

Everyone Can: Elementary Children's Perceptions of Singing

by:

Judy Pagryzinski

A thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music

(Music Education)

in the University of Michigan

2017

ABSTRACT

Whenever people ask about my profession as a music educator, the first thing I'm typically told is: "Oh, I can't sing!" The purpose of this study was to explore how selected 2nd, 4th and 6th grade students' attitudes towards themselves as singers form, and how these perceptions and behaviors were interpreted by the teacher-researcher. Research questions that guided this study were a) How do students describe themselves as singers; b) How do parents describe themselves and their child as singers; and c) What are the comparisons between the teacher-researcher's perception of them as singers versus their own perceptions? This research used purposeful sampling. Students were chosen based on how they answered 'I can' statements on a singing survey distributed to all 2nd, 4th and 6th grade students at an elementary-middle school on the West Coast of the United States. Participants chosen were mostly those identifying themselves as 'non-singers' who I, the teacher-researcher, identified as having singing skills or students who identified as singers and possessed a lower singing accuracy than their peers which I weighed through classroom observations and previous singing assessments. Following the basic qualitative research design, data collection included surveys, interviews, and recordings from both students and parents in addition to a teacher log. Data was transcribed and coded for themes. The themes that emerged from the data collection were a) insights from the student, parent, and teacher-researcher on perceptions of the child's singing and b) parent and child experiences that aided in shaping singing perceptions. From this research, I found that elementary-aged students mostly perceived themselves to be capable of singing, and felt more confident when singing alone or with an individual or group of individuals that they trusted would support and give them positive feedback. With practice, five out of six students believed

that they could continue to improve their singing skills and confidence levels. Parents shared these same views about their children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first entered the University of Michigan's Summer Masters in Music Education program, the idea of writing a thesis terrified me. I recall feeling as if I had nothing to say and that I did not have enough experience to be successful on the graduate level. It was the support of my family and friends, school community, Masters colleagues, and University of Michigan faculty that gave me the encouragement to guide my learning, exploration, and research to better my teaching these past few years.

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my parents for always supporting me in everything I do. Whether it is watching concerts via an email link, or listening to me blabber on about something exciting that I've learned in my practice or as a graduate student, at the end of the day you will always be my biggest fans and for that I am forever grateful. Secondly, a huge thank you is due to my administration, faculty, students and parents. Your willingness to work with and support my goals have time and time again shown me that I made the right decision moving across the country. Thank you for your love, encouragement, and participation. I would also like to thank my Summer Masters cohort: Jenn, Vinnie, Evan, Kathi, Katelyn, David, and Alex for being a vastly different, but united group of people who challenge one another and truly care about improving music education across the country.

A major thank you goes to my thesis chair, Dr. Colleen Conway who made me feel as if I was capable of writing something of this size and stature. Your energy, attitude, and enthusiasm gave me the motivation and excitement to make this a reality. Also, a huge thank you goes to my thesis committee, Dr. Carmen Pelton and Dr. Julie Skadsem, for your time, flexibility, and insight. A last thank you to key faculty members including Marie McCarthy and Kate Fitzpatrick for helping me direct my research focus; none of this could have been possible without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose and Research Questions.....	3
Summary.....	4
CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	5
Introduction.....	5
Perceptions towards Singing in Elementary School.....	5
Perceived Singing Accuracy.....	7
Influence of Gender Roles on Singing Behavior.....	10
Influence of Assessment on Perceptions of Singing.....	13
Parent Perceptions of Singing and Ability.....	15
Influences Outside of School.....	17
Summary.....	18
CHAPTER III – DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	20
Purpose and Research Questions.....	20
Design.....	20

Pilot.....	21
Description of Research Site.....	22
Sampling.....	23
Data Collection.....	24
Student surveys.....	24
Parent surveys.....	25
Student interviews.....	25
Parent interviews.....	25
Student recordings.....	26
Parent recordings.....	26
Teacher log.....	27
Procedure.....	27
Validity.....	30
Data Analysis.....	32
CHAPTER IV – SINGING PERCEPTIONS.....	34
Rosina.....	34
Jorge.....	36
Eddie.....	38
Anthony.....	39
Juan.....	41
Delilah.....	44
Discussion.....	45

CHAPTER V – SINGING EXPERIENCES	48
Rosina and Rosina's Mother.....	48
Jorge and Jorge's Mother.....	51
Eddie and Eddie's Mother.....	53
Anthony, Anthony's Father, and Anthony's Mother.....	55
Juan and Juan's Mother	60
Delilah and Delilah's Mother.....	63
Discussion.....	65
CHAPTER VI - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	69
Purpose and Research Questions.....	69
Past Literature.....	69
Methodology.....	70
Findings.....	70
My Application.....	71
Suggestions for Teachers.....	73
Suggestions for Future Research.....	74
Final Thoughts.....	75
REFERENCE LIST	76
APPENDICES.....	80

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval.....80

APPENDIX B: Blank Student Singing Survey81

APPENDIX C: Blank Parent Singing Survey.....83

APPENDIX D: Blank Student Interview Protocol.....84

APPENDIX E: Blank Parent Interview Protocol.....85

APPENDIX F: Blank Recording Session Rubric.....86

APPENDIX G: Blank Parental/Student Consent Form.....88

APPENDIX H: Blank Parental Consent Form.....89

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Whenever individuals inquire about my profession, they tend to appear delighted, yet anxious to discover that I am a vocalist and music educator. More times than not, the same responses arise when discussing music education: “Oh, I can’t sing,” “I have no musical ability,” and the ever-so-common misconception, “I am tone deaf.” There is no doubt that singing is a complex phenomenon that involves many cultural, social, psychological and physical factors; however, from an early age, all children are exposed to singing in some context. Whether it is a parent singing lullabies, hearing songs of worship in a religious setting, or listening to songs on the radio, singing surrounds us as human beings. Welch (2005) argued that our basic neuro-psychobiological design allows humans to make sense of and find the significance in patterns of sound organized as music within our own cultures. Whidden (2008) researched why adults considered themselves to be non-singers, yet stated that human beings have been hardwired to sing since the beginning of time.

In my own practice, I have time and time again been told by my students and their parents that they ‘cannot sing’, yet I have heard students correctly imitate tonal patterns or even sing a song that they enjoy quite accurately to the original. I have also witnessed students who once were quite confident singing in class or as a soloist, begin to shy away from singing tasks as they progress through elementary school. So, the question arises as to what is the cause(s) for this potential attitude and behavior shift?

Singing remains a core component of the elementary music curriculum in America, dating back as early as 1838 when Lowell Mason fought to include music as a curricular activity in the Boston Public Schools because of numerous children’s choirs throughout the city (Birge,

1938). The Core Music Standards state that by first grade, students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of musical concepts (such as tonality and meter) through performing rhythmic and melodic patterns (National Association of Music Education, 2015). Despite the historical use of singing in American schools, national guidelines, and various types of pre-educational exposure, children vary greatly when it comes to personal perceptions and behaviors towards singing once they reach the end of elementary school.

Legette (1998) conducted a research study of over 1000 elementary, middle and high school music students. In this study, Legette administered a Musical Attribution Orientation Scale to explore how students ranked musical ability and effort as the most important reasons for musical success or failure. Legette also questioned how students' beliefs about personal ability and effort strengthened from elementary to middle and high school. McPherson and O'Neill (2010) surveyed over 24,000 students (ages 9–21) from eight countries in regards to their perceived musical ability and found that, on average, students' musical competence beliefs dropped significantly with age, including perceptions about singing.

Research indicates that gender can attribute to a negative perception towards singing. This negative opinion of singing based on masculinity and femininity could begin as early as five years old (Hall, 2005; Tibbetts, 1975; Welch, Sergeant, & White, 1997). Not all children progress through elementary school and form this perception, otherwise every female student would reach adulthood and be comfortable singing, which is not the case. Although the relationship between gender and perceptions of singing may exist, there is little data indicating what other factors could explain a change that develops from the time a child enters elementary school to the time he or she leaves (Mizener, 1990). Furthermore, Warzecha (2013) questions this phenomenon, suggesting that elementary-aged children (for the most part) all have

unchanged and high-pitched voices, meaning that boys are rejecting their own singing voices before there is a noticeable change in the voice. This leads to questions as to why behaviors and perceptions towards this age are negative.

It seems then that there is a need to describe a child's self-perception of musical ability to understand his/her behaviors and attitudes towards singing at the elementary level (Kastner, 2009). Although a small number of research studies have explored a child's overall musical identity, there has not been a significant amount of research conducted on the relationships of singing skills on elementary-age children as assessed by a music educator and the relation of this assessment on a child's attitude about singing, although evidence in other fields suggests that skill and attitude are related (Mizener, 1990). For instance, if a child is attempting to accomplish a singing 'task' higher than their current musical competency as set by the teacher, "out-of-tune" singing behavior will likely happen. If a child has heard themselves be labeled or have labeled themselves as 'tone deaf' or 'non-singer' because of failing such a 'task,' the child has been shown to create a negative connotation towards singing (Welch, 2005). In Whidden's (2008) research on adult non-singers, she recognized that students who have been labeled as non-singers at the elementary level by someone they perceived to be a musical expert, they internalize negativity towards any future singing activities. By including insight into a child's musical self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, and the influences that create these rationales, music educators are more equipped to grasp a child's behaviors and perceptions towards singing and ultimately as the teacher, create a positive musical environment for developing singers (Kastner, 2009).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how selected 2nd, 4th, and 6th grade students' attitudes towards themselves as singers form, and how these perceptions and behaviors were interpreted by the teacher-researcher. Research questions that guided this study were a) How do students describe themselves as singers; b) How do parents describe themselves and their child as singers; and c) What are the comparisons between the teacher-researcher's perception of them as singers versus their own perceptions?

Summary

Children receive various kinds of exposure to singing from the time they are born. It is a visible part of life that exists within different societies and cultures, along with school. Chapter I has created a rationale for the study and provided the purpose and research questions for this inquire. Chapter II will share past research studies related to perceptions and behaviors towards singing.

CHAPTER II

Perceptions and Behaviors towards Singing: A Review of the Literature

Introduction

To distinguish potential influences on singing perceptions and behaviors in elementary-age students, this literature review will be presented in the following categories: a) perceptions towards singing in elementary schools b) perceived singing accuracy c) influence of gender roles on singing behavior d) influence on assessment on perceptions of singing e) parent perceptions of singing and ability and f) influences outside of school. These influences will explore the connections between past research and the purpose of this study.

Perceptions towards Singing in Elementary School

By the time children enter school, they have already had various levels of outside exposure to music. Despite several influences, positive attitudes toward school music activities has been found to decline with each advancing grade at the elementary level (Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Vander Ark, Nolin, & Newman, 1980), especially in relation to singing. Haladyna & Thomas (1979) gave 3,000 students a non-verbal attitude inventory about seven subject matter areas, reading, math, PE, music, social studies, art, and science to determine student attitudes towards school and the decline that takes place with age. Student participants were between grades one through eight and identified by grade and gender. They found that music was the only subject matter out the seven to have this downward tendency across all grade levels. They also found that girls' ratings for enjoying music was slightly higher than that of the boys. The most noticeable drop in interest towards music was between fifth and sixth grade. Based on the quantitative structure of the research, it was impossible for them to determine what

factors contributed to this decline, but it does shed light onto the fact that attitudes towards school music decreases with age.

Vander Ark, Nolin, and Newman (1980) tried to find the relationships between social status and attitudes toward music in elementary classrooms from grades three through six. Sixteen elementary schools from a suburban, Midwestern city were selected with a total of 5,697 participants. Students were asked to complete Nolin's *Musical Attitude Inventory* and Coopersmith's *Self-Esteem Inventory* (1967). Additional data collected included the occupation of the parents or guardians of the child which was then used to figure out social status.

Their research found that self-esteem was a significant variable in predicting attitudes toward classroom musical experiences much more than social status, gender, or age. They did notice that as students progressed to higher grades, attitudes towards school music became much more negative. Specifically, music reading activities produced the lowest attitude rating from students and had no connection to social status. Therefore, research has shown that children's self-concept in relation to music at school and the value they place on music declines with age, significantly more than for reading and mathematics.

As children progress through school, they become very aware of their own capabilities through making comparisons and receiving feedback from others (Hallam, 2008). For example, Mizener (1990) studied the significance among grade level and self-perception of singing skill. She gave 542 questionnaires to students in grades three through six in Austin, Texas and found that more students from the lower grades felt that they were good singers than did members of upper grade levels. Additionally, she found that girls had a more positive self-percept about singing than boys did, especially in the upper grades.

Randles (2010) produced a more widespread study where 1,219 students from grades four to 12 from a moderately sized suburban school district in the Midwestern United States were asked to identify what skills they perceived defined a “good musician” based on fourteen open-ended response items. In all the grades tested, ‘performing/practicing singing’ was among the top five response categories that students declared as characteristics of a ‘good musician’. Like Mizener (1990), Randles’ study uncovered that as students graduated through grade levels, starting from fourth grade, their perceptions of themselves as being good musicians decreased. Furthermore, singing was a large factor for students to consider when labeling what a ‘good musician’ entailed. Other researchers have performed studies like Randles (2010) and found that younger children tended to be more positive about singing than older children, despite that developmentally their singing skills were improving (Welch, Saunders, Papageorgi, & Himonides, 2012). One thing to consider that neither research study explored would be interest levels towards singing in the grades K-2. Understanding these factors might potentially assist in curving negative perceptions toward singing in elementary-age students as they move to upper level elementary grades.

Perceived Singing Accuracy

Through examining research literature on singing in elementary schools, it is obvious that self-perception can contribute to children not singing in tune, or lead to the perception that children are not singing in tune (Greenberg, 1970). He believed that self-concept is learned in relation to how individuals have been treated by those who have contact with them, like how they develop a self-concept in music. A positive view of self is a direct result of a successful musical experience and recognized accomplishments. There is no doubt that musical self-concept has been linked to motivation, interest, and participation in school and out of school musical

activities (Hallam, 2008). This can result in students believing that they are underachieving in music, leading to the creation of emotional and psychological blocks towards singing. Despite such emotional and psychological blocks, few research studies have been performed on influences that generate such blocks. Additionally, there have not been research studies on techniques to change children's self-percepts to more positive attitudes towards singing accuracy. Once the 'damage' so to speak has been done in creating a self-percept about singing ability, how do music educators change these perceptions to get at and foster a child's true singing potential? This question itself could elicit a separate research study.

Because such emotional and psychological blocks towards singing clearly exist, Greenberg's (1970) study examined musical achievement and self-concept in 10 out-of-tune elementary boys from fourth to sixth grade who joined an auditioned choir of 152 students. These 10 students were placed on the outer edge of the choir and did not sit next to one another. Choir was held twice per week for a half hour over 11 weeks. All teachers were asked to keep a log of these students for those 11 weeks to track any changes in behavior or self-concept.

