CCC. As president and founder of CCC, he not only oversees and implements the logistics, he also directs the most advanced singers, level seven.

Mr. Karl Chang always took a moment to ponder before replying in a calm, intelligent voice. He sat idly in his chair, with his hands folded across his lap. He always had a close-lipped smile on his face that made me feel welcomed to speak with him. He is eloquent in his speech, and the room hushes whenever he talks. He has complete control of the classroom, and even the parents lean in, intrigued, as they attentively listen. He is a kind of father figure for the group, and although his stature is not tall, he commands a room.

Ms. Helen Leung is the level five choral director and has been working with CCC since 1998. Her commanding and direct voice is paired with her softer side where she laughs and smiles with the children. She is very well put-together, with trendy outfits and styled hair, and is poised in front of the children. Her singing voice is full and rich, while her speaking voice can cut over the chatter of eighty-plus students. She grew up in Taiwan and moved to California with her husband in 1993. She discovered CCC through her high school choir teacher in Taiwan who had retired in California. She has children who also participated in CCC, giving her a nice perspective as educator and parent in this organization. She is currently teaching six classes, and, after 16 years teaching with CCC, still loves exposing the students to choral music and providing a rich musical experience for them. I truly enjoyed getting to watch her teach, and I gained many excellent ideas from her that I have applied to my own teaching. I am grateful for getting to watch her masterful command of the classroom.

Gaining Access and Permission

Ethical issues may arise when an outsider is studying a culture or group. To ensure a lack of bias, it is important for me as a researcher to discuss my relationship with the choir. I have never worked for CCC and have only seen them perform in festivals. Their performances were of the highest level, and once I realized the mission of the group, I was inspired to research them. I teach music in a public middle school to a population that identifies primarily as Chinese American, and I was interested in observing how CCC uses Chinese culture to inform their pedagogical style. I teach in the same area as CCC, but we do not share students. It is possible that some of the students had heard of me as a choral director, but I think it is unlikely since none of them mentioned it to me. I had met the directors two to three times previously through mutual festivals and choral events.

I am a White female originating from the Midwest. Since I am not part of a Chinese American culture I foresaw a possible conflict as the “other” observing in an unfamiliar setting. To help overcome this, I established procedures to create clear expectations. I originally contacted the founder of the choir in the summer of 2012 to start building a relationship and explore interest in becoming part of the study. I also sent letters to the parents, permission slips, and clear verbal instructions/assent form before any interview (see Appendices B, F, G.). To help establish credibility, Mr. Chang spoke with the parents at the first informational choir rehearsal and let me explain the study briefly to the parents. Prior to the study, I received approval from the directors at CCC to grant me permission and access. I also received approval from the Institutional Research Board at the University of Michigan.

Glesne’s (2011) Participation-Observation Continuum describes the scope of the researcher in terms of involvement. For this study, my involvement was as observer and I only

had minor social interaction with the group. The teacher introduced me, I observed quietly on the side while watching rehearsals, and I also spoke with students to gain perspective of the CCC experience. I rarely addressed the entire group, except on the first day when I introduced myself, and on the last day when I said goodbye. I did not sing with the group, nor teach. On one occasion, I read a winner of a raffle, but otherwise I simply sat, smiling at students as they passed, or saying “hi” if they greeted me. Even though the interaction was minimal, I did feel a connection with the students through observing their musical growth throughout rehearsals and through speaking with them throughout the interviewing process.

Data Collection

Triangulation provided validity to this study by utilizing multiple data-collection methods (Glesne, 2011). The first form of data was my researcher’s field notes and audio of the C51 choir rehearsals. Observing and audiotaping the first rehearsals allowed me the chance to get an overview of the emerging concepts of the study. Out of the entire class, 49 students returned completed permission slips. I asked students to take home and fill out a questionnaire to gain basic information about the participants, including racial identification and years in the ensemble, to help discover the participants I wished to interview. Out of those 49 students, 43 completed the pre-screening questionnaire throughout my observation. After the first week, 16 students met the criteria, and we chose ten to complete the surveys and then five to interview. These interviews were audio recorded. I interviewed each student once, and the interview lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. These interviews took place during rehearsal in a private room. While I waited for the surveys and questionnaires to be returned, I continued to observe rehearsals and take field notes. I interviewed the directors towards the end of my observations so I could ask clarifying questions as they appeared during my observations.

I completed the data collection by attending weekly rehearsals over a period of five weeks, totaling around 12 hours of CCC rehearsal time. All participants filled out IRB-approved permission slips and were read the same verbal assent scripts prior to the first interview (Appendices B and G). Through the observations, surveys, and interviews, I was able to gather a sense of how identity is created and formed in this particular children's choir setting among Chinese American youth.

My data analysis involved writing detailed description of the setting and individuals, and transcribing the interviews and my personal thoughts. This process was followed by analyzing the data for themes as recommended for case study and ethnographic research (Creswell, 2009). I followed Creswell's (2009) data analysis procedure (see Appendix H).

Trustworthiness

I incorporated a number of validity strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of my findings. Triangulation is the primary method for increasing accuracy. Using several sources of data collection, I was able to develop themes through the convergence of the major ideas. Negative case analysis is a conscious search for disconfirming evidence and discussing that contrary information in your findings (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2011). This search also increased the trustworthiness of my research.

The final method of trustworthiness was self-reflection. It was important for me to check in with my own personal biases. I am a middle school choir teacher who teaches students very similar to the participants in the study. I needed to make sure my own experiences did not cloud the information being received and to keep an open dialogue with the reader of my personal background and beliefs that may impact the findings.

Chapter IV

Findings

With true friends...even water drunk together is sweet enough.

- Chinese Proverb

It is 6:39 p.m. and rehearsal starts in only six minutes, yet very few students are in their chairs, ready for the beginning of rehearsal. Students arrive by themselves and quickly go to their self-chosen seat to chat in English with their friends. Parents come in and out of the room, talking with Ms. Leung in Mandarin. A girl gossips to her friend as they set up chairs for some students. Most of the students who are quiet seem to be waiting for someone. In the back corner a group of three girls are giggling and chatting in English. Two girls in matching pink floral skirts and black tops enter and go to their seats. By 6:42 p.m., the class is filled with talking and laughing.

It is clear from the beginning that the students are close with each other. The conversation, laughing, and familiarity with each other is apparent through observing their interactions; the parents are at ease with Ms. Leung and vice versa; the students eagerly await friends; and the students quickly walk to their spot in apparent anticipation for class. The room felt warmly familiar and welcoming.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this community is the retention rate. A lot of the students join in first grade and graduate with the group when they are seniors in high school.

Mr. Chang: But some people, they may or may not continue because their interests change. Their schedule is tight. Too much homework or whatever reason. But as soon as they come in we want to provide them that enjoyment through the choral music. And

we have some alumni or even graduates from colleges and they are doing work. They still— they told me—their best friend is still the Crystal community.

Courtney: How many of the students would you say in your top group have been in it for more than five years? More than 10 years?

Mr. Chang: Oh, 95 percent.

C: Really?

Mr. Chang: Mm-hmm.

C: When do most of them join would you say? Of your top group?

Mr. Chang: When?

C: Yeah.

Mr. Chang: Grade one.

The top group (the most advanced) currently has 84 students. Clearly something is happening in this choir that is making the students and the entire community want to stay for so many years.

The purpose of this case study was to explore ways that the cultural identity of Chinese American adolescents was mediated through participation in a children's choir that sings repertoire from both Western and Eastern countries of the world. Data analysis revealed that cultural identity for these students was exemplified through four themes: ethnic pride, social impact, musical esteem, and culturally relevant pedagogy (see Figure 1).

