

Chapter 21

Development of multicultural choirs on college campuses:

Theory and practice

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Introduction

This chapter describes a single multicultural choir developed on a university campus over an eight-year period. *Multicultural choir* here refers to a group of people (chiefly students), born in different countries, now connected to one local area or institution, who learn to sing songs from the cultures of the singers in the group. While choirs often sing songs from different cultures, it is less common to limit the repertoire to the cultures of the performers. We suggest that singing songs from the cultures of choir members, in the context of those cultures, adds special value to the individual members, to the choir as a whole, and to the organization or institution from which the choir is drawn.

First, we focus on the growing internationalization of higher education. We then consider concepts from several disciplines that shed light on factors influencing the development of a multicultural choir. Following this background of theoretical perspectives, examples from the various instantiations of the particular multicultural choir are described. Conclusions are offered regarding the promise that similar initiatives hold for creating well-being on a university campus.

Internationalization and the value of singing in providing common ground

Over the last three decades, the proportion of international students enrolled in colleges and universities has grown at a breathtaking pace. Between 1990 and 2014, the number of international students worldwide quadrupled from 1.3 to 5 million (Griffith & Benson, 2018), and increases are expected annually (British Council, 2018). International students often face greater challenges adjusting to university life than do students who are native to the culture or country of the university. One challenge is finding common ground with other students, particularly if language barriers inhibit communication (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Buus, 2015; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013).

A singing group can provide common ground, literally and figuratively. Participants occupy the same space, and their voices contribute to one common sound reaching everyone's ears simultaneously. On a physiological level, according to one study interpersonal synchronization of respiration and heart rate variability was greater during singing as compared to a rest condition (Müller & Lindenberger, 2011). Each choir member must listen interpersonally to the voices of the other members of the choir and intrapersonally to his or her own voice (Welch, 2005). At the same time, the singer aims to convey the message of the music through elements of melody, lyrics, harmony, bodily movements or dance. These elements may contain important cultural information. *Cultural* here refers to norms associated with a group of people who have similar beliefs, traditions and backgrounds. These could include musical scales characterizing the music of the group; voice quality (vocal timbre) typical of singing for that tradition (e.g., Beijing opera is distinct from European opera); traditional narrative themes or myths; language, including regional pronunciations and/or dialect forms; rhythms and harmonies; and any gestures, bodily

movements or dances associated with the piece. Thus, in principle, a multicultural choir on a university or college campus—especially one that sings songs from the cultures of the members of the choir—can provide opportunities for sharing aspects of each singer’s culture, experiencing elements of other cultures, and expanding and diversifying their social networks. Given these potential values and the prevalence of internationalism on university campuses, it is puzzling that university-based multicultural choral groups of this type are rarely found.

A Multicultural choir

At the outset of this chapter, we briefly defined the term *multicultural choir*. The specific multicultural choir of interest here is a singing ensemble that encourages the engagement of persons from every cultural group at an institution. Every member of the institution is welcomed to the ensemble, as long as they would like to sing, to share songs from their own culture (past or present), and to learn the songs of other cultures represented in the ensemble. Fifty years ago, such a choir might be inconceivable on many campuses due to the homogeneity of the student body. But now, for example, at the University of Prince Edward Island, a small Canadian university where the present study was carried out, students are joining the campus from over 80 countries. Many of these countries, like China, Germany, India, and Nigeria have strong choral heritages that are quite different from a North American songbook.

During an eight-year period, the multicultural choir has taken various forms reflecting many factors influencing the dynamics of such a singing group. Early on, challenges to forming such a campus choral group became apparent, but by combining theoretical perspectives from various disciplines, the foundation of a successful protocol developed. Our goal was for this

protocol to support the formation and maintenance of multicultural choirs in other settings. In taking a step in this direction, our chapter examines the applicability of ideas from psychology, choral pedagogy, and public policy, as foundations for a multicultural campus choir.