Following these 11 weeks, Greenberg found that the 10 un-tuned singers all had a) poor peer relationships, b) academic underachievement, and c) lack of a strong sense of self, except for two students. Although some boys made progress in their singing, he noticed that the biggest issues existed with their self-concept. He found that those who had lower self-concept struggled significantly more with learning and enhancing their singing skills. Thus, Greenberg speculated that their poor musical self-esteem was an important factor in their out-of-tuned singing.

Over 20 years later, Mizener (1990) found that interest and self-perception of singing had little to do with third through sixth graders singing accurately. In fact, she found that of the 123 tape recordings of students singing "Jingle Bells" showed that 78% of students indeed liked to

sing, yet did not necessarily want to join choir or participate during music class activities. Based on her studies, she did not find a relationship between attitudes towards singing and singing accurately, as the majority of the students she examined, sang accurately.

A few years after, Mizener (1993) conducted a quantitative study on attitudes of elementary-age children toward singing and assessed singing skills. In this study, Mizener designed a questionnaire consisting of 44 items that broke up into five categories: a) singing interest, b) choir participation, c) classroom singing activities, d) out-of-school singing experiences, and e) self-perception of singing skill for 542 students in grades three through six. After collecting data, no statistically significant relationship existed between self-perception of singing skills and assessed accuracy. Students who thought they were good singers did not demonstrate stronger singing skills than students who did not think they sang well, leaving the question of what made some students more confident in their singing skills than others.

Kastner (2009) explored the role that various musical experiences play in developing musical identities, specifically through the construct of musical self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. She conducted interviews, observations, and kept participant journals for four fourth-grade children from a Midwestern elementary school. Parents of these children were also interviewed. In this study, three of the four students being interviewed particularly addressed “dislike and discomfort” when singing despite having proficient singing voices. She believed that a child’s perception of poor singing could create low self-esteem for elementary-age students; therefore, making it the job of the music educator as the facilitator, of implementing a safe singing space in order to help avoid such negative self and peer perceptions of singing.

Similarly, Shouldice (2014) conducted a study of 347 elementary-age students to explore what characteristics lead to the perception of what defined a ‘good musician’. She found that out

of 28 response categories, singing was in the top three characteristics among students in grades one to four for what makes a ‘good musician’. In addition to the survey, Shouldice interviewed students on what descriptors on the 28-category scale described them. She found that most students stated that they knew whether they were ‘good musicians’ based on how others perceived their abilities, resulting in a self-percept. For instance, “One third-grade student felt she was not a very good musician ‘because – well, at home my sister always makes fun of me ... She’s like, ‘you’re not good at singing’ (interview, 17 April 2012, p. 338).” This is a strong indicator that peer-influence can strongly reflect a child’s self-percept of singing accuracy.

Influence of Gender Roles on Singing Behavior

Another factor that can manipulate singing behavior in elementary-age children is the influence of gender roles. Even prior to reaching the stage of voice change, research studies have reported that there is a perception that singing is very “un-masculine” (Mizener, 1990; Green, 1997). Several researchers have highlighted how cultural expectations and hegemonic influences affect developing musical identities of men and women differently, both in musical preferences and choices to participate (Green, 1997; Welch, 2006). Since singing is significantly part of many students creating their musical identity, the idea of gender is crucial in determining how young children feel about their voice.

Green (1997) wrote a book on discourses of music and how they directly relate to ethnicity, gender, and social groupings. In the second part of her book, she explored day-to-day operations within the music classroom and observed gendered musical practices. In one study, she discusses asking 78 teachers to answer a questionnaire about how they perceive boys’ and girls’ comfortability during specific musical tasks. When asked about singing, 31 teachers stated that boys were shy, reticent or awkward about singing in ways that connected to puberty or were

in relation to the voice break. Only 13 indicated that boys and girls were equal in singing, and none indicated that boys were more successful at singing than girls.

Some of the reasons teachers believed boys did not engage more in school singing, was because they “feel that it is a girl activity”, it is less “macho”, or peer pressure pushes boys away from singing. Green also stated that the views of the pupils were concurrent with that of the teacher’s perceptions. Many said that they thought singing was considered to be a girls’ activity, even if they themselves enjoyed singing. One eleven-year-old even said, “singing is girls’ jobs’.

In a research study conducted by Mizener (1990) singing attitudes were explored in third through sixth grade children. Although Mizener was unable to find any connection between gender and singing accuracy, she found that gender played a part in self-percept of singing. In her results from a 44-item questionnaire, she discovered that out of 542 children, there was an equal percentage of each gender (38% of girls and 37% of boys) that responded "true" to the item "I'm a good singer." However, more boys than girls answered "not true." Because of her study, Mizener encouraged music educators to increase positive gender identification in music. This is especially necessary in the lower grades prior to age eight when attitudes toward music are beginning to develop (Warzecha, 2013).

Hall (2007) researched how seven-year old children compose songs in second grade music class and looked how interactions amongst peers influence children’s song compositions. She found that some of the social interactions affected their motivation and ability to compose songs. She found that interactions among students resulted in issues of gender bias. For instance, Hall had two students, Nathaniel and James that accused another boy named Mike, of sounding “girlish” when Mike sang his composition. In addition, Nathaniel imitated Mike’s high-pitched voice, telling him to sing lower. Later in the same project, Nathaniel and James felt that a tape

recording of their voices made them “sound girlish”. Despite both instances, Nathaniel and James were recorded as having a high tessitura themselves along with being able to imitate tonal patterns and show contour.

Similar to the research done on the perception of singing conducted by Hall (2007), Welch (2012) explored how gender perceptions reflected elementary attitudes toward singing. In this study, 11,388 students from 177 schools in London took a questionnaire consisting of 60 questions about their attitudes toward singing within the context of and outside of school. Again, significantly more girls saw themselves as singers versus the boys who did not. Interestingly, researchers found that when boys initially enter school music at the elementary level, their ability and competency to pitch match is equal to girls when lyrics are absent (Welch, Saunders, Papageorgi, & Himonides, 2012).

Warzecha (2016) researched the effect of male peer modeling in Kindergarten general music classrooms to discern whether this affected boys’ perceptions of singing. Two sixth grade peer models interacted with and both taught kindergarten students in two different class periods and resulted in positive relationships with the Kindergarten students, improvement in peer models’ vocal quality, and the rareness of a male model in the elementary school setting. She found that when the sixth-grade boys were more confident in their abilities to sing, the Kindergarteners were much more responsive, despite pitch discrepancies, however did have more accurate singing when the peer models sang accurately in both chest and head voice.

What was interesting, is that Warzecha notes that both her and Matthew, the peer model, noticed that boys were laughing when he sang in his head voice, alluding to the misconception that singing in head voice or falsetto is feminine (Green, 1997). This could partially be because

Matthew was much less confident and struggled more with his singing than Joseph, the other peer-model (Warzecha, 2016).

She also found that many boys did enjoy having a boy as a music teacher, because it was something they had never experienced which could be part of the disconnect noticed between genders and seeing singing as feminine at the elementary level, since many practitioners are female. Green (1997) also discovered that most of the 78 teachers' she questioned believed that their gender had a potential negative influence on the singing self-percept of students that did not identify as the same gender.

Influence of Assessment on Perceptions of Singing

Formal assessment has become a fundamental component in education throughout the United States. Educators are constantly being bombarded with this notion that formal assessment is the 'best' way to track educational progress and improvement in every subject matter and at each grade level. This trend has been no different in music education. There have been numerous models created to assess musical progress and aptitude in children (Brophy, 2010; Gordon, 2001), yet there is no doubt that these various types of assessments could potentially hinder or influence a child's perceptions and behaviors toward singing.

Because singing is such a vulnerable thing, the idea of assessment can truly be daunting for anyone, especially children. Greenberg (1970) studied 'un-tuned' singers in grades four through six. Although the students had not necessarily been assessed negatively in music, assessment in other grades gave many students a sense of low self-esteem that reflected their behaviors toward singing. For example, although many students enjoyed singing, and in this case wanted to join choir, all ten of the children studied had low self-percept of their singing abilities,

especially those that were low academically. Although this connection is not explicit, it did lead Greenberg to question the “correlation between” academic achievement and singing abilities.

Hall (2007) found that for some second graders, when it came time to perform their compositions for younger students, they felt very unnerved. For instance, Hall describes her student Jared hiding behind Allen, peeking around his shoulder self-consciously. With each performance, Jared seemed to get a little more comfortable which led to an open discussion with the other second graders. Some students expressed that they only felt comfortable singing in front of people they know, alluding to the idea that perhaps they were fearful of being judged. Once students felt that they were supported by their former teachers and the students watching, the students became more comfortable with each performance.

Whidden (2008) explored how singing experiences and assessments at the elementary level lead individuals to perceive themselves as non-singers by the time they reach adulthood. She found that common reasons for adult non-singers form in Western society as a direct result of personal and formal assessment. One of these reasons includes some participants recalling a time when they compared themselves with siblings and friends who publically displayed singing skills that these individuals felt they were unable to measure up to. Adult non-singers also labeled themselves as unmusical or non-singers, was because if they did not make a successful career out of this skill, some individuals feel that society will not accept a ‘spectrum of musical ability.’ Whidden also found that participants receiving negative feedback at a young age after attempting to sing publically, especially from an authority figure, gave them great humiliation attributing to negative feelings about their own singing. These experiences can lead to individuals distinguishing singers as only a ‘select few talented ones’. Read the story of Cheri, a mid-40s medical doctor who identifies as a non-singer based on perceptions of her own singing

accuracy created from an assessment in the form of an audition conducted by her fourth-grade music teacher.

In January of Cheri's grade four year, the music teacher put forth the opportunity to be a part of a recess choir that would travel in the spring to the nearest city for a concert. Cheri was excited at the prospect of being part of the choir, traveling to the city, and missing out on having to go outside for recess in the middle of a Canadian winter. She eagerly went to the audition with all the other grade four girls. When the list was posted for who was to be in this special choir, Cheri soon realized that not only was she not selected to be a part of the choir but she was the only grade four girl not to have been selected. She was completely ostracized from the rest of her female peers. There was no one with whom to play and in her own words, "It was humiliating. You really have an awareness of acceptance or rejection at that age. It was absolutely devastating." She had never thought that she could not sing until this incident. She had always participated enthusiastically and without reserve in singing activities. (p. 7)

In this instance, labeling and assessment by Cheri's music teacher resulted in the creation of an idea that she "could not sing". Such assessments, whether intended or not, can quickly shape how a child perceives their singing voice.

Parent Perceptions of Singing and Ability

Parents are rarely aware of how they are fostering, shaping and framing their child's musical development. Despite potential parental desire for their child to develop a strong singing voice, lack of vocal interaction between a parent and child can hinder a child's interest in exploring his/her singing voice (Welch, 2005). Communication within the family highly influences children's developing sense of musicality (O'Neill, 2002). Furthermore, as previously

explored, there is a trend in elementary-age students that singing becomes less desirable with age. One possible explanation may be that children develop more realistic perceptions of their own singing abilities as they progress through elementary school; however, it is possible that this decrease in self-perception of themselves as good singers comes from messages and influences that they receive about their musical ability from parents (Shouldice, 2014).

Hall (2007) interviewed three children based on first grade assessment criteria to interpret peer interactions during composing, their composition process, and the songs they composed. To get the full picture, she also interviewed parents about their attitudes towards their second-graders composing songs for music class. In her research, parents such as Sarah's were very supportive of her imagination, fostering her love of music and comfort with sharing her compositions. Nathaniel's mother seemed completely surprised and unaware that her son composed songs, yet after thinking about it further, realized that she has always sung 'silly songs' with him and his grandfather, who he spends a lot of time with, is quite musical.

Kastner (2009) describes the family script theory as a way of children finding their role as they mature as a direct result of how they are influenced by their family dynamics. She mentions that this is especially true when students form their views on the value of singing and musical identity. In Kastner's ethnographic study on the musical identities of fourth graders, she found that most parents wanted their children to possess musicality through either playing an instrument or singing, but not all knew how to be good 'role models'. She did find that students with parents who engaged in musical activities while their children were young in a positive way such as playing the trumpet or conducting a band, had a much more positive music self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-concept for their children.

In one instance, Kastner interviewed a fourth-grade student named Ravi who said that singing wasn't "his thing". When asking Ravi's parents about his singing, they mentioned that he had never had formal singing lessons, clearly putting the importance of formal training above the abilities that Ravi currently possessed as a singer. This parental belief that only formal training in voice leads to "good" singing, could very much have influenced Ravi's self-perception of himself as a non-singer. In a second interview with a different student, Olivia found that because emphasis was never placed on the value of singing by her family as a potential career choice, she did not feel the need to continue pursuing voice, despite liking to sing.

Warzecha (2016) explored how modeling singing can greatly affect how a child learns to sing and can boost one's perception of their own singing voice. She found that both genders, but especially Kindergarten boys articulated an appreciation for having a male teacher. Warzecha also noticed that boy students were very exploratory with their head voice when the peer models taught class. Since singing can be learned at the same time that children are learning to speak, parents are the first vocal model. Therefore, a positive singing self-percept for a parent could be crucial to their child's vocal growth, even before entering school.

Although research has been conducted on the connection between parental *support* for music and their child's success, study of parental support of their child's singing is not the purpose of this study. In contrast, there has been little to no research on the relationship between a child's perception of their own singing voice and that of their parents' perceptions of singing voice.

Influences Outside of School

It is easy to conclude that students receive various types of music education outside of the school environment. Again, children are exposed to music through social media, peers, family,

culture, and religion to name a few. In fact, whether individuals view themselves as ‘musicians’ or ‘musical’ is influenced significantly by social and cultural surroundings in addition to how individuals relate to those around them (Green, 1997). This is especially true with singing. This study will investigate what factors outside of school influence perceptions and behaviors about singing.

Just as Mizener (1990) examined gender roles and grade level as factors that influenced singing self-percept and behaviors in elementary-age students, she explored out-of-school musical experiences as something that appeared to be related to attitudes towards music. In many aspects of this part of the study, Mizener explored parental influence as the ‘outside factor’. Question did arise as to whether socio-economic status influenced positive or negative attitudes toward singing in elementary-age students.

Summary

Singing is something all children experience through listening and practice beginning at a very early age. Somewhere between the time children enter school and by the time they leave, a shift in self-perception and behaviors toward the individual’s singing voice changes. The literature has indicated that there is a strong relationship between gender roles and perception of accuracy when exploring attitudes toward singing in elementary-age students. Although thorough research has looked at gender roles and accuracy as factors that contributing to perceptions towards singing, there is still a question as to how factors such as parent self-percept of singing influence a child’s self-percept toward singing, what kind of influences outside of the home and school impact singing perceptions, and even how assessment can potentially play a role in how children perceive themselves as singers and how this perception reflects in their

attitudes within a school music program. Chapter III will explore the methodology used to explore how children perceive themselves as singers.

CHAPTER III

Design and Methodology

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how selected 2nd, 4th, and 6th grade students' attitudes towards themselves as singers form, and how these perceptions and behaviors were interpreted by the teacher-researcher. Research questions that guided this study were: a) How do students describe themselves as singers; b) How do parents describe themselves and their child as singers; and c) What are the comparisons between the teacher-researcher's perception of them as singers versus their own perceptions?