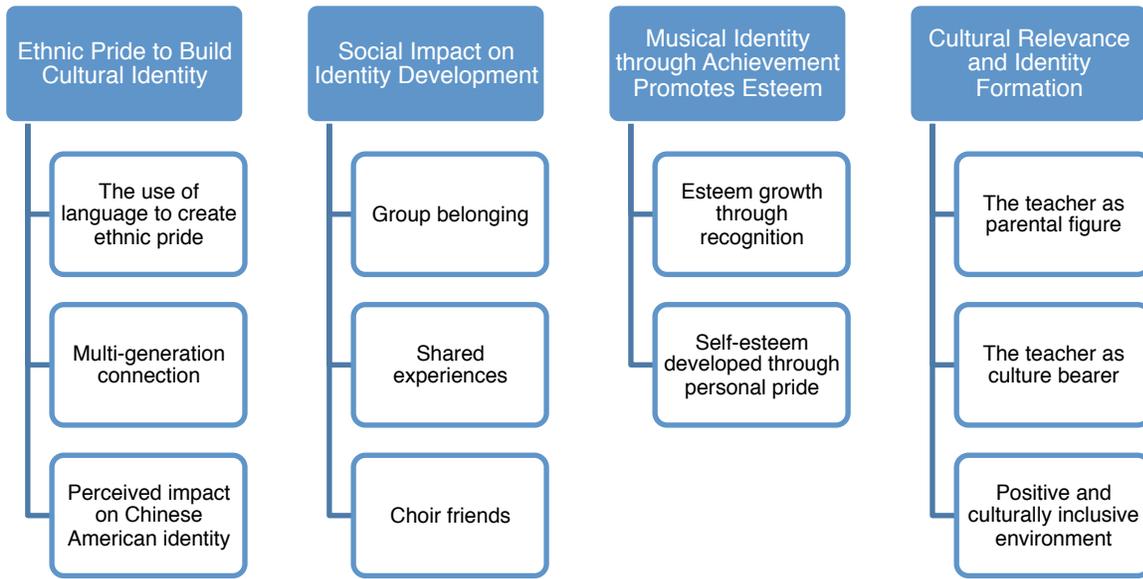


Figure 1. Themes and related codes referred to within Chapter IV.

Ethnic Pride to Build Cultural Identity

As mentioned in chapter three, most of the choir members identify as Chinese American, and, on account of this, it was not surprising to find ethnic pride manifest within the choral setting. In this analysis, the theme of ethnic pride refers to the students' positive feelings of being Chinese American. Exploring cultural identity among these students was part of the purpose of this study and ethnic pride denoted a relation to cultural identity. Ethnic pride interwove throughout the chorus through language and multi-generation connections between the students and their parents and grandparents. I also found the students struggled to verbalize their personal perception of their Chinese American identity and involvement in the choir.

The use of language to create ethnic pride. The code of “the use of language to create ethnic pride” relates to the utilization of the Chinese language to instill a sense of honor. The second time I observed the choir it happened to be “spirit day” at CCC. Prior to the rehearsal, the children received an email that told them to dress in their CCC gear. The most prominent shirt was a t-shirt exclaiming love for CCC utilizing both English and Chinese (see Figure 2). At each rehearsal I observed, at least one or two students wore this shirt, showing that the students genuinely liked it.



Figure 2. Photograph of Crystal Children's Choir t-shirt.

Although the students primarily spoke in English with each other, Mandarin was used a number of times in the classroom setting. Parents often spoke with the directors in Mandarin. The directors also used Mandarin during rehearsal, although rather sparingly. During the second observation, when one of the students was moving seats rather slowly, Ms. Leung exclaimed, “Hurry!” and then followed with something in Mandarin. The student quickly moved to her new seat. I asked Ms. Leung how she knew with whom to speak with in Mandarin.

Ms. Leung: Well, I think because I know them—

C: You just know them.

Ms. Leung: Yeah. I just know it. And sometimes—it's very interesting for some students, they don't speak Mandarin, and some, they can say, "Teacher," in Chinese, “Lǎoshī” because they hear their friend talk about this word. So that's funny.

I never spoke with these students she mentioned, but it is interesting to note that the perception of speaking the language was clearly positive. Not knowing Chinese was more rare in the classroom than knowing Chinese, and it seemed that knowing the language aided the students in a feeling of belonging.

Throughout the interview process, the students mentioned language a number of times.

Kelly: Well, it makes my Chinese or other language more strong in a way because even if I'm not Chinese-American, I'm singing a lot of Chinese. This is a Chinese community. Here most people are Chinese, then I can learn some Chinese without even having to pay money to do it like on purpose. You're just doing it as a part.

C: Yeah.

Kelly: Yeah. So it's like a three in one.

Kelly also spoke of her sense of pride over speaking dual languages.

C: Okay. As a Chinese-American, how does singing songs from China affect you, if it does at all? Do you like it? Stuff like that.

Kelly: Well, I think it's kind of interesting. First of all, we always find really something to laugh with when they translate it from Chinese to English. It's hilarious. It's like putting it through layers of Google translate can always find at least three typos or three wrongs or grammatical errors that don't make sense. You can laugh at that the entire time.

Kelly was describing being part of an exclusive group that knows the answers. This group of students is fluent in both English and Chinese. Not only did students become more familiar with the Chinese language, but also it appeared to be ideal to the students to be a fluent speaker, not in an exclusive way, but as a point of pride for those students.

Multi-generation connection. The code of “multi-generation connection” refers to the finding that the children’s choir seemed to have a unifying effect for multiple generations of the students’ families. CCC tries to choose popular Chinese folksongs that they think the parents and/or grandparents will know well. Ms. Leung explained.

And also we like to sing some Chinese songs that they can bring up some memories to the parents. As you know, 90-percent of the parents are Chinese as well. So we can— I think this is a good connection when the kids sing, and the parents say, hey, I can sing this too.

A few students referred to feeling connected to their parents when singing songs in Chinese. Table 1 presents several responses to the question, “As a Chinese-American, how does singing songs from China affect you, if it does?”

Table 1

Responses to “As a Chinese-American, how does singing songs from China affect you, if it does?”

Student Name	Answer to Question
Betsy	Well, my parents always listen to Chinese songs, so I kind of get the feeling of how they experience it.
Kelly	But for Chinese songs they want the parents or the audience or whoever is listening who understands this language to know what you're singing about and they want it to be a good reflecting song, a song that reflects to their life and like their childhood so they can actually think about it and not just feel like, I have no idea what they're talking about even though I'm this race.
Megan	Yeah. I think I like it because it's like reminds me of Chinese culture and like the style that my parents like to listen to and stuff like that ... So then I feel like I can relate to my parents more that way.

Betsy expanded a little more on her thoughts:

Betsy: And then you kind of get a sense of what their culture is like, too.

C: Yeah. Do you like that?

Betsy: Yeah.

C: Yeah? Why?

Betsy: You get to understand more about my parents, too. Because my friends, we're all, like, Chinese-American, so we kind of get to understand our history, kind of, a little bit better.

I next pressed the students on the difference between singing songs from China and non-Chinese songs.

C: Do you get a different feeling singing songs that aren't from China?

Megan: Not really. Like if they're like a different language, it's like—well, for China it's particularly because my parents like speak Chinese and stuff, but for other languages, it is a little different because I'm not familiar with. Well, maybe a little because I can experience Chinese songs and usually like at home I don't really listen to Chinese stuff, so this stimulates my Chinese side.

C: What do you listen to at home—pop?

Megan: Yeah.