The three authors of this chapter have all been members of the multicultural choir. Annabel Cohen, as director of the research project Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies in Singing (AIRS), initiated the choir and managed (as distinct from directed) the choir since its inception, participating in a majority of the sessions. Bing-Yi Pan was an AIRS postdoctoral fellow starting in 2011 and was involved with the choir from its inception until his departure in 2015. As a vocalist originally from China, he provided scaffolding for the male singing sections and cultural, musical and linguistic advice on songs from China. Karen Ludke was also a postdoctoral fellow and helped to manage the choir over a period of eight months, bringing some of her expertise in how singing can support the learning of foreign languages. Most of the information presented in this chapter has not been derived from a formal research method, although a short survey was conducted on two occasions during one semester. Our primary data come from our observations as researcher-participants who can note evidence of successful outcomes; for example, the value of taking the time for responsive reading of lyrics, led by a native speaker. As there is almost no published research on this topic, our observations and theory gathering help to define a problem space, paving the way for the application of scholarly methodologies moving forward.

Theoretical Perspectives

This section considers a few theoretical perspectives from the field of psychology, and briefly touches on music pedagogy and public policy. However, it should be noted that fundamental

issues within each domain are enormously complex, for example, reduction of prejudice (Dixon & Levine, 2012), curriculum and teaching methods in an international context (McCarthy, 2012), and the societal significance of policies for resourcing rather than cutting extra-curricular activities (Putnam, 2015). Nevertheless, each of these important domains overlap in the formation of a multicultural choir, and consequently can provide a foundation for decision-making.

Psychology

Social psychology offers insights into attitude formation and reveals that prejudices can form quite innocuously early in life. Infants as young as three months of age, whether of African, Asian, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, or Chinese ethnicities, prefer faces of their own ethnicity (Kelly et al., 2007). Portuguese children as young as six years old show implicit anti-dark skin prejudice (Neto, this Volume; Sousa, Neto, & Mullet, 2005). A meta-analysis of over 500 studies demonstrated that intergroup contact typically reduces prejudice (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). This suggests that providing opportunity for intergroup contact through singing together may enable respect for the “other” to develop. A university campus is an important place for the development of mutual respect among young people as well as faculty and staff.

The power of song was demonstrated in a public-school classroom-based intervention that reduced anti-dark-skin prejudice by teaching the music and culture of this minority group (Neto, this Volume; Neto, Pinto, & Mullet, 2016). Children’s improved attitude endured for at least two years. With adults, choral singing led to more rapid social bonding than other group activities such as crafts or creative writing (see Launay & Pearce, this Volume; Pearce, Launay, & Dunbar (2015); Ravignani, Bowling, & Hitch, 2014). A multi-year program of

singing in British schools increased the sense of social inclusion among children from different backgrounds (Welch, Himonides, Saunders, Papageorgi, & Sarazin, 2014). These studies motivate the formation of a multicultural singing group that has the potential both to reduce potential ethnic or other prejudices and to facilitate social bonding among persons who may otherwise have little common ground.

From the perspective of cross-cultural personality research, one study showed that individuals from East-Asia were more prone to avoid potentially negative outcomes and less likely to approach to gain favorable outcomes, while the reverse was true for individuals with a Western cultural background (Heine & Buchtel, 2009). This suggests that attracting participants from different cultures to a new experience such as a multicultural choir may require different amounts of effort in order to create a balance of engagement and representation.

The perspective of cognitive psychology points to the greater demands on a multicultural choir than on one that performs music in a familiar language and in a familiar musical style, including a non-native style in which a choir specializes (for example, a choir that specializes in Balkan music). In support of this view, when Chinese and North American singers were asked to repeat a novel melody on the syllable /la/, their ability to do so was impeded when the model melody was sung to them in the non-native language (Cohen, Pan, McIver, & Stevenson, 2015). Thus, members of a multicultural choir may face different levels of cognitive load when learning the melody and lyrics of a new song, depending on how the music and lyrics are introduced. Furthermore, fundamental differences in global music styles—of which Western traditions represent a small fraction—create cognitive challenges. For example, the scale structures of the music of Lithuania (Ambrazevičius, 2015), or the

maqams (similar to scales) of the Eastern Arab world (Marcus, 2015) would initially challenge singers familiar with Western-European music traditions, and vice versa. Most cross-cultural music-cognitive research in this area has focused on perception (e.g., Demorest et al., 2010; Demorest, Morrison, Nguyen, & Bodnar, 2016) rather than performance, but highlights the mental challenges of learning a song in a foreign language from both linguistic and music-structural standpoints.