Design

This study utilized Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) basic qualitative design to get to the core of what creates perceptions and behaviors towards singing in elementary-age students. Qualitative research is defined as, "research based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (p. 23). To label this common qualitative study practice, Merriam and Tisdell added the word *basic* to create the definition for basic qualitative design.

Basic qualitative research design explores how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences for the overlying purpose of understanding how people make sense of their lives and experiences. Through this form of research, data is collected through interviews, observations, and other document analysis. The analysis of the data involves identifying reoccurring patterns that support and characterize the data. Thus, parent and teacher perspectives of students as singers was also

explored to get a more thorough scope of perceptions towards singing in elementary aged students.

Pilot

During the 2015-2016 school year, I piloted some research tools that served as the backdrop to my current work. Two of the primary tools created were singing surveys for both students and parents. Once the parent and student singing surveys were created, the student singing surveys were sent to a private elementary-middle school in Metropolitan Detroit. The pilot singing survey was distributed to students in grades two, four, & six only. Additionally, the music teachers at the school in Metro-Detroit were asked to video tape themselves giving the instructions along with footage of the students taking the survey. The video also included final critiques from students about the pilot's feasibility for understanding.

To my knowledge, the 2nd graders were the first to take the original student singing survey. The music teacher emailed me promptly and mentioned that some of the verbiage was difficult for her students to comprehend. Additionally, the students found the formatting troublesome, so letters and boxes were added to each question to create further clarity. Despite the original issues, this teacher reported that for the most part, students were very positive about the survey and were willing to answer the questions. After receiving the feedback, I manipulated the original singing survey to reflect these changes, and had the pilot school redo the survey with different sections of the same grades (two, four, & six). The pilot school found the revised survey to be a better research tool.

Once the surveys were returned, I averaged the answers based on gender, age, and category in excel. The data was also run through the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software to see similarities and differences amongst grades and genders. From a glance,

the results of both somewhat reflected my hypothesis that the second grade tended to feel more comfortable with singing. Also, despite age, most boys felt less comfortable singing in front of girls and vice-versa, especially as they aged. Another interesting note was how students answered being able to talk to their parents about singing. Answers varied greatly, and averaged in the middle of a 1-5 comfortability scale across the three grades asked, showing that only one-half of the 45 students, felt comfortable talking to their parents about singing which is what led me to my current study.

In doing the pilot, I was interested in the numerical results that a quantitative study could provide. The pilot alone showed that there indeed was a phenomenon that existed in singing comfortability and confidence that decreased as students progressed through elementary school. These results led me to explore perceptions and behaviors through a basic qualitative lens to inquire further and gain a deeper understanding of how students describe themselves as singers and how their perceptions of their singing skills are reflected in various singing behaviors.

Description of Research Site

Before surveying, interviewing, and recording students, I first received IRB approval from the University of Michigan (Appendix A). The elementary students who were surveyed, interviewed and recorded were second, fourth and sixth grade students from a private school on the West Coast of the United States. There were 240 students enrolled at the school during 2016-2017 and their demographic was quite mixed. Each grade consisted of 20 to 26 students per class. Students receive one 50-minute music class per week and have the option of joining band or orchestra, musical theatre, a guitar methods course, and several co-curricular choirs through after school music opportunities. Co-curricular choirs are open to students beginning in second grade, while all other extra-curricular opportunities are open to third through eighth graders.

Sampling

The first step of the sampling process was to develop a singing survey which was distributed to students in the 2nd, 4th, and 6th grade classes. Unlike the pilot, students put their name on the singing survey so I could select a participant group. I selected six students total; one boy and one girl from grades two, four and six. Students ranged in ages from seven to 11 to show a potential shift in comfortability with their singing voice. Additionally, parents of these three grades all filled out a singing survey as well and were asked to identify themselves as willing to be interviewed.

Purposeful sampling was the technique drawn upon to select interviewees. Purposeful sampling involves identifying individuals or groups that are especially knowledgeable about or have experienced a phenomenon of interest and additionally are willing to participate and communicate about their experiences and opinions. Students were chosen based on how they answered 'I can' statements on the singing survey. Participants chosen were mostly those identifying themselves as 'non-singers' who I, the teacher-researcher, identified as having singing skills; or students who identified as singers and possessed a lower singing aptitude which I weighed through classroom observations and previous singing assessments. Students were also selected based on parental interest and consent in being interviewed about themselves and their children as singers which was identified on the parent singing survey.

Participants

Based on the student surveys I received, I chose six students to participate. After inviting all parents and guardians of these six students to participate, the following parent/guardian participants were available for face-to-face interviews except for Jorge's mother who submitted written responses. All students have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

Name	Grade	Age	Parent Participant
Rosina	2 nd	7	Mother
Jorge	2 nd	7	Mother (written)
Eddie	4 th	9	Mother
Anthony	4 th	10	Mother & Father
Juan	6 th	11	Mother
Delilah	6 th	11	Mother

Data Collection

For this study, various types of data were collected to further explore student attitudes towards singing and the interpreted behaviors perceived by the teacher-researcher. Following the basic qualitative research design, data collection included surveys, interviews, and recordings from both students and parents in addition to a teacher log (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews and recordings with both students and parents were conducted separately outside of the scheduled school day during the 2016-2017 school year.

Student surveys. In the singing survey (Appendix B) sections possessed a header to help ‘group’ question types together based on potential influences that could have dictated how children may have felt about themselves as singers. These groupings included, ‘accuracy’, ‘gender’, ‘formal assessment’, ‘parental self-as-singer’, and ‘outside factors’. In this singing survey, a one-to-five scale was used to assess whether students identified themselves as able to perform a singing task. Additionally, students were asked to write about what it means to be a singer and how they described themselves as a singer. Unlike the pilot, students identified themselves by putting their names on the survey so I could create a participant group, however pseudonyms have been used in this paper to protect their privacy. Singing survey answers were kept confidential and were destroyed after research was completed.

Parent surveys. Just like the students, all second, fourth, and sixth grade parents took a different singing survey (Appendix C) to determine their beliefs about their own singing voices and how these beliefs had an impact on perceptions towards their child's singing voice and attitude towards singing activities. This survey was given in the fall of 2017 along with the consent forms for their children. Once the student participant group was selected, only parent surveys of students in the participant group, were explored. The parent survey was used to determine how parents felt about themselves as singers and whether that opinion of themselves played a role on how their child participant perceived himself/herself as a singer. This survey also aided in getting the parent perspective about how they defined their child as a singer and the types of opportunities offered to their children for singing outside of school. All second, fourth, and sixth grade parents had the option to sign a consent form for themselves and their child to participate in future recordings and interview studies based on the survey. Parental singing survey answers were kept confidential and were destroyed after research was completed.

Student interviews. During the interviews, students were asked questions in relation to their responses on the singing surveys. Based on Merriam and Tisdell (2016), interview questions were semistructured, giving greater flexibility to wording in accordance with issues related to the study that were addressed, but gave room for responding to the situation and responses at hand. This was extremely important as the students being interviewed varied in age (Appendix, D). Students were each interviewed once within one academic school year. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, but kept confidential.

Parent interviews. Parents of those in the student participant group were also interviewed (Appendix, E) once throughout the academic school year based on their child's age and availability. Parents signed a consent form (Appendix, H) to participate. These interviews

took place sometime after their child's interview. Parents were asked about their individual and group singing experiences, along with any singing influences they may have had up to this point. Just like the student interviews, questions were semistructured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Student recordings. Within the interviews, students were individually asked to sing songs of their choice, imitate tonal patterns, along with learning and reproducing a song by rote. By having students sing songs of their choice, I was able to get some insight into, "influences and opportunities outside of home and school that contributed to perceptions towards singing within elementary school." Furthermore, asking students to imitate tonal patterns and reproduce a song learned by rote helped identify, "perceived accuracy" and "assessed accuracy". All singing was done a cappella and was audio-recorded. Interview and recording sessions were recorded and confidentially stored. Interviews and recording sessions took place after the school day. All interviewed students had the option of having a third-party person present. Students were assessed based on three categories including pitch accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, and behaviors/confidence levels (Appendix F).

Parent recordings. Similarly, parents were asked to sing songs of their choice, imitate tonal patterns, and sing a song learned by rote during their interviews as referenced in the consent form (Appendix, G). Just like their children, all singing was done a cappella and was audio-recorded. These interviews/recordings took place on a day sometime after their child's interview. Parents began by singing a song of their choice. Parents were then asked to imitate tonal patterns and reproduce a song learned by rote to help identify the parent's singing habits, including their sense of their own accuracy, and assessed accuracy by the teacher researcher. Parents were also assessed using the same three categories as their children (Appendix F). For

male participants with post-pubescent voices, both Examples 1 & 2 were prerecorded by a fellow male music colleague and played back in the same key to accommodate the octave change.

Teacher log. A teacher log was kept throughout the academic school year. This log included any observations and student interactions that took place outside of the basic qualitative research. This log assisted in creating a total student profile of each child in the participant group, especially in terms of behaviors when it came to singing in class among peers.

Procedure

The techniques I used for this qualitative study were interviews, observations, recordings, and surveys on perceptions towards singing at the elementary level. Consent forms (Appendix G) were distributed to all parents in October after the first month of school was under way. Parents were asked to both consent to allowing their children to take the singing survey and additionally asked to consent to me conducting interviews with their children at least once throughout the 2016-2017 school year. Parents also signed a consent form for themselves to be interviewed following their students' interviews (Appendix H).

All 2nd, 4th and 6th grade students took the singing survey in October which aided in participant group selection. Based on student responses on the survey and corresponding parental interest for being interviewed, I chose two second, two fourth, and two sixth grade students of opposite genders, except for fourth grade where two boys were selected to participate. To answer the above research questions, students were asked about their individual and group singing experiences within and outside of school, along with any singing influences they may have had. Interviews were about 60 minutes in length.

Within the student and parent interviews, participants were asked to sing a song of their choice, imitate tonal patterns, and learn a song by rote. A rubric was used to assess pitch

accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, and their behavior/confidence levels during each activity (Appendix, F). Students were asked to imitate the following tonal patterns on a neutral syllable based on Edwin Gordon's tonal Learning Sequence Activities. Tonal patterns were arpeggiated to help with developing audiation skills. Gordon defines audiation as the ability to think music in the mind with understanding (Gordon, 2012). Students were asked to imitate tonic and dominant tonal patterns in both major and minor tonalities. The tonal pattern activities in Example 1 were used. "E" stands for an easy pattern, "M" for medium, and "D" for difficult (Gordon, 1990).

Example 1:

The image displays musical notation for Example 1, organized into two rows: Major and Minor. Each row contains three patterns labeled E, M, and D. The Major section is in the key of D major (two sharps). The Minor section is in the key of D minor (one flat). The patterns are as follows:

- Major E:** Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are D4 (labeled 'Do'), E4, and F#4.
- Major M:** Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The notes are E4, F#4, and G4.
- Major D:** Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The notes are G4, F#4, and E4.
- Minor E:** Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes are D4 (labeled 'La'), E4, and F4.
- Minor M:** Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The notes are E4, F#4, and G4.
- Minor D:** Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The notes are G4, F4, and E4.

In accordance with Music Learning Theory, I sang the pattern once alone, then with the student/parent, and finally asked the student/parent to sing the pattern independently. These pitches were chosen in relation to the current skills being assessed within individual music classes for all grades. For changed male participants, a separate recording of a male singer was used in the same key by a fellow music colleague.

Students and parents were then asked to learn a song by rote. Rote learning is the information that students learn as a result of repeating what they are told or by repeating what has been performed for them (Gordon, 2001). The American Folk tune "Sandy Land" in (Example 2) was used. To teach the song, I began by establishing the tonality and meter of the

song. I then followed the below steps of the Music Learning Theory process for teaching songs by rote:

- Step 1 – Just listen to the teacher sing the song (unaccompanied).
- Step 2 – Move heels to macrobeats while listening.
- Step 3 – Move hands (pat lightly on thighs) to microbeats while listening.
- Step 4 – Move to both macrobeats and microbeats while listening.
- Step 5 – Audiate the resting tone while listening. Sing the resting tone after teacher finishes singing the song.
- Step 6 – Audiate the song.
- Step 7 – Follow along with me.
- Step 8 – Sing the song without accompaniment.

(The Gordon Institute for Music Learning, 2016)

All choice songs, along with the above tonal patterns and the given song that were learned by rote were all audio-recorded and kept locked on my personal laptop to maintain confidentiality.

Example 2:



Validity

According Merriam and Tisdell (2016), basic qualitative research strives to get at understanding as the primary rationale for investigating a phenomenon. What makes experimental studies trustworthy is the researcher's careful design of the study based on worldviews and questions congruent with philosophical assumptions of reality. Basic qualitative research is not a single, fixed phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured, but is a holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing type of research. A primary way that this study increased credibility was through triangulation.

Triangulation is described as using "multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.

244). This study used triangulation by applying multiple methods of data while also cross-checking the data collected by having surveys, observations, recordings, and interviews. There were also multiple perspectives given as students from second, fourth, and sixth graders were a part of the participant group in addition to parents being interviewed. This increased credibility as it countered the concern for the study being from the narrow lens of the teacher-researcher (Patton, 2015). Maximum variation was also used in this study as I diversified my sample selection by choosing students of opposite genders and ages throughout elementary school.

The researcher's position or reflexivity also played a role in the validity of this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Reflexivity describes how the researcher affects and is affected by the research process and requires the investigator to explain potential biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research being done. This was my second year teaching the students from whom I collected data. Although the surveys helped distinguish who I selected for my participant group, my observations from the previous school year also influenced my decision towards whom I interviewed about singing perceptions. My assumptions about student comfortability with singing as they age also came directly from teaching elementary-aged students for the past few years. As I enter my fifth year of teaching, I have witnessed this shift in singing interest take place time and again which has peeked my curiosity into this area of research. Taking such precautions allows the reader to "better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 249).

Ethically, this study has taken precautions to ensure the safety of its participants and the trustworthiness of myself as the teacher-researcher. I have given all parents informed consent forms (Appendix, F), while also giving individual students who received parental/guardian

consent the choice as to whether they want to participate in the survey, and eventually the interview process. Parents of participant group students were also given a consent form allowing me to use their responses for this research study (Appendix, G). All participants were promised confidentiality and pseudonyms if eventually used in the study. Participants were also given the right to opt out of the study or participant group at any given time. Even though I had relationships of teacher-student and teacher-parent with my participant groups, the sole purpose of data collection was to do just that; collect data.

Data Analysis

To organize and manage the data from student and parent interviews, student and parent recordings, and teacher logs, I began by coding the information. Coding is the assigning of some sort of designation to various aspects of data to easily retrieve specific pieces of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My codes included “What makes a good singer,” “When is a time that you felt uncomfortable with singing,” “Has someone sung to you or around you,” and “Do you think you can sing.” Then I grouped interview questions into different categories. Throughout interview responses by both children and parents, a few common themes continued to emerge such as perceptions of singing, singing experiences (both positive and negative), and discussion among family members about singing. I then tied these potential themes to the original purpose statement and research questions.