It is interesting to note that this student does not listen to Chinese folk music outside of class, although her parents do. Also, she originally thought she did not feel anything different when singing non-Chinese songs but upon reflection she thought she might.

Another student spoke of her heritage and the connection to the generations before her:

Kelly: I don't know. I think Chinese, it kind of makes me feel old thinking that like my heritage goes all the way back to something. Whenever China started, I don't know, compared to America. But I like American songs. I like it. It's like, it's a joyful mood to it whereas Chinese songs are usually more serious.

I must admit I loved this little comment that American songs are joyful compared to Chinese songs. I found it rather endearing. In an effort to provide negative case analysis, I found that the other two students I interviewed did not have a different feeling singing songs from China versus other countries.

Perceived impact on Chinese American identity. During the interview, I asked each student if singing in this choir affected their Chinese American identity. I was fascinated to see how each student interpreted this vague question. The question itself seemed to stumble some, due to the use of the term “Chinese American.” Many students referred to themselves simply as “Chinese” and when I asked if they were Chinese American they had to think about the American part of the phrase before agreeing. Despite identifying as Chinese American in the initial questionnaire, the students needed to think about this in a verbal context. It was almost as if they felt a stronger connection to being Chinese compared to American. Overall, I found that that the students struggled to describe a connection between participation in this choir and their Chinese American identity, yet demonstrated how they have dual identities as both Chinese and American.

R: I'm not sure. I think so.

C: How?

R: I think so because I think Chinese songs when they write it, write it down on paper, you have to learn. You either can read the—like the English translation. That's kind of hard because there's like certain pronunciations that you have to guess on.

Betsy described the impact on her identity as small but affirmative:

R: Not that much, but kind of. Because the—a lot of the people here are Chinese-American, and we sing together. So, well, we kind of get to hear—since we're in this choir where the teachers are Chinese, sometimes we sing more Chinese songs than other choirs. So we kind of—our parents also hear more familiar songs. And since—sometimes when my parents are listening to songs I also hear them, so a lot of the songs, the tunes sound really familiar.

Jorgensen (1998) discussed how, with globalization of music, *our* versus *their* music is blurring. Popular music from one country is spread throughout the world with the use of technology. Although this case study focused on Chinese American adolescents in a choir that sings Chinese folksongs, I noticed many universal themes seen in many adolescents, not only Chinese Americans. For example, Philip discussed how he felt that singing songs from other countries does not impact his ethnic identity:

C: Okay. As a Chinese-American, how does singing songs from China affect you, if it does at all? Do you like it?

Philip: I think it's interesting. Well, I guess like—I don't really know how it affects me but I guess just learning like different styles of music kind of gives you like a bigger picture of different styles—types of music. I don't think it's just like Chinese music because like we sing like Italian music, like French music and stuff, so. Yeah.

C: Yeah. I was going—so the next question is, do you get a different feeling singing songs that aren't from China?

Philip: Well, I don't really—I don't feel like any different like, oh, when I sing like Chinese song, it's like, oh, this is my country song you know. It's like all the same.

They're just like foreign songs, so then it doesn't really affect me any particular—more like one way than another.

In the above interview, Philip mentioned that singing in Chinese was still a “foreign” song. In Megan’s interview, she mentioned that at home she listens to pop music, similar to most American teenagers. There seems to be a blend between Chinese and American cultures in the students’ lives. Mr. Chang also described this dual identity:

Mr. Chang: We're trying to educate not just kids but also I would say educate and communicate with parents. And also to give them feedback, get their feedback.

Hopefully, we connect, for instance, a young generation. Young parents, they have different mindset versus the older generation. Right?

The older generation thinks, well, ours is a goal process. You have to stick with it. You have to learn piano. You have to practice every day. You have to do it for 20 years or more. But younger parents, their mindset's different. They just want to touch base with what our work needs, what sports needs, what academic needs. They're trying to give their children's life more variety to choose from. So it's different. So we see people that don't have that persistent mentality if you will.

He also describes the merging of Eastern and Western traditions.

Mr. Chang: You know, it's more Eastern versus Western. If you look at Eastern culture, Chinese culture, you know, Eastern culture, it's king, dynasty. It's like an ivory tower.

Everybody's trying to be the number one. Number two is just not good enough. And we want to be number one. But Western culture is more community based. You can do whatever you want to. You can do whatever you like to. And you can be successful in every aspect of the work, for instance. Right? So it's a different culture background and different mentality.

So we try to open up and say, okay, bring your kids in- as he or she is. It's okay. We'll give the kids the opportunity to learn.

In a choir where part of the mission is to sing and learn about Chinese folksongs, it is only natural that people assume the students gain a sense of Chinese pride. However, I found it interesting that the students could not describe this connection. Throughout the observations, I also never felt that the teachers made a conscious effort to discuss Chinese culture, or do anything to actively promote cultural identity, although I do think the students grew in their ethnic identity through the social system at CCC.

Social Impact on Identity Development

The concept that social groups and friends help to create identity was mentioned in chapter two through the work of Green (2011), Tarrant et al. (2002), and Bartolome (2010). Friends seemed to play a vital role among the students interviewed. One of the sub questions in the purpose statement referred to exploring social interaction and its effect on identity development. Overall, I noticed a rather complex social strata comprising numerous inclusive peer groups to create a sense of belonging, shared experiences to create a common bond within the choir, and friends that are created specifically within the choir that may or may not differ from friendships created in other settings.

Group belonging. The code of "group belonging" refers to the finding that most of the students already belonged to or were quickly incorporated into one of the social cliques in the choir. There were a number of different social cliques in the choir, each with their own distinct characteristics.

Brandon arrived and slumped into his chair. His mother handed him his water and he grabbed it without saying anything, almost in protest. His mother said goodbye, and Brandon didn't even acknowledge her. He sat and read, ignoring everyone. Throughout rehearsal, he rarely sat up, but still sang. It was peculiar because, on the surface, he didn't seem interested in the choir at all. Upon further observation, however, I noticed him tapping his foot while he sang. When the teacher posed musical questions, he discussed them with his neighbor. In the first few rehearsals, he spent his break time reading to himself. By the next rehearsal, he was greeting the nice boy who sat next to him, Ryan.

Ryan had a group of friends, filled with some memorable characters. They loved to talk about books. This may be an understatement, because it seemed that was all they talked about with the same amount of enthusiasm that most students give a flashy new action movie or videogame.

One of the girl's clothing never seemed to fit right, either being too large or too small. Another girl had last year's style of glasses, but all of them shared a love for books and choir. The girl with the out-of-style glasses constantly hummed to herself.

One day, Ryan was reading a book during break time and another girl came up to him, and said, "Wait- that book is from the library?" The rest of the crew, including Jason, starting teasing Ryan about getting the book from the library instead of buying the book at a bookstore. Next they gossiped about how far they were in that book and what was going on and what Ryan

would soon read. Jason now had a group of friends. Instead of reading every break, he talked with this group, although still read before rehearsal. Whenever there was a break in music, Jason looked at or spoke with Ryan. Ryan and his friends were so inclusive to Jason, and Jason reciprocated their kind gestures. Although at each rehearsal Jason still showed typical teenage angst, he clearly enjoyed the music and also his group of friends.

Jason's group hung out at the front of the room, and towards the back were what I called "the cool girls." They clearly knew what to expect of the choir, and they dominated. They were the strongest sight singers, had good posture, sang out, and still maintained an air of "coolness." They sat in the same seats every rehearsal and gabbed every moment they could. Although most of the girls go to the same school, a couple students in this clique did not. While they sang, they looked at each other, and clearly each one had a role in the group. Becky is the fun one, who dances as she sings and makes funny faces to the other girls. Starlette is the best singer and is always volunteered by her friends to sing challenging sections of the song. Betsy is quieter, very smiley, and is always someone to lean on. I spot her braiding or brushing her friend's hair on more than one occasion. Megan is more of an introvert, loves sports, and does not mind not being in the action of the gossiping. She is fine with being herself, and just reading if she is so inspired.