Positive psychology focuses on well-being. Garnett (2017) has discussed the experience of singing in a choir from the perspective of the concept of *flow*, which refers to an optimal state of well-being associated with complete immersion in an activity that can arise when a person has sufficient skills to master an interesting challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The related concept of *social flow* extends to optimal interactions with others. One study of four experienced choristers revealed significant increases in social flow (measured by a questionnaire) when singing or improvising together; neurochemistry indicated significant reduction in stress and arousal when singing together, but not when improvising (Keeler et al., 2015). In a study of homeless men who sang in a choir, semi-structured interviews revealed the positive influences of group singing on emotional, social, and cognitive processes (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; see also Davidson & Leske, this Volume).

Choral pedagogy and music education

Regarding teaching non-Western music, Goetze (2000) and Stone (2017) offered suggestions for enabling the choir members to learn to sing in the way originally intended by the composer or musical-cultural tradition, through engaging members of the culture, avoiding westernized notation in favor of aural learning, incorporating appropriate movement, and establishing the cultural context and meaning of the song from the start.

In reviewing music education from an international perspective, McCarthy (2012) referred to an identity crisis associated with the challenges of “accommodating alternative pedagogies with traditional, time-honored European methodologies” (p. 56). She specifically noted that technology and constructivist learning paradigms, where performance proficiency is independent of knowledge of Western music notation, often challenge teacher-centered teaching and music literacy. The force of globalization also raises questions about the appropriate balance between local, national, and global musics. The notion that music allows for communication across language barriers in educational settings has been challenged by Koza (2001). A plethora of theories for music teaching (Taetle & Cutietta, 2002) suggested that certain methods may fit particular groups or individuals better than others. Some methods may be more common in some countries than others, with consequent transfer effects for the multicultural choir. For example, we have seen that students familiar with a strict conductor-led four-part harmony church choir may find the multicultural choir unappealing with its more flexible rehearsals and encouragement of members to occasionally take a leadership role in the “song circle”. Music learning theory also directs attention to constructs of musical talent and aptitude, and the realization of potentially large individual differences in the ability to remember pitch patterns or feel a rhythm, adding to the heterogeneity of the already heterogeneous group of choir members.

Public policy

The well-being of communities depends on the happiness and productivity of each of its members. Harvard public policy expert Robert Putnam (2015) and colleagues (see Snellman, Silva, Frederick, & Putnam, 2015) have documented the growing class gap among American young people. The vicious cycle begins with inadequate infant care, family instability, low

quality of education, poorly paying jobs or uncertain employment, and fragile physical and mental health. One economical bright light is extracurricular activities in which children of all classes have the opportunity to share in common goals. Speaking to the Annual Meeting of Chorus America in Boston, Putnam (2015) emphasized the value of choirs for bringing together individuals of all walks of life as a means of building social capital. Research by Yerichuk (2015) on a longstanding community choir in Toronto which is dedicated to values of social equality revealed that challenges can arise despite good intentions.

Summary

Concepts and studies from social, positive, and cognitive psychology, choral and music pedagogy, and public policy all shed different lights on the possible benefits of a multicultural choir, highlighting some of the challenges of creating such a group and the value of doing so. Our focus is on a dynamic choir that sings songs of the cultures of its members. To the best of our knowledge, no university campus has such a choir. Other multicultural choirs that we know of that show respect for the cultures and songs of the cultures of its members have unique features that are discrepant in some way from the multicultural choir we have in mind (some are audition choirs, one sings only harmony, two aim to teach English, most are leader-based with repertoire chosen by the leader, one entails assignments and course credit). Brief descriptions of these other choirs are found on the companion website [CW21-1].

Developing the AIRS Multicultural Choir

None of the other examples of similar choirs have all of the features and opportunities envisioned for a multicultural choir, as described below and illustrated with specific examples in this section.

Opportunities provided by a multicultural choir

In addition to the opportunity to sing with others, a multicultural choir on a university campus may offer its members opportunities to:

1. develop common ground, especially for international students who arrive without acquaintances from their homeland and who are not native speakers of the language spoken in the new country;
2. contribute to a shared social and aesthetic activity;
3. take a leadership role as culture-bearer in teaching a song (e.g., pronunciation of the words, description of the cultural context and meaning) or managing aspects of the choir (e.g., maintaining the website or songbook);
4. learn about different cultures (including languages and musics);
5. dismantle prejudices about persons who differ from oneself;
6. embrace the value of preservation of one's culture, potentially leading to associated increases in self-esteem.