Using the themes of perceptions of singing, singing experiences, and discussions with family members about singing, I began comparing and exploring different perspectives within each theme. For example, based on interview responses and teacher logs I examined child/teacher perspectives, parent/teacher perspectives, and parent/child perspectives.

Additionally, I explored all singing recordings and compared them as follows a) student to parent

singing recordings b) student to student singing recordings across grade levels, and c) parent to parent singing recordings.

To maintain fluidity, I decided to organize each child/parent/teacher data separate from other families for Chapters IV and V. Chapter IV explores perceptions of singing. Subareas of exploration include “What makes a “good” singer” from the child and parent perspective and describe “You as a singer” from the perspective of the child, parent’s view of the child, and teacher-researcher. In this section I also used the student recordings as part of the view of the teacher-researcher to compare with descriptions that children had about themselves and parents had about their children.

In Chapter V, I combined the two themes of singing experiences and conversations about singing with family members, since both topics had a significant amount of overlap from interviews. The subcategories are broken up into a case for each child as follows: a) child’s experience, b) parent’s experience, c) parent recording & teacher-researcher observations.

CHAPTER IV

Perceptions of Singing

Perceptions of what makes a “good” singer is a matter of opinion that has widely been discussed. We have all heard a song or performance followed by an individual with or around us labeling a singer as good or bad. Moe (1950) describes good singing as being made up of many things including effort, state of health, posture, physical coordination, emotion, sense of pitch, tonal memory, and ability to memorize physiological sensations. Greenburg (1970) describes inability to sing in tune as part of an individual’s self-concept. Randles (2010) states the need to understand students’ perception of what a “good” musician is to improve retention in music programs.

This chapter is focused on the qualitative data collected from students and parents through interviews, recordings, and teacher logs/observations about their perceptions of singing. Each of the six students were asked several questions (Appendix D) about their perceptions of singing, specifically what made a good singer, who they were as singers, and observations that they have made about singing. They were also asked to sing a song of their choice, imitate tonal patterns, and learn a song by rote (Appendix F). In addition, the parent(s) of the children interviewed were also asked to answer similar questions about themselves and their children as singers as well as sing a song of their choice, imitate tonal patterns, and learn a song by rote (Appendix D & E).

Rosina – Grade 2 (Age 7)

What makes a good singer? Rosina began our interview by describing singing as “fun.” Her singing influences included Selina Gomez and Ariana Grande. She described both singers as having songs that she could sing along with and found that they both had pretty voices. Rosina

also focused on the fact that repetition and working with her mother is what helps her learn songs quickly. When asked, “what makes a good singer,” she felt that practice was one of the biggest things that made someone good. Confidence was another key component in becoming a good singer. Rosina also thought that attending music classes often would allow someone to grow up to be a singer. When asked whether a singer was good only if it was their job, Rosina answered, “No, sometimes they (people) do it for fun!”

Like her daughter, Rosina’s mother stated that practice and confidence is what makes a singer good. She mentioned artists such as Shakira, Otis Redding, Mana, Cat Stevens, and Luis Miguel as a few individuals who she felt possessed the best singing voices. She felt they were easy to sing along to, and most of their music had a good melody. Rosina’s mother also identified singing as a very good outlet of energy that puts individuals in a good mood.

You as a singer. When asked whether Rosina thought she herself was a good singer she said that in her head she imagines herself growing up to become a singer. She can always imagine herself performing and thinks that singing is very fun. She mentioned how she is always singing along to tunes that she hears and how impressed her father is that she knows as many songs as she does. Rosina also focused on the fact that repetition and working with her mother is what helps her learn songs quickly. Rosina mentioned that occasionally she thinks she is a bad singer. Usually, she only feels that she is bad when she is sick, because her voice sounds very different to her ears. Typically, singing makes her feel happy and puts her in a good mood. To her, singing seems “pretty easy!”

During the parent interview, Rosina’s mother described Rosina as shy when it comes to singing, but that her daughter liked it very much. She felt that with proper voice training, she could sing. She also mentioned that Rosina enjoys singing freely in the car.

As the teacher-researcher, I have observed Rosina to be somewhat nervous imitating patterns and singing individually in front of her peers. However, when she is in a group setting, Rosina appears to be quite confident, focused, and responsive with her singing. Sometimes she struggles accessing her high voice, but has shown great improvement in the past two years. Rosina can match, audiate, and imitate pitches in class, but it occasionally takes her a couple of tries.

For the student recordings, Rosina happily sang through the song “I Need You Now” by Lady Antebellum. At first, it was clear that she was struggling to remember the lyrics which was getting in the way of her singing so I pulled them up for her. She then sang it a cappella with lyrics and did a much better job of matching pitch and showing contour. She successfully sang all six patterns in Example 1. During Example 2, she struggled a bit on the last two measures, but learned the song by rote in tune and maintained the resting tone throughout. She seemed a little nervous to do Example 2, but said, “I’ll try.”

Jorge – Grade 2 (Age 7)

What makes a good singer? Jorge began his interview labeling Michael Jackson is an artist with the best singing voice. He thought his songs were “cool” and easy to sing along with. Like Rosina, Jorge also thought that “practicing a lot” made a good singer as well as “trying”. He repeated a quote his father has frequently shared with him stating, “Practice until you get very good at it. The more you practice, the better you get.” He also felt that it was important to first hear a song before trying to sing it.

Jorge’s mother did not specify what artist(s) she felt have the best voice, but identified her interest in Hip Hop, American Pop, and Latin music. For her, what makes a good singer, is

someone with a good voice and enthusiasm for what he or she is singing. She believes that a good singer must be passionate.

You as a singer. When asked to describe himself as a singer, Jorge described himself as a “weird rock-star.” He thought that rock-stars were cool and confident, but that he didn’t want to be one. He said he kind of likes to sing and that he does ok when he is by himself. Jorge thought that when he does sing in music class or along with a song, he is typically doing a good job. He also likes singing with friends and with the radio, especially the song “Happy” by Pharrell Williams.

Jorge’s mother described him as someone who typically will only sing when the rest of the kids are singing. She also mentioned that Jorge’s younger brother tends to be more prompted to sing confidently; Jorge on the other hand enjoys dancing more! From her observations, Jorge likes singing happy songs and typically sings with her when she asks him to or right before bedtime. She also expressed that Jorge has a good “ear for music” and good musical intuition.

I have observed Jorge to be someone who does not care about what others think of him. He appears to possess self-confidence, however when it comes to singing in front of his peers, I have observed discomfort. He does not volunteer to sing independently or go first during music class, but is willing to participate in singing activities, and majority of the time responds successfully unless he does not understand what is being asked of him.

During his student recordings, Jorge chose to sing the song “Happy” by Pharrell Williams. He could sing the melody of the entire chorus perfectly, but struggled with matching the lyrics to the rhythm, based on lack of memory. Jorge also imitated all six patterns successfully and sang through Example 2, but struggled with Step 6, where he had to audiate the short tune. After the exercises, I asked Jorge how he felt he did. He said, “I tried my best.” He

also felt very confident that he could learn the song quickly and match pitches. He also thought that he could practice singing if he needed to.

Eddie – Grade 4 (Age 9)

What makes a good singer? Eddie described his music teacher as someone who has one of the best voices. He also stated that he “really liked” listening to rock and rap music. He also thought that making music sound right by matching pitches and rhythms are characteristics of a good singer. In order to do these things well, he felt that it was very important that good singers practice.

Eddie’s mother described artists such as Celine Dion and Mariah Carey as individuals with the best voices, because they were people “who can hit those notes super high.” She also thought that one does not have to be classically trained to be a good singer, but that ear training would improve singing abilities. “Someone who can listen and feel the beat,” and someone who can “portray the meaning beyond what you (they) are singing” makes a good singer. “A good singer can get up anywhere and own it!”

You as a singer. When asked to describe himself as a singer, he shook his head no and looked down. He explained that he can’t go high and that good singers have to be able to sing both high and low. Eddie did say that he enjoyed singing with the radio sometimes, but didn’t feel very confident singing in front of others individually.

Eddie’s mother explained that her son is always moving to music and singing in the car. She remembered that during her pregnancy, she herself would “rock out” in the car and she could feel Eddie moving as well when music came on. She also expressed that Eddie picks up on the words of songs quite quickly and that she believes he has a very good ear for singing. His mother explained that there have been multiple occasions where Eddie will come into the car at

the end of the day on a day that he had music class and will be singing a song he just learned that day.

In music class, I have observed Eddie to lack confidence in singing, but will participate. Based on observations of his body language such as eye contact, posture, and focus, he shows much more confidence singing when it is with a group, versus as individually during imitation or creation activities. During music activities, he is able to match pitch, but it sometimes takes him time to switch in to his head voice from his chest voice.

During the student recordings, Eddie immediately got uncomfortable. He shrugged and looked very nervous. Eddie could not think of a song that he could sing a cappella on his own. We also had to do a few ‘sirens’ to get Eddie into his head voice. Eddie could imitate all six patterns successfully from Example 1. In Example 2, after noticing some struggling for Eddie to reach the high notes, I changed the key from G Major to E Major, which greatly improved Eddie’s pitch and rhythm matching. We again did a few ‘sirens’ to get him back into his head voice which he struggled to maintain throughout Example 2. He did not feel confident singing by himself.

Anthony – Grade 4 (Age 10)

What makes a good singer? Anthony thought that Adele had one of the best voices because she had the ability to use power, but could also be soothing and soft. He also mentioned that her voice is not raspy, and very clear, which to him makes for her having one of the “best” singing voices. When asked which characteristics make a good singer Anthony immediately emphasized ‘confidence’ and ‘practice’. Additionally, he felt that having strong vocal cords (like muscles) was helpful in producing a good sound. Anthony also described being true to yourself and having passion was a major contributor towards being a “good” singer.

Anthony's father named individuals like Alexi Murdoch, John Denver, John Legend, and Frank Sinatra as a few of the people he thought possessed the best voice because of the "soulfulness" and "richness" behind their voices. To him, a good singer didn't have to be a performer, but had to have confidence and not "hide behind the music." He felt that lyrics were a form of poetry and that articulation and balance between the voice and music were aspects that contributed towards being good.

Anthony's mother considered Adele and Christina Aguilera as having two of the best singing voices because of their "passion," "range," and "strength." She felt that training, spirit, and "true passion" were characteristics of a "good" singer. His mother did not think that performing was the only way to be a "good" singer, but that singing for the pure love of singing is what can make someone "good".

You as a singer. Anthony described himself as somewhat of a "nervous" singer, but that he truly enjoyed doing it and believes that he can do it well. "I think about the tunes and think about whether a song is minor and major now, and think about when I am supposed to or not supposed to sing. Then I kind of put it all together. (To me) it makes it easier to learn a song when I have an idea of the tonality." He sometimes felt that his nervousness comes from the fact that singing comes from a place of expression, because to him, being able to express oneself is a characteristic of good singing.

Both parents described Anthony as someone who tends to sing in private. His mother mentioned that a lot of the time Anthony listens to music and sings in his room. Anthony's father mentioned that Anthony is into very interesting music and likes to sing along with what he hears on XM radio. They also described "opera day" which entailed the entire family singing and

creating their own songs all morning during breakfast. Both parents described this as very playful and something that Anthony enjoyed.

As the teacher-researcher, I have found that Anthony becomes nervous when he goes to access his head voice; an observation I have noticed with many male students his age. He is always willing to attempt singing and from assessments I have taken in class, is quite successful with matching and internalizing pitch. Anthony appears to enjoy himself during group songs and activities, but does not always chose to sing as freely if others around him are not.

For the student recordings, Anthony chose to sing the chorus of “Stay with Me” by Charlie Puth. Like other students, Anthony had more success singing the chorus without lyrics. He first did this a cappella. He could maintain pitch and would make a disgusted face when he heard himself go off. I then had him sing the chorus again with the recording in the background. With the recording, he possessed perfect contour and could match pitches on a neutral syllable. He also successfully went into his head voice without issue or hesitation. Additionally, Anthony successfully imitated 5 of the 6 patterns in Example 1. In Example 2, he struggled with audiating the resting tone, and staying in his head voice. He matched contour and sang a good portion of the song with me after changing the neutral syllable from “bum” to “oo,” but did not feel confident singing it alone. After the examples, he felt “ok” about it.

Juan – Grade 6 (Age 11)

What makes a good singer? For Juan, an example of a good singer was Miike Snow and his own father. He thought both changed their pitches smoothly. When asked, what makes a good singer, Juan seemed slightly stumped: “That’s a good question!” He elaborated by saying that a good singer changes pitches correctly, but could be a little bit off if he or she does not fully

know the song yet. He also thought that the melody should be recognizable if someone is singing well.

Juan also made the comparison between basketball and singing in that they both require a lot of practice. “With singing, if you want to do a concert you need to practice a lot so you don’t mess up. Basketball, you need to practice, because if you want to make it to the NBA you have to work and work.” I then asked if being a performer was the only way someone could be a good singer. He did not think so. He thought good singers could sing just for the sake of doing so.

Juan’s mother pinpointed similar characteristics and stated that a good singer has to have a good voice, which she believed she did not possess. An individual whose voice resonated with her was Mick Jagger. She felt that his voice with his song just fit together perfectly. She also mentioned that by just “doing it” or “practicing” one’s singing gets better. Juan’s mother felt “good” singers are people who can confidently sing in front of others, but people did not have to perform publically to be good.

You as a singer. Juan classified himself as a someone who gets shy singing in front of other people. “When I’m with my friends singing, I kind of like it, because we are all together and it’s fun.” He stated that he didn’t think his voice was “that good,” but that it was ok and that he could work on it to improve. Juan mentioned being able to shift from low to high was difficult for him. He noticed that sometimes his voice cracks because he is at “that age.” Juan felt significantly more confident with his singing abilities when he knew the song “really well” and was in the presence of “positive friends.”

Juan’s mother admitted that she doesn’t get to hear her son sing that much, because he is so shy about doing so in her presence. She did recall one evening when they were driving home from dinner and Juan played a song on his phone that he knew all the words to and belted out

confidently. She noticed that he does have a good voice, but lacks the confidence to sing in front of others despite her and her husband's encouragement of him to do so.

Having only been Juan's teacher for two years, it has been tricky to get him (and his classmates) to sing. Just like his classmates, Juan is willing to do so, but lacks confidence, especially as puberty is kicking in. Juan can match pitch and successfully learn songs by rote based on Gordon's steps.

I then asked Juan if he could sing a song that he likes. He thought of a Miike Snow song and said "Oh, I'm nervous" right before he sang. He started, but could not remember how it went. He then picked a different song called "My Type" by Saint Motel. He had me put on a recording, but emphasized that he barely knew the words. I accessed the lyrics for him and he immediately felt more comfortable. He tried to sing in the octave of the singer, which worked when it was within his range. I had him sing some sirens like an 'owl' and then asked if he could try it again singing in that same space. I then sang along with him, and he had much more success with contour and matching pitches. For a changing male voice, I did not think this song was in a comfortable range for him. He said after that it made him feel nervous, but that he felt "okay" about it.