On the other side of the room, a boy and girl spend every break flirting as much as possible. Stealing each others' stuff, poking fun, and lots and lots of giggling are common among these two. Add in a sidekick or two to the flirting and you have what I called "the flirting group."

In front of the flirting group were a group of boys that clearly loved choir. Gabe sits near the front and is always helping the teacher. He is a little younger and still carries some of

the baby fat typical in so many young boys his age. Gabe is always the teacher's first call for help. He not only volunteers but is also called upon to help with attendance or organizing chairs. He smiles constantly and speaks with adults as equals. He likes to have things organized and will willfully volunteer to reorganize a stack of 40 chairs because one person did not align the chairs perfectly. He leads a group of similar looking boys that still have that cute roundness found in little kids.

Gabe is a natural leader, but Bobby is a little trickster. Although he never completely breaks the rules, he definitely bends them by randomly shouting out answers instead of raising his hand. During a speaking section in the song, he is a tad too loud compared to everyone else. On spirit day, Bobby tears off his jacket at the last moment as if he is Superman to reveal his choir shirt. The other students giggle, and he is entered into a raffle to win a prize for wearing his spirit gear. One night, after a good performance, Bobby yells, "Yea!" and is genuinely excited about the performance, yet never gets in trouble for yelling. The other characters in this group are close, although Bobby and Gabe clearly attract the most attention.

Next to this group of boys in the front and center of the room are "the up-and-coming cool girls." They are as young as the other people they sit near, but younger than the current cool girls, and I commonly spot them making funny faces towards their friends, or looking at each other while singing. This group of five or six girls chase each other during breaks and are always giggling. They move to the music, always have perfect posture, drop their jaw while they sing, and tap their toes. They are clearly engaged and love every moment of choir. Commonly sporting their CCC gear, I suspect these perfectly manicured girls will sit in the back row and run the show in a few years.

As I look around at all these groups during rehearsals, I notice that race does not seem to play into the social schema. A white girl hangs out with the twins that dress identically. An Indian girl is warmly greeted by her friends every rehearsal. Biracial students are included just the same as everyone else. There is definitely an air of acceptance that even I felt as one of the few white people in the room. On spirit day, I was able to read off a raffle number for who received a prize for wearing their CCC shirts. At the final rehearsal, Ms. Leung asked me to say a few words so I could say goodbye to the students. The students commonly said hi to me with warm smiles. I thoroughly felt accepted into this group after such a short time and loved every minute with this group of students.

Similar to findings in Green (2011), Tarrant et al. (2002), and Bartolome (2010), social groups played a part in identity creation in the CCC choir setting. The students naturally had a group in which they belonged, just for joining this choir. This idea of group belonging ensured all the students had a social backbone to lean on. There are students who were exceptions, however. For example, there was a girl who I never saw speak with another student – she preferred to read or stare at the other students. But, overall, most of the students seemed to happily belong to a social circle.

Shared experiences. This code refers to the positive connection between the choir members created during overnight choir trips. This included trips to national and international performances, and also the mandatory annual five-day choir camp.

Starting in the fourth grade, the students in CCC start to go on choir trips. The first trip was always to Disneyland and then subsequent trips seemed to change, ranging from Taiwan to New York City. The participants seemed to love to discuss these trips, and spoke of them often and enthusiastically:

C: What is special about the CCC experience?

Patricia: I think the fact that they go on a lot of random trips.

C: Yeah. Can you tell me about one?

Patricia: Oh, yeah. New York. We went to New York in sixth grade and we started the choir trips at around, I think it was, third grade. Third grade or fourth grade. And the first trip you possibly go to like for every single person would be Disneyland.

C: Yeah.

Patricia: Yeah. And then I think that's when you start to learn a lot of responsibility in and out because you have to pay attention to where you're going in Disneyland. You got to stick with your own group. You have to, I don't know, live on your own.

C: Yeah.

Patricia: How like the chaperone will help you but you have to basically live on your own for about three days and two nights.

C: Yeah?

Patricia: Yeah.

C: So, you mentioned New York. What was special about New York?

Patricia: New York. Oh, the Broadway shows. Yeah. Okay. I'm in choir, I like to sing, so like if someone is off tune in the Broadway show, I could possibly hear that. You could obviously hear it if you're like if your ear is like trained for like, I don't know—I went to—oh, six years, that was six years. Six years in choir, you could hear the differences in Broadway show and like regular singing and how people are off tune. You can go, hey, you're off tune. And they would go, how would you possibly know? And you'd go, I've been singing, I should know.

C: Yeah?

Patricia: Yeah.

C: So did you hear it on Broadway?

Patricia: A little bit. A little bit.

The students not only spoke highly of the trips, but also liked to talk about the choir camp that they attended each summer. The camp is not affiliated with the choir, and provides a typical camp environment for children offering such activities as swimming, team building, and sitting around a campfire. The choir uses the facilities for this purpose and also as a rehearsal space. At this camp, they sing, learn new music, and also get to know the other students through activities.

Megan: Like in choir camp there's a—what's it called—like the people who have been here before, they arrange activities too so then they have like bonding activities where you're like, oh, everyone close your eyes and then you pick like a few people and then they have to like tap someone for like, make them feel confident or like something like that, just like really nice things like that.

C: That's nice.

Megan: Yeah.

The look of nostalgia on the students faces while talking of these shared experiences was sweet. Each student would take a moment and look into the distance when talking of the trip and always have a slight smile while telling me about the trips or camp. It was apparent that these experiences had a special place in their heart not only by their mentioning them throughout the interview process, but also through the look of content they expressed when talking about these trips. Gracyk (2003) mentioned that musical memories can serve as a tool in self-discovery, and these shared musical memories seemed to be crucial to the CCC experience.

Choir friends. This code applies to the positive relations created through participation in the choir. The students clearly had friends within the group, and those friends seemed to carry throughout other activities in the students' lives. Kelly told me about how she has friends in choir that are in her school, as well as some friends in CCC that go to Chinese school with her. Even if they aren't friends she talked about how having choir in common helps in different environments. "I think it kind of breaks the ice because once you know someone in like a new environment, I guess, it's easier for you to transition."

Betsy discussed the benefits of the choir community.

C: So what is special about the CCC experience?

Betsy: You get to learn to collaborate with others and work with them to, like, make music. And you kind of grow up with them, so they're kind of your, like, friends and family.

C: Yeah. Tell me a story about that. Like, is there one person in particular you can think of without naming names, or how they're like that, how you grew up with them, things like that?

Betsy: Well, some of the people who I play with at break time and sing with them at choir, they also live in my neighborhood. So I also, like, go to school with them.

C: Oh. So they're, like, school friends and choir friends.

Betsy: Yeah.

C: Did you meet them first through choir or school?

Betsy: Some of them were from school, and some of them were from choir.

She then went into the specifics about how choir friends are different because you sing with them, and the singing impacts the relationship.

Betsy: It's really fun to hang out with other people, and when you sing with the other choir people you, like, feel really happy to be with them.

C: Yeah. Can you think of, like, a particular song or a moment, or beginning rehearsal, end rehearsal—

Betsy: Like, near the end of rehearsal. Because at the beginning everybody's just, like, gathered so that they're kind of scattered everywhere. Then after two hours of practicing together, you kind of share a bond, so at the end you become happy and cheerful.