Beyond the individual goals and gains, an active multicultural choir and associated social interactions among the students may offer the opportunity to increase the social capital and general well-being of the university community environment (Putnam, 2015; see also Jeannotte, 2003).

Making these opportunities a reality requires reducing other opportunities, more specifically, moving away from privileging "European art music as being of 'high' or 'highest quality' and instead [moving toward] the acknowledgement that popular, folk or indigenous music are as worthy as European art music on the value scale of human activities" (Bradley, 2006, p.

4). However, it is difficult to entirely ignore or avoid an embedded value system. For example, at the beginning of one year of the choir, one of the new facilitators kindly arranged the use of the performance stage of the university music department as a regular rehearsal space. For the first rehearsal, the facilitator positioned a grand piano literally at center stage, presumably with idea that the singers would surround it, with a joint focus on the pianist and choral director. The grand piano is a powerful symbol of European art music (Raykoff, 2000)¹, and this particular set-up, while helpful for an informal Western-music singing group, contradicts the idea of equally valuing all music traditions of the world. What is less compatible with an Inuit or Bantu chant than a grand piano? Pianos or organs are common in churches throughout the non-Western world, but they are absent in places of worship of many non-western religions. The stage set-up for the choir quickly entailed moving the piano to the side of the stage, leaving space for circular arrangement of the choir members that allowed mutual eye contact.

Organization of activities within rehearsals

The concept of singing together may differ from one culture to another as discussed by Baldacchino, Baldacchino and Ellis in this Volume (see also Durrant, 2017). In Western cultures it is generally fundamental that persons sing the same pitch for a particular soprano, alto, tenor, or bass part. In some African cultures, producing the same pitch may be less important than jointly creating approximations to a pitch, which leads to a more interesting complex timbre. Instability of key may characterize the style of some songs of Lithuania (Ambrazevičius, 2015) and South Africa (Stone, 2017). Two-part singing of Southwestern Bulgaria commonly employs musical intervals of major or minor seconds; hitting the exact pitch of such intervals requires high aural sensitivity. These intervals will sound beautiful to those familiar with the style, while others may experience dissonance (Markoff, 1975). A

highlight for one of our multicultural choir's rehearsals was the visit of Maria Hnaraki, a native of Cyprus, and then Director of Greek studies at Drexel University. She was a model culture-bearer, engaging the group in song and dance of Greece (see Chapter 24, this Volume). Further, some religious or cultural practices may prohibit women singing in the presence of men, and female students from such cultures may find it foreign to sing in a mixed choir or may have had no experience singing and instead may have only learned to play a musical instrument.

Personality may also influence social interaction and expectations regarding behavior in the choir setting. Facilitators of multicultural choirs must be sensitive to differences in vocalists' backgrounds and find ways to create common ground and provide opportunities for everyone to experience the joy of the music and to honor the cultural origins of the song.

Even a choir representing members of a homogeneous cultural background that aims to sing songs of its own culture faces substantial challenges, for example, regarding repertoire preferences, range of vocal ability (in a non-audition choir especially), singing in tune or in time. Such choirs typically have a choral conductor, a facilitator who has chosen a repertoire with which he or she is familiar (Amato, Escrivão Filho, & Amato Neto, 2011). These challenges are compounded when choir members represent not only mixed levels of musical or singing abilities but also different cultural backgrounds. The choir faces challenges when initially only a few choir members—which may or may not include the facilitator—are familiar with the song. As an example, one student from the Philippines taught our choir a beautiful but challenging song from his country, *Kung Mawawala Ka*, as well as helping to revitalize the choir after the summer months.

Insights gained through the Multicultural Choir from 2011-2019

Over its first eight years, the choir has attracted an estimated 200 members, comprised primarily of students. Several postdoctoral researchers participated and facilitated the choir at different times, with the support of undergraduate student assistants. Songs selected by the participants contributed to a cumulative songbook representing over 30 countries [CW21.2].

Approximately 25 students responded to an advertisement placed around the campus in September, 2011, announcing the start of the multicultural choir. The ad read:

Figure 21.1. Wording of the initial advertisement of the multicultural choir and song circle.

Do you like to sing?

Join the UPEI International Choir and Song Circle!