When going through Example 1, I adapted the key of the minor examples from D minor to C minor to accommodate his vocal range. Going through Gordon's steps, Juan was three for three in both examples. For Example 2, I changed the key from G Major to E Major, which greatly improved Juan's pitch and rhythm matching. After both examples, Juan felt like these gave him some confidence in his singing and that he could apply some of these steps to his own song learning.

Delilah – Grade 6 (Age 11)

What makes a good singer? Delilah identified one of her friends as having one of the best voices she had ever heard. Her ability to “sing high and low” fluidly makes her very good. Delilah also noticed that her friend has an ‘echo’ (vibrato) occasionally throughout her singing which is very “cool” because it sounds good and is something that Delilah herself cannot do. She further explained that a good singer doesn’t sound “weird” or “out of place.” “It doesn’t sound like something is dying!” Delilah mentioned that when singing, the pitches should be right and that people must make sure they are singing in the right octave. For Delilah, good singers should also be passionate about singing.

Delilah’s mother described a good singer as someone who could hold melody. She didn’t think rap or ‘talking’ through music made a singer good. Her mother also thought that good singers should have good “tone” and can keep the “tune.”

You as a singer. Delilah stated that she likes singing, but not when many people are around. She articulated that she would only sing with others if she knew them very well. She sings a lot with her friend and gets positive reinforcement about this from her parents. Delilah feels significantly more confident singing when she knows the music. She doesn’t like performing solos, but is comfortable singing in a group.

Delilah’s mother said that her daughter loves music. “She loves to sing, at least at home!” She stated that Delilah used to sing all the time, but does not do it as much anymore. “As she has gotten older, she is more self-conscious around other people. Not family and close friends, but peers.” She said that Delilah is trying to find her place and her last couple years of school have been difficult with her peers due to teasing and interpersonal relationships not necessarily surrounding music, but which she believed to be part of her daughter’s discomfort with singing.

I have observed Delilah to be a very shy singer in music class. It is occasionally difficult for her to access her head voice, but whenever she does, she can match pitch. She is not particularly outgoing and has a couple of classmates who are extremely talkative and vocal. Delilah has never volunteered to sing a solo and typically gets bright red if asked to imitate anything independently. Delilah is willing to sing in a group and appears to be comfortable.

When asked to sing a song of her choice, she sang, “The Road Less Travelled” by Lauren Alaina. At first she sang it a cappella and possessed contour and a lot of confidence. Delilah then sang it again with a recording where she pitch-matched well especially in her chest voice, but struggled to access her head voice. For Example 1, Delilah again struggled with accessing her head voice. She could imitate patterns while singing with me, but had a hard time audiating them for her to sing them independently. She sang three of the six examples correctly. In Example 2, Delilah sang the song learned by rote well with me. On the final step, she lowered the initial pitch, and had contour with a few matched pitches throughout.

Discussion

It was interesting that almost all student participants identified ‘practice’ as being the key component for being a good singer. This was also true in Randles (2010) findings that one of the top five things that makes someone a good singer is practice. Many also referenced something that a parent had taught them about practice and made the connection to singing. Although this was a common theme, I also noticed that practice, effort, and confidence were the only words that the 2nd graders used to describe a good singer, while the 4th and 6th graders focused not only on practice, but achieving accuracy. Parents also seemed to comment on the need for practice and accuracy, but added the idea of passion as something that made a singer good.

Students were then asked to describe themselves as singers and parents were asked to elaborate on their opinions towards their child's singing skills. Students did not express extreme confidence in their singing skills, but all felt that they could sing, except for Eddie. Eddie has also struggled in academics outside of music which Greenberg (1970) articulates might give students a sense of low self-esteem when it comes to singing. Students like Rosina, Anthony, Juan and Delilah all mentioned some fear about liking to sing, but being fearful of doing so in front of others. This is also something that Whidden (2008) mentions in her research about adult non-musicians. People typically compare themselves to friends or siblings who sing "better" than they perceive themselves to sing or having experienced negativity about their singing from someone important, causing low self-esteem in their own singing skills. Although some students seemed fearful and unsure about themselves as singers, all students felt that by practicing, they could improve their singing. Almost all parents identified their child as possessing singing skills, and that the car was a common place where singing skills could be assessed.

Almost all students mentioned that they enjoyed singing with the radio or alone. For them, these activities felt very normal and were low-pressure situations. Mizener (1990) also found that, especially in her fifth and sixth graders singing with the radio or singing by themselves was enjoyable. This shows that children do like to sing, when they feel comfortable doing so.

Delilah also touched on an interesting point about positive feedback. Delilah mentioned that she likes singing around her friend and parents because they give her positive reinforcement. Hall (2007) found that some of her second grader composers expressed that they only felt comfortable singing in front of people they knew. Hallam (2008) also found that as children progress through school, they become very aware of their own capabilities through peer

comparisons and feedback. Warzecha (2016) found that when she complimented one of her Kindergarten boys for using his head voice, the rest of the students began attempting to use their head voice while singing. This was very true for Delilah who openly admits that hearing positive feedback from her peers would give her a better perception of herself as a singer and more confidence to sing around them.

Chapter IV explored perceptions of singing. Subareas of exploration included, “What makes a “good” singer” from the child and parent perspectives and described “You as a singer” from the perspective of the child, parent’s view of the child, and teacher-researcher. Chapter V, will identify past experiences of children and parents that have influenced their singing self-perception.

CHAPTER V

Singing Experiences: Parent & Children's Perception

In Chapter IV I looked at students' perceptions of what makes a good singer and how they identify themselves as singers. I also explored how each child's parent(s) characterized good singers and how they described their child's singing. Chapter V will explore the many positive and negative experiences that children have had in relation to singing based on interviews (Appendix D), recordings, and teacher logs/observations. Additionally, this chapter will elaborate on experiences that parents have observed their children having in regards to singing as well as their own personal experiences with singing based on interviews (Appendix E) and parent recordings.

Rosina and Rosina's Mother

Rosina – Grade 2 (Age 7). After describing to me what made a good singer and how Rosina felt as a singer, we discussed times when she remembered being sung to or had singing take place around her. Rosina recalled that on her birthday, her friends, parents, and relatives all sang to her in Spanish. She also told me about an aunt of hers that is currently in the hospital and that they all sing together to “make her happy.”

Rosina and I discussed whether she had ever heard anyone say or tell another person that they cannot sing. She replied that she did not think so, but someone may have a long time ago. She stated that she would be “really sad” and “surprised” if someone told another person that he or she couldn't sing, because singing is “really fun” for her. “I don't know what I'd say if they did say that in front of me.”

Rosina is in her first year of Liturgical Choir. This is an extracurricular choir open to grades 2nd-8th that meets once a week for 45 minutes. Liturgical Choir also performs at a

religious service during the school day the week after a rehearsal. During Rosina's interview, we discussed times that may have made her feel comfortable or uncomfortable when she was singing. She explained that in choir she usually doesn't feel uncomfortable singing. However, she described that sometimes when she is singing loudly in choir, "they (other choir members) look at me weirdly and I feel weird about it." Rosina elaborated by saying that sometimes she doesn't know the beat of the song and thus she quiets down. She explained that if her parents are watching, sometimes she gets nervous that they will be mad at her, because they are always encouraging her to sing out. When asked whether she would tell a teacher if someone gave her those weird looks while singing, she replied that no she wouldn't, because she didn't think it would be "big enough of a deal" for a teacher to care.

When asked if Rosina would feel comfortable singing a solo, she said that if she knew the song well, she'd feel good about it. She mentioned that singing a solo for a school concert or at church would be fine with her. Rosina said that outside of school, she is unaware of opportunities for her to sing, however she thinks she would like to sing a live concert when she gets a little older.

Rosina said that she and her parents discussed singing only when she expressed interest in joining choir. "My dad was happy, so I was also happy." She also elaborated on her aunt being in the hospital. Rosina recalled that her aunt is always singing, and that she and her mother talked about singing with her to keep her happy. She also mentioned that she and her mother talk about singing when she is helping Rosina learn a song. Other than this, Rosina said that she does not talk about singing that much, but that she does like to sing.

When asked the same question, Rosina's mother said that she did not think her and Rosina ever talked about singing. She does tell Rosina to sing so she and her father can hear her

in the back of the church while she is singing a solo or in the choir. Rosina's mother said that if she puts her hands on her ears, it is a symbol for Rosina saying that she cannot be heard and to sing louder. "I can tell how they (her lips) move if she is singing or not!" I also asked if she had ever heard of anyone telling her daughter that she was a bad singer. She emphatically replied, "NO!"

Parent experiences. Rosina's mother and I also spoke about her personal experiences with singing. She mentioned how much she loves to sing and does not care what other people think! "I think I'm fantastic! I like to pick the ones (songs) I'm going to be successful with. The ones I don't, I sing along to alone or with Rosina because she doesn't care". When asked if anyone ever told her that she was a bad singer, she mentioned her brother and her niece and told a story of how they told her to "Stop singing!" after she sang on a karaoke machine that her niece had received for her birthday. My observation is that she did not share their opinion and it did not hurt her confidence in her own singing.

When asked about people who had sung around or to her, she recalled her mother singing to her every morning. "My mom has an awesome voice! From the time I can remember from when I moved out, my mom would put the radio on and sing." She also described a big party in her home country of Nicaragua called Purisima, which was a big party that celebrated the Virgin Mary on December 7th. For this event, people would go caroling to people's houses and she elaborated on how fun this was for her growing up. "In Nicaragua, music is a big part of growing up."

She did describe a time when she felt very uncomfortable singing back when she was younger. Rosina's mother explained that her drummer boyfriend at the time wanted her to sing a part of "Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones with his band at one of their concerts

and she was ‘too shy’ to do so. She explained that she did not want to make a “fool of herself” in front of him, despite him being very encouraging.

We briefly discussed Rosina’s father and his experiences with singing. She said that he does not sing, but appreciates good lyrics. She explained that he was not from a musical family. “His family was very Catholic (and were) completely against the British Invasion and kind of shut down music.”

Parent recording. When asked if she herself would be willing to sing, she was thrilled to do so. She sang “Rio Rebelde” by Julio Iglesias. I was unfamiliar with it at first, but after going back and listening to it, my assessment is that she sang it quite well. Additionally, she imitated all six of the tonal patterns correctly from Example 1 and learned the rote song in Example 2 very quickly.

Jorge and Jorge’s Mother

Jorge – Grade 2 (Age 7). Jorge also explained times when other people had sung for him or around him. He mentioned that his mother used to a lot when he was younger. He said that she doesn’t do it as much anymore, but does sing to him and his younger brother before bed. When I asked him about his father and whether he sings in Jorge’s presence and he responded, “Never! Not to me!” He described a time when he and his family challenged his father to sing. “He did a little! It was kind of funny. We forced him.” He then mentioned that sometimes he hears his father sing with the radio in the car.

Jorge explained that outside of school, he tends to sing when he wants to. He did not feel like he had opportunities outside of school to sing. Jorge did think that he might consider joining a choir or singing club, but wasn’t completely sure. When Jorge and I talked about a time he felt ‘uncomfortable’ singing he responded with “Every time!”. He explained that he is not used to

singing, especially not in front of people. Singing in front of people makes him feel embarrassed and this is not something he thinks would get better even if he practiced. He said that during music class he feels safe and is happy.

When asked if he has ever heard someone tell another person that he or she ‘cannot sing’ he said “no.” He also did not think it would bother him if he overheard someone telling a person that he or she ‘cannot sing’ to someone else. Jorge explained that his mother has told him that he is good at singing, and that his parents and him typically have a lot of fun doing so. “We laugh a lot at me being silly, but not at my singing.” Additionally, Jorge’s mother could not think of a time when she had overheard someone implying that her son could not sing.

Jorge said that his family does not talk about singing. When asked if it would be weird to talk about, he said that it would not be. He mentioned that he would not talk to his family though about singing, but he was not sure why he wouldn’t. Jorge did say that his mother tells him that he is a good singer. Jorge’s mother reconfirmed this by saying that she and Jorge do not discuss singing.

Parent experiences. Jorge’s mother mentioned that she typically does not feel uncomfortable singing. She said that occasionally she might feel uncomfortable singing individually if there is a group of people around her outside of her close family. If it is around people she does not know well, she would prefer to sing in a group. Additionally, she mentioned that no one ever told her that she was ‘bad’ at singing, but that she could recall a time when her mother told her that she couldn’t hear her singing, but was able to hear her friend’s voice much better. “I used to sing very softly”. She said that she likes singing at home and in the car, but does not think she has a fantastic voice. “I can get by.” Unfortunately, Jorge’s mother was unavailable to participate in the singing portion of this project.

Eddie and Eddie's Mother

Eddie – Grade 4 (Age 11). When asked as to whether someone had ever sung to or around Eddie, he replied that I (his music teacher) was the only person that he could think of. He thought that his mother sings, but felt very unsure. Eddie also said that he has never talked about singing with anyone in his family. Additionally, he did not think that he had opportunities to sing outside of school, but did feel confident that he could play his clarinet. Eddie has been playing clarinet in the after school “Join the Orchestra” ensemble, which meets once a week for about 40-minutes. He has also performed with other students his age outside of school because of this after school ensemble.

I also asked Eddie if he had ever heard someone say that he or she cannot sing. He responded with, “Besides me? Yes!” He was not able to elaborate much more as to why he felt that way. Eddie did mention that a time he felt uncomfortable singing was during a past music recital. He did not say much more, but just recalled feeling uncomfortable. He did say that he was “pretty much/sort of” comfortable during school concerts. However, when asked about whether he’d feel comfortable singing in a group he quickly replied, “No!” because “I just don’t want to.” Additionally, he shook his head no when asked about being willing to sing a solo. He could also not recall if he had ever heard someone tell another person that he or she was a bad singer.

Parent experience. Eddie’s mother and I also spoke about her own experiences with singing. “I jam in the car, at home, and in the gym! Music moves me.” However, when asked specifically about her as a singer, she said “I’m terrible, I could make cats crawl!” She also explained that she makes her kids cringe in the car, but she loves it anyways.

When asked about past experiences of people singing to her or around her, she remembered both of her parents singing to her and her mother playing the piano. She described music always being on in the car when she was little and that occasionally she would hear her parents singing along to the radio. Eddie's mother also told me that growing up her friends and her would also jam out in the car and make parodies by "remixing the words" to a popular song. She also stated that music and singing in her mind begins a lot at home and at church. "I think we all think we are good singers at home and by ourselves."

This led to a conversation about why she thought singing was such a private thing. "You have to be good to get in front of people. If your voice doesn't sound a certain way, (you) might be more self-conscious. I don't want to torture people." However, she did think that people could improve their singing at any age if the individual was open to trying.

We also discussed whether Eddie's mother had ever heard someone tell another that he or she cannot sing. She said that she hears this "all the time." She explained that Eddie constantly says that he cannot sing, but she thinks it has more to do with him not wanting to versus being unable to. Eddie's mother enthusiastically stated that her son sings everywhere. She did not think he would feel comfortable being in a group though and could not assess if what Eddie sings is in tune.