This bond she mentioned during the interview I also observed during rehearsals. After making a beautiful sound in *Oh Shenandoah*, the students looked at each other in delight. The students started to giggle at the raw “gashoonga” chant during one of their Swahili songs, *Amani*. The students gained inside jokes through rehearsals, shared emotional moments exposed by the beauty in singing, and were part of an inclusive community that seemed able to create life-long friendships.

Having friends that also identified as Chinese American created a sense of camaraderie while learning the music. Betsy spoke of how most of her friends were Chinese American and how they learn together. As mentioned earlier, Betsy said, “Because my friends, we're all, like, Chinese American, so we kind of get to understand our history, kind of, a little bit better.” These positive social groups played a large impact on the creation of cultural identity.

Musical Identity through Achievement to Promote Esteem.

The theme of musical achievement to promote self esteem referred to observations of confidence developed through involvement in the choir. CCC performs throughout the year for family and friends, and also attends conferences and festivals. The multitude of performances in the Bay Area, nationally, and internationally allow the students to develop a deep esteem based

on the musical achievements of the group. Data analysis revealed several related codes within this theme. One code was self-esteem growth through outside recognition from such sources as parents or through high ratings at festivals and competitions. Another code was growth intrinsically through personal pride and a work ethic to be one's best self.

Esteem growth through recognition. This code relates to positive feedback from the student's community as well as through awards received at festivals and competitions. Overall I found that this positive feedback led to a high self-esteem from their achievements through participation in this choir.

Kelly mentioned how much fun she had on the New York trip. When I asked her why it was fun, she responded, "We won a lot of awards, like the sweepstake awards, and I think it was the overall best choir." CCC is recognized as one of the best children's choirs in the Bay Area. They are asked to perform at exclusive festivals like the local Chanticleer festival, and they have been selected to perform at the American Choral Directors Association regional and national conventions. It is an incredibly large organization, and part of the pride of the group is based in how well they perform at competitions and are recognized by others for their excellence.

In addition to awards, the students receive recognition from family members for the accomplishments of the choir. Students' families serve as the primary audience for the concerts. Kelly told me about liking to go to concerts, but said that her parents only go to a concert if she is participating. Megan told me of a time when she was singing karaoke with her family at home and her parents remarked how she was "pretty good" at singing. She felt that their approval of her vocal quality was a sign that they liked that she was in choir.

Self-esteem developed through personal pride. Students in this group are driven. This code refers to the benefits to their esteem based on the positive outcomes of their hard work. I

found that the students showed intrinsic motivation to succeed through focus and high levels of effort during rehearsals. This effort created a sense of pride at achieving the high standards of the group.

On November 2nd, I wrote the following in my field notes: *It's 7:08 p.m. and the students start to work on "Amani," a rhythmically challenging song that is in both French and Swahili. They speak the rhythm on rhythm syllables before singing the entire song on solfege syllables. You can feel the concentration. Students are tapping their feet to stay in time. One girl is clearly lost but staring so intently at the music and trying to get back in time. Many of the students are lost but focused on the music and trying to rejoin. As the music falls apart, the students start to talk about the music, and the leaders in the group quickly hush everyone so the teacher can lead them. The teacher does not have to establish discipline or work to get the group back together. The students want so badly to improve that they quiet themselves and look intently to the director. Ms. Leung quietly says almost in a whisper, "Please respect this class." The students are silent. I have never seen this focus from this group. It is as if the students know they are not performing at the level that is expected of them and are disappointed in themselves. When they dive back into the music, the attention and focus astounds me. I cannot find one student who is not burying their head into the music, bouncing a head, tapping a foot, or patting a hand to stay in rhythm. No one is looking at his or her friends trying to get attention or even smiling; everyone is concentrating on the music. They continue to repeat the same activity over and over until the director is satisfied with their performance. This process is repeated for twenty-five minutes. As a middle school teacher, this level of concentration for such an extended period of time astounds me.*

The choir has lofty standards, and the students are proud of meeting them. Megan, for example, spoke of how challenging it was to advance to the next level. The students need to audition to advance, and the audition involves both sight-singing and singing repertoire where their tone is analyzed. The repertoire reinforced this level of difficulty. The choir was singing a song called “Angels of the Wind,” and Megan spoke of the challenging intervals and how difficult it was to sight-read. The group does not receive any recordings of the music and are expected to be able to sing a song from sight. There are extra classes during the week they may sign up for to improve their sight-reading, but no extra help in learning the repertoire. The students seem to feel a sense of pride for conquering the challenges presented in this high achieving choir.

The group requires a large time commitment, and I was particularly impressed by the commitment on a Saturday night from so many students in middle school. Kelly exclaimed, “My mom thinks it's a pain in the butt sometimes, but she's like, ‘You know what, I think you're fine. I think you're good.’” And she's like, every time she drops me off, she's like, “Oh my God, I have to drop you off again.” But once we're on stage and we're performing, she's like, “You must really like this place to put up with them every single weekend.” And I'm like, “Oh, sure.”

I want to mention again that this is a self-selecting group of students, even to the point where they dispute their own parents' sense of hassle at having to drop them off. It is natural that the students observed would find many benefits through participation. If a student did not feel these benefits, they would probably quit. Therefore, it is important to remember that the findings in this study only refer to these students in this situation.

Cultural Relevance and Identity Formation

Culturally relevant pedagogy benefits all students regardless of race, yet a key component of culturally relevant pedagogy is understanding the particular cultures of the students (Delpit, 2006). CCC reinforces the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy in many ways, beginning with employing a staff that mirrors the demographics of its students. All of the teachers are fluent in Mandarin and are already a part of the Chinese American community in the Bay Area. Under the broad umbrella of this theme, I found several relevant codes. The codes include: Teachers as parental figures, teachers as culture bearers, and creating a culturally inclusive environment that makes music with integrity while encompassing a curriculum that honors a wide range of cultures.

The teacher as parental figure. This code represents the students' perception that the teachers represented more than just a teacher figure, but more of a parental one whom they could trust and come to for help or advice. Of all the students interviewed, each one spoke very highly of their director not only as an educator, but also as a person. For example, Patricia discussed her feelings of closeness to the directors:

C: How do the directors play a part in your life?

Patricia: Oh, you definitely get to know your directors because there's only—they're like, I think in this entire Bay area, there's only about, I don't know, five to eight conductors, so you practically know everyone.

C: Yeah. Can you give me an example of like how that relationship is? You know, like a story or an interaction or—

Patricia: Oh. They're like your second moms.

C: Yeah?

Patricia: Yeah.

C: How so?

Patricia: Well, when they take you to Disneyland, they don't expect too much, but they expect a lot in a way. It's kind of like a give and take. If you respect them, and you follow their directions and you can take care of yourself, they'll respect you. And then they'll help you out in like times of hard need. For example, my friend she kind of—she went to overnight camp with our choir but like overnight she had homesickness. Yeah, so one of the conductors, she's like the most motherly person in the group, she's just like, you know what, I feel bad for you and I'm just going to lay down next to you the entire night, and she slept with her the entire night. That is so nice.

C: That is so nice.

Patricia: I know.

Megan described her directors as the “parents in the choir as a family.” She went on to describe how Ms. Leung is like the “mom” who is telling everyone what to do “in a nice way.” In my observations of the choir, it is interesting to note that Ms. Leung never came off as warm to me and was always very direct with what she wanted from the students. Yet even with this directness, she also never came off as mean. The students seemed to like that she said exactly what she needed of them and they were happy to comply. She set very clear expectations and the students worked very hard to fulfill them.