Share songs from various cultures

Learn more about singing

Meet friends from across the campus & around the world

No prior experience or music background necessary

Just a love of singing, music, and people

Students, Staff, Faculty, and friends—All welcome

There was no formal schedule for the first rehearsal, as it was unknown who would appear and how many. *Brother John/Frère Jacques* with its linguistic variations for many languages, worked well as an ice-breaker. A student from the Music Department introduced the song *If I had Words* which some of the students knew from the 1995 film *Babe*. The melody and harmony draw on Symphony No. 3 in C minor by Saint-Saëns and exemplify the Western art tradition, but its uplifting lyrics (wishing a loved one an endless life of nature's beauty) were compatible with the ideals of the choir. Singing such a song effectively requires considerable practice, especially for those who are less familiar with the Western-European music tradition. This initial session suggested that the choir might benefit from a more organized rehearsal schedule.

Bing-Yi Pan and Annabel Cohen attended a Toastmasters International meeting in November, 2011. Toastmasters is a growing international organization with over 16,600 clubs in 143 countries that focuses on development of public speaking and leadership. They wondered if the success of these clubs might be adapted for the multicultural choir. Each club follows the same strict schedule for its meetings. Meetings begin and end sharply at appointed times. Members share responsibilities in running and evaluating the various sections of the meeting, and members perform in prepared or impromptu speaking situations. A key difference between Toastmasters and the multicultural choir was the mode of communication, singing rather than speaking, and group singing rather than individual speaking. However, Pan suggested that choir members could be individually responsible for warm-ups, programming, teaching songs, leading songs, and evaluating the session—running each session with an implicit understanding of members helping members.

With this in mind, a fixed schedule of activities was instituted with the aim of engaging different members in responsibilities for leading a warm-up, leading songs, and the opportunity for a final karaoke performance of a song of one's choice at the end. Variations on this approach sustained the group for the rest of that year and into the next (see Table 20.1, this Volume, for the rehearsal format, as well as some aspects that are described in Chapter 21 by Baldacchino, Baldacchino, and Ellis, regarding the diverse preferences of participants for rehearsal activities).

The multicultural choir has benefited from the participation of choir members with varied types and amounts of singing experience. For example, one staff member of the AIRS project brought their experience with an international choral organization for barbershop-style singing. The choir also benefitted from the charismatic input and strong singing voices of students from the university's music, education and psychology departments, some of whom were learning about the psychology of singing. Student assistants also maintained and organized the songbook, and Facebook site. Student organizers' social media and networking also contributed to the choir's membership. International exchange students from Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan (among others) all enhanced the choir at different times, joining longer-term international students or faculty from Cameroon, Canada, Iran, Mauritius, Syria, Ukraine, Uruguay, USA, and more.

One benefit of the multicultural choir's membership was its flexible organization around a core group who provided continuity, which included three members of the community who belonged to several choirs, one of whom provided guitar accompaniment. One highlight included Mauritius night, with more than a dozen students from Mauritius sharing their songs and dance, and providing refreshments from that country, thanks in part to one student's

grandmother who was visiting from Mauritius. That year, the group took particular delight in closing off each meeting with a choral version of the game “musical chairs”.

The leadership of the choir alternated between an informal song circle set-up and a more organized choir direction, with each approach providing different benefits. For example, some participants felt impatient about long warm-ups and believed that the purpose of the choir was to sing songs, while others valued the opportunity to improve the quality of singing through the warm-up activities. One year, postdoctoral associate Lilia Nafikova from Ukraine, who had training in choral direction, took on the role of facilitator and achieved three-part harmony with the group. Similarly, Blair Ellis, a visiting summer student from Mount Alison University, who was studying psychology and music, facilitated the Multicultural Choir in the summer of 2013 and then created a choir on his own nearby campus in a neighboring province during his final undergraduate year. After he graduated, the choir continued (2014-2015) and the members visited the original choir at the University of Prince Edward Island. This was a highlight for both choirs to share some common songs and learn new ones. The success of joining the multicultural choirs from the two campuses provided a prototype of what could be possible on an even larger scale.