She also described that singing in front of others, much like her son, would make her feel extremely uncomfortable singing. She did not describe a specific experience, but simply said "I never put myself in positions to perform." In elementary school, she recalled not wanting the spotlight on her in musicals or church. When asked if someone ever told her that she was a bad singer, she laughed and said "Other than my kids?" Eddie's mother joked that she did not think her husband was a good singer because he couldn't carry a tune, lacked rhythm, and makes up

the words. “He tries so I give him an ‘A’ for effort. Sometimes I have to tell him to be quiet because it’s annoying.”

Parent recordings. After being asked if she herself thought she could sing, she laughed and said, “No, no!” She described her singing as that of a “squeaking pig” or “cats clawing.” She did think with practice she’d feel more confident. I asked if Eddie’s mother could pick a song that she liked singing the most and she stated, “My Church” by Maren Morris. When asked if she would sing it she replied, “Not in front of you.” We then moved on to the singing examples where she imitated all six out of six tonal patterns in Example 1 correctly and learned Example 2 by rote perfectly. Afterwards, she said that she felt a little uncomfortable doing the examples, because she was judging herself.

Anthony and Anthony’s Mother and Father

Anthony – Grade 4 (Age 10). Anthony described a few situations where people had sung to or around him. He stated that his sister sings in her room a lot and he can typically hear her and that obviously in music class this happened. He also said that his parents do not sing around him, but that his father will put music on the TV and the two of them will talk about what they like and do not like.

Anthony and I also discussed whether he had ever heard anyone say or tell another person that they cannot sing. He said that he has heard people in his fourth-grade class say this a lot. On how this made him feel, Anthony replied, “I know they can! Everyone can, they just can’t express it sometimes. It makes me feel squiggly inside because I know they can!” He figured that reasons his classmates may say they cannot sing probably comes from a place of embarrassment or lack of confidence. He also referenced maintaining a certain reputation amongst peers and discussed another one of his classmates. “So and so is a funny guy, but he

doesn't want to sing" He also said that there is a big fear for kids about making a mistake, but if friends were to encourage one another, including himself, people may not be so intimidated. Anthony mentioned that pitch matching in music class is one thing that he thinks makes his peers feel nervous about singing.

He also described a few situations that had taken place in music class earlier this year where people may have felt threatened or uncomfortable singing. Anthony referenced a time when one girl told another that 'you stink' when she could not get a part correct. He also thought of another boy who looked very uncomfortable when he was asked to audiate and sing the resting tone of a song on 'la'. "Maybe he was trying to be funny, but he really looked uncomfortable." When asked if he personally has ever been told he was a bad singer, he could not recall and said how 'not nice' that would be. "I don't want to be that person. You don't want to be laughed at and made fun of."

In addition to feeling uncomfortable because of his peers, he also described singing high as something that made him feel uncomfortable. He recalled a time during the previous school year when I had asked him to sing high and that it was hard. "It's weird. It feels weird and sounds weird. I don't have confidence in singing like that. My voice isn't used to it. With practice, I could do it."

We then talked about personal experiences that Anthony has had with singing such as singing a solo or outside of school. He expressed that he sometimes sings solos and duets at church on Sunday mornings, but feels more comfortable because the choir is backing him up. Outside of school he prefers to spend his extra time playing sports. "I have other things to do. I don't enjoy it (singing) to the fullest."

Anthony and I also talked about times when he and his family have talked about singing. He mentioned that his family likes a lot of different music. “My dad likes jazz and I like that too, same as my uncle.” Anthony’s parents both expressed that they encourage him to have fun and ‘belt it out’. His father described conversations they have had about Frank Sinatra and how open Anthony is to exploring different types of music. He did not specifically say they discussed Frank Sinatra’s singing voice.

I also asked Anthony’s parents if they had ever heard anyone tell Anthony that he was bad at singing. They both referenced a previous music teacher who they liked, but ran the program very differently than it is currently being run. Anthony’s father recalled both Anthony and his sister saying “She never picks me to sing,” at church or concerts. Anthony’s mother elaborated by saying, that it was clear this previous music teacher had ‘her people she always called on’ and that her kids were never selected. Thus, both children felt as if they were not good.

Parent experiences: Anthony’s father. For Anthony’s parents’ interview, both his mother and father participated together. For the sake of fluidity, I will discuss their experiences in two different sections. I will begin by elaborating on Anthony’s father’s responses to interview questions and parent recordings.

Anthony’s father began by describing his own singing as “ok”, but that he loved to sing. “I was an actor, but was never super into musicals.” He thought that his ear had improved and he had gained more control over his voice than he used to. He also wished that people would have pushed him to sing more and have formal training when he was younger and working in the theater world.

Anthony's father also described a few times when others had sung to him or around him. He elaborated on being in the theater world and hearing people sing around him constantly. He also described experiences that he had with family members. "My dad was really into classical music and some operas. He had a great appreciation for classical music and used to have it in the car. Most of my brothers didn't get into it. He sang in the choir and did caroling with friends." Anthony's father could not recall ever hearing his mother sing to him and his brothers. He also recalled his father pushing him and his brothers to sing in church saying "I can't hear you" if he was standing next to them. He also remembered his elementary school teacher Mrs. Simpson playing the guitar in class and encouraging kids to sing with her playing.

We then discussed whether he had heard someone tell someone else that they were not a good singer, he thought that he had. "Boys are brutal!" Anthony's father recalled saying, "You are horrible" to his brother. When asked to assess how he thought people would feel about being told that, he said it would 'squash their spirit' and 'belittle' them. I then had him reflect on if someone had ever told him that he was a bad singer. He remembered a director in a show telling him that he had a tough time hitting a note in "O Danny Boy".

This led to a conversation about describing times when he felt uncomfortable singing. Anthony's father remembered feeling uncomfortable when in his freshman year of college, someone got fired from *Fiddler on the Roof* and he had to jump into a role rather quickly. "I had six lines that were a solo with the orchestra and swore the conductor was going to kill me. I didn't know what I was doing and was extremely scared by the conductor's reaction. I was afraid people were going to laugh at me."

Anthony's mother. Anthony's mother on the other hand described herself as a terrible singer. "I don't have a good voice, I never developed the confidence for it." She couldn't

remember any music programs that she had had, but did say that she did not feel as if any of her teachers ever inspired her to care about music or singing. She also explained that her family did not focus on music, but more on academics and reading.

She could not recall a time when her parents had sung to her growing up or had music in her house. As a teenager, she recalled liking music, but emphasized that it was not how she was raised. Her parents were teens with a low economic status. When they moved into a community with more money when she was older, she noticed more of those communities valued music. “I felt like high income families had more of an opportunity” to have exposure to music.

When asked whether Anthony’s mother had ever heard someone tell another person that he or she was bad at singing, she referenced NBC’s *The Voice*. She thought that this kind of talk kills confidence and makes people not want to try. I then asked if anyone had ever told her that she was a bad singer. She quickly replied, “Yes! I say I’m bad before anyone else has a chance to. I self-deprecate.”

For her, singing itself is uncomfortable. “I might sing along with my daughter because she is in to it, but never in front of other people.” When asked about any instances that led to her feeling of discomfort, she remembered her sister singing a solo in a concert during high school. All Anthony’s mother could recall was her own feeling of nervousness for her sister because of the possibility of her not being good and how that would make her feel.

Parent recordings. Based on both parents’ descriptions of their experiences with singing, I felt that Anthony’s mother may feel more confident singing if we did the parent recording sessions separately. After Anthony’s father left the room, Anthony’s mother said the “Brooklyn, Brooklyn Here I Come” by “The Avett Brothers” was a song she would feel comfortable singing along to. She sang a little piece of it a cappella, which appeared to have

contour and a tonal center, but she said she'd feel better singing along with the recording. We pulled up a recording of the song and she sang along well with the harmony during the chorus which in the original was also sung by a female. I then had her imitate the tonal patterns in Example 1 where she imitated all six correctly. For Example 2, she struggled with Steps 5 (audiating resting tone) & 6 (audiating the song in her head). However, when it came time to sing the song with me, she did quite well. She did not feel comfortable singing the song independently.

Anthony's father happily sang "Sunshine" by John Denver along with a recording that he pulled up on Spotify. To accommodate his voice, I used the prerecorded male recordings to avoid any potential singing octave issues. Anthony's father imitated all six tonal patterns accurately. He also sang Example 2 accurately, but did slightly struggle with the higher notes around his break.

Juan and Juan's Mother

Juan – Grade 6 (Age 11). Juan described a vivid scenario where someone sang to him or around him. "My dad will sing right in front of my face and yell, 'It's my favorite song!'" He explained that while playing "Just Dance" on the Wii, he and his mother and father will be dancing and singing the song which is "really fun." Juan said that both of his parents sing quite a bit. "If Michael Jackson or The Beatles come on (the radio) my mother will go full blast, turn the windows down, and start singing!"

We then talked about if he had ever heard someone say that they are bad at singing. He said that he has heard a lot people say that they cannot sing. "Sometimes when my friends come over they will say they can't sing. Sometimes I say I can't sing." When asked how that made him feel, he thought singing is a skill that can improved, so people need to simply try harder.

I also asked if he had ever heard someone tell another person that they were a bad singer. He explained that no one has said it in a serious manner, but ‘joking-wise’ yes. Juan said that sometimes friends will say ‘please stop’ in a joking way, but that maybe this could be bothersome to the person who is singing, whether they are singing in a joking way or not. He thought that even saying it in a joking way could lead people to stop singing and give it up if someone made fun of them.

Juan mentioned that he typically feels uncomfortable singing in front of other people. He feels “OK” singing at school concerts or with friends. He did recall a time when he went to Maine and his favorite song come on the radio in the car. As he began singing, his grandparents and relatives tried to get him to sing. He said that ‘being put on the spot’ made him uncomfortable and not want to sing. Juan also expressed feeling shy singing in music class because his friends are watching. “Overall I know I can do it, but sometimes I just don’t feel that way.”

Juan did say that he felt comfortable leading a song at church, but only if a friend joins him. He especially likes singing the closing song of a mass because “everyone is clapping and usually the last song has a really good beat!” When asked whether he had opportunities to sing outside of school, Juan thought that his opportunities consisted of mostly singing in the car. He did not think that he would join a singing group, because he wanted to dedicate his time to playing basketball.

Juan and I talked about whether he and his family ever talk about singing. He said that his parents have asked him if he wants to be a singer, but he typically says he does not. Juan also mentioned that his parents ask him why he does not want to sing for them. He said that they are very encouraging of his singing. Juan’s mother said that she and her husband talk to Juan about

the songs they sing in the car together and what songs his class is going to be singing for school concerts.

I then had him think about if anyone had ever told him that he was a bad singer. He could not think of a scenario, but said, “I would feel pretty bad if someone said that and I was actually trying, but I would still try no matter what they say.” I also asked Juan’s mother if she had ever heard of anyone saying to or around Juan that he cannot sing. To her knowledge, she did not think so. She followed up by saying, “He should keep doing it no matter what anyone says.”

Parent experiences. Juan’s mother described herself as a ‘terrible’ singer. “I’m not a good singer. I hate my voice on anything.” She also mentioned that she would never sing in front of other people, but singing in the car by herself was ok. Throughout the interview, Juan’s mother mentioned many times that she did not have a “good” voice.

When asked specifically if anyone had ever told her that she was ‘bad’ at singing, she remembered being put in the alto section with mostly boys during fourth or fifth grade. “I was an alto and ALL the girls were sopranos.” She described feeling as if she was not harmonious or was not good, because she was placed with the boys. Any time she was on stage, she felt very ‘uncomfortable’ singing. She could remember this same year of school having to sing “White Christmas” on stage with the entire class, and she hid behind the curtain.

When asked as to whether she could recall someone singing to her or around her, she mentioned that when she went camping, someone always had a guitar and was singing. She also described her experience growing up with a father who was a musician. Juan’s mother explained that her father was always performing in a band and that she grew up in bars watching. She said that her mother would harmonize and sing with him occasionally as well. Juan’s mother mentioned that none of her siblings got into singing and performing, but one of her half-brothers

was good at playing the saxophone. She also mentioned that Juan's father plays the harmonica and loves to sing, but that he did not have significant musical influences growing up from what she knew.

Parent recordings. When asked to sing a song of her choice or match pitches, she chose not to and expressed that she would feel "very uncomfortable". "I won't even sing in front of my husband!" From speaking with Juan's mother, the negative feedback that she received and partially perceived about being an alto in fourth grade, has left her uncomfortable.

Delilah and Delilah's Mother

Delilah – Grade 6 (Age 11). Delilah described a couple of scenarios when other people had sung around her. She mentioned that her friends and mother sang around her quite regularly. Also, church was a place where people sang around her. Delilah also described myself and a previous music teacher as having sung around her and playing various songs for her in music classes.

When asked if she had ever heard someone say that they can't sing, she replied, "Yes, me." She also remembered hearing friends and people in her class saying that they could not sing. I then asked if anyone had ever told her that she was a 'bad' singer. She said no, because she does not sing that much. We then discussed how hearing others say that they cannot sing might make her feel as a bystander. She mentioned "Sometimes I tell them that they are really good and they really are!" Delilah then described that in regards to her, she would probably feel better if more people around her told her that she could sing. Delilah's mother and I also discussed whether she had heard someone tell Delilah if she was not good or bad at singing. She could not recall such a situation, but thought that she very well could have.

Delilah and I then talked about a time when she felt ‘uncomfortable’ singing. She remembered a time in music class a few years prior, with a previous music teacher. Delilah said that sometimes this music teacher would give the students songs and she’d want each student to sing them in front of the class. This made Delilah feel extremely ‘uncomfortable’. She also mentioned that if students wanted to sing at a school mass, this music teacher would ‘make’ them sing it in front of the class first.

Delilah said that she would probably feel comfortable singing a solo, but that it would depend where. She did not think she would want to sing a solo in front of her school or in front of a large group of people. She also did not think that she would be interested in joining a singing group outside of school if one was available to her. “I like to sing, but I don’t like to sing a lot. I don’t know why.”

I also had Delilah discuss any conversations that she and her family have had about singing. She said that she and her mother talk about songs they sing in the car sometimes, and that she talks to her close friend about songs they’d like to sing. Delilah could not recall talking to her father about singing. Delilah’s mother said that her family does not talk about singing, but that it typically just happens organically.

Parent experience. Delilah’s mother said that she and her family sing for fun in the car and in the house. “We listen to music more than we watch television.” She described singing in her family as being very informal. As a kid, she could not recall anyone in her household singing, but never felt ‘uncomfortable’ singing, because it was just something she has always done. “I used to sing when I was little on stage and in chorus”. She described feeling comfortable singing at church and places where it would be appropriate. Delilah’s mother also mentioned

singing with kids and the music therapists for her job as she is a Child Life Specialist who works with children who have cancer or blood disorders.

We then talked about if she had ever heard someone say that they ‘can’t’ sing. She mentioned that her kids say that occasionally. Delilah’s mother follows up with statements such as, “I don’t know what you mean by that.” With Delilah, she tries to remind her that singing is for fun and it does not matter if her voice is good or not. “I don’t really brush it off, but try to not let her get down on herself.”