When I first arrived, a student asked me if I was there to “steal” the Chinese way of teaching. I did not quite know what she meant by that, but I was interested to see what she meant by the “Chinese way” of teaching. Throughout my observations, I could not find anything that stood out to me about the director’s style of teaching. Her classroom management, her choices in music, and her interactions with the students all seemed to me to be good teaching

techniques taught universally in the United States. She did tell the students not to be “lazy,” a term stereotyped as negative in the Chinese culture, but that seemed rather minor. I asked the founding director, Mr. Chang, about it and he simply described it as similar to how the students’ parents talk with them. Upon further searching, I think they may be referring to the directness of the teacher’s requests. I did find all the teachers instructions to be very clear and concise, and perhaps this resembles a similar style to the one that the students experience with their parents at home.

The teacher as culture bearer. According to Goetze (2000), a culture bearer is someone who can verify that non-Western music is performed in a manner representative of the culture where the music originated. These experts can put non-Western music into context for Western learners and also share pertinent cultural information. At CCC, all of the directors are Chinese American. Mr. Chang moved from Taiwan in 1981. Ms. Leung moved from Taiwan in 1998. There is a strong connection to Taiwan, since many teachers are from there and also since the choir has a branch in Taiwan. This branch in the CCC organization is a choir based in Taiwan that has over 400 members.

Ms. Leung’s language of origin is Mandarin. Because of this, selecting Chinese folksongs is easier for her. She can easily translate the music for the students and help them with pronunciation. She also knows which folksongs are popular and which are more obscure among the Chinese. For example, Ms. Leung describes how her background relates to the music of the choir:

Ms. Leung: Recently we sang a song called Ocean, my Homeland-大海啊, 故. So that's a song that talks about the ocean is my homeland. And I grew up there, and I have a very

deep emotion with my homeland. Yeah. And it was in Chinese. So for level four and level five we sang that song. I think this is a typical song in the choir here.

C: Do the parents know, do you know?

Ms. Leung: I would say, yeah. Many. And also we like to sing some Chinese songs that they can bring up some memories to the parents. As you know, 90 percent of the parents are Chinese as well. So we can—I think this is a good connection when the kids sing, and the parents say, hey, I can sing this too.

Ms. Leung is a wonderful role model for the students. She is well educated, great at her job, and has many positive character attributes that the students admire, such as professionalism and kindness. During an observation, a guest director was working with the group. Ms. Leung walked over to the social group that I have called the “cool girls” and put her ear by them to double check their pronunciation of a Japanese song and to reinforce positive singing attributes like sitting up and singing out. She must have made a little joke, because the girls all smiled and she smiled back. It was clear they had a personal connection and enjoyed each other.

The directors also act as a connection between the parents and the children. If a student misses rehearsal without notifying CCC, a director will call home to check on the student. Before and after classes, parents freely talked with Ms. Leung in their language of origin whether it was English or Chinese. Mr. Chang also spoke with parents on a regular basis. It was clear that parents are comfortable with the directors and vice versa. The parents were very involved in the community, driving the students to rehearsals, staying to watch, and helping pass out snacks. When I asked the students why they joined the group, the students said they liked to sing and their parents thought this would be a good outlet. Ms. Leung also took the time to learn all the students’ names, which I think is quite a feat considering level C51 has over 80 students, and she

teaches six classes. The relationships between the directors and the parents and the students aided in creating a positive culture of community in CCC.

Positive and culturally inclusive environment. This code refers to interactions that showed the group embracing ideas and people from all cultures. Even though this choir primarily involved only students and teachers who identified as Chinese American, I found the environment to be very inclusive of all cultures. I even felt this on a personal level as an outsider looking in. For example, I was asked to announce the winners in a raffle that the choir was holding. More examples included students asking me questions, saying “hi,” checking in with me, and an overall sense that everyone seemed at ease with me being present. I, too, felt the experience of “the community” that the students talk about. In my field notes, I wrote the following: *Today was the first day I did not feel like ‘the Other,’ and I liked it. I feel like originally I was ‘the Other,’ not because I am white, but because I was new. And today I definitely felt much more included, which surprised me as a white woman in a Chinese American oriented choir. It feels that inclusion into the group has nothing to do with race. When successfully implemented, culturally relevant pedagogy creates an environment of acceptance of all cultures while being able to explore your own.*

On a day called “Spirit day,” I noticed Ms. Leung made an effort to develop an inclusive environment. The same day as the raffle, the guest director taught a group of songs that originated from Japan. The students were not familiar with the meaning of the words. Not only did the teacher translate the words, but she also acted out the meaning. She sang phrase-by-phrase, acting out each line. Using her hands, she showed the journey of the person in the song going hunting. The students giggled when she got to the climax, where the hunter pointed the gun and shot. She smiled throughout the entire experience and sang at a slow pace to ensure

comprehension. The students remained quiet throughout the entire experience, focusing on the storytelling. This technique helped the students to understand while joyfully learning the language.

In an interview with the founding director, Mr. Chang, he referred to the many cultures honored:

C: What do you see as the benefits of participation for the students?

Mr. Chang: Well, they—we try to build an environment—it's a platform. We use choral music as a platform to gather youngsters and using the choral music for them to learn art. For them to learn different cultures. For them to learn different languages. And for them to build a relationship—friendship in the choir. In California, most school doesn't have choral program. So that's—we try to build that platform, build that environment for them to enjoy through the choral music.

Further, he described how having multicultural teachers allow the students to be exposed to more multicultural music. The students sing in many languages including Latin, German, Mandarin, Japanese, French, and they were even learning a song in Swahili during my observation. They clearly are providing a multicultural education for the students by exposing them to so many different musical cultures.

In summary, the choir was a multifaceted environment. Data analysis of the interviews and observations revealed four primary themes, including ethnic pride to build cultural identity, social impact on identity development, musical achievement promoting esteem, and cultural relevance in identity formation. Within the theme of ethnic pride to build cultural identity, the Chinese language and a connection between multiple generations seemed more obvious in identity creation compared to the students perception of their Chinese American identity.

Having a positive social group with shared experiences through choir trips was important in creating a sense of belonging. This community was a powerful force in their lives and therefore shaped their identity. The students seemed to hold high self-esteem derived from recognition from their families for their achievements and also through awards. They also had a sense of personal pride from all of their hard work at achieving the high standards of the group. The teachers played an essential role in the students development, encompassing the role of educator, and parental role model, while also creating a positive learning environment conducive for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to explore ways that the cultural identity of Chinese American adolescents was mediated through participation in a children's choir that sings repertoire from both Western and Eastern countries of the world. This study examined a children's choir where a majority of members identify as Chinese American adolescents. The primary question guiding the inquiry was: How do Chinese American adolescents describe the experience of singing in a children's choir on their emerging cultural identity? Sub questions included the following: How is identity created or described by Chinese American youth in a children's choir? How does social interaction with fellow choir members affect their identity development? What is the impact of singing Chinese folksongs on the development of their identity? How might the findings apply to other music education settings?

Below I will present a discussion of the findings on the Crystal Children's Choir influence on cultural identity organized by the four themes revealed in data analysis: ethnic pride, social impact, musical esteem, and culturally relevant pedagogy. After discussing the findings of the four sections and comparing them to other researchers findings, I will discuss my thoughts on the contrary findings in the study, specifically the external view from the students that singing Chinese folksongs did not impact their identity.

CCC's Influence on Cultural Identity

CCC influenced the cultural identity of the students through creating ethnic pride, building a positive social environment that allowed students to learn about their shared culture, fostering high esteem among participants due to their involvement in such a successful Chinese

American choir, and through the influence of quality educators who designed and implemented a culturally relevant pedagogy within the choir.