More recently, Justin Amador, a student director from the music department who was an instrumentalist and a skilled tenor with conducting training—with a great deal of energy and imagination—led a semester of rehearsals. His involvement developed the group’s cohesion and led to a repertoire representing the countries of choir members who were regularly present at rehearsals. Another year, Daniel Bevan-Baker, a music therapist took the role of facilitator and provided scaffolding for the learning of songs significant to choir members by studying the suggested songs in advance and providing musical back-up to the student

presenters of their songs. In both of these instantiations of the choir, however, members from the relevant country took charge of teaching the pronunciation, and a type of responsive reading took place, between the member “cultural expert” and the larger group. Such language practice through this type of exchange happened on successive meetings while the song was being learned, and phrase lengths increased from just one or two words to whole lines, and entire verses. Using YouTube music videos helped demonstrate how the songs should sound and often contained images of the song sung in cultural context, and the member culture bearer (see Chapter 20) explained and provided additional information. Each student presenter appeared to experience a special feeling of sharing the best of their homeland with new friends and acquaintances, and choir members also appeared to enjoy mastering a song of a new friend from another culture, perhaps empathizing with how it felt to share their own songs with the group.

In terms of repertoire, some songs work in many different languages. *Brother John/Frère Jacques* is ideal because every line repeats, and the cultural expert can sing the first line in his or her language, and the rest of the choir can echo this. After many verses, the melody is familiar and can be sung as a round. The song *Everyone Loves Saturday Night*, which is said to be of Nigerian origin, has only one line, “Everybody loves Saturday night” [CW21-3] and after reading one line in the particular language, it is possible to look up and establish eye contact with the other members of the choir or with an audience in performance. However, even such a song may introduce subtle challenges in a multicultural setting. For example, Saturday is not universally a day of the weekend; it may be a regular working day, which not everybody would therefore love. A comment to this effect was spontaneously made by someone who possibly looked around at the singers and had the sudden realization that everyone may not love Saturday night. These challenges may lead to discussions among the

choir about how to include all the cultures of the members who are present. One highlight in the choir's repertoire was Pharrell Williams' song *Happy* in English, French, Spanish, and Swahili (the latter translated by one of the choir members). A guest from Cuba, who performed as a busker at the Saturday market near the university, was invited to perform and teach his songs, and *El cuarto de Tula* was added to the repertoire.

Despite initial concerns about encouraging choir members to value all musical traditions equally, we found it was helpful to engage a piano accompanist for rehearsals, even though the piano was only appropriate for some songs. It was also helpful to have choir members who could provide on-the-spot assistance with technology as needed (e.g., displaying the relevant lyrics text files or YouTube examples via computer projection). Some rehearsals were audio- and video-recorded for the purpose of capturing the activity so as to understand better the group dynamics and factors leading to engagement and well-being of members.

Regarding choir members' reasons for joining the choir, a survey with Likert-style ratings (from 1-5, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree") was conducted at the beginning (19 participants) and at the end of one semester (17 participants). This helped to explore the goals of those who signed up and whether those goals were met after 10 weeks of rehearsals. As seen in Table 21.1, the key reason for members joining was for fun, and almost all goals were met or exceeded by the end of the semester.

Table 21.1 Mean rating (5-point scale) of benefits of participation by choir members before and after 10 weeks of participation (Standard Deviation is to the right of the mean rating)

Time of Rating & No. of Raters	Judged Benefits										Overall	
	Improve Singing	Increase Musical Knowledge	Meet People	Improve Language Skills	Have Fun	Relax	Acquire Cultural Knowledge	Met Expectations				
Early session N=19	3.63 1.26	3.89 0.88	4.21 0.54	3.53 1.12	4.84 0.37	4.58 0.61	Not asked	Not asked				
After 10 Weeks N=17	3.59 0.87	3.76 0.90	4.89 0.33	4.12 0.70	4.94 0.24	4.79 0.40	4.35 0.70	4.59 0.51				

In terms of resources, a modest budget has been available throughout to support the hiring of student leaders or facilitators, special initiatives (e.g., honoraria for guest experts from other countries, such as the performer from Cuba, or music educator from Crete) and for occasional post-rehearsal pizza events, all serving to support the goals of the multicultural choir initiative.

Over the years, the multicultural choir was invited to perform on and off campus. For example, at an international event of the Faculty of Education, students from several countries led the group in singing songs from their countries. The choir also invited members from the local Association for Newcomers to Canada to participate in rehearsals, although their attendance was irregular. Other highlights included performance at the university “Global Village”, an event celebrating the cultural diversity on the campus. The choir also performed in honor of World Singing Day (October 21st, 2017) at a mass choral event held at a central shopping mall.