Parent recordings. Delilah’s mother chose to sing along with the chorus of Sam Hunt’s “Body Like a Back Road” where she matched all pitches and rhythms, despite not feeling confident about singing the lyrics. She also imitated all six tonal patterns perfectly from Example 1. We then went through all steps for Example 2 where Delilah’s mother could remember the resting tone, audiate the song in her head, and eventually sing it independently without issue.

Discussion

In Chapter V, I asked parents specifically about themselves as singers, and they had many more mixed reactions than the student participants. During conversation, Rosina’s mother and Delilah’s mother were quite confident in their singing abilities, Anthony’s father and Jorge’s mother were somewhat confident, and Eddie’s mother, Anthony’s mother, and Juan’s mother were very unconfident in themselves as singers.

Parents who possessed a lack of confidence in their singing skills had some combination of the following three experiences: a) They did not participate in singing activities as children, b) They did not discuss singing with anyone in their life, and/or c) They had a singing experience that caused them to feel uncomfortable with their own singing. Research has also shown that peer-influence can strongly reflect a child’s self-perception of singing accuracy, so can any type

of negative feedback from a peer or facilitator (Whidden, 2008; Shouldice, 2016). As a result, parents typically had two reactions with their children. Parents were either very positive and encouraging of their children as singers, or admittedly did not communicate much with their child about singing.

Not surprising, students also discussed other people judging their singing as a reason for being ‘uncomfortable’ doing so. Most students could recall a time when someone made a face, a joke, or a comment, whether towards them personally or someone else, that caused them to question themselves as singers. Shouldice (2014) also found that maintaining a certain reputation amongst peers is extremely important and that when students were mocked in any way for their singing, it led them to believe they were unfit to sing. What is the most interesting, is that students articulated that they enjoy singing quite a bit, but begin to feel uncomfortable when it comes to singing in front of peers or large audiences in fear of judgment or lack of perfection.

There was also a trend in behavior and physical confidence when it came to the point of the interview when students and parents were asked to sing. See Appendix F for criteria.

Song by Choice

	Rosina	Rosina's Mom	Jorge	Eddie	Eddie's Mom	Anthony	Anthony's Dad	Anthony's Mom	Juan	Juan's Mom	Delilah	Delilah's Mom
Pitch Accuracy	3	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	4	2	N/A	2	4
Rhythmic Accuracy	4	4	4	N/A	N/A	4	4	4	4	N/A	4	4
Behavior/Confidence	3	4	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	4	2	N/A	3	3

Tonal Patterns

	Rosina	Rosina's Mom	Jorge	Eddie	Eddie's Mom	Anthony	Anthony's Dad	Anthony's Mom	Juan	Juan's Mom	Delilah	Delilah's Mom
Pitch Accuracy	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	N/A	2	4
Behavior/Confidence	4	4	4	1	2	3	3	3	4	N/A	3	4

Song by Rote

	Rosina	Rosina's Mom	Jorge	Eddie	Eddie's Mom	Anthony	Anthony's Dad	Anthony's Mom	Juan	Juan's Mom	Delilah	Delilah's Mom
Pitch Accuracy	3	4	3	2	4	3	2	3	4	N/A	2	4
Rhythmic Accuracy	4	4	4	2	4	3	3	4	4	N/A	4	4
Behavior/Confidence	3	4	3	1	2	3	2	3	3	N/A	2	3

There was not a major difference among grades or genders when it came to pitch accuracy or physical behaviors and confidence for singing a song of their choice, however, the 2nd graders were more confident than the 4th and 6th grade students as well as parents in imitating tonal patterns, something Mizener (1990) also found to be true when studying the significance among grade level and self-perception of singing skill. A possible explanation could also be that the younger students have experienced imitating patterns with me much more than the older students.

Something else interesting to note was parental behavior and confidence in relation to parent and child. Kastner (2009) found that when parents have discussions with their children about music and act as singing ‘role models’ children possess more singing confidence. For

example, Rosina's mother is a very confident singer and is vocal about this with her child. Both her and Rosina both appeared mostly-to-strongly confident when it came to all three singing activities. On the contrary, Eddie and his mother both lacked or possessed only some confidence when singing through the singing activities and both chose not to sing a song by choice due to what I observed as discomfort and lack of confidence. However, this was not the case for Juan and his mother. Juan's mother did not feel confident singing through the activities while Juan was mostly-to-strongly confident with many of the activities. A possible reason for this could be that Juan's parents are both very vocally supportive of his singing and his father regularly "sings in his face" per Juan's interview.

When prompted about the discussion of singing amongst parent and child, the answer was that conversation about singing was very informal. Parents and children mostly discussed songs of interest, what songs they were singing for a school performance, or if they had interest in joining a singing opportunity at school (choir, musical theater, etc.). Anthony's mother even admitted that this process made her reconsider how she talks about herself as a singer in front of her family so not to influence her children to think negatively about their own singing voices.

CHAPTER VI

Summary and Conclusions

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how selected 2nd, 4th and 6th grade students' attitudes towards themselves as singers form, and how these perceptions and behaviors were interpreted by the teacher-researcher. Research questions that guided this study were a) How do students describe themselves as singers; b) How do parents describe themselves and their child as singers; and c) What are the comparisons between the teacher-researcher's perception of them as singers versus their own perceptions?

Past Literature

Past literature supports that researchers have explored and tried to understand how children develop a self-perception about their singing skills. Greenberg's (1970) study examined musical achievement and self-concept in 10 out-of-tune elementary boys from fourth to sixth grade who joined an auditioned choir of 152 students. Mizener (1990) studied the significance among grade level and self-perception of singing skill. Mizener found that more students from the lower grades felt that they were good singers than did members of upper grade levels. Whidden (2008) explored how singing experiences and assessments at the elementary level lead individuals to perceive themselves as non-singers by the time they reach adulthood. Kastner (2009) explored the role that various musical experiences play in developing musical identities, specifically through the construct of musical self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Randles' (2010) study uncovered that as students graduated through grade levels, starting from fourth grade, their perceptions of themselves as being good musicians decreased. Furthermore, singing was a large factor for students to consider when labeling what a 'good musician'

entailed. Shouldice (2014) conducted a study of 347 elementary-age students to explore what characteristics lead to the perception of what defined a ‘good musician’. She found that out of 28 response categories, singing was in the top three characteristics among students in grades one to four for what makes a ‘good musician’. Although these past studies have given great insight into self-perception of singing based on grade level, past experiences, and gender based on observation, few have focused on the parent self-percept/child self-percept relationship in addition to interviewing both child and parent about what singing looks like to them. Based on this previous research I utilized Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) basic qualitative design to get to the core of what creates perceptions and behaviors towards singing in elementary-age students.

Methodology

Basic qualitative research design explores how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences for the overlying purpose of understanding how people make sense of their lives and experiences. Following the basic qualitative research design, data collection included surveys, interviews, and recordings from both students and parents in addition to a teacher log (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants consisted of two students of the opposite gender from second, fourth, and sixth grade and their parents. These children attended a private school on the West Coast of the United States. There were 240 students enrolled at the school and their demographic is quite mixed. Each grade consisted of 20 to 26 students per class.

Findings

From this research, I found that elementary aged students mostly perceived themselves to be capable of singing, and felt more confident when singing alone or with an individual or group of individuals that they trusted would support and give them positive feedback. With practice, five out of six students believed that they could continue to improve their singing skills and

confidence levels. Parents shared these same views about their children. Furthermore, when parents spoke positively about their child's singing, gave encouragement, or participated in singing activities with their child, the child typically felt more confident and comfortable with singing. Additionally, parents who were very vocally supportive of their child's singing gave their child a level of confidence about their singing skills. Lastly I found that the teacher-researcher's perception of the child as a singer did not always line up with how the child felt about their singing. In most cases, the teacher-researcher felt that the child had better singing skills than the child thought that he or she possessed.

My Application

Throughout writing this paper, I noticed that my language and analogies with the way I spoke with my students, especially fourth grade through eighth changed drastically. Based on research I was finding, material I was teaching, and responses from my participants, I observed how little singing terminology my students possessed. I would also observe students of all ages being extremely hard on themselves if they were unable to master a task immediately. This led me to focus significantly on the importance of practicing and realizing that singing is a skill. I typically use the analogy that Kobe Bryant did not become a fantastic basketball player by focusing on one skill or by putting in minimal practice. I also relate it to math and scaffolding, that you must be able to add and subtract before you can multiply and divide, just as we must practice singing patterns and train our ears and voice to work, before we try to imitate an Adele song that we love from the radio. Additionally, some students will comprehend and perfect a concept in math quicker than another, which does not downplay ability, but solidifies that people learn different skills at different rates. Singing is a skill that takes time and practice to master.

Therefore, I was very impressed when Juan used a similar analogy during his interview with me about basketball and practicing singing.

In terms of vocabulary, I have also noticed that both parents and students lack accurate singing language, making them frustrated when trying to articulate how they feel about singing or describe singing experiences both during interviews and in a typical music class. From doing this research, I tried a new game with my lower and upper elementary students that involved watching short clips and identifying different types of voicing. Additionally, we addressed that all unchanged voices (boy or girl) typically fall under the soprano category. They were then assigned to go home and ask both parents to sing for them, classify what voicing they thought each parent possessed, and then asked their parents if they were familiar with the voicing terminology. When the students came back the next music class excited to share about what they had discovered, it was wonderful to see that a dialogue concerning language had indeed taken place about singing between parent and child. At the very least, this got the students excited to interact with material from class and hopefully helped with educating parents as well.

In a similar way, my fourth and sixth grade male participants all mentioned their voice changing or having to sing high fluidly as problematic in their own singing. Since then, I have tried to be very open with both males and females about the fact that the voice does change, but that everyone has two different registers such as the head voice or falsetto for changed men and the chest voice. Because the voice is something that we typically do not see, it is significantly harder to conceptualize. I have noticed that having an open discussion about the voice change and different registers from a young age with both genders together has led to my students being more encouraging, supportive, and understanding of their classmates when individually imitating or creating patterns in class or learning a song.

Suggestions for Other Teachers

Based on my research and findings, I have a couple of suggestions for other teachers moving forward. The idea of practice was pointed out by five of the six students and all parents as something that could improve singing skills and confidence. As a teacher, helping emphasize not only the importance of practice, but comparing it to something that is very obtainable for students could greatly cut down on the self-perception of “I can’t sing.” Giving students and parents singing strategies, such as imitating music or ear training could greatly open the conversation about singing and allow children to have a gateway into more challenging music. This could assist in helping students realize that singing is a skill and not an innate talent that some possess and some do not.

As teachers, it is often our job to not only educate our students, but to also educate our parents. It is crucial that we as educators help parents understand that the notion of talent can cause a very positive or negative effect on their child’s self-percept of their voice. We have all seen a reality television show or internet clip where a person’s singing voice is being harshly judged. This can greatly affect a child’s willingness to sing openly or be willing to practice and try. By educating parents that it is imperative to support experimentation with singing just as they would applaud a newborn’s efforts to babble and speak for the first time, could greatly improve a child’s self-percept of their own singing.

From my research, parent participants also tended to believe that singing was a crucial part of their child’s educational journey. However, only one or two of the seven could articulate proper verbiage about aspects of singing or basic music terminology such as melody, tone, pitch etc....By giving proper singing vocabulary to children, educators can create an opportunity for this language to weave its way into family conversation, allowing parents to feel more connected

to their child's musical learning. Even though parents may not feel like experts, they can begin to grow with their child. This is also key on creating lifelong singers and realistically advocates for vocal education.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on my findings, doing a study on the type of musical language parents and children use on a regular basis could create huge insight for music educators. Many of my students and parents lacked the language to adequately describe phenomena in singing that led them to feel uncomfortable or have a sense of discomfort simply discussing the topic. Exploring the type of musical language that parents and children use on a regular basis could greatly break down this notion that singing is only for the well-trained.

It would also be interesting to explore more about how students at various ages describe singing practice. Since the majority of student and parent participants identified practice as a strategy they could use to improve their voices, it would be fascinating to learn more about what that means to students and their parents. This kind of qualitative study could greatly improve teacher instruction, how parents and children speak about music, and even allow parents to feel more at ease about being a singing role model for their children.

Furthermore, students and parents all possessed an idea of what makes a "good" singer. Perhaps examining these characteristics with the notion of "talent" could potentially break down the stigma of singing in public. All of my student participants had some lack of confidence singing, and mentioned that singing by themselves in front of others might make them feel nervous. By taking away this idea of "talent," natural ability, or judgement especially during the school-aged years, could greatly impact how students perceive themselves as singers and promote lifelong singing.

Having all parents or guardians interviewed could further bridge the gap of understanding between parents' self-percept in relation to their child's self-percept of themselves as singers. Because in this study, I was only able to speak with mothers mostly, I only received part of the total parental self-percept. By ensuring that all parent/guardians of the child participant are interviewed, teachers could get a much better understanding as to whether gender plays a role in influencing a child's self-percept on singing. Furthermore, following the same student/parent participants over a longer time frame, might also show a larger shift in self-perception and understanding of singing in both parent and child. This could also track the potential decline in singing confidence or interest that research has shown exists.

Final Thoughts

Singing is something that everyone can do. Just like any other skill, it is learned and should be fostered for it to improve. Teachers and parents both have a responsibility to make sure children feel safe exploring their singing voices at any age so they do not grow up to be the generation that proclaims "Oh, I can't sing," "I have no musical ability," and the ever-so-common misconception, "I am tone deaf." As human beings, we are constantly surrounded by music and singing. It is time we make singing a skill that everyone feels confident about discussing and doing freely without judgement.

References

- Birge, E. B., Wilson, G. V., & Gehrkins, K. W. (1938). Public school music, 1838-1938. *Music Educators Journal* 24(4), 13-14. doi:10.2307/3385446
- Brophy, T. S. (2010). *The practice of assessment in music education: Frameworks, models, and designs*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc.
- Gordon, E. E. (1990). *Jump right in the music curriculum: Tonal register book one revised edition*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc.
- Gordon, E. E. (2001). *Jump right in the music curriculum: Reference handbook for using learning sequence activities*. (2001 Ed.) Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc.
- Gordon, E. E. (2001). *Musical aptitude profile manual*. Chicago: GIA Publications.
- Gordon, E. E. (2012) *Learning sequences in music: A contemporary music learning theory*. (2012 Ed.). Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc.
- The Gordon Institute for Music Learning. (2016). *Classroom activities*. Retrieved from: <http://giml.org/mlt/classroom/>
- Greenberg, M. (1970). Musical achievement and self-concept. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 18(1), 57-64. doi:10.2307/3344358
- Green, L. (1997). *Music gender and education*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Haladyna, T., & Thomas, G. (1979). The attitudes of elementary school children toward school and subject matters. *Journal of Experimental Education* 48(1), 18-23. doi:10.1080/00220973.1979.11011707
- Hallam, S. (2008). Motivation to learn.. I. Cross and M. Thaut (Ed.). *Oxford handbook of music psychology* (285-294). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Hall, C. (2005). Gender and boys' singing in early childhood. *British Journal of Music Education*, 22, 5–20. doi:10.1017/S0265051704005960
- Hall, M. M. (2007). *Composing in a second grade music class: Crossing a watershed as children begin to understand song as structure*. (Doctoral Dissertation) Retrieved from: <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/1903/7174/1/umi-umd-4550.pdf>.
- Kastner, J. D. (2009). *Unwritten stories: An ethnographic case study of fourth-grade students' musical identities*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (Order No. 1478838)
- Legette, R. M. (1998). Causal beliefs of public school students about success and failure in music. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 46(1), 102-111. doi:10.2307/3345763
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and Implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- McPherson, G. E., & O'Neill, S. A. (2010). Students' motivation to study music as compared to other school subjects: A comparison of eight countries. *Research Studies in Music Education* 32(2), 101–137. doi:10.1177/1321103X10384202
- Mizener, C. L. P. (1990). *Attitudes of third- through sixth-grade children toward singing and choir participation and assessed singing skill*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (Order No. 9031664)
- Mizener, C. L. P. (1993) Attitudes of children toward singing and choir participation as assessed singing skill. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 41(3), 233-245. doi:10.2307/3345327
- Moe, K. E. (1950) What makes a good singer? *Music Journal* 8(6), 46-48. doi: 740712437
- National Association for Music Education. (2015). *Core Music Standards (PK-8 General*

Music).

- O'Neill, S. (2002). The self-identity of young musicians. In R.A.R. MacDonald, D.J. Hargreaves, and D. Miell, (Ed.). *Oxford handbook of music psychology* (462-470). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Randles, C. (2010). "What is a good musician?" An analysis of student beliefs. *Arts Education Policy Review* 112(1), 1–8. doi:10.1080/10632913.2010.490774.
- Schmidt, C. P., Zdzinski, S. F., & Ballard, D. L. (2006). Motivation orientations, academic achievement, and career goals of undergraduate music education majors. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54(2), 138—153. doi:10.1177/002242940605400205
- Shouldice, H. N. (2014). Elementary students' definitions and self-perceptions of being a 'good musician'. *Music Education Research* 16(3), 330-345. doi:10.1080/14613808.2014.909396
- Tibbetts, S. L. (1975). Sex-role stereotyping in the lower grades: Part of the solution. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 6(2), 255–261. doi:10.1016/0001-8791(75)90051-2
- Vander Ark, S., Nolin, W. H., & Newman, I. (1980). Relationships between musical attitudes, self-esteem, social status, and grade level of elementary children. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 62(Spring), 31-41. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40317591>
- Warzecha, M. (2013). Boys' perceptions of singing: A review of the literature. *Applications of Research in Music Education* 32(1), 43-51. doi:10.1177/8755123313502341
- Warzecha, M. (2016). *Male peer modeling in the kindergarten music classroom*. (Master's

- Thesis) Retrieved from the University of Michigan library.
- Welch, G. F., Sergeant, D. C., & White, P. (1997). Age, sex and vocal task as factors in singing in-tune during the first years of schooling. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 133(Summer), 153–160. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40318855>
- Welch, G. F. (2005). We “are” musical. *International Journal of Music Education* 23(2), 117-120. doi:10.1177/0255761405052404
- Welch, G. F., Himonides, E., Papageorgi, I., Saunders, J., Rinta, T., Stewart, C., Preti, C., Lani, J., Vraka, M., & Hill, J. (2009). The national singing programme for primary schools in England: An initial baseline study. *Music Education Research* 11(1), 1-22. doi:10.1080/14613800802699523
- Welch, G. F., Saunders, J., Papageorgi, I., & Himonides, E. (2012). Sex, gender and singing development: Making a positive difference to boys’ singing through a national programme in England. In S.D. Harrison, G.F. Welch, & A. Alder (Ed.), *Perspectives on Males and Singing*. (pp. 27-43). New York, NY: Springer Netherlands.
- Whidden, C. (2008). The injustice of singer/non-singer labels by music educators. *GEMS Gender, Education, Music & Society* 5(Spring). Retrieved from: <http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/gems>

Appendix A: IRB Approval



Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB-HSBS) • 2800 Plymouth Rd., Building 520, Room 1170, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800 • phone (734) 936-0933 • fax (734) 998-9171 • irbhsbs@umich.edu

To: Judith Pagryzinski

From:

Thad Polk

Cc:

Colleen Conway
Judith Pagryzinski

Subject: Initial Study Approval for [HUM00119619]

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Study Title: Everyone Can!

Full Study Title (if applicable): Everyone Can!: The Student/Teacher Perception of Elementary Children's Behaviors towards Singing

Study eResearch ID: [HUM00119619](#)

Date of this Notification from IRB: 1/3/2017

Review: Expedited

Initial IRB Approval Date: 1/3/2017

Current IRB Approval Period: 1/3/2017 - 1/2/2019

Expiration Date: Approval for this expires at **11:59 p.m. on 1/2/2019**

UM Federalwide Assurance (FWA): FWA00004969 (For the current FWA expiration date, please visit the [UM HRPP Webpage](#))

OHRP IRB Registration Number(s): IRB00000246

Appendix B: Blank Student Singing Survey

Singing Survey

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Please read the following: This survey was created to help understand how children feel about singing (Piers & Harris, 1969). Below is a Confidence Scale using numbers 1-5. The number 5 means you are really sure you can do something while 1 means you cannot do something at all. Please rate how certain you are that you can do each of these things below by writing the number that you think describes how able you are to do the following task.

Confidence Scale

Cannot do at all		Moderately can do		Highly certain I can do
1	2	3	4	5

I can ...

Accuracy: Confidence

a. Sing correctly	_____
b. Sing in tune	_____
c. Match pitches (notes)	_____
d. Accurately sing patterns for my music teacher.	_____
e. If I get stuck learning a song, I can fix it and sing it correctly	_____
f. Learn songs quickly	_____
g. Sing easily	_____

Gender:

h. Sing well with a group	_____
i. Alone in front of my classmates	_____
j. Sing if boys are in the room with me	_____
k. Sing if girls are in the room with me	_____

Formal Assessment:

l. Sing well in music class	_____
m. Sing well for singing assessments	_____
n. Sing for my music teacher	_____
o. Practice singing	_____
p. Sing solos at school	_____

Parental Self-as-singer:

q. Sing songs with my parents	_____
r. Sing songs for my parents	_____
s. Tell if my parents are singing in tune	_____
t. Talk to my parents about singing	_____

Outside Factors:

u. Sing with the radio	_____
v. Sing in public	_____
w. Sing with my friends	_____
x. Sing the songs I hear at religious services	_____
y. Join a singing group if one was open to me	_____

Describe what makes a singer?

Describe yourself as a singer.

Appendix C: Blank Parent Singing Survey

Parent Singing Survey

This questionnaire is designed to help understand how parents feel about singing and the affect that self-as-singer has on children. Please rate how certain you are that you can do each of the things described below by writing the appropriate number. Other than your gender, answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by your name. **IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE PART OF THIS STUDY FURTHER, PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME AT THE BOTTOM AND THE GRADE OF YOUR STUDENT!**

Place an 'X' by the gender that applies: Male: _____ Female: _____

Confidence Scale

Cannot do at all	Moderately can do do	Highly certain I can do
1	2	3
	4	5

I can:	<u>Confidence</u>
Sing accurately	_____
Sing well in a group of my peers	_____
Match pitch	_____
Teach songs to my child	_____
Sing in tune	_____
Sing with the radio when my child is in the car	_____
Join a singing group if one was open to me	_____
Sing in public places	_____
Sing when men are in the same room with me	_____
Learn a song that my child teaches me	_____
Sing with ease.	_____
Sing songs for my children	_____
Sing in front of my friend group	_____
Sing when women are in the same room with me	_____
Hear a song and quickly start singing	_____
Sing songs with my children	_____
Sing the songs I hear at religious services	_____
Distinguish if my child is singing in tune	_____
Talk to my child about singing	_____
Lead by example for my child when it comes to singing	_____

Do you offer other opportunities for your kids to sing (at home, in community group, at church...)

Describe your child as a singer.

Appendix D: Blank Student Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to let me interview you on how you feel about singing. Your participation will greatly help myself and others become better music teachers! Remember, I want to hear about your experiences and will not judge you for anything you say. Your answers will not influence your grade in any way. I will record our conversations in order for me to keep track of what we discussed along with the singing examples. These recordings will not be shared with other people, but will only be used for the purpose of this research study.

- Please state your name, age, and grade.
- Who do you think has the best voice? Why?
- Describe what it means to sing?
- What makes a “good” singer?
- Describe yourself as a singer?
- What kinds of conversations have you had with your family about singing?
- Can you describe a time when others have sung to you or around you?
- Have you ever heard someone say that they can’t sing?
- How does that make you feel?
- Describe a time you may have felt ‘uncomfortable’ about singing?
- Has anyone ever told you you’re bad or not good at singing?
- Have you heard anyone tell someone else that they are bad or not good at singing?
- Do you think you can sing?
- Would you feel comfortable singing a solo?
- Do you have opportunities to sing outside of school?
- How does it feel when you sing in front of others?
- Describe a ‘confident’ singer.

Appendix E: Blank Parent Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to let me interview you about your child as a singer and on how you feel about singing. Your participation will greatly help myself and others become better music teachers! Remember, I want to hear about your experiences and will not judge you for anything you say. Nothing said here will play any part on your child's grade. I will record our conversations in order for me to keep track of what we discussed along with the singing examples. These recordings will not be shared with other people, but will only be used for the purpose of this research study.

- Please state your name, age, and grade.
- Best voice?
- Describe singing
- What makes a “good” singer
- Describe yourself as a singer?
- Describe your child as a singer?
- Do you and your child ever sing together?
- Do you and your child discuss singing?
- Describe a time you may have felt ‘uncomfortable’ about singing?
- Has anyone ever told you you’re bad or not good at singing?
- Has anyone ever told your child that he/she is bad or not good at singing?
- Describe a time when someone has sung to you or around you.

Appendix F: Blank Recording Session Rubric

I: Tell me what your favorite song to sing is?

I: Please sing part of it for me.

SCALE	1	2	3	4
Pitch Accuracy	Student/Parent did not imitate the original pitches while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent imitated some of the pitches while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent imitated most of the pitches while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent imitated all pitches while singing their song of choice.
Rhythmic Accuracy	Student/Parent did not maintain a steady beat while singing their song of their choice.	Student/Parent maintained some beat competency while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent mostly maintained the beat while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent were rhythmically precise while singing their song of choice.
Behavior/Confidence	Student/Parent appeared to lack confidence and body language while singing a song of their choice.	Student/Parent appeared to possess some confidence at points while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent appeared mostly confident while singing their song of choice.	Student/Parent appeared to possess strong confidence and body language while singing their song of choice.

I: Please repeat back to me the following pitches:

SCALE	1	2	3	4
Pitch Accuracy	Student/Parent did not imitate tonal patterns while repeating the	Student/Parent imitated some of the tonal patterns when repeating the	Student/Parent imitated most of the tonal patterns when repeating the	Student/Parent imitated all of the tonal patterns while repeating the

	examples given.	given examples.	given examples.	given examples.
Behavior/Confidence	Student/Parent appeared to lack confidence and body language while imitating tonal patterns.	Student/Parent appeared to possess some confidence at points while imitating tonal patterns.	Student/Parent appeared mostly confident while imitating tonal patterns.	Student/Parent appeared to possess strong confidence and body language while imitating tonal patterns.

I: I'm going to teach you a new song by rote. Please follow along.

SCALE	1	2	3	4
Pitch Accuracy	Student/Parent did not reproduce the correct pitches with the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent imitated some of the pitches while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent imitated some of the pitches of the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent imitated all pitches while singing the song learned by rote.
Rhythmic Accuracy	Student/Parent did not maintain a steady beat while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent maintained some beat competency while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent mostly maintained the beat while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent were rhythmically precise while singing the song learned by rote.
Behavior/Confidence	Student/Parent appeared to lack confidence and body language while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent appeared to possess some confidence at points while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent appeared mostly confident while singing the song learned by rote.	Student/Parent appeared to possess strong confidence and body language while singing the song learned by rote.

Appendix G: Parental/Student Consent Form

Dear St. Mark School Parents/Guardians,

As many of you know, I am currently pursuing my Masters in Music Education at the University of Michigan during the summertime. As part of my final thesis, I am conducting qualitative research on the perceptions and behaviors towards singing in elementary-age students. The purpose of this study is to explore children’s perceptions of and behaviors towards singing as it forms and evolves throughout various stages of elementary school. With your assent and your child’s consent, I will give all St. Mark School 2nd, 4th, and 6th grade students a singing survey in music class with questions regarding whether or not they feel they ‘can’ perform a task that involves singing. For example, “I can sing with a group of my friends”.

Please sign here
if you are comfortable with your child taking the ‘Singing Survey’ and their answers being used in this study. No actual names will be used in the thesis.

Students will put their name on this survey and will confirm or deny whether or not they feel comfortable being asked additional questions about their answers in after-school interviews. Interviews would take place one day after school (preferably Mondays) during October, one in January, and a final interview in May, based on availability and coordination. Sessions will be videotaped for the sole purpose of logging information and will be kept private. Students may opt out of this process at any given time.

Please sign here
if you are comfortable with your child being interviewed at three points during the above months and videotaped for the sole purpose of logging information. No images or names will be used in this thesis.

Please list the name of your child/children that you are assenting for:

Thanks in advance for your assistance in helping me complete my thesis and for your willingness to help further explore how children gain confidence when it comes to singing.

Sincerely,

Judy “Page” Pagryzinski

Appendix H: Parental Consent Form

Dear St. Mark School Parents/Guardians,

As many of you know, I am currently pursuing my Masters in Music Education at the University of Michigan during the summertime. As part of my final thesis, I am conducting qualitative research on the perceptions and behaviors towards singing in elementary-age students. The purpose of this study is to explore children's perceptions of and behaviors towards singing as it forms and evolves throughout various stages of elementary school. Since parents play such a major role in child development, I would also like to get your consent to interview you about your singing experiences along with observations about your child's singing.

One interview will take place in person for no more than 60 minutes. Ideally, I would like to schedule this interview after your child's second interview and before their third and final. Sessions will be videotaped for the sole purpose of collecting data and will be kept private. You or your child may opt out of this process at any given time. Regardless of your decision to participate, this will not affect your child's music grade.

Please sign here if you are comfortable with being interviewed at one point during the 2016-2017 school year and videotaped for the sole purpose of logging information. No images or names will be used in this thesis.

Thanks in advance for your assistance in helping me complete my thesis and for your willingness to help further explore how children gain confidence when it comes to singing.

Please list the name of your child/children part of the participant group and times that you may be available during the week for the interview:

Child's Name _____

Potential Interview Days/Times:

- Mondays: _____
- Tuesdays: _____
- Wednesdays: _____
- Thursdays: _____
- Fridays: _____

Sincerely,

Judy "Page" Pagryzinski