CCC's influence on students' ethnic pride. The largest connections between ethnic pride and CCC manifested through the use of the Chinese language and the multigenerational connection. For example, students wore shirts in Chinese that proclaimed love for the organization. Ms. Leung spoke with parents fluently in Chinese and created a welcoming environment for the community to use their primary language of Chinese. Even students who did not speak Chinese would call the teacher using the Chinese word for "teacher." Kelly exuberated pride over speaking multiple languages and being part of a group who can do this. These findings seemed consistent with Shankar (2011), who found that Asian American youth use their heritage language to bond with their cultural communities and find a sense of belonging.

I found it interesting that the teachers specifically chose music with the intent to connect students with their parents. Both Betsy and Megan mentioned feeling a connection to their parents when singing Chinese folksongs. This connection makes sense given the findings from previous literature. For example, Qin et al. (2008) found that many of their study participants felt a distance between themselves and their parents due to language and cultural barriers. CCC works with the students to bridge these gaps, so it makes sense that the students felt closer to their parents when singing popular folksongs with which their parents were familiar.

Learning about shared culture. Most of the students involved in the choir identify as Chinese American, and the students seemed to coalesce into distinct social groups within this broader community. Betsy talked about how her friends were Chinese American and, as a result, how she felt that they could understand her cultural history better than others. Other than this

one anecdote, I did not find any other connections between social groups and cultural identity. It is important to note the social groups were important to identity creation, just not necessarily cultural identity. Shared experiences and singing choral music created the social groups. Betsy made an important point when she stated, “Because at the beginning everybody's just, like, gathered so that they're kind of scattered everywhere. Then after two hours of practicing together, you kind of share a bond, so at the end you become happy and cheerful.” This quote expressed the connection these students felt within the group. Bartolome (2010) found a similar social bond in the girl's choir she studied. Tarrant et al. (2002) also noted in their study that music can be a tool to form positive peer relations, form positive social identities, and fill a void for other identity needs.

Fostering high esteem among participants. CCC is admired in the choral community due to their numerous performances at highly regarded conferences and festivals, and their numerous awards and recognitions. The students felt a sense of pride as a result of being part of such a distinguished group that is also primarily Chinese American. They sing songs from China with confidence, and this esteem reinforces that the Chinese culture is valued. There are connections here to Fitzpatrick's (2012) article, when she noted the importance of students feeling that their cultural identities are acknowledged, legitimized, and respected within the music classroom. Mills (2008) also found that participation in a children's choir enhanced personal and musical self-esteem.

In Shaw's (2012) discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy, one of the recommendations was that directors should ensure that their choirs sing non-Western music within the style of that particular culture rather than in a Western style. In the CCC, this is not the case—indeed, they sang non-Western songs with a typical Western children's choir choral sound. However, this did

not seem to distract from the cultural meaning of the song. Instead, the students received positive praise from their Western-style colleagues that led to accessibility, enjoyment, and acceptance in the larger choral community in the United States.

Providing quality educators who teach in a culturally relevant style. All of the teachers' language of origin was Chinese, and they identified as Chinese American. This allowed the teachers to easily present the Chinese culture to the students and choose repertoire that represented the culture. Goetze (2000) discussed the necessity of a culture bearer, or someone who ensures that music from non-Western cultures is performed with integrity by communicating important cultural information. After observing and interviewing members of CCC, I found that the students in the choir valued immensely the culture bearer role the directors filled.

Megan and Patricia described the directors as parental figures. The teachers truly seemed to care about every student. This characteristic is seen in the communications between the organization and the parents, how directors worry over students missing rehearsal, and by the directors getting to know each student's name in a sea of hundreds of students. Mills (2008) also noted the importance of the family-like collective identity seen in the children's choir she researched.

“They're Just Like Foreign Songs”

Philip added important insight when he declared, “Well, I don't really—I don't feel like any different like, oh, when I sing like Chinese song, it's like, oh, this is my country song you know. It's like all the same. They're just like foreign songs, so then it doesn't really affect me any particular—more like one way than another.” Megan stated that she listened to pop music at home, typical of many American teenagers. Comments such as these really muddied the idea of

what might be the cultural identity needs of Chinese American students in a choral education setting. Jorgensen (1998) discussed how globalization of music may be changing these needs—the distinction between *our* vs. *their* music is blurring. Today, popular music from one country is easily spread throughout the world with the use of technology.

I believe many people assume that Chinese Americans associate more with the Chinese culture than the American culture. However, the Chinese-American culture is its own standing cultural entity. The subquestions of the study questions how social interactions, singing Chinese folksongs, and participation in the choir affects their identity. It seems that the students navigate multiple identities. Within the Chinese-American culture, the students were able to be competent in multiple identities including their Chinese identity, their American identity, their music identity, and the many other identities these students carry in their day-to-day lives. These all compounded into creating unique individuals. The founding director of the choir, Mr. Chang, spoke of Western versus Eastern traditions in Chinese American families. He discussed how different generations had different needs and how CCC fits those needs among changing values. This observation aligned with the findings of Hunt et al. (2011), who studied Chinese American identity in the club scene when their respondents noted that their identities were fluid and in flux, and they had to maintain multiple identities based on the situation.

Suggestions for Teaching Practice

The final subquestion of the study asked how the findings may apply to other music education settings. There are several practical implications that can be drawn from this study. This study suggested that incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy into the music education classroom may aid Chinese American students in navigating their cultural identity. More specifically, to develop the type of positive culture CCC embodies, educators in the music

classroom might similarly strive to perform multicultural music with integrity, utilize culture bearers as a resource, and recognize the differing identities of their students as a guide for curriculum development.

The students in this study articulated a sense of connection with their parents and their heritage when singing songs from their heritage country, *i.e.*, China. Performing multicultural music with integrity implies that the music be of the utmost quality. This means that teachers should strive to find music that withstands the test of time in a particular culture. Popular folksongs are a good place to start for the novice educator. Lau (2007) wrote an article in the *Music Educators Journal* on how to incorporate the music of China into the music education classroom. This article is helpful for teachers looking to reach Chinese American students and also expose Western students to non-Western cultures.

Finding a culture bearer as Goetze (2000) suggested is challenging if you live in an area that does not have a large population of the culture you are studying. Luckily, new methods of communication are possible, such as video chatting. To incorporate culture bearers of Chinese American descent, local groups such as the Chinese Culture Center in San Francisco may serve as helpful resources. Across the United States, there are many organizations that have a mission of spreading culture from a particular country or region, and teachers may wish to contact these local groups in their area.

Teachers also need to recognize the differing identities that every student navigates throughout their youth and try to develop connections between their curriculum and these emerging identities. Since music is seen in every culture, music education courses may be more easily situated within the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy than other subjects. Teachers must develop an educational philosophy that recognizes the many cultural

contributions made by different peoples (Campbell, 1995). Although music educators must balance the content of their curriculum, recognizing and learning songs from students' cultures as well as other cultures is indeed possible.

Culturally relevant pedagogy may help to make education more meaningful for the growing Chinese American population in the United States. Music education is a subject that naturally relates to different cultures and practices. As Gloria Ladson-Billings stated, "Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities" (1995, p. 476). Expanding into non-Western music may cause a teacher to feel apprehensive, but as this study suggests, performing non-Western music with integrity may help in providing a culturally relevant pedagogy with Chinese American adolescents. This approach will not only help the students, but also help teachers grow. As the famous Chinese proverb wisely states, "Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still."

Suggestions for Future Research

Previous research on cultural identity in education primarily concentrates on African American and Latino students due to the "achievement gap" seen frequently between White students, African American, and Latino students on standardized tests (O'Connor et al., 2009). Although Asian Americans are one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau, 2014), little research centers specifically on the educational needs of Asian American students because of the "model minority" myth (Lee, 1994; Maddux et al., 2008; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008). Further research in music education is needed on this population.

The primary limitation of this study was the length of time that the students were observed. A true ethnography on this group of students would probably reveal a more in-depth understanding of the identity among Chinese American youth in a culturally relevant children's choir. Another limitation of this study was the self-selecting nature of the group, as previously mentioned. It would be interesting to explore the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy among Chinese American youth in different choral settings, including a public school with a more racially diverse group of students. Would the Chinese American students still appreciate singing songs within a diverse group of their peers? It is also important to note that results may shift based on how many generations of a family have resided in the United States. Asian Americans who are first generation may have very different needs from Asian Americans whose families have resided in the United States for generations, particularly if a family's primary language is not Chinese. It would be fascinating to see the differences among students with families who have resided in this country for different lengths of time.

It is essential that the field of music education continue to look at the concept of identity development and culturally relevant pedagogy for Chinese American students, and to attempt to incorporate those strategies into the music classroom. The fact this minority group is one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States marks the need for this research as especially urgent.

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Appendix A

Prescreening Questionnaire

Pre-Screening Student Questionnaire

Please answer to the best of your ability. Your child's name will not be shared with anyone.

Child's/ Name:

Number of years your child has been in the CCC: _____

Current Level in CCC: _____

Race (circle all that apply)

American Indian

Asian American (circle below):

Chinese American Korean American

Japanese American

Vietnamese American Other Asian American: _____

African American

Latino/a

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

White

Other: _____

Appendix B

Parent information letter

August 27, 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am writing to you as a Master's student of music education at the University of Michigan under the supervision of my faculty advisor, Dr. Kate Fitzpatrick. I am currently working on my thesis, which focuses on the culture of the Crystal Children's Choir. The University of Michigan oversees this research project. The purpose of this project is to see how the children's choir affects Chinese American identity. The research study also examines the values and benefits associated with being in the choir. I will observe Level 5 rehearsals each week for a month. I will also talk to a few members to find out what is important and valuable about this choir. I will conduct interviews with some students and teachers. Each interview will last for 20 minutes and will be about the choir.

Please note:

- The interviews are voluntary.
- Interviews take place during the break period of rehearsals.
- Children get an information statement before an interview.
- Your child may choose to participate or not.
- All interviews are audio recorded but no identifying information used.
- The interview is about their experiences as a member of the choir.
- Your child does not have to answer any questions he/she does not want to answer.
- Choosing not to be in this study has no consequences.
- Children can stop at any time.
- Even if the parent gives permission for the child to participate, the child may still decline to participate.
- I will protect children's privacy to the maximum extent allowable by law.

In the final paper, fake names are used. Audio recordings, as well as all study results, may appear in papers, journals, and/or presentations that are of interest to music educators. I will not share any identifying information. We expect no benefits or risks since we are only asking questions about typical daily experiences.

I would like to formally ask you to participate in this research. You may preview the interview questions by contacting me by email or telephone and I will send you a copy.

If you have any questions about this study, please ask. If you prefer, you can contact my professor, Kate Fitzpatrick, at kfitz@umich.edu. . If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss

any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 2800 Plymouth Rd. Building 520, Room 1169, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800, (734) 936-0933, or toll free, (866) 936-0933, irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Sincerely,

Courtney Lindl
(415) 238-7335
lindlcourtneyb@gmail.com
Master's Candidate Music Education
University of Michigan- Ann Arbor, MI



Parental Permission

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child - _____, to be part of the study. Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you allow your child to be part of the study, you may change your mind and withdraw your approval at any time. Your child may choose not to be part of the study, even if you agree, and may refuse to answer an interview question or stop participating at any time.

You will receive a copy of this document for your records and one copy will stay with the study records. Be sure that you receive answers to the questions you ask about the study. Be sure that that you understand what your child's role in the study. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

I give my permission for my child to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

I give my permission to audiotape the interview with my child.

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Audition Criteria

Level II & Up Audition Criteria:

For 5th Grade and up in September 2013

1. C Major Scale
2. Scale Exercise - Alleluia
3. Echo Singing
4. Sight Singing
5. Songs: **America the Beautiful & America (My Country 'tis of thee)**

Scale Exercise - Alleluia

A musical score for a scale exercise in G major (one sharp) and 12/8 time. The melody consists of two phrases: the first phrase starts on G4 and ascends to D5, and the second phrase starts on D5 and descends to G4. The lyrics "A - lle - lu - ia, A - lle - lu - ia." are written below the notes.

Sight Singing Samples

Two numbered sight singing samples, each consisting of three staves of music. Sample 1 is in 3/4 time and features a sequence of eighth and quarter notes. Sample 2 is in 2/4 time and features a sequence of quarter and eighth notes, including a measure with a sharp sign (#) above the staff.

America The Beautiful

O beau - ti - ful for spa - cious skies, for am - ber waves of
 grain. For pur - ple moun - tain maj - es - ties a - bove the fruit - ed
 plaint A - mer - i - cal A - mer - i - cal God shed His grace on
 thee. And crown thy good with broth - er - hood, from sea to shin - ing sea!

America

My Country 'Tis of Thee

My coun - try 'tis of thee, sweet land of lib - er - ty, of thee I
 sing. Land where my fa - thers died, Land of the Pil - rim's pride.
 From ev - 'ry moun - tain side, let free - dom ring.

Appendix D

Director Interview Questions

CCC Level C51 Director Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself
2. How long have you been involved with CCC? Why have you stayed?
3. What do you see as the benefits of participation for the students?
4. What are the goals of your choir level?
5. Where do you perform and who is the typical audience?
6. How does your role aid, if any, the mission of spreading Chinese folksong?
7. A lot of students talk about the community here at CCC. How would you describe it?
8. Why do you think so many Chinese Americans join this choir?
9. Describe your role and relationship in the community.
10. Are there any challenges associated with membership in this community?

CCC Founding Director Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself- outside adult choir
2. What is your function as founding director?
3. What do you see as the benefits of participation for the students?
4. A lot of students talk about the community here at CCC. How would you describe it?
5. Why do you think so many Chinese Americans join this choir?
6. Describe your role and relationship to the students and their families.

Appendix E

Chorister Survey

Crystal Children’s Choir Chorister Level Five Survey Questions

Please answer the following questions in the space provided. You may go onto the back should you need more room for your response. All responses will remain anonymous. Thank you!

1. How long have you been in the CCC?

2. Why did you join CCC?

3. Why did your parents want you to be involved with CCC?

4. What do you see as the benefits of CCC participation?

5. What, if anything, do you gain from the cultural side of CCC?

Appendix F

Simple Script for Recruitment

Hi, my name is Courtney Lindl and I am a student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I am conducting a study on how your children's choir affects identity among Chinese American adolescents. The study involves watching rehearsals and interviewing a few students and teachers. There are no risks to participate and all information will remain anonymous. You do not have to be part of the study. The goal is to learn about how choir affects you and share it with other music educators. Are you interested in being part of the study?

Appendix G

Child Assent Script

I am working on a research project about the experiences of Chinese American adolescents in a children's choir. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences in CCC. Your parent(s) said it would be okay. It is okay for you not to answer some of the questions or to say that you don't want to answer any more questions. Are you willing to talk to me?

Appendix H

Creswell's (2009) Data Analysis in Qualitative Research