Discussion, Conclusions, and Future Directions

This chapter has outlined some theoretical ideas from the disciplines of psychology, music education, choral pedagogy, and public policy that can be brought to bear on understanding the functioning of a multicultural choir. It has also described experiences over an eight-year period in developing such a choir, guided by and consistent with the theoretical ideas.

Questions that could be investigated in future empirical research include: (1) What are some of the effects of having (or not having) a director or leader, and to what extent does this lead to particular choir members with an appropriate musical/organizational background becoming informal, *de facto* choir leaders? (2) To what extent are singers' goals to join a song circle for fun compatible with a multicultural choir performing concerts to raise its profile and bring benefits to more people within the university and wider community? (3) How do the musical genres and repertoire develop as different choir members bring new songs to the group, and does a "core" musical repertoire develop that becomes independent of a tangible songbook? To what extent can and should the repertoire be maintained, for example via audio recordings of the spoken and sung lyrics, when choir members from those countries or cultures depart? To what extent are social bonds formed between members, and what is the time course of this development?

As described in this chapter, a multicultural campus choir might be regarded as a system within other systems: the university, the region (city, country), the countries of origin of choir members, the skills of facilitators, and the many factors that influence individual choir members based on their prior experience in choral singing, socio-economic status, gender, academic and career interests. Facilitators must understand this and appreciate that culture as well as personality variables influence a choir member's interpretation of events. The eight

years of experience with this multicultural choir are consistent with research suggesting that the shared activity of singing, speaking, and moving together can create trust and social bonding and overcome initial natural prejudices and fears (Neto et al., 2016; Pearce et al., 2015). Our survey (Table 21.1) showed that most people joined the choir to have fun. This was illuminating because the organizers saw the choir as serving to develop friendships, community, trust, and social capital on the university campus, and ultimately—perhaps on a small and individual scale—even supporting peace among nations.

Our experience with a multicultural choir, guided by ideas from several disciplines, has continuously revealed joy of the choir members in sharing the songs of their cultures, intimations of a state of flow, diversified social networks, opportunities for leadership roles, and engagement in a meaningful activity outside of the classroom (e.g., when rehearsals lasted an extra half hour, with no-one aware of the time). These benefits require resources, particularly in time and energy needed for organization of activities, but the positive and powerful outcomes that a multicultural choir can bring to a university campus far exceed the value of the time, effort, and modest finances needed to set the stage and provide the scaffolding that enables this extracurricular activity.

We do not suggest that the foundational disciplines highlighted in this chapter—psychology, music, education, and public policy—are the only relevant ones. Theory and research from sociology, anthropology, and economics would also provide insight. Future hypothesis-driven and qualitative case study research is needed, based in different disciplines in order to expand our understanding of the formation and maintenance of vibrant multicultural choirs on college and university campuses. It is hoped that the results may be applied beyond the

university campus to the building of community through singing on every scale (Ahlquist, 2006).

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Glossary

Culture bearer: persons who can share traditions of members of one culture with members of another. Such persons may be trained, and not necessarily a member of the particular culture whose traditions they are passing on.

Community: a group of people that gathers for a reason: whether to remember and recall, to share, or to create new experiences (Gregory Barz, quoted by Karen Ahlquist, 2006, p. 3)

Cross-cultural music: music that is embraced by a number of different cultures and integrated to produce what is called acculturated world-music; for example, jazz, which embraces western musical harmonies with African rhythms.

Indigenous music: Music specific to one culture; an idealization in the 21st century due to the global influence of many non-indigenous musics on the original indigenous music.

Meta-analysis: A research methodology that combines the results of all the studies, typically published or unpublished, that aim to test the same hypothesis in order to determine the general effect and a synthesis of all the available data.

Social capital: The network of friendships and acquaintances, comprising social networks in which trust, and cooperation are fundamental, and lead to the greater good. The term was popularized in a positive light by public policy expert Robert Putnam, but used earlier and also influentially in a different way by Pierre Bourdieu, a sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher.

¹ Describing the piano as an icon in film, Ivan Raykoff (2000, p. 330) says: “The piano was not only a symbol of culture, it was a symptom of cultural change. Seeing a piano, one imagined classical music, inspired artistic creativity, bourgeois domesticity, noble aristocracy, the grand spectacle of public performance, and the intimacy of private expression” (p. 330